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Title

The Grey Zone and its Discontents:
A Postmodern Psychopathological Study of Selected Works of
Arab-American Writers Rabih Alameddine and Rawi Hage

Submitted by
Mrs. Sara HARRAT
Supervised by
Prof. Mohammed Seghir HALIMI

Jury

Halima BENZOUKH	MCA	University of Ouargla	Chair
Mohammed Seghir HALIMI	Prof	University of Ouargla	Superviser
Nassima KAID	Prof	University of Sidi Bel Abbes	Examiner
Abderrahim CHEIKH	MCA	University of Ouargla	Examiner
Ahmed BECHAR	MCA	University of Biskra	Examiner
Farida LEBBAL	MCA	Higher National School of Renewable Energy, Environment & Sustainable Development	Examiner

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Submitted by

Sara HARRAT

Statement of Authorship

I hereby declare that I am the sole author of this PhD thesis and that I have not used any sources other than those listed in the bibliography and identified as references. I further declare that I have not submitted this thesis at any other institution in order to obtain a degree.

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Acknowledgments

Dedication

I dedicate this work to my little angel and the apple of my eye: my daughter Khadidja and to my husband for his love and support.

Abstract

Abstract

The literature of immigration portrays our age's most prominent features: immigration and the de-centering of the European imperialistic center, as well as the de-marginalization of the colonized margins. The figure of the immigrant lives in an in-between space, one where the boundaries between the center and the periphery collapse. This means, according to Homi Bhabha, the creation of a third hybrid culture which puts an end to essentialist notions, fixed cultures and identities, erect hierarchies and rigid boundaries. Hybridity, as argued by postcolonial theorists, not only proves that identity and culture are in constant flux, but guarantees a sense of freedom. Although hybridity is praised for all this positive potential, it is the objective of this dissertation to focus on its negative one. Hybrid characters do not simply and haphazardly happen to *appear* in what Bhabha calls the Third Space, for if this had been the case then all the positive promises of hybridity would have been undeniable and guaranteed. Instead, the hybrid figure, either immigrates to this in-between space for various reasons, or is born there to parent's who have immigrated to it. The hybrid figure, therefore, has an original past and an original culture, which affects his transition. This research studies the effects of the past of the characters and of their original culture on the creation of the "third" hybrid identity, and on the psychological disorders that this latter causes on its bearers when they cannot get rid of past trauma and of the memories of their troubled homeland, and when they find that the host country is not as promising as they pictured it would be. This study attempts to prove that Arab-American authors, Rabih Alameddine and Rawi Hage, portray characters that carry their own past traumas with them to the host country, or experience another type of insidious trauma when they face oppression there. Past and insidious traumas prevent the characters from enjoying the full promises of hybridity and prove that hybridity is only a pseudo-subversive enunciation. The hierarchies and boundaries, especially racial and economic, are still rigid in the face of the poor racialized immigrant. It is also argued in this research that their work belongs to the trauma genre which is characterized by the use of postmodern techniques like non-linearity, multiple narratives, intertextuality, fragmentation, gaps and silences as representative tools that mirror the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and the other psychological disturbances associated with it such as dissociation and even madness.

Keywords: Hybridity, trauma, PTSD, postmodernism, insidious trauma, boundaries.

Summary in French

Résumé

La littérature de l'immigration représente les traits les plus saillants de notre époque : l'immigration et le décentrement du centre impérialiste européen, ainsi que la démarginalisation des marges colonisées. La figure de l'immigré vit dans un espace intermédiaire celui où les frontières entre le centre et la périphérie s'effondrent. Cela signifie, selon Homi Bhabha, la création d'une troisième culture hybride qui met fin à l'essentialisme, aux cultures et identités figées, aux hiérarchies érigées et aux frontières rigides. L'hybridité, selon les théoriciens postcoloniaux, prouve non seulement que l'identité et la culture sont en constante évolution, mais garantit un sentiment de liberté. Bien que l'hybridité soit glorifiée pour tout ce potentiel positif, c'est l'objectif de cette thèse de se concentrer sur son potentiel négatif. Les personnages hybrides n'apparaissent pas simplement et au hasard dans ce que Bhabha appelle le Tiers-espace, car si cela avait été le cas, alors toutes les promesses positives d'hybridité auraient été indéniables et garanties. Au lieu de cela, la figure hybride possède un passé original et une culture originale, ce qui affecte sa transition. Cette recherche étudie les effets du passé des personnages et de leur culture d'origine sur la création de la « troisième » identité hybride, et sur les troubles psychologiques que cette dernière provoque chez ses porteurs lorsqu'ils ne peuvent se débarrasser des traumatismes passés et des souvenirs de leurs patries troublées, et quand ils découvrent que le pays hôte n'est pas aussi prometteur qu'ils l'imaginaient. Cette étude tente de prouver que les auteurs arabo-américains, Rabih Alameddine et Rawi Hage, mettent en scène des personnages qui emportent avec eux leurs propres traumatismes passés dans le pays d'accueil, ou subissent un autre type de traumatisme insidieux lorsqu'ils y sont confrontés à l'oppression. Des traumatismes passés et insidieux empêchent les personnages de profiter pleinement des promesses de l'hybridité et prouvent que l'hybridité n'est qu'une énonciation pseudo-subversive. Les hiérarchies et les frontières, notamment raciales et économiques, sont encore rigides face à l'immigré racisé et pauvre. Il est également soutenu dans cette recherche que leur travail appartient au genre de traumatisme qui se caractérise par l'utilisation de techniques postmodernes telles que la non-linéarité, les récits multiples, l'intertextualité, la fragmentation, les lacunes et les silences comme outils représentatifs des symptômes du trouble de stress post-traumatique (TSPT) et autres troubles psychologiques tels que la dissociation et même la folie.

Mots clés : Hybridité, traumatisme, TSPT, postmodernisme, traumatisme insidieux, frontières

Summary in Arabic

ملخص

يصور أدب المهجر أبرز سمات عصرنا : الهجرة وتفكك المركز الإمبريالي الأوروبي ، فضلاً عن إلغاء تهميش الهوامش المستعمَرة. تعيش شخصية المهاجر في فضاء بيني أين تنهار الحدود بين المركز والأطراف. وهذا يعني ، وفقًا لهومي بابا ، إنشاء ثقافة هجينة ثالثة تضع حداً للنزعة الماهوية ولمفاهيم الثقافة والهوية الثابتين و الحدود الصلبة. الهجنة الثقافية ، وفقا لمنظري ما بعد الاستعمار ، لا تثبت فقط أن الهوية والثقافة في حالة تغير مستمر ، ولكنها تضمن الشعور بالحرية. على الرغم من الإشادة على نظرية الهجنة الثقافية بسبب كل هذه الإمكانات الإيجابية ، إلا أن الهدف من هذه الرسالة هو التركيز على جوانبها السلبية. الشخصيات الهجينة لا تشغل ببساطة وبشكل عشوائي ما يسميه هومي بابا الفضاء الثالث ، لأنه إذا كان هذا هو الحال ، فإن كل الجوانب الإيجابية للهجنة الثقافية ستكون مضمونة ولا يمكن إنكارها. بدلاً من ذلك ، فإن الشخص الهجين ، إما يهاجر إلى هذه المساحة البينية لأسباب مختلفة ، أو يولد هناك لأبوين هاجروا إليها. هذا يعني إذا أن الشخص الهجين لديه ماض أصلي وثقافة أصلية ، مما يؤثر على انتقاله بين الثقافات و الهويات في الموقع البيني الهجين. يدرس هذا البحث آثار ماضي الشخصيات وثقافتهم الأصلية على تكوين الهوية الهجينة "الثالثة" ، وعلى الاضطرابات النفسية التي تسببها هذه الأخيرة على حامليها عندما لا يستطيعون التخلص من الصدمات الماضية ومن ذكريات الوطن المضطرب ، خصوصا عند اصطدامهم بواقع أن البلد المضيف ليس واعدًا كما تصوروا. تحاول هذه الدراسة إثبات أن المؤلفين العرب الأمريكيين ، ربيع علم الدين وراوي الحاج ، يصورون شخصيات تحمل صدماتهم السابقة معهم إلى البلد المضيف ، أو يعانون من نوعً آخر من الصدمات العنصرية عندما يواجهون الاضطهاد هناك. تمنع الصدمات الماضية و العنصرية الشخصيات من مما يمنعهم من التمتع بوعود نظرية هومي بابا الكاملة وتثبت أن نظرية الهجنة التهجين ليست سوى نظرية زائفة. الهرمية والحدود ، وخاصة العرقية والاقتصادية ، لا تزال قائمة و جامدة في وجه المهاجر العنصري الفقراء. يُناقش هذا البحث أيضا أن عملهم ينتمي إلى أدب الصدمة الذي يتميز باستخدام تقنيات ما بعد الحداثة مثل اللاخطية والسرد المتعدد والتناص والتجزئة والفجوات والصمت كأدوات تمثيلية لأعراض ما بعد الصدمة. اضطراب الإجهاد والاضطرابات النفسية الأخرى المصاحبة له مثل الفصام وحتى الجنون.

الكلمات المفتاحية: تهجين ، صدمة ، ما بعد الحداثة ،صدمة عرقية ، الحدود ،اضطراب ما بعد الصدمة.

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General Introduction

Background of the Study

We live in an age of immigration and mobility. According to the current International Organization for Migration's (IOM) global estimate, there were around 281 million international immigrants in the world in 2020. People immigrate to another part of the globe and begin a new life for myriad of reasons, encompassing push and pull factors. Push factors are related to those who are forcibly displaced from their homelands under threatening and violent situations when their basic human rights are compromised and they lose the freedom to react, choose and decide. They include such issues as war, insecurity, disasters, famine and poverty. On the other hand, pull factors are those that attract people to a new home. They include, for instance, better job opportunities, education, healthcare, and living standards.

While immigration is not a new phenomenon, the large-scale diasporic displacement in the last two centuries is, as explained by Sten Moslund, predominantly caused by two World Wars, imperialism, colonialism, and the globalization of world economy, in addition to the increased capacity of modern means of communication and transportation (1), and I might add civil wars as well. These issues, according to Salman Rushdie, as quoted by Moslund, are gaining "a central position in contemporary literary and cultural studies where the second half of the twentieth century is emphasized as an epoch-making era in which mass migration and global movement has been picking up speed and volume" (ibid).

In this ongoing process of immigration (whether forced or not), the borders between nations are receding and the world is undergoing a process of flattening and shrinking. Immigration, the meeting, and sometimes clashing, of different cultures have resulted in the construction of new global societies and new cultural landscapes characterized by cultural, ethnic, religious and linguistic diversity, as well as by the blurring of clear distinctions and boundaries. This process of globalization has as its mantra the dismantling of the rigid hierarchies and vertical boundaries that separated nation states and cultures during modernity. A flat, global world allows for a horizontal flow across boundaries, and hence, has brought

the end of the monoculture and began a new era that celebrates border crossing, pluralism and heterogeneity. Now is, to borrow Zygmunt Bauman's words, the age of "heterophilia" (qtd.in Werbner 2)

Globalization promotes identity politics based on mixing and hybridity, a celebratory term strongly linked to the idea of a flat and boundary-less world where different cultures and people are encouraged to engage in mutual process of hybridization to create a postmodern global mélange. Consequently, the figures of the immigrant, the hybrid, the tourist, and the nomad are born. They are the transgressors of the boundaries and the disturbers of fixity, purity and order. All these seem consistent with the credos of postmodernism.

Although a slippery term, there is an undeniable postmodernist inclination for hybridity. Standing as the antithesis to modernity's insistence on coherence, stability and the fixity of meaning and identity, postmodernism rejects the pure, the fixed and the stable. It values, instead, plurality, reconstruction and redefinition (Hassan 504). Hybrids, similarly, refuse to be fixed to one identity and one place, to be rooted. Therefore, hybridity embodies the spirit of postmodernism with its celebration of exchange, mutability, fluidity, and transgression.

In a postcolonial, postmodern age, the hybrid lives in an in-between space. This in-between space has permitted, as Edward Said claims, an intellectual revival and freedom led by the émigré writers as a way to be liberated from the representational ravages and shackles of the imperialistic system. Though, to Said, displacement is one of the "unhappiest characteristics" of the age, it has also created new states and new borders that have caused a radical shift in power dynamics from the center to "decentered exilic energies," embodied in no other than the immigrant hybrid figure. This makes of the latter the embodiment of "political figure between domains, between forms, between homes, and between languages"

(*Culture* 332). It also means that the in-between space is primarily liberating and powerful.

Statement of the Problem and Rationale

Hybridity emerged in postcolonial theory as an alternative to the racist purism of the eighteenth century when it was born as a result of colonial expansion and slavery. Literary scholars Gayatri Spivak, Edward Said and Homi Bhabha are credited for transferring the concept from its biological/racist origin, under the name of miscegenation, to the field of postcolonial studies. Postcolonial critics' main concern is the issue of representation of the Self and Other in literature and academia and the power of discourse to shape knowledge and mold control. Therefore, hybridity, a concept directly related to the relationship between the Self and Other, has become a buzzword in literary, cultural, and postcolonial studies.

Nowadays, reflections of intercultural contact and global culture as well as discussions of Third World literature have as their *locus classicus* Bhabha's notion of hybridity. Bhabha and the other postcolonial critics have enthusiastically leapt on this idea of the mutual constructiveness and interconnection of the Self and Other as hybridity's main strategy of putting an end to colonial Western Manichean thinking. Thus, hybridity stands as a counter-hegemonic discourse based on a tendency to blur divisions and distinctions: national, ethnic, cultural and racial. New in-between identities combine aspects of both pre-established identities, i.e. the Self and Other, in an anarchic challenge to notions of purity, homogeneity, and order.

The inherent resistance to fixed binaries posits hybridity and hybrids as the antidote to essentialist significations, and rigid cultural categories, and endows them with a deconstructive potential and transgressive power. As Bhabha defines hybridity as:

> [T]he sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategic reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is, the production of discriminatory identities that secure the 'pure' and original identity of authority). Hybridity is the revaluation of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. It displays the necessary deformation and displacement of all sites of discrimination and domination (160).

Creating a liberating selfhood that is formed in the space betwixt many cultures, hybridity is, hence, a powerful space to occupy because it exists outside and beyond the rigidity of the binary system.

Indeed, Hybridity occurs in an in-between space that Bhabha calls the Third Space, which stands for the idea that the boundaries between cultures are not fixed and rigid barriers between them, but a place of productivity where news signs and forms are created. This means that a whole new culture, which is a hybrid of opposing cultures, is formed in this liminal Third Space. The Third Space is, thus, acclaimed as the location of resistance, subversion and intervention against racial, cultural and national hegemonic narratives.

Praiseworthy as the postcolonial prospect might be for its apparent desire to smash the ideologies that seek to keep erect hierarchies, notions of purity and the Western Manichean mindset tightly locked in a box marked archaic and racist, my intention throughout this thesis is to demonstrate that hybridity has its own pitfalls, catches and blind spots. Perhaps one of the most dangerous qualities of hybridity is its romanticization of border-crossing, which makes it unreflective of the afflictions that the hybrid subject goes through in the in-between space that lacks certainty, unity, and stability.

Hybridity's idealization of travelling, movement, and on-going evolution makes it lack unity and harmony, which the immigrant character often yearns. While it provides a kind of cosmopolitan freedom, one cannot "free himself of the homing instincts" (Dayal, "Subaltern" 275). Thus, the openness and restlessness of the Third Space may lead to psychological distress in the heart and mind of the hybrid subject, resulting from the constant need of belonging and fractured subjectivity. The painful loss of roots, unbelonging, and homelessness are the price of hybridity, as Burke confirms (7).

Therefore, the question we have at hand after the postcolonial critics' poststructralist endeavor to evade essentializing significations and identifications is where does one go next?

Indeed postcolonial critics created a theory that leads to an endless deferral of meaning. Accordingly, home becomes the unattainable dream, and the hybrid subject, who is stuck in limbo living between two worlds and stranger in both, really has nowhere to go. Hybridity has turned a blind eye to the idea that living in a space where identity, as points out Christopher Lasch, can be adopted and discarded like a change of costume" (qtd.in Bauman 23) can be psychologically agonizing for the individual who needs a sense of rootedness and belonging.

Moreover, while I do not deny that hybridity is a real outcome of mobility, multiculturalism and cross-cultural contact, I align myself more with the anti-hybridity critics. They point to a paradox in hybridity's potential of dismantling erect hierarchies that result from assumptions of purity, for to be realized as such, it has to admit the existence of those pure cultures and identities in the first place. Consequently, hybridity is merely a pseudo-subversive enunciation which, rather than really destroying the binarism of the colonial system, only confuses pre-established codes and adds another category. This means that in our neo-colonial world, hierarchies are still there albeit under different guises.

Another flaw of hybridity is its uneven articulation. There are asymmetric relations of power and hegemony involved in the hybridization processes. This means that hybridity is a one-way Eurocentric process that leans more towards the Western center than the non-Western margins. For example, integration within multicultural societies, as this thesis seeks to display, is only achieved through the acculturation and assimilation of the immigrant. Therefore, even though hybridity is hailed to be the antithesis of racism, global and multicultural settings have given birth to a new form of discrimination, known as cultural racism or neo-racism (Wieviorka 141). It advocated the belief in the superiority of Western culture, which is responsible for the uneven process of hybridization.

One of the strongest attacks against hybridity is directed against its elitism. Hybridity is a concept invented by bourgeois, middle-class elite theorists who are hybrids themselves,

such as the Indian American critics Gayatri Spivak and Homi Bhabha, and the Jamaican British Stuart Hall. Hybridity is, hence, criticized to be a discourse that reflects only the realities and identities of those transnational intellectuals, or "postmodern cosmopolitan," to whom the boundaries are porous and the Third Space is joyous (Friedman 74). Jonathan Friedman attacks hybridity theorists for taking their arguments from poetry, literature and movies instead of from the realities of the majority of hybrid subjects; hence, neglecting their socio-economic and political struggles. Aijaz Ahmad too reproached Bhabha for presenting a universal theory that does not take into consideration class and gender issues that may affect the process of hybridity.

In this thesis, I seek to look into the hybrids of postmodernism, which are the result of immigration, displacement, and uprooting, as depicted in the novels *I, the Divine: A Novel in First Chapters* (2001) and *Cockroach* (2008) by the Anglophone Lebanese writers Rabih Alameddine and Rawi Hage, respectively. These novels portray hybridity, considered by postcolonial critics as the leitmotiv of the experience of immigration, as an experience that does not reflect and capture the state of its diasporic hybrid characters. Instead, it fails to address the issues they face while living in a third space of in-betweenness, like unbelonging, restlessness, homelessness, marginalization and alienation.

Indeed, hybridity is still *à la mode*, but the rigid boundaries refuse to melt. Therefore, through my analysis of Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, for example, I also want to ask the question of whether the idea of racial and cultural categorization really gets demolished in this play of identity and the zealous glorification of hybridity. Is it not possible that in this play, some borders refuse to melt and space is compartmentalized into systems of inclusion and exclusion based on skin colour and social status? *Cockroach* offers a remarkable interrogation of the oft-made assumption in contemporary postcolonial studies that hybrid subjects might bring about a genuine transformation of the racist Western systems and their oppressive social

categories. My reading of the novel shows that day-to-day injustice, white supremacy, domination, racism, and the marginalization of immigrants are still an existing reality in multicultural spaces where immigrants are estranged and pushed to the bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy. In a postcolonial society that claims to be raceless and colour-blind, such as the Canadian, skin colour is proven to be a category that still retains all the degrading associations it ever had (such as filth, evil, and threat).

Central to the representation of hybridity that I am concerned with in this thesis is the idea that trauma and the different psychological disorders associated with it, such as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and dissociation, shatter the individual's Self and affect his/her experience of space. In the novels I shall investigate, radical transformation of the identity of the protagonists and other characters occurs as a result of traumatic experiences, like war, rape, abuse and even discrimination and racism. I seek via detailed exploration to examine the possibility that trauma has the potential to affect the process of hybridity and make of the Third Space one of pain and suffering.

Classical or literary trauma theory was inaugurated by literary scholar Cathy Caruth, who defines trauma as a wound caused by a sudden overwhelming event on the psyche that ruptures the "the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). As opposed to physical bodily injury which is healable, trauma is characterized by its belatedness. That is to say, it is a missed encounter that is not understood the moment of its occurring, and only manifests itself belatedly in the form of repetitive symptoms, such as dreams, intrusive hallucinations and flashbacks, resulting from the return of repressed traumatic memories. The story of trauma is not that of surviving the traumatic event and escaping death per se, but the story of its "endless impact on life" (ibid 7). Therefore, trauma has a dual temporality that disrupts both temporal and spatial experience. Even though it

happened in the past, trauma comes back to haunt the survivor in the present and future, affecting his spatio-temporal experience.

Classical trauma theory is centered on the trope of the unspeakable. Caruth and the other theorists insist that trauma resists linguistic articulation particularly because it is an unclaimed, unassimilated experience that was not known when it occurred (Caruth, *Unclaimed 4*). Trauma is unspeakable for the simple reason that it is impossible to represent an event that is beyond the range of expected and normal human experience. As a result, language can only succeed in representing trauma through its failure to do so.

The unseakability of trauma has given birth to trauma fiction. Anne Whitehead notes that the only way to represent trauma is through transmission rather than realistic representation. Accordingly, trauma fiction writers rely on a postmodern aesthetic of trauma that mimics its intrusive symptoms and mirrors the voice of the traumatized. Whitehead points that postmodernism's non-conventional narrative structures are the perfect means to represent the strange temporality of trauma and its "damaging and distorting impact" (82). In trauma fiction, trauma's repetitive symptoms translate into texts of trauma where transforming traumatic memories into narrative memories cannot happen in a linear, straightforward manner. Instead, trauma narratives mirror the disruptive symptoms of trauma, which is achieved through postmodern techniques, such as, "intertextuality, repetition and a dispersed or fragmented narrative voice" (84). In this thesis, I aim to study the postmodern aesthetics of the novels, characterized by fragmentations, textual gaps, silences, repetition, non-linearity, shift in perspective and language, which represent symptoms of PTSD and split subjectivity.

While the interdisciplinarity of Caruthian trauma theory has contributed in disengaging trauma from the purely clinical field of psychiatry to the cultural and literary fields, the theory, nevertheless, has its drawbacks. It has been accused of focusing on the

disruptive impact and unspeakabilty of the event itself at the expense of decontextualizing and de-historicizing it from the historical, socio-cultural and political contexts where it occurs. In her edited volume T*he Nature of Trauma in American Novels* (2012), theorist Michele Balaev, rethinks Caruth's theory and proposes a new pluralistic trauma theory that emphasizes grounding trauma in the different contexts that lead to its happening in the first place.

Balaev's pluralistic trauma theory adds another paradigm to the representation and interpretation of trauma narratives, that of place, which she sees as a "silent second character, for it is the geographic location, cultural influence, and historical moment that merge to define the value of trauma for the individual and community" (xv). Considering space a second character that has a direct relation to the traumatized protagonist offers a contextual framework for the analysis of trauma. Similarly, highlighting the necessity of placing trauma into a collective framework, Dominick LaCapra argues that "it is misguided to see trauma as a purely psychological or individual phenomenon" (xi). Trauma, he insists, "has crucial connections to social and political conditions and can only be understood and engaged with respect to them" (ibid.).

Related to this research is pluralistic trauma theorists' notion of "insidious trauma." Insidious trauma considers the traumatogenic effect of microaggressions, such as racism and oppression in our neo-colonial world, which are not overtly violent to the body, but "that do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 107). It stipulates that "abuse, such as political oppression, racism or economic domination" (Craps 28) are traumatic and cause the same symptoms as event-based trauma, manifested in the form of PTSD symptoms. This is particularly applied in multicultural settings where racism and ethnocentric marginalization are traumatic to the diasporic subject who experiences them as threatening to the integrity of the Self, as I seek to prove.

In a similar vein, examining the experience of immigration, RoseMarie P. Foster observes contextual factors which render immigration traumatic, some of which are "pre-migration trauma, i.e., events experienced just prior to migration that were a chief determinant of the relocation […] [and] substandard living conditions in the host country due to unemployment, inadequate supports, and minority persecution" (157). Therefore, my analysis of the two selected novels focuses on the traumatized characters with the added criteria of space and its peculiarities since the experience of immigration is primarily spatial, and hybridity occurs in an in-between Third Space. Most specifically, it is my objective in this thesis to highlight that trauma should be read in terms of the historical, social, political and cultural. In other words, I seek to demonstrate how oppressive structures, such as patriarchy and racism, lead to trauma and influence the productive and empowering experience of hybridity.

Literature Review

Due to the diversity of the Arab world, Arab-American literature is just as diverse, heterogeneous, and hybrid in form, style and content as its writers themselves. Arab-American writers as a group are very difficult to categorize because they come from different backgrounds and have many individual differences like faiths, political views, and social status, even though they share many common cultural and linguistic traits (Al Maleh, *Voices* 12). In his book *Modern Arab American Fiction,*Steven Salaita argues thatin order to answer the question "What is Arab American literature?" emphasis should be made on the writer's origins and the thematic of the work. He explains that "there is no such a thing as diversity in Arab America; there are diversities" (2), because an Arab-American author can be:

> Muslim (Shia and Sunni and Alawi and Isma'ili), Christian (Catholic and Orthodox, Anglican and Evangelical, and Mainline Protestant), Jewish (Orthodox and Conservative and Haredi and Reform), Druze, Bahai, dual citizens of Israel and twenty-two Arab nations, multi- and monolingual, progressives and conservatives, assimilationists and nationalists, cosmopolitanists and pluralists, immigrants and fifth-generation Americans, wealthy and working-class, rural and urban, modern and

traditional, religious and secular, White and Black, Latin American and Candian. We also occupy the many spaces between these binaries. Sometimes Arab Americans are non-Arabs such as Circassians, Armenians, Berbers, Kurds, and Iranians. (1)

Salaita's categorization is relevant to this thesis because it justifies the choice of Rabih Alameddine whose religion is Druze, and Rawi Hage who is Canadian of Lebanese origin. Rawi Hage himself can be taken solely as an example of the richness and flexibility of Arab-American literature, because he writes in English in a Francophone setting, which makes him part of the "transnational Arab authors whose works can no longer be easily situated in relation to a specific language or place" (293), argues Najat Rahman. Nouri Gana similarly agrees on the fact that Hage's writings are a vital contribution to the "amalgam of multicultural literature" (196) especially because of their lyrical style and postmodern narrative techniques. Judit Molnár calls Rawi Hage an "allophone writer [who] is neither 'English' nor 'French'" whose works belong to the "overlapping" category of immigrant, ethnic, minority, multicultural, and emergent literature all at once ("Intricate" 60).

Rabih Alameddine and Rawi Hage belong to a generation of Arab American writers that is deeply affected by the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990), a dark period in contemporary Lebanese history. The Civil War had a transformative impact on the lives of these writers, as it was the cause of their immigration and features in all their works. As Alameddine states, "[the war] permeates every corner of my life. I can't seem to write about anything else. The war taught me how to deal with impermanence, how to sharpen my sense of the absurd, and how to function in a chaotic world" (Devlin). War, chaos, absurdity, and the "impermanence" of belonging, order and identity are all themes which I explore within the context of trauma and hybridity.

Alameddine's and Hage's writings differs from the first account of the immigrants of Al Mahjar[1] writers, characterized for the most part by its romanticism, mysticism, collective optimism, nostalgia, harmony, and pride in their culture. Instead, Lebanon, in the works of these writers is depicted as destroyed, lost, torn and chaotic. Their fictional characters are tormented by traumatic memories and nostalgia is absent in their novels. The themes, genres and narratives are marked by their ethnic and hybrid experiences within traumatic social, political, and economic contexts. The host countries exalted in the first accounts of Al Mahjar authors and valued for offering chances for success and better life are criticized in the novels of Alameddine and Hage for their alienating individualism, failure of integration, stigmatization of Arabs, socio-economic injustice and racism.

The themes dealt with by these Arab-American authors indicate that the context of Arab-American literature is highly politicized because of the impact of wars (like the Palestinian-Israeli war, the Lebanese Civil Warm the two Gulf wars, and the Iraq War) and violence on the creation of the Arab diaspora[2], and as a result of diasporic Arab literature (Al Maleh, "Romantics" 437). Salaita includes writers such as Rabih Alameddine and Rawi Hage

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[1]Al Mahjar refers to the New York Pen League or Al-Rābiṭah al Qalamiyah, the first wave of Arab-American writers. They are the émigrés Arab writers of the early 20th century in the US, which includes Gibran Khalil Gibran, Ameen Rayhani, Mikhail Naimy, and Elia Abu Madi. Al Mahjar writers maintained a nice balance between their original culture and the American one, and did not write from a sense of inferiority. In addition to their pride in their culture and influenced by the romantics and the transcendentalist, their style is is characterized by harmony, collective optimism, and nostalgia, their writings touched topics other than immigration and "weighed on the side of universality" (Al Maleh, Arab Voices 12). For more information on the three trends of Arab-American literature see: Al Maleh, Layla. *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*.Rodopi, 2009.

[2]Etymologically, the term "diaspora" is derived from the word "diaspeiro." "Speiro" means to sow, or to scatter seeds, and "dia" means "across." Initially diaspora referred to the removal of the Jews from Palestine and their dispersal all over the world. Ironically, nowadays diaspora is strongly linked to the dispersal of the Palestinians from their homeland by the Jews. Diaspora refers to people who are displaced from their homelands, and scattered in an alien soil. What characterizes diasporas is that despite their traumatic removal from their countries of origins, they share and strongly maintain a collective identity and a collective "memory, vision, or myth about the homeland" as the "ideal home and place of eventual return when the time is right" (Saffran 83-84). The Arab diaspora means all Arabs who live outside of their homelands and share all the features of diaspora, like the mythic vision of the homeland and the collective sense of identity. For more on the concept of diaspora and its other characteristics see: Saffran, William. "Diasporas in the Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return." *Diaspora*.Vol. 1, No.1, 1991, pp. 83-99.

to demonstrate the politicized context of Arab-American literature and the portrayal of the Lebanese Civil War in the Arab-American novel. Rawi Hage's novel *De Niro's Game* examines "the interrelation of wartime violence with sexual aggression" (24), explains Salaita. Rabih Alameddine *Koolaids* explores moral and political themes AIDS and the Lebanese Civil War (44), juxtaposing them to show how ironically AIDS, which is related to sex, a "life-bearing act", causes death, just like war also causes death but horrible as it is, "it is always justified as a necessary affirmation of life" (44).

In her article "Cultural Hybridity, Trauma and Memory in Diasporic Anglophone Lebanese Fiction," Syrine Hout similarly stresses that contemporary Anglophone Arab literature produced in exile is typically a war literature which makes it diverse whether in style, form or content (330). In another article, "The Last Migration: The First Contemporary Example of Lebanese Diasporic Literature," she speaks about the "homing desire" produced by immigration and affirms that a "creative tension," resulting from the discourse of "home" and "dispersion," inscribes "a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins" (144-145). My reading of the novels prove that such "homing desire" is not experienced as "creative tension" in the works of Alameddine and Hage but as painful tension that prevents the characters from deciding who they are.

Rabih Alameddine's novels, according to Hout, are exilic rather than diasporic because they stress more on "the exclusion of exile" than on "the adaptations of diaspora" (145). In *Koolaids*, for instance, the end of fighting, like AIDS, is inevitably death, and the characters, wherever they are, cannot adapt to their state of in-betweenness and are always excluded until they die eventually, as the narrator comments, "In America, I fit, but I do not belong. In Lebanon, I belong but I do not fit" (qtd. in Hout, "Last Migration" 145-46).

Salah D. Hassan's article "Unstated : Narrating War in Lebanon" studies how Rawi Hage's novel *De Niro's Game* attempts to negotiate the absurdities and destruction of the

Civil War through the figure of the "unstated" (1621). The "unstated" refers to the "grotesque brutalities of the war" which no matter how much stated they are by TV, photography, and writers, they remain "unstated" and "unheard" because nothing is ever effective to portray them loud and clear enough (1621-22). It also refers to a state (political authority) that no longer has power and sovereignty, or what Hassan calls "the unstated state" which becomes the case of Lebanon during the Civil War (1622). According to Hassan, the statelessness of Bassam, the protagonist, both physically and emotionally, being an illegal immigrant in France, and his inability to react emotionally as he narrates, "Ten thousand bombs had landed on Beirut, that crowded city, and I was on a blue sofa covered with white sheets to protect it from dust and dirty feet. It is time to leave, I was thinking to myself" (11), offers him a form a freedom, both physically and emotionally (1628). I analyze *Cockroach*'s trauma as unspeakable, which is similar to Hassan's notion of the unstated, because of the protagonist's refusal to open the wounds of the past. Moreover, travelling along with him in the form of mental illness, namely schizophrenia, it endows him with the freedom and power he needs to face his marginalization in a racist multicultural society that causes him a different kind of trauma, an insidious one.

Critic Wen-Chin Ouyang also comments on the link between Alameddine's and Hage's novels and war. According to her, their narratives "steer away from the hackneyed postcolonial discourses of 'East-West' 'clash civilization'" and are narrowed down instead to "civil wars and totalitarian rule than internationalized in the machinery of imperialism" (3). For example, in *Koolaids,* Alameddine creates a bleak world of death as the victims of the Lebanese Civil War and the American AIDS epidemic of the 1980s narrate their stories. Additionally, the character in Alameddine's and Hage's novels live in a world characterized by conspiracy as they find themselves "pawns of insidious powers, often national and international secret services, wherever they are" (4). I agree with Ouyang's views and add to

them how trauma affects the present subjectivities of the characters and their situations within the Third Space, as they immigrate to a new place away from the war (both spatially and temporally).

In "Journeying Through a Discourse of Violence: Elias Khoury's *Yalo* and Rawi Hage's *De Niro's Game*," Dalia Said Mostefa argues that Rawi Hage's novels prove that the discourse of violence influences the identity and self-discovery of the young men who practice it as a means for survival and its relationship to sexuality and masculinity during the Civil War. On the other hand, in her article "Masculinities and the Aesthetics of Love," Dina Georgis reads Rawi Hage's novels differently than Mostafa and discusses how they represent, instead, the fragility of masculinity in the violent context war (134). Najat Rahman, as well, analyzes Hage's novels through a positive lens, and believes that his works are perfect illustrations of apocalyptic works where the war and its horrors are not inevitable and destructive apocalyptic discourses usually represent. Instead, war promises new beginnings and a better future secured by the characters quest for freedom. As she explains Hage's novels are "[A]lternative imaginings of apocalypse [that] recuperate disorder into creative possibilities of inclusion and restructuring" (800). I must disagree with Rahman but agree with both Mostefa and Georgis. I read the experience of war and its trauma as influential over the characters' identities. Moreover, in my analysis of Alameddine's novel, I also study the crisis of masculinity and chaos during the war as the context within which the protagonist's traumatic rape occurs.

The post-war Lebanese novel can indeed, stand itself alone as a distinctive literary sub-genre of Arab-American literature. Syrine Hout addresses this matter in her book *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Fiction*. Quoting Elias Khoury's that "civil wars can be erased from neither reality nor memory. Instead they are reborn and reincarnated," Hout examines the everlasting effects of the Civil War on Lebanese writers who, until nowadays, continue to

write about it, standing as "testimonies" to its horror and violence (202). These writers, according to Hout write from a multicultural standpoint that privileges neither their Lebanese homeland nor their new adopting lands. Their writing is, thus, characterized by "cultural hybridity" and "in-betweenness," she argues (9). The characters in Hage's novels, for example, Hout asserts, belong neither to their home countries nor to the new ones. They can neither detach of their past nor cling to the present because memories of their homelands always live with them, and, therefore, they cannot really form a clear identity for themselves.

The characters' state of in-betweenness in Hage's novels is also examined by Judit Molnár in "The Intricate Nature of the Cross-Town Journey in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*." She explores the protagonist's search for acceptance in Canada by studying the novel's spacious dimension as the immigrant character continually situates himself in a "liminal" space of in-betweenness, whether culturally, linguistically, or even geographically. Similarly, Jesse Hutchinson, in "Immigration and Liminality in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*," discusses the liminal space where the immigrant character situates himself, although a different liminal space than the one discussed by Molnár. She reads the protagonist's liminality as a hybrid human-cockroach creature as his only possibility of existence because he can neither assimilate to the Canadian culture nor forget his origins, so to exist he has to completely forget that he is a human being.

The same state of in-betweenness, and debunking of the myth of a return to a perfect homeland portrayed in the novels of Rabih Alameddine is discussed by Carol Fadda-Conrey. She states that his work exhibits a "de-mythologizing [of] the homeland" (169). Alameddine in *I, the Divine*, for example, portrays a critical, anti-nostalgic, non-romantic relationship with the homeland. The protagonist, Sarah, as a transnational outsider to her homeland and the host land, constantly oscillates between them physically and psychologically and has the ability to assess and criticize both cultures because of her very place of in-betweennes and detachment

from both. Therefore, as a transnational novel, *I, the Divine*, criticizes and reexamines the idea of an easy negotiation of identities by the diasporic subject (175).

Christina Garrigos studies the effects of the Lebanese Civil War in Alameddine's works, in addition to intercultural dislocation. According to Garrigos, *I, the Divine* reflects intercultural dislocation in its textual hybridity which results from two types of hybridity: linguistic hybridity and the cultural hybridity of the protagonist who is the offspring of two different cultures being the daughter of an American mother and a Lebanese father (191-92). According to her, the in-betweennes of the protagonist causes her intercultural dislocation as she spends her life looking for a place to fit in but never does. Moreover, Garrigos contends that the novel is an example of cosmopolitanism[3] because of its rejection of essentialism and cultural purity by employing a hybrid, bicultural protagonist (188-89). While I agree that both Alameddine and Hage reject the idea of cultural purity through the neither/nor identification of their protagonists, however, their work do not portray a liberating and joyful type of cosmopolitanism.

Purpose of the Study

This thesis aims at examining the representation of the complex space of in-betweenness in the novels *I, the Divine* by Rabih Alameddine and *Cockroach* by Rawi Hage. These novels steer away from the celebratory representation of hybridity which translates in these novels into an agonizing experience of unbelonging, rootlessness, and homelessness. Both authors present us with characters who are caught in a space of painful negotiation of traumatized and split subjectivities caused and exacerbated by their past traumatic

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[3]Cosmopolitanism is a celebrated contemporary notion, though the same as hybridity, it has its flaws and dissenters. The word cosmopolitan derives from the Greek word *kosmopolitês, meaning citizen of the cosmos, the cosmos being envisioned as one polis or one city. It stands for the idea of human beings as members of a single community. It is a paradoxical notion that means a citizen of the world who is a member of all communities and of none at the same time regardless of social, cultural, racial, religious and political affiliations. It claims detachment from all established order and institutions. For more on cosmopolitanism, see Fine, Robert. Cosmopolitanism: Key Ideas. Routledge, 2007*

experiences, such as war, rape and abuse, and by their present devastating reality of alienation, displacement and marginalization the host countries. Their hybrid status brings to the surface long repressed traumatic memories and feelings of unbelonging and uncertainty, which does not provide them with a better alternative and adds more psychological turmoil to their already-traumatized psyches. Repressed emotions, anger, guilt, shame, and hatred force the characters to reevaluate and question their split subjectivities and their belonging vis-à-vis both their homelands and the host country.

War and personal traumas make home a strange place. Following relocation to a different place, they also travel along, shatter the victims' existence within the new space, and stand in the way of forming a sane hybrid identity. Therefore, I seek to prove that traumatic memories and the experience of insidious trauma within multicultural spaces make the transition between cultures very difficult, if not impossible. They manifest themselves as psychological disorder, namely PTSD, dissociation and even madness when the characters fail to adjust, as is the case of the protagonist in *Cockroach*, or when their sense of unbelonging is too traumatic and unbearable like the characters of Janet and Lamiain *I, the Divine*. Moreover, I also aim to study the postmodern representation of trauma in these works, characterized by fragmentation, repetition, non-linearity, genre and linguistic hybridity, postmodern techniques that mirror the symptoms of their repressed trauma.

Research Questions

This study is based on the hypothesis that hybridity has much negative potential which can be revealed through the different psychological disorders exhibited in the hybrid characters in Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine*, and Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*. In order to reach its aims, the thesis attempts to answer the following research questions:

1- What is Bhabha's cultural hybridity and how did it evolve out of a racialist colonial discourse?

2- To what extent does hybridity succeed in destroying Western Manichean thinking and its racist and discriminatory attitudes towards non-Western hybrid figure?

3- To what extent does hybridity succeed in representing the different realities of immigrants living in multicultural spaces?

4- What is trauma and trauma theory?

5- How do past traumas and present insidious trauma influence cultural hybridity?

6- What postmodern techniques are used in Alameddine's and Hage's novels that represent symptoms of PTSD, madness and the hybrid subjectivities of the characters in Alameddine's and Hage's novels?

Research Methodology

Postmodernism rejects the idea of a singular or ultimate truth and celebrates plurality and multiple approaches of investigation. The concept of hybridity, as explained earlier, is based on postmodern heterogeneity, instability of meaning and transgression of borders. Trauma, as well, is an interdisciplinary concept that is itself hybrid as it blurs the lines between the past and present, mind and body, memory and forgetting, speech and silence.

Therefore, this work is guided by a theoretical framework that is multidisciplinary and includes notions developed by many critics. This includes postcolonial theory, anti-hybridity criticism, and trauma theory. This thesis aims at establishing a link between the characters' traumatic pasts and their present immigrant hybrid status. Consequently, my study of the novels is mainly informed by the ideas developed through the anti-hybridity backlash. In addition to this, using classic trauma terminology, such as repetition, unspeakability, fragmentation, and non-linearity, I follow the classical Caruthian trauma model to interpret the unspeakability of trauma and the way it is represented through postmodern narrative techniques. Doing so, I apply a psychiatric reading (medical approach) of the novels based on the symptoms of PTSD as they appear in the APA's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM-*V* and *DSM-IV*). More significantly, my Caruthian reading of the novels is also combined with a Balaevian pluralistic trauma approach in order to situate the

traumas of the characters in their social, cultural, political, and economic contexts. In addition to this, my work relies heavily on Michelle Foucault's notions of power, discourse, the building of Western superiority by the former and Frantz Fanon's notions of space, power, phobic neurosis, and the construction of the Self and Other.

The title of the thesis, "The Grey Zone and its Discontents: A Postmodern Psychopathological Study of Selected Works of Rabih Alameddine and Rawi Hage," is an allusion to Sigmund Freud, one of pioneers in the field of psychological trauma. Caruth's classical trauma theory is itself based on his work on trauma as this thesis demonstrates. The meaning of the "grey zone" in the title is twofold. On the one hand, it refers to undecidability and ambiguities of the in-between space where the hybrid characters are located. On the other hand, it refers to their entrapment in what Kali Tal calls trauma's liminal time. Trauma's liminal time is a separate transitional spatial entity caused by trauma which disrupts history, time and meaning and condemns the individual to be caught in endless repetitions of the past. While normal time moves in a linear direction, trauma's liminal time does not as the past finds its way to intrude upon the present through traumatic re-enactment and intrusions. Unless the victim is able to work though his trauma s/he will forever be stuck in trauma's liminal time, which is a theme this thesis explores.

Structure of the Thesis

The present thesis is divided into four chapters. The first chapter is dedicated to define hybridity. It begins by tracing its historical development from a concept rooted in biology and botany, to a pejorative concept in the nineteenth century when racial mixing was rejected on the grounds of pseudo-scientific racial theories, to reach its final Bhabhaian meaning as a positive, empowering and liberating outcome of cross-cultural contact. Focus is then paid to the main criticism that the theory of cultural hybridity has received from various critics.

The second chapter introduces the second concept that this thesis explores: trauma. The chapter explores its historical evolution from a somatic illness in the nineteenth century to a psychological disorder known nowadays as post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). The main focuses of this chapter is to present Caruth's and Balaev's trauma theories and the genre of trauma fiction. It also seeks to draw affinities between postmodern narrative techniques and the symptoms of PTSD.

The third chapter studies Rabih Alameddine's novel *I, the Divine*. It seeks to focus on the postmodern and experimental structure of the work. It argues mainly that the postmodern techniques used by the author are a reflection of the traumas of the protagonist and her sense of un-belonging and fragmented self. The chapter also draws attention to the patriarchal and war contexts of Lebanon which allow the rape of the protagonist to happen and how her trauma drives her to reject her Lebanese identity. Moreover, it also studies the cultural context of the USA, the second part of the protagonist's identity, and how its values are hypocritical, which is the reason behind her alienation in the USA and her failure to belong there in addition to her past war and rape traumas which haunt her.

The third chapter analyzes Rawi Hage's novel *Cockroach* and his protagonist's dissociative state and mental illness, morphing into a cockroach whenever threatened. The chapter draws a link between his mental illness and his hybrid status as an immigrant and focuses on the conditions that trigger his psychopathological metamorphosis. This chapter aims at proving that the insidious trauma the protagonist faces in multicultural Canada, such as racism, marginalization and exclusion from the privileged spaces of the whites, being forced to embrace the identity of the inferior Arab Other by his therapist, poverty, and hunger, is the reason behind his mental illness. The main objective behind this reading is to prove that the much-celebrated Bhabhaian hybridity is not an automatic response to mobility as it fails to

take into consideration all the injustices the hybrid character live through even in multicultural

spaces that claim to be raceless and colour-blind.

Chapter I. Cultural Hybridity: History, Definition and Backlash

Introduction

In our globalized and flat world, cross-cultural contact that results from mobility (immigration, colonialism or even slavery in the past) led to the emergence of a phenomenon referred to nowadays in cultural and postcolonial studies as hybridity. Cultural hybridity today stands for a liberating and empowering notion that comprises an advantageous mingling between two different cultures. It is privileged because it is claimed to put an end to notion of essentialism, racial purity, and fixed identity and celebrates, instead, the crossing of the boundaries, not only geographical ones, but those between West and non-West, White and non-White, Self and Other. However, the history of the concept of hybridity has not always been a positive one.

This chapter aims at tracing hybridity back to its nineteenth century's origins as it emerged as negative concept based on pseudo-scientific racial rules. The crossing between people of different races was compared to the crossing between animals of different species and the degenerating consequences it had on them. The offspring of parents from different races, who were referred to through pejorative terms such as mulattos, mongrels and bastards, were seen as an abomination to humanity, and were believed to contaminate the white race, and hence posed a challenge to Western superiority based on a racial hierarchy that placed white people at the top.

The interbreeding between people from different races was highly abhorred and was called "miscegenation," a term now considered pejorative. Some countries, such as the USA, went as far as to issue anti-miscegenation laws that prohibited marriage and cohabitation between white and black people not only because it produced mulatto children with anatomical disharmony as they were neither white nor black, but because it posed a challenge to the institution of slavery so vital for the growth of the developing nation. Using Foucault's

thought on race, power and discipline, this chapter studies first the building of the myth of white superiority, Eurocentrism and the categorization of the Self and Other based on skin colour in order to create and assert the power of the white. Then, it analyzes the history of the concept and how it evolved out of the biological and racial discourse of the nineteenth century with its negative connotation to the field of cultural studies holding a much-celebrated positive potential. Homi Bhabha is credited for this change of evolutionary trajectory of the concept of hybridity mainly in his book *The Location of Culture* (1994). Hybridity, according to Bhabha is born out the colonial exchange between colonizer and colonized. He argues that the colonial mission failed in imposing their cultural values on the colonized, and resulted, instead, in a relation of mutual interchange that crosses the rigid boundaries between the self and other. This is what he calls cultural hybridity. He emphasizes that the main feature of postcolonial, multi-cultural and global world is a valorization of in-between spaces, spaces of mixing and exchange that deconstruct the power of the dominant culture, break the boundaries, and give voice to the previously-voiceless subaltern.

However, the main aim of this thesis is to question Bhabha's cultural hybridity and its positive potential. For this reason, after defining hybridity and providing an overview of its history, this chapter discusses the main negative features assigned by critics who opposed cultural hybridity in what has been known as anti-hybridity backlash. Some anti-hybridity critics included in this thesis are Jonathan Friedman, Aijaz Ahmad, Jan Nederveen Pieterse, Amar Acheraïou, John Hutnyk and Pnina Werbner who criticize hybridity for its asymmetric hegemonic power dynamics, rootlessness, assumption of purity, essentialism and eliticism as discussed in details in this chapter.

I. Eurocentrism and the Myth of White Superiority

Eurocentrism is a discursive practice that constructs an image of the white West as the epitome of rationality and civilization. Such image is constructed through a distorting looking glass that projects an inferior image of the West's racial, cultural and religious Other. As a construct, Eurocentrism is a hegemonic discourse "informed by a host of myths and essentialist narratives of self-representation based on pseudo-scientific theories of cultural and racial hierarchies" (Acheraïou 66). Within the colonial context of the nineteenth century, the preservation of Western superiority that was necessary for the continuation of its colonial mission depended on asserting cultural, racial and religious superiority much as, if not even more than, it did on military domination.

Since the fifteenth century, the West's subjugation and devaluation of the Other were the means to justify, pursue and continue its colonial project, based on the West's claims of cultural superiority, which in turn, was founded on their claims of racial superiority. I find it relevant here to provide a Foucauldian interpretation of race as discipline suitable to analyze the West's mechanism of asserting superiority and power based on the idea of race. Discipline according to Michelle Foucault is a means of asserting power. It is what maintains social order and "'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals as both objects and instruments of its exercise'' (*Discipline and Punish* 170).

Specifically, Foucault argues that power is achieved through discipline and control over the corporeal, as the subject is "is carefully fabricated in it [the social order], according to a whole technique of forces and bodies'' (ibid 217). This means that there are forces that control and categorize bodies according to a self-serving constructed hierarchical norm: race. In his collection of lectures, *Society Must Be Defended: Lectures at the College de France,* Foucault argues that since the second half of the eighteenth century, race has been used as a

tool of control that was applied to "man-as-species" (242) and involved the hierarchization of people based on the most obvious physical difference, that is, skin colour.

Therefore, race is not an ontological reality, or a biological corporeal truth, but a political construction. It is a mechanism of power based on discursive practices that assign different knowledge to different bodies. This knowledge creates race as a corporeal reality. To produce and fix the idea that race was truth, knowledge about the different races had to be linked to a fixed marker; skin colour and blood provided just that. The idea of race as a constructed corporeal truth that aimed to function as a mean of power and control adds a political dimension to the body. As Foucault's argues that the body is *"directly involved in a political field: power relations have an immediate hold upon it; they invest it; mark it; train it; torture it; force it to carry out tasks, to perform ceremonies, to emit signs"* (*Discipline and Punish* 25).

Race was central to the construction of a superior white Self in relation/contrast to an inferior black Other because it fixed the body to a certain essence or identity based on skin colour. Foucault explains that race "categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth in him that he must recognize and others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power that makes individuals subjects" ("The Subject and Power" 331).

Skin colour functioned as the most visible marker of demarcation through which racial categorization was established. Skins identified as black were viewed in opposition to white skin. The basis for such distinction was Western binary thinking which, as described by Derrida, *"*has always been structured in terms of dichotomies or polarities: good vs. evil, being vs. nothingness, presence vs. absence, truth vs. error, identity vs. difference, mind vs. matter, man vs. woman, soul vs. body, life vs. death, nature vs. culture, speech vs. writing'' (qtd.in Johnson viii). The superiority of white people and inferiority of the black was not

based on valid scientific proof, but on this binary Western logic that associated the positive connotation of good and divine to white color as opposed to black color which was associated with evil and sin.In *The WhiteMan's Burden,* Winthrop Jordannotes that at that time, black people were believed to embody all the various negative connotations associated with the word "black" in Western though, such as "Deeply stained with dirt; soiled, dirty, foul […] Having dark ordeadly purposes, malignant; pertaining to or involving death, deadly; baneful, disastrous, sinister […] Foul, iniquitous, atrocious, horrible, wicked […] indicating disgrace, censure, liability to punishment" (6). Put simply, "black was an emotionally partisan color, the handmaid and symbol of baseness and evil,a sign of danger and repulsion" (ibid). Upon their encounter with a different race, the white already focused on the most immediate sign of difference and created a racial imaginary based on skin colour in order to assert their superiority through setting boundaries between white and non-white, thus, "White and black connoted purity and filthiness, virginity and sin, virtue and baseness, beauty and ugliness, beneficence and evil, God and the devil" (ibid). Consequently, we might say that the boundaries between different cultures were originally nothing but racial boundaries.

I.1 Pseudo-Science and the Building of the Myth of White Superiority

As a result of colonialism, the nineteenth century was the pinnacle of cross cultural contact and exchange. The encounter with non-European people who were so visibly different from the European colonizer led to the beginning of a movement of comparative scientific studies, examining the physical distinctions between the different races with the aim of sanctioning a racial hierarchy to assure the superiority of white to non-white people. Western pseudo-scientific anthropological theories promoted essentialist constructions of identity based on the idea that skin colour and physiognomic differences were powerful measures of racial, cultural and intellectual superiority.The essentialist discourse on race in the nineteenth century that relied on pseudo-science, religion and philosophy not only presented the

physiognomic features and differences between races with the aim of creating a secure notion of boundaries that separated them, but sought to establish a link between race and intellect, race and sexuality, and race and class.

I.2 Pseudo-Science and the Idea of Race

The ideology of race crystallized during the Enlightenment (the eighteenth century) and the dissemination of scientific knowledge that characterized this period. Later during the century, numerous Western philosophers, such as Emmanuel Kant, Voltaire, David Hume and Thomas Jefferson, postulated racial theories that asserted the natural inferiority of non-white races. Presenting a subjective ideology that relied mainly on secondary sources (travel narratives), their thought reflected the general opinion at time regarding non-white races. Most significantly, it also had a political and economic underpinning, having to do with slavery and colonialism.

Due to the contact with people who were physically different, and inspired by biological and botanic classification which began in the seventeenth century, Enlightenment scientists embarked on a project of a taxonomic identification of the different peoples Europeans encountered during the Age of Exploration, the same way botanists and biologists classified flora and fauna. The classification systems which laid the groundwork for scientific racism were those of Swedish botanist Carolus Linnaeus and the German physiologist Johann Friedrich Blumenbach.

Linnaeus, called the "Father of Taxonomy" created a classification system that is still used and taught today. His pronounced Eurocentric thinking had devastating and far-reaching effects. It was the root of modern scientific racism, presenting race as a biological/natural truth rather than a social construct, based on pseudo-scientific evidence. He was influenced by Aristotelian and Medieval hierarchical view of the natural world, known as the *scala naturae*

or the *Great Chain of Being*, where all parts of nature, both matter and living organisms were categorized based on their advancement, with God at the top, man right underneath God, then down through animals, vegetables, rocks and minerals.

In his *Systema Naturae* (1735),Linnaeus invented a taxonomy of the animal kingdom, placing humans with the primates. He was the first naturalist to include man within the animal kingdom. Linnaeus created the appellation "Homo Sapiens" to refer to the human species and the Homo Sapiens into four types or varieties: *Europaeus albus* (European white), *Americanus rubescens* (American red), *Asiaticus fuscus* (Asian tawny), and *Africanus niger* (African black).

Linnaeus classification of humans into four types corresponded to the four world continents known at that time; Europe, America, Asia and Africa. He, further, proposed that geography and climate were responsible for the most observable difference among the different races: skin colour, as well as for affecting their humours. He aligned skin colour with four medical temperaments: sanguine (blood), choleric (yellow bile), melancholic (black bile), and phlegmatic (phlegm). This became the basis of scientific racism since personality and health were believed to be determined by these humours. He classified Europeans as sanguine, Americans as choleric, Asians as melancholic and Africans as phlegmatic. Furthermore, in his 1758's tenth edition of *Systema Naturae*, he added more attributes to each type to include moral characteristics, style of clothing and form of government in addition to the attributes mentioned in the previous editions (skin colour, humours, and physical traits).Table 1 summarizes his hierarchy of Homo Sapiens.

Species	Skin Colour and Humour	Physical Traits	Moral Characteristics	Clothing Style	Government Style
Americanus	Red, choleric and straight	Straight, black and thick hair; gaping nostrils; [freckled] face; beardless chin	Unyielding, cheerful, free	Paints himself in a maze of red lines	Governed by customary right
Europaeus	White, sanguine, muscular	Plenty of yellow hair; blue eyes	Light, wise, inventor	Protected by tight clothing	Governed by rites
Asiaticus	Sallow, melancholic, stiff	Blackish hair, dark eyes	Stern, haughty, greedy	Protected by loose garments	Governed by opinions
Africanus	Black, phlegmatic, lazy	Dark hair, with many twisting braids; silky skin; flat nose; swollen lips	Sly, sluggish, neglectful	Anoints himself with fat	Governed by choice [caprice]

Table 1.Linnaeus Classification of Human Species. Source; Charmantier, Isabelle."Linnaeus and Race."*The Linnean Society of London*, 3 Sept. 2020, www.linnean.org/learning/who-was-linnaeus/linnaeus-and-race

Linnaeus' taxonomy classified the different human varieties according to a hierarchical system based on the above mentioned traits, placing the Europaeus initially at the top of the Homo hierarchy. By the tenth edition, influenced by the idea of "the noble savage," he moved the Americanus to the top. However, Linnaeus classification of the Africanus was always at the bottom of the hierarchy, giving them the most detailed and negative description. Interestingly as well, Linnaeus writing of his *Systema Naturae* happened at the same time that Sweden started its enslavement mission of Africans. Thus, it was the task of the

anthropologists to provide scientific justification for the inferiority of the Africans to justify their enslavement.   Linnaeus work was translated in 1792, presenting a pseudoscientific study of human diversity, with effects that are still felt today. Linnaeus system of ordering is based on a racial scheme that served as a map of variations drawn according to colour lines that separated the different human varieties. Attributing mental characteristics, behavior, and even politics to physical traits such as skin colour marks the beginning of the conceptualization of the faulty idea of race which still continue to shape how people view difference (as a biological fact rather than a socio-political construct), and which was used as a political tool to assert superiority and justify the subjugation of other human beings.

Staffan Müller-Wille explains that to talk about race is essentially to talk about "the history of a fatal misconception," or a "false idea" (517). Race is a certainly a false idea because history proves that it was constructed from flawed and biased judgments in order to justify domination over the Other and to support of the institutionalization of race, that is, slavery. It is, therefore, necessary to regard race as a tool rather than as a representation of difference and truth. Once we look at race as a tool, we come to the understanding that it does not mirror the object or phenomenon it represents. Instead, it is a political means to maintain the power to control and subjugate, through the construction and ordering of knowledge, by passing faulty assumptions about the other.

I.3 Culture as a Complex Whole and White Superiority: From Barbarism to Savagery to Civilization

Culture has traditionally been viewed as a "grand design" (Wicker 29), as a functional analytical instrument/system used for the interpretation and regulation of behavior as well as for the establishment and maintaining of a well-ordered reality. Contrastingly, it has also been considered as "as a framework for emancipative efforts," especially when the concept of

culture started to be a major topic for discussion since the 1970s, as suggested by the various compound words formed from its combination with many suffixes, giving birth to whole new ideas, such as trans-culturalism, multi-culturalism, inter-culturalism, and pluri-culturalism.

Hans-Rudolf Wicker describes this as a "paradoxical situation" of the "scope of cuture" (30). The situation is paradoxical, for culture is a fragile abstract concept that is constantly changing. This is reflected in the use of culture as a tool for demarcation, on the one hand, but at a different stage of its development, it has also been defined in terms of all the different possibilities and positive potentials attached to it on the other hand. The key to understanding this situation lies in the very evolution of the definition of the term "culture" itself, from a classical modern perspective to the contemporary concept of culture as is used nowadays in cultural studies.

The meaning of the word "culture" has been subject to debate, but with the publication of *Primitive Culture,* by the British anthropologistEdward B. Tylorin 1871, culture became the major focus of anthropology.Tylor popularized the term through his definition of culture as the collective sum of learned human behavior, as "that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, law, morals, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society" (1). Two significant features should be underscored in Tylor's definition. The first is that culture is man-made, that all the beliefs, customs, art, law and rules that are deemed cultural are only the product of culture and not culture itself. The second major feature is that culture is a "complex whole" that includes all the learned and man-made skills and behaviors individuals acquire as members of a social group.

That culture is a man-made complex whole of entities means that in order to acquire culture, or to be part of a certain culture, there must be a starting point where the individual/social group does not possess any culture and have to go through developmental

stages to acquire it. Deeply influenced by the Darwinian Evolutionary theory that dominated the nineteenth century, Tylor created a civilization scale where culture goes through three sequential developmental stages, beginning with "savagery," progressing to "barbarism" and culminating with "civilization."

Tylor considered savagery as a low stage of culture, barbarism as a middle stage and civilization as a higher stage of culture.He explained that:

> By long experience of the course of human society, the principle of development in culture has become so ingrained in our philosophy that ethnologists, of whatever school, hardly doubt but that, whether by progress or degradation, savagery and civilization are connected as lower and higher stages of one formation. (33)

More importantly, Tylor defined the stage of barbarism as the stage where men "take to agriculture," and that the acquisition of the art of writing signaled their passing from the barbaric stage to the civilized stage. As per Tylor's definition then, the quintessential embodiment of culture was the Western culture which was considered more superior by virtue of its possession of the art of writing. The ethnocentrism of Tylor'sdefinition of culture is self-evident, as the idea of cultural borders is implicitly explained in the lines that separate the three developmental stages of cultural development from savagery to barbarism and ultimately to culture. While his theory is now outdated, it would inform centuries-to-come belief of the Western culture as the prime example of civilization.

The Tylorian conception of culture as a complex whole laid the foundation for cross-cultural comparison. This is because considering culture as a complex whole of different entities permits the identification of patterns within cultural collectivities, which further allows discerning distinctions between the patterns across different social groups, as well as their uniqueness as a result of their differences. Additionally, the entities are, fixed structures, and constitute hence stereotypical patterns of thinking, behavior, and beliefs. This, in turn, makes culture "[a] pattern, [a] matrix, [a] stencil, or [a] filter" (Wicker 32) that determines

what and who belong to a certain culture, as well as what and who is alien to it. However, cross-cultural comparisons not only inform the policy of belonging and marginalization, but also transforms culture into a "product of political collectivities" used in order to "promote and strengthen the collective 'We'" (Finkielkraut qtd.in Wicker 34), and also establishes a definite link between culture, hegemony, racism and essentialism.

An example of the claim of cultural superiority, based on Tylor's theory of culture, disseminated by prominent academics and policymakers is the 1885's annual address to the Anthropological Society of Washington, "From Savagery to Barbarism," written by American geologist and ethnologist J.W. Powell. Powell postulated that the progression of culture, that is, the progress from savagery to barbarism and then to civilization, was not carried to the same extent in all times and places. "Some tribes are yet savages; other tribes are yet barbarians; and some peoples have attained civilization," he justifies (191).

According to systematic biology, "man is an animal," but anthropologically, it is possible for man to evolve out of this pre-human condition of animality. Man can become "more than animal by reason of his activities; man is man by reason of humanities" (192) Man's activities are manifested in his "arts, institutions, languages, opinions and methods of reasoning" (193). To be human entails that men depend on one another, that these activities must be shared, and that no one has the right to claim them to himself because "The fundamental principle of animality is supreme selfishness; the fundamental of humanity is mutual assistance" (192). To share means to homogenize. Throughout the course of the development of human culture, the West was/is, indeed, characterized by a strong tendency to homogenize.

Homogeneity can be achieved through assistance, through the sharing of human activities. Precisely, the race, which has already reached the stage of civilization, as demonstrated in the development of their arts, language, institutions, opinions and reasoning,

feels qualified as humans to help the group or the race stuck in a state of barbarism. "[R]aces of higher culture," (i.e. Western, White) should "spread civilization over inferior races," such as "the American Indian" (193). Consequently, Non-Western races were considered primitive and barbaric, and their only way towards becoming a "culture" was through the westernization of their activities.

It is, thus, evident that Powell employs a rhetoric of cultural hierarchies of superior and inferior cultures. Using a hegemonic logic of center and periphery, he states that it is the mission of the white man who represents the highest race to spread its culture and homogenize the other inferior races. The only way for these inferior races to move up the cultural hierarchical scale is to acquire the superior methods of the white race; its institutions, language, opinions, reasoning and way of thinking:

> This return to homogeneity is accomplished from their *centers* of invention to the *circumference* […] by the spread of *institutions* from tribe to tribe and from nation to nation, for waves of conquest have rolled again and again over all lands, and when civilization is reached institutions and institutional devices are transplanted, for *civilized men are ever engaged in comparison* and ever striving to select the best […]This tendency to homogeneity is accomplished by *linguistic communication*, for with the progress of culture. Men come to speak more and more in synonyms, and *dominant languages are spread* far beyond the boundaries of their native lands; and thus there is a tendency to *homogeneity of tongue.*
> This return to homogeneity is accomplished by the *spread of opinions*, for the opinions that influence the highest of the race come ultimately to influence all […] And finally this homogeneity is accomplished by *the spread of the same methods of reasoning*, the same psychic operations by which the truth is reached. (194; italics added)

Powell here clearly uses the same logic would later characterize the essentialist modern discourse that justified the West's colonial and imperial project.

II. Development of the Notion of Hybridity

Hybridity has recently become a buzzword in cultural and literary studies to describe the phenomenon of cross-cultural contact and its consequences. As a concept, however, hybridity did not evolve overnight. It is, rather, an unstable concept that has gone through

various manifestations throughout history with different labels used to name it. Robert C. Young explains that "hybridity is […] itself a hybrid concept" (22). It is a hybrid concept because it developed from different domains; biological, racial, social, political and cultural, and was, for decades, referred to through various words such as; creolization, metissage, mestizaje, miscegenation and syncretism, to name some.

However, regardless of the name used to describe cultural mutation and mixing, it has always been linked to the issues of control and subjugation, rather than to simply belong to a racial discourse that takes difference as its subject. My aim through this analysis is to prove that these notions reflect the hostile attitude of Western thinking towards non-Western presence, its anxiety and rejection of racial, ethnic and cultural mingling, as well as the legal and discursive measures taken to prevent it.

II.1 The Biological/Racial Origins of Hybridity: Miscegenation, a Threat to White Purity and Superiority

The concept of hybridity is traced back to the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries when it emerged in the USA, France and Britain as a result of colonial expansion and the institution of slavery. During this time, hybridity assumed a negative racist dimension, referring to the prodigy of parents from different races. Paradoxically, it developed along with the humanistic ideals of the Enlightenment that centered around a rational understanding of the universe which valued knowledge, happiness, freedom, toleration and fraternity.

In its eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' racial sense, hybridity, thus stood as the antithesis of cultural homogeneity and the fixity of identity. The prevailing discourse about racial hierarchies was characterized by fear and anxiety regarding hybrid races. Colonial encounter and the consequent juxtaposition of cultures created the phenomenon of hybridity, which originally started as a result of racial mixing. Interracial mixing meant the transgression

of the impassable racial and cultural boundaries and the problematization of white purity and superiority. It was seen as a direct menace to the very existence of the white race. Therefore, the growing number of the offspring of interracial relationships was a source of concern regarding the degeneration and degradation of white race. The mongrels, mulattos, bastards, terms that were used synonymously with racial hybridity, were defined as an abomination to human nature with their excessive physical strength, unbridled sexuality, violent temperament, and intellectual inferiority.

The word "hybrid" has its roots in the fields of botany and biology. According to the Online Etymology Dictionary, it was used to refer to plants and animals of mixed lineage and entered the English language via the Latin word *hybrida*, designating the offspring of a wild boar and a tame sow. However, it probably originated from the Greek word *hybris*, the name of the goddess or personified spirit who is the daughter of of *Aether* (Air) and *Gaea* (Earth). *Hybris* is the Greek goddess of excessive insolence, violence, reckless pride, arrogance, offense and outrageous behavior, or what is referred to as the concept of hubris, which is interesting as later the offspring of people from different races were viewed as an excessive abomination and offense to nature.

Until the nineteenth century, the term "hybrid" was defined in many dictionaries with reference to plants or animals. The *Webster's Dictionary* in 1928 defines it as "a mongrel or mule; an animal or plant produced from the mixture of two species" (R. Young 5). In such cases the resulting hybrids are usually sterile. Originally, the idea that there could ever be a human hybrid was unimaginable (due to the rigid imaginary borders between the races). However, when mixed-race populations became a reality in many colonies, and were growing in number, pejorative words were used to name the forbidden product of the union between different races, likening them to the "mongrel" and the "mule" to highlight their inferiority.

For example, in the 1700's Edward Long who believed that white and black people belonged to different species, believed that "hybrids between them are eventually infertile, and that black people are closer to apes than man" (Tizard and Phoenix 28), emphasizing the "mulatto" nature of the hybrids. The mulatto is a pejorative term which comes from the Spanish/Portuguese word *mulato* meaning "young mule," referring to the infertile cross between horse and a donkey. The mule is an animal, the existence of which was not meant to last, and it is itself infertile and leaves no legacy of its own. Consequently, Long "conflated the cultural term 'mulatto' with the biological characteristics of the mule" (R. Young 7), which reflected the derogatory views on racial mixing and its degrading effects: just like a mule, the offspring born to parents from different races was believed weak, sterile, would decline after a few generation and would not inherit the good qualities of either parents:

> Some few of them [Mulattos] have intermarried here with those of their own complexion; but such matches have generally been defective and barren. They seem in this respect to be actually of the mule-kind, and not so capable of producing from one another as from a commerce with a distinct White or Black. (qtd.in Young 7)

Hybridity was viewed during this time within a racial framework, under the name of "miscegenation." Racial interbreeding was viciously attacked for bringing the degeneration and pollution of the white race. This view was supported by pseudo-scientific proofs which rules that different races were different species, in addition to the essentialist Western discourse that strongly advocated claims of Western superiority, asserted and preserved by racial purity. Coming from the Latin words *miscere*, to mix, and *genus*, race, the word "miscegenation" means to mix races. It was coined in 1863 by the Americans David Goodman Croly and George Wakeman in their pamphlet "Miscegenation: The Theory of the Blending of the Races Applied to the American White and Negro." Following the abolition of slavery in the South and the election of Abraham Lincoln, this period witnessed the spread of a pronounced anxiety vis-à-vis the issue of racial mixing.

Croly and Wakeman not only invented a new term, but their pamphlet reflected the fear of miscegenation that would define that attitude of whites towards non-whites in the USA for the next century. The pamphlet was written anonymously, disguised as the work of radical Republican abolitionist authors with the intention to outrage white society by the main theme presented in it. What was particularly terrifying to the white male was that abolition would give black people not only their physical freedom, but would also provide sexual freedom to white women, especially in the South where miscegenation practices would be carried out massively, hence granting white women what they had always desired secretly—a black lover (Masur 108).

Even though the pamphlet was revealed as a hoax, it caused racist hysterical outbursts among the whites of the South who could not fathom the idea that mixed raced people were more superior, that they were the future of a nation built on the notion of white superiority. One such responses was "The Black Republican Prayer," a parody to the Lord's Prayer that called upon "the spirit of amalgamation that [Americans] may become a regenerated nation of half-breeds, and mongrels [who] live in bonds of fraternal love, union and equality with the Almighty Nigger, henceforward, now and forever. Amen" (ibid).

II.1.1 Mulattoism: A Threat to White Purity

Debating the future socio-economic status of the freed slaves all over the USA, racial mixing was condemned as the most dangerous result of the abolition of slavery. Miscegenation was rejected because it destabilized the constructed fixed racial boundaries. The USA considered itself as a nation of elites, founded by white European descendants. Belonging to the nation and citizenships were privileges given only to those who conformed to the markings of white European elites (Fields). Thus, black people and Native Americans were denied this privilege.

One of the strongest responses to Croly's "Miscegenation" came from John H. Van Evrie in his "Subjenation: The Theory of the Normal Relation of the Races: An Answer to 'Miscegenation'" (1864). Evrie's "Subjenation" fiercely argued against the "indecent doctrines" of racial mixing. Just like a new word was coined by Croly, Evrie also introduced the new term "subjenation." It comes from "*sub*, lower, and *generatus* and *genus*, a race born or created lower than another." Subjenation, thus, meant the "natural or normal relation of an inferior to a superior race" (4). Evrie considered this hierarchical relationship between races, or the "inequality of those [God] has made unequal" as vital for the existence of American civilization.

Following the publication of "Miscegenation," Evrie deemed it necessary to shed light on the "true relation of races" because racial mingling would make races perish and create, instead, a new mongrel species. He was a polygenist[4], who endorsed the idea that the different human races were distinct and different human species with the Caucasian as superior to all other "human species." To support his claim, he argued that the white race/species was never originally barbarian and gave the example of Greek and Roman poetry which he considered even more eloquent that the poetry of his present days, hence, proving that the white race had a well-developed and superior intellect since the dawn of history. On the other hand, the other inferior races, such as the Africans, are not civilized because they are stuck in a position of barbarity unless "placed in a position of subjenation and thus domesticated" by the white race (18).

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[4]The very idea of humans belonging to different "races" was hotly debated during the 19th century between two contesting views: monogenism and polygenism. Monogenism is a theory of human origins that regards humans as having the same origin (coming from the same lineage). Polygenism, on the other hand, is its opposite theory of human origins which posits that different human races were of different origins (i.e. not descendents of the same ancestral lines). The polygenetic view that white and non-white people were not of the same "species" and hence were inherently different from one another, led to major discussions regarding the products of the crossing of a white person with a non-white one. Thus, it comes of no surprise that union between them was not well-regarded, a stance that was supported even by pseudo-science. For more on this see Young, Robert J.C. Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race. London and NY: Routledge, 2005, pp.1-17

Evrie believed that miscegenation was the most serious threat to the superiority of the white race. He insisted on the distinctiveness and rigidity of the boundaries between the races and viewed racial boundaries not as man-made but as the product of a divine plan. Maintaining a natural relation between races, based on the superiority of the white and the inferiority of the other races, or what he called subjenation, was simply the embodiment of an inevitable and irreversible divine plan. To believe in the Bible, according to Evrie, was to believe that "each race is distinct--the white standing at the top, the negro at the bottom of the column […] It is expressed in one word, subgenation— the normal relation of the races. It is to embody in social science the laws which the Creator has stamped on the organism of mankind" (14)

Evrie perceived miscegenation as a monstrous violation of God's natural order and called it an unnatural "beastly crime" (24) that would cause the annihilation of the white race in America. Mixing with inferior bloods was seen as a racial disorder that would contaminate the pure and white American blood. Evrie held that the downfall of American civilization would be brought by the mingling of distinct species of mankind through miscegenation, which he also referred to as "mulattoism […] an abnormalism—a disease" (Sandquist 94). Evrie presented his subjenation theory as a remedy against mulattoism, which would assure a normal order of the species and protect the boundaries from being transgressed. The noble, intellectual and moral nature of the white race must remain superior, and the other races must remain inferior because of their savagery, barbarism and incapability of civilization.

The fear of miscegenation has a direct relationship to slavery in the USA. Slavery was necessary for the building of the nation during the nineteenth century and miscegenation threatened this institution because it blurred the boundaries between the races, especially when the offspring could racially pass as white. Marxist scholars argue that racism and the fixing of rigid boundaries between black and white was an economic necessity for the

survival of the mode of production which was slavery (Mumford 281). Black slaves provided a useful and powerful workforce to do the more difficult and unwanted jobs under the harshest conditions; or to serve their white master, in short. The hybrids were a problem because they destabilized the racial order and the question of whether they were black or white was important because it meant the difference between master and slave. Consequently, as early as the 1660's anti-miscegenation laws were passed to forbid interracial unions and keep the white race and the other non-white races (Black and Native Americans) separate from each other, and which were not fully repealed until 1967.

II.1.2 British Scientific Racism and the Fear of Degeneration

Similar to the American attitude towards racial hybridity, the British also associated miscegenation with the fear of degeneration. As early as the eighteenth century, author Philip Thicknesse complained in 1778 of the "little race of mulattoes, mischievous as monkeys, and infinitely more dangerous" (qtd.in Caballero 2). The expansion of British Empire in the nineteenth century contributed more to racial mixing. The attitude towards inter-raciality was aggressive and condemnatory. It was shaped by white middle-class observers that included academics, scientists, novelists, politicians and journalists, and was presented through a "lens clouded by class, racial, gender, sexual and political anxieties" (Balachandran 546). Inter-racial hybridity was perceived as a threat to the imperial order because maintaining white superiority through the preservation of rigid racial boundaries was necessary for the very existence and establishment of the British Empire itself.

Racial Mingling was rejected on the basis of a scientific discourse which argued that it would lead to the degeneration and decay of the white race. The pseudo-scientific idea of hybrid degeneration considered mixed race offspring as physically weaker and mentally inferior than their white parent. Dr Robert Knox (1791-1862), in particular, pioneered racial

theories that shaped mid-Victorian views towards racial differences. Historians consider Knox the spiritual father of modern British scientific racism, and "one of the key figures in the general western movement towards a dogmatic pseudo-scientific racism" (Curtin qtd.in Davies 2). Knox developed a pseudo-scientific racial doctrine based on comparative anatomy in the 1850's and 1860's, in his work *The Races of Men* (1850).

Knox' work as a surgeon for the British army in South Africa in the 1820's allowed him to spend time studying the physiological features of the indigenous people and their anatomical differences, as well as collecting skulls of black people in order to use them for craniological measurements to be compared to skulls of white people. Nancy Leys Stephan states that early and mid-nineteenth century witnessed the rise of a scientific movement that studied and compared measurements of human skulls aiming at inventing a taxonomy of human variations that would be more scientific than the one of Linnaeus in the eighteenth century (28-34). Knox belonged to this movement. He believed that the skull lodged the organ of the mind: the brain, and studying it was the right way to justify the physical, mental, aesthetic and religious differences amongst different races.

As a polygenist, Knox classified different races as different species and firmly believed that race played a crucial role in the rise and fall of civilizations. He considered that "race in human affairs is everything, is simply a fact, the most remarkable, the most comprehensive, which philosophy has ever announced. Race is everything: literature, science, art, - in a word, civilisation depends on it" (Davies 12). Knox's racialist views emphasized the superiority of the white race, and posited that race was a constant and fixed notion that should remain likewise lest it would lead to the degeneration of civilization.

Insisting on the essential immutability of the notion of race, Knox was a strong opponent of colonialism because not only was it immoral, but mainly because of the fear of degeneration and degradation of the white race that would be caused by its intermixing with

the indigenous people, producing hybrids that would go extinct in the fourth of fifth generation. He regarded hybridity as a "degradation of humanity [that] was rejected by nature" (29). Participating in miscegenation practices was deemed destructive of the racial hierarchy proved by comparative anatomy and craniology. Even though Knox opposed colonialism, the Knoxian racial ideology was the foundation of "toxic racist ideas to a wily political manipulator," used to justify a new ideology of "uncompromising imperialism" (Mares 2).

Therefore, the main fear of miscegenation was the blurring of the racial lines which were crucial for establishing a racial structure that maintained the superiority of white civilization, aiming to have control over the colonies and for imperialistic expansion. Ann Stoler analyzes the fear of miscegenation in Europe and Britain as the result of a bourgeois morality based on ideas of racial purity which were associated with the bourgeois class that began to grow in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (45). The bourgeois sophistication of the British stood in stark opposition to the primitiveness of the indigenous people of the colonies, and interracial mixing tainted that sophistication and challenged their superiority. Consequently, the British used derogatory terms to describe the products of such relations, like "mongrel[s]" and "inferior[s] and renegade[s]" (Cooper and Stoler 610).

II.1.3 France's Racial Other: Encounters and Anxieties

Miscegenation challenged the stability of race and proved that racial purity and cultural superiority were but an illusion. The mutability of whiteness was an idea that brought much anxiety to the white colonizers as the monstrous and ambiguous hybrids were feared to put an end to the white race. Joseph Arthur, Compte de Gobineau, one of the most significant racial ideologists in Europe during the mid-nineteenth century expressed this anxiety in *Essai sur l'inegalite des races humaines* (1853), and linked the decline of European civilization to

miscegenation. He lamented, "the white race […] has henceforth disappeared from the face of the earth […] it is now represented only by hybrids" (168).

He propounded a theory of race claimed to be scientific, but like all racist thinking at the time, it was in fact pseudo-scientific. Race was presented as a strong indicator of unbridgeable differences between the three clearly distinct human types; the black, the yellow and the white. The black race was placed at the "foot of the ladder" for having animal characteristics and an intellect with dull and inexistent mental faculties (205). The yellow race was seen as clearly superior to the black race, but the yellow man was not capable of civilization because he "tends to mediocrity in everything […] He does not dream or theorize; he invents little" (206). The white race was placed at the top of the ladder with higher mental faculties, physical appearance, intellect, "instinct for order," problem-solving capabilities, love of freedom (unlike the formalist of the yellow race and the despotism of the black), and honour, one of the most fundamental forces of civilization that is "unknown to both the yellow and the black man" (207).

Gobineau argued for the "permanent and indelible" intellectual and physical superiority of the white race and its capacity for civilization over the yellow and black races. However, the "immense" superiority of the white race was challenged by racial intermixture which produced "hybrid and chequered races" (208). He called interracial relations an evil beyond repair or redemption, for it leads to the moral refinement, ennoblement and improvement of the inferior race. The "mulatto" who "may become a lawyer, a doctor, or a business man" would become far better than his black father, "who was absolutely savage, and fit for nothing" (209). And, on the other hand, racial mixing would strip the white race of its defining features and replace it by an inferior hybrid race.

Gobineau explained that "the white race originally possessed the monopoly of beauty, intelligence and strength. By its union with other varieties, hybrids were created, which were beautiful without strength, strong without intelligence, or, if intelligent, both weak and ugly" (209). To Gabineau, the greatest danger of the admixture of blood, which he referred to as a "curse" and a "disorder," was the slow degeneration and dilution of the superior Aryan blood, which would cause the downfall of civilization through the destabilization of the homogeneity, purity and fixity, so necessary to civilization and its harmony. "There is no greater curse than such disorder, for however bad it may have made the present state of things, it promises still worse for the future," as he put it (211).

III. Bhabha's Cultural Hybridity: The Logic of the Beyond and the Third Space

As a colonial concept, hybridity was viewed as a forbidden transgression of racial boundaries and was associated with the degeneration of the superior white race. During colonial times, essentialism ruled, and anti-miscegenation fear and anxiety were the characterizing attitude towards hybridity. However, postcolonialism transformed this notion into a more positive and celebrated one.

Hybridity, according to the postcolonial theory, is a means of countering the hegemony of Western discourse of representation and the colonial essentialist identity politics. Postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha is credited for moving hybridity out of the racial and biological to the wider cultural and spatial realms. As the title of his book *The Location of Culture*, which lays the foundations of his theory, suggests. Hybridity is what causes a shift in the essentialist and imaginary location of cultures, both central and peripheral, to a third liminal space, hence, bringing an end to the binarism of the center/margin and superior/inferior that characterized colonial thought. That cultures can move from their space to the Third Space means that the boundaries that were once rigid are now porous, and the identities that were fixed are fluid.

Bhabha's theory of cultural hybridity calls for a reconsideration of cultural contact beyond the Western essentialist logic of binary opposition. Instead, contact between cultures is viewed as a site of negotiations where both cultures engage in some sort of a back-and-forth dialogue and become part of a process of hybridization themselves. Consequently, hybridity challenges the idea that identity is fixed and stable, and celebrates, rather, interculturality and the instability of identity.

III.1 The Logic of the Beyond and the Third Space

A key feature of Bhabha's hybridity and the Third Space is his notion of the "beyond" space which creates cultural bridges that allow for revision, intervention and going "beyond" the rigid cultural borders. Bhabha begins his work *The Location of Culture* with an epigraph quoting Martin Heidegger, "A boundary is not that at which something stops but, as the Greeks recognized, the boundary is that from which something begins its presencing" (1). Heidegger's quote is about space, the limits and the boundaries, which means that it summarizes the core of Bhabha's topological reasoning. According to Bhabha's logic of the beyond, we only exist on the borderlines of the present, in a space that can be defined neither as the past, for it has already passed, nor as a "new horizon," for we are still experiencing it, still in a state of constant shifting, not yet, indeed never, arriving at a final state of being (ibid).

The beyond means that the present is no longer seen as a distinct breach that separates the past from the future, but as a transitory moment, "where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity, past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion" (ibid). Perhaps the French translation of the word beyond can explain its "restless movement" better than its English counterpart, as Bhabha explains that it is all caught in the word "*au-delà*," which means "here and there, on all sides, *fort/da*, hither and thither, back and forth" (1).

Bhabha illustrates that the controversial use of the prefix "post" in "postmodernism, postcolonialism, postfeminism" to label our *present* era is proof of this shifting and unstable condition that characterize our existence in the realm of the beyond (1). The prefix "post" in these jargon words does not indicate afterness or sequentiality to mean "after modernism" or after colonialism for instance, as Bhabha is against the idea of a "dead hand of history that tells the beads of sequential- time like a rosary, seeking to establish serial, causal connections"(4). Nor does it indicate opposition, as in anti-modernism, or anti-colonialism. Rather, this prefix that "insistently gesture[s]to the beyond" stands for the latter's "restless and revisionary energy," as one movement emerged as a *revision* to its predecessor according to the demands and the condition of the present era it represents (4).

The restless movement that characterizes the beyond and its revisionary power mean that it can change the present "into an expanded and ex-centric site of experience and empowerment" (ibid). Therefore, the beyond denotes not only spatial and temporal distance, but "marks progress, promises the future." allowing for new possibilities (4). To exist in the beyond is to exist in an "intervening" space, but it is, more significantly, to live in a "revisionary time" and to be endowed with the capability of " return[ing] to the present to redescribe our cultural contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historical commonality; *to touch the future on its hither side*" (7; italics in original). In this sense, the beyond allows for a return to the present in order to redefine, revise, re-invent, and restate the existing cultural conventions. The intervention, when performed on cultural differences, leads to a re-definition of human subjectivity and to new representations of identity, and that is what Bhabha intends when he refers to Heidegger's quote, stating that "the boundary becomes the place from which something begins its presencing" (5).

III.2 Edward Said, Bhabha and (Post)Colonial Discourse

Before Bhabha, Edward Said was among the first critics to study the power relations between colonizer/colonized and West/Orient in his seminal work *Orientalism.* Inspired by Foucault's notions of power and discourse, Said closely analyzes imperial culture and the hegemonic and monolithic colonial discourse. His theory of Orientalism is based on his study of the colonial discursive practices, that is, the rhetorical and representational strategies the West used to construct, propagate and control the inferior image of the Orient to justify its imperial project. While Said is the originator of colonial discourse theory and "a new field of criticism, postcolonial studies," his theory has been criticized by many scholars, including Bhabha, for its reliance on binary thinking (Acheraïou 90).

The basis of Bhabha's hybridity theory is actually his criticism of Said's Orientalism. He accused Said for constructing a theory that confirms the hegemonic power relations and the binary opposition between the West and East as a fixed framework of representation. He criticizes Said for:

> introducing a binarism within the argument which, in initially setting up an opposition between these two discursive scenes, finally allows them to be correlated as a congruent system of representation that is unified through a political-ideological intention which, in his words, enables Europe to advance securely and unmetaphorically upon the Orient […] There is always, in Said, the suggestion that colonial power and discourse is possessed entirely by the coloniser which is a historical and theoretical simplification. The terms in which Said's Orientalism are unified—which is, the intentionality and unidirectionality of colonial power—also unifies the subject of colonial enunciation. ("Difference" 199-200)

From Orientalism's "refusal to engage with alterity" (199), Bhabha proposes his theory of hybridity and the Third Space against the fixed systems of representation, by addressing the issues he considers missing in Said's theory. That is to say, the "alterity" or change that cultural encounter brings upon the different cultures involved in it, which disturbs and deconstructs the colonial discursive system. However, what Bhabha seems to overlook is that Said does refer to what he calls a "vacillation" that occurs from the "immense number of

encounters" between cultures (*Orientalism* 58). This vacillation leads to the creation of category that is neither "completely novel [nor] completely well known" (ibid). As he explains, "a new median category emerges, a category that allows one to see new things, things seen for the first time, as versions of a previously known thing" (ibid).

Said's idea of vacillation and the condition of newness that results from it is probably the foundation of Bhabha's hybridity and the Third Space. It bears similarity to Bhabha's statement that hybridity transcends the binary logic of colonialism and allows for the creation of a new position. "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'Third Space', which enables other positions to emerge," as Bhabha states ("Third Space" 211).

III.3 Bhabha's Third Space

If colonial discourse depends on fixity in its construction of the Self and Other, Hybridity subverts colonial order and destabilizes colonial power, providing a space for subversion and intervention. It challenges "traditional discourses of authority and enables a form of subversion, founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention" ("Signs"154). The subversive power of hybridity and the Third Space nullifies the fixity of cultural hierarchies and dissolves the polarities of colonial discourse which are the source of its power. It leads to the creation of a new "international" hybrid culture. Bhabha emphasizes the prefix "inter" in his description of hybridity to highlight that this condition of in-betweenness is what destroys the binary constructions of the West. The Third Space is, accordingly, the:

> precondition for the articulation of cultural difference […] the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based […] on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. To that end, we should remember that it is the 'inter' – the cutting-edge of translation and negotiation, the in-between space – that carries the burden of the meaning of culture

[…] And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of ourselves. *(Location* 38-39)

Bhabha uses Renee Green's architectural site-specific work, *Sites of Genealogy,* as a metaphor to explain the Third Space where hybridity occurs. The stairwell in this architectural site, instead of being the barrier between the attic downstairs and the boiler room upstairs, really makes a connection between them, and so the " stairwell became a liminal space, a pathway between the upper and lower areas" (*Location* 3-4).

Instead of clashing or being completely separate, the two cultures, meet in the "stairwell", or the liminal Third Space. This Third Space is neither colonizer nor colonized, neither Self nor Other, and neither "upper" nor "lower", but a hybrid that rejects these imposed polarities and prevents identities to be fixed at either side. Bhabha explains:

> The stairwell as liminal space, inbetween the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interation, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, prevents identities at either end of it from settling in primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without assumed or imposed hierarchy. (ibid 4)

Bhabha elucidates that the minority representation of difference is not a simple reflection and rejection of pre-established cultural and ethnic characteristics, but rather a negotiation seeking to assert cultural hybridity. Hybridity and the Third Space, which are interchangeable concepts, stand, hence, for the productive and creative space from which change and newness (new perspectives, identities meaning, combination) are created. They permit the negotiation of identities and the production and celebration of multiplicity, bringing about "something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation" ("Third Space"211).

The Third Space's creative potential comes from the possibility of transformation, translation and re-articulation that it allows. Bhabha states,"The transformational value of

change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are *neither the One* […] *nor the Other* [...] *but something else besides,* which contests the terms and territories of both" (*Location* 28; italics in original). The process of translation and negotiation of meaning and identities is fundamental for the process of hybridization and the destruction of the essentializing polarization through the creation of "a space of hybridity […] that is new, *neither the one nor the other"* (*Location* 25; italics in original).

Moreover, Bhabha insists that the hybrid culture is not more supreme, authoritative, or higher than either of the cultures involved in the process of hybridization, considering that the process of negotiation leading to the creation of hybridity is not Hegelian but seeks to destroy cultural hegemony and binary representations of antagonism. Simply, the hybrid space gives the minority a chance to emerge outside of the margins and occupy this in-between space, "the outside of the inside," and give them a sense of belonging to the whole. As he justifies:

> Hybrid agencies find their voice in a dialectic that does not seek cultural supremacy or sovereignty. They deploy the partial culture from which they emerge to construct visions of community, and versions of historic memory, that give narrative form to the minority positions they occupy: the outside of the inside; the part in the whole. ("Culture's in Between" 212)

III.4 Stuart Hall's Hybridity, Postmodernism and Immigration

Linking the concept of hybridity to postmodernism and immigration, Stuart Hall, one of the leading critics in diaspora studies argues that postmodern age suggests the dissolving of the fixed identity makers and cultural paradigms of the colonial age, and the shift of focus from the center to the periphery, in addition to the creation of new spaces and new borders. Hall considers postmodernism as "a set of responses to the decentring of (that) European […] hegemony that began in 1492" (Morley and Chen 14). From this perspective, he believes that the migrant experience, as an experience of "displacement, dislocation and hybridity," reflects the "postmodern condition" *par excellence* (ibid).

Placing the construction of racial and ethnic identities and the question of who we are as the most prevalent concerns of the age of migration, Stuart Hall speaks of his own Jamaican-British identity, and how nowadays, instead of being the "outcast and the inferior," he at last finds himself at the center as a result of postmodernism:

> Thinking about my own sense of identity, I realise that it has always depended on the fact of being a *migrant*, on the difference from the rest of you. So one of the fascinating things about this discussion is to find myself centred at last. Now that it is the postmodern age, you all feel so dispersed, I become centred. (qtd. in Davis 179)

Most significantly, Halls contends that with their border crossing, the migrants are the ones who occupy a transgressive position, one of critical interrogation, vis-à-vis the erect cultural hierarchies and their essentialism:

> [Y]ou have to be sufficiently outside [the center] so you can examine it and critically interrogate it. And it is this double move or, what I think one writer after another have called, the double consciousness of the exile, of the migrant, of the stranger who moves to another place, who has this double way of seeing it, from the inside and the outside. (Hall and Sakai 364)

Hall uses the metaphor of the center and periphery to explain his view of hybridity, which he considers another name for diasporic identity. Hybridity refers to "the constant process of differentiation and exchange between the centre and the periphery and between different peripheries, as well as serving as the metaphor for the form of identity that is being produced from these conjunctions" (Papastergiadis 274). In other words, the power of hybridity lies in this potential of displacing the marginal position to the centre, hence, destroying the essentialist binary system and nullifying the very idea of the center and periphery. There is no centre (dominant culture) and periphery (marginal culture). Instead, every position becomes a centre. Rejecting the Western tradition of binary oppositions, Hall explains his realization that identity is only constructed by the colonizer through historical narratives and discourse. That identity is an invention means that it is not an essential, universal and finished product. Instead, Hall insists, identity rejects absolute fixed closure; it is in-constant flux, fluid and open to redefinition, growth and alterations at any possible

historical moment. To explain, he draws an analogy between language and identity. Language is infinite and prone to evolution and change, so is identity. Therefore, "instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished historical fact […] we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production', which is never complete always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation'" (qtd.in Davis 184).

Hall, therefore, insists that the essentialist and teleological Western discourse that perpetuates the fixedness of culture and identity must be challenged. He asserts that representations are strong because they decide what is normal and what is not, what belongs and what does not. As he puts it, "representations sometimes call our very identities into question. We struggle over them because they matter […] They define what is 'normal', who belongs – and therefore, who is excluded" (*Representations* 10). In the same vein, Ulrich Beck believes that the essentialist fixed identity markers like race, skin colour, birthplace, blood and settlement are an epistemological human error that favors some cultures and debases others. Moslund suggests that the correction of this error is reached through the figure of the hybrid immigrant through which nowadays we can arrive at "an advanced understanding of what it is to be human" (2).

IV. The Anti-Hybridity Backlash

Bhabha and the other hybridity theorists insist that the freedom necessary for a re-creation of the Self is now greater than ever before in this postcolonial world, "the world of travel" and immigration, which opens the possibility for cross-cultural, intercultural and multicultural contact where the Third Space occurs (*Location* 9). However, contemporary multicultural, intercultural, cross-cultural encounters, and the phenomenon of globalization which is used synonymously with hybridity, provide a suitable contextual ground not only for the realization of hybridity but for the verification of its success and failure.

IV.1 Hybridity, Hegemony and Asymmetrical Power Relations

Theorists of hybridity pride themselves for inventing a theory that cures essentialism and presents an idyllic picture where the antagonistic and different cultures are brought together. However, doing so, they turn a blind eye towards cultural and social discrimination and to the fact the hybridity is usually constructed against the backdrop of a society where power, inclusion and exclusion are still a reality. For, if it were true that hybridity entails positive interaction, exchange and negotiation that involve enriching and productive processes of giving and taking between different cultures, then the experience would have been *equally* positive for all participants within the cultural encounter. Reality, nevertheless, proves that this idea is far from being true.

There is an uneven articulation of hybridity in the postcolonial era that forces the non-Western Other into a process of acculturation and assimilation. In this respect, Ella Shohat criticizes hybridity for encompassing a wide range of various forms of cultural mixing that involve asymmetric inclusion and hierarchical integration. She states :

> Negotiating locations, identities, and positionalities in relation to the violence of neo-colonialism is crucial if hybridity is not to become a figure for the consecration of hegemony. As a descriptive catch-all term, "hybridity" per se fails to discriminate between the diverse modalities of hybridity, for example, forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political cooptation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence. The reversal of biologically and religiously racist tropes - the hybrid, the syncretic - on the one hand, and the reversal of anti- colonialist purist notions of identity, on the other, should not obscure the problematic agency of "post-colonial hybridity. (Shohat 110)
>
> Not all hybrids are equal, and not all people are hybridized the same way and to the

same extent. According to Jan Nederveen Pieterse, one of the critics of hybridity, there are relations of power and hegemony inscribed with hybridity, responsible for this inequality. Under close scrutiny, especially of the reality of postcolonial societies and immigrants, we can see "the traces of asymmetry in culture, place, descent" (*Globalization and Culture* 80). Hybridity is claimed to bridge the gaps between cultures and challenge the boundaries of

Eurocentrism. However, careful examination and questions must be raised regarding the conditions, or "terms of mixing," which are still Eurocentric. Taking this into consideration, we may be talking of an incomplete one-way assimilationist form of hybridity that leans away from the still-marginal non-Western culture to the Western center.

In its embodiment of a postmodernist celebration of multiplicity, subversion and transgression, Hybridity is described as the antidote of essentialism (ibid 68). Postcolonial theorists designate it as an expression of transcendence beyond rigid binary thinking and the polarities of Self/Other, us/them, West/East, First World/Third World, White/ Non-White and so on. However, the process of mixing, negotiation and translation of identities and cultural elements that hybridity entails is based on domination and conceals asymmetrical hegemonic power relations. Explicitly hybridity embraces diversity, but implicitly it conceals cultural hegemony. For example, former British colonies, such as India, still retain the former Empire's legal and political systems and infrastructures, which indicates their failure in creating their own and indirectly acknowledges the superiority the Western ways (ibid 74-75). Similarly, Amar Acheraïou calls hybridity a mere theory, stating that the liberating and subversive potentials of the Third Space as a space that puts an end to Western Manichean thinking are "far-fetched, if not erroneous" (93). In practice, hybridity occurs according to a system of "empowerment" and "disempowerment," another terminology he uses for hegemony. Accordingly, the hybrids, or the "cultural translators," simply "empower the same and disempower the Other" (ibid). Hybridity hence fails to create an alternative imaginary subjectivity that destroys polarity and is trapped in trapped in a hegemonic discourse of superiority and inferiority.

Therefore, for hybridity to be an anti-essentialist concept, it has to be grounded on principles of mutability and mutuality. That is to say, a critical deconstruction of Western binarism entails that the Self and Other must be interconnected, and that both cultural

identities should mutually engage in a process of self-construction. As Kwame Anthony Appiah clarifies in his review of Bhabha's *The Location of Culture,* "the strategy of hybridity proposes […] that the Other is already 'within'the Self'' (5). However, the polarized nature of cultural identity and the reality of Western cultural hegemony problematize the idea of cross-cultural exchange and the hybridization process.

Cross-cultural exchange is governed by asymmetrical power dynamics, with non-Western cultures affected by the Western culture to a greater extent than vice-versa. This undermines the idea that the Other is already within the Self. Hegemony plays an important role in cross-cultural relations and identity politics. The notion of power influences the efficacy of hybridity as a political project in the face of Western hegemonic cultural systems.

IV.2 Hybridity Taking Place at Someone's Expense

As a result of the imbalance of power, the hybridization process and its positive consequences may happen at the expense of one culture over the other. This has been especially the case when cultural contact was enriching and creative, but the West assumed the hybrid product as their own, not giving credit to the non-Western source that was considered only as a kind of "raw material that is 'processed' in Europe or North America" (Burke 7). Western popular music, for instance, took from the Pygmy music of Sub-Saharan Africa, creating a hybrid music style, but copyrighting it without acknowledging, neither seeking consents of, the original African musicians. Another example can be taken from the medical field, as suggested by Richard Grove who points to the existence of a global imperial network of information and medical transfer between 1600 and the mid-nineteenth century, when the West had frequently utilized botanical and medical knowledge of indigenous peoples all over the world without accrediting the origins of such transfer (ibid).

Hybridization and cultural mixing have always characterized cultural contact since the colonial age. Nevertheless, according to Acheraïou, the West "still" refuses to acknowledge the various cultural, technological, and linguistic cross-fertilizations and influence of the colonized cultures on the West. For example, linguistic borrowing was an enriching phenomenon to both the colonized and colonizer's language. 900 English words, related to different fields such as biology, trade, military, and religion, are of Indian origins; and over 200 Arabic and Berber words found their way into the French language. However, despite the obvious hybridity, former colonizers are still not willing to admit this "mutual debt" (63). Even when influence was admitted, it was usually trivialized and claimed to be given value only as it is transported into a European context. This belittling attitude can be detected in Rupert Hall's thinking who states in 1963 that "Europe took nothing from the East without which modern science could not have been created; on the other hand, what it borrowed was valuable only because it was incorporated in the European intellectual tradition" (qtd.in Acheraïou 64). Such narcissistic denial of the contribution of non-European cultures and knowledge to the development of the West comes from a stubborn Eurocentric refusal to accept the indigenous as patrons of knowledge and enlightenment. It was the West that was on a mission *civilisatrice* as the sole holder of the beacon of knowledge, truth and civilizationand not the other way around.

This drawback of hybridity can be explained using Foucault's thought on power and discourse. The West has always held the power of discourse and dictated what can and cannot be told. A Western "regime of truth" is constructed by political and economic forces that create a corpus of knowledge where truth, power and discourse are all connected within a relation, as summarized in the following quote by Foucault:

> "Truth" is to be understood as a system of ordered procedures for the production, regulation, distribution, circulation and operation of statements. 'Truth' is linked in a circular relation with systems of power which produce and sustain it, and to effects of

power which it induces and which extend it. A 'regime' of truth. ("Truth and Power" 133)

Applying this idea on the context of hybridity, the examples mentioned above about hybridity taking place at expense of the non-Western culture illustrate how the West presents its own version of the truth that omits the positive and productive consequences of cross-cultural exchange, for the simple reason of possessing the discursive power to provide its own version of the truth. This is mainly because through discourse truth and power intertwine with history. As Foucault defines discourse, not as "an ideal, timeless form," but as a historical form, "a fragment of history […] posing its own limits, its divisions, its transformations, the specific modes of its temporality" *(Archeology of knowledge* 117).

Foucault calls discourse a fragment of history that is subject to modifications and transformations because it is determined by a political, economic and cultural apparatus, mainly related to the issue of domination and control. This strips truth from claims of universality and discourse from claims of truth, for history, after all, is the lies of the winners.

IV.3 Hybridity and the Loss of Roots

Rapid hybridization, globalization, and the revitalization of identity lead non-Western cultures to suffer from a civilizational crisis caused by national identities and cultures deformed by the West. Accordingly, hybridity holds the opposite effect of what it seeks to reach, as it symbolizes the success of the West in promoting itself as the superior form of civilization, and the accomplishment of its *mission civilisatrice* through the annihilation of the other.

Edward Said stresses that self-affirmation and attachment to national identity are morbid, as "Nothing seems less interesting than the narcissistic self-study that today passes in many places for identity politics, or ethnic studies, or affirmations of roots, cultural pride,

drumbeating nationalism" ("Between World" 8). However, the re-invention of cultural identity from a universal vantage point as hybridity and cultural globalization call for means that one's Self becomes known to the Other, just as it may also mean that one's Self is lost to the Other.

The newly-gained hybrid identity is usually more relevant to a Westernized world, and hence undermines its original culture and civilization. Burke refers to the submission of the dominated identity to the dominant one and the "loss of regional traditions and […] local roots" as the "price of hybridization" (7). It becomes, thus, a source of puzzlement that Said attacks the concepts of rootedness and national identity, on the one hand, but writes of his own dilemma of home, "living between worlds," as well as his nagging sense of unbelonging caused by the oscillation between the binary system of the "self" and "other" and "East" and "West," describing himself as "out of place everywhere" (Burke 3).

In recent debates surrounding the issues of globalization, cultural homogeneity becomes one of the most mentioned disadvantages of the concepts of mixing and hybridity. It has been argued that though hybridity adopts a celebratory stance towards heterogeneity, a homogenizing process is actually taking place under the cloak of hybridity. Indeed, the process of globalization that unequivocally involves a process of hybridization is believed by anti-hybridity critics to be nothing but" a theory of westernization by another name, which replicates all the problems associated with Eurocentrism: a narrow window on the world, historically and culturally" (Pieterse, *Globalisation and Culture* 67). For instance, some critics use such terms as "Cocacolonization" and "McDonaldization," coming from the worldwide spread of these American institutions and products, to shed light on the fact that globalization is just another word for Americanization. As Hutnyk argues, that hybridity implies a "wishful vision of future integration into a supposedly homogenous Western culture" (120).

IV.4 Cultural/ Neo-racism Racism and the Failure of Hybridity

In addition to the idea that Westernization may be concealed under the guise cultural hybridity and globalization, critics of hybridity have also linked it to racism. Even though, as Papastergiadis puts it, "hybrids were conceived as lubricants in the clashes of culture; they were the negotiators who would secure a future free of xenophobia" (261), hybridity, as the antithesis of racism, is difficult to be realized because of a new kind of discrimination that non-Western cultures face when they exist within a multicultural society. The thing is that after the discrediting of nineteenth century's scientific racism that ranked and differentiated people according to their biological phenotypical and genetic features, a new kind of "cultural racism" emerged. Cultural racism, also called neo-racism (Wieviorka 141), new racism, postmodern racism, and culturalism (Bratt), is differentiation which is related to cultural characteristics; such as, religion, language, traditions, national origins. Resulting from, and leading to, the perception of the culture of the Other as a threat to the culture of the Self, this neo-racism advocates the belief in the cultural superiority of the West. Thinking in terms of group boundaries, culturalism is thus just a proxy for traditional racism.

Bratt investigates the belief in European superiority in 21 countries, to test how cultural racism relates to traditional racism. He concludes that though the former is cultural and the latter is physical/biological, empirical research proves that the two are intertwined in two main areas: the belief that Western culture is better and that whiteness is an indicator of superiority (see Fig.1.)

| Some races are born more intelligent |
| Some races are less hard working |

Racism

| Western cultures are much better |

| Qualification for immigration: be white |

| Qualification for immigration: Christian background |

Culturalism

| Better if almost everyone shared customs and traditions |

| Cultural life undermined by immigrants |
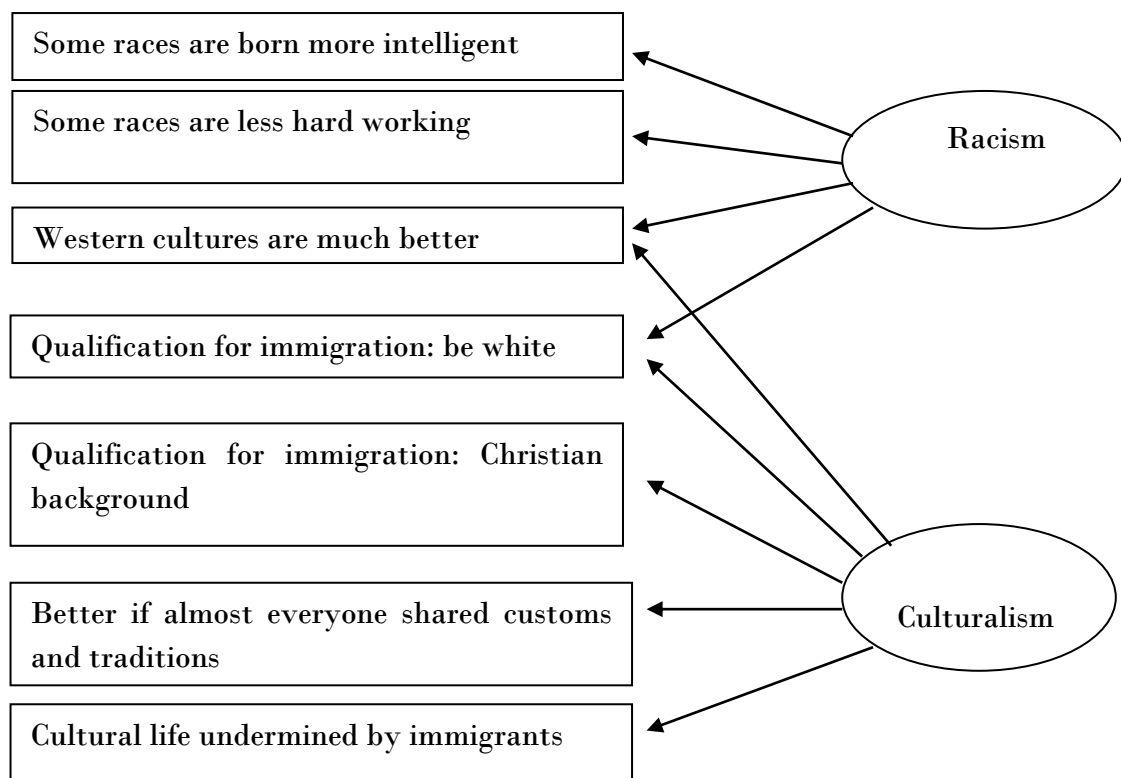
Figure 1.Links between Culturalism and Racism. Source: Adapted from Bratt, Christopher. "Is it Racism? The belief in cultural superiority across Europe. » *European Societies,* **2022, Vol. 24, No. 2, 207-228**

Anti-hybridity critics believe that despite co-existence within a globalized setting, cultural racism means that cultural differences are irreconcilable. This is mainly because neo-racism creates a "genetic cultural heritage" to groups and individuals, constructing them as blocks, and their behavior, whether real or imagined, is seen as representing as essence of the category that exhibit it (Wieviorka 142).

Tariq Modood explains that human beings are naturally inclined to have a preference to their own racial and cultural group, which is why the co-existence and mixing of different cultures is sometimes "bound to lead to violent social conflict and the dissolution of social bounds" (154). How would a hybridization process be possible then in such societies unless if it means the loss of cultural roots and adoption of the culture of the West? For this reason, Weiviorka classifies cultural racism into two types. The first is linked to universalism and inferiorisation. It assumes essential differences between cultures and accepts the existence of

the Other, but only in an inferior position. The second is based on differentialism and rejection. It postulates racial difference as the basis of irreconcilable cultural difference and insists that distance must be kept between the Self and the Other.

Therefore, a "post-biological" neo-racist cultural intolerance has developed in a seemingly colour-blind, hybrid, multicultural, and globalized world (Modood164). Even though hybridity assumes the death of scientific racism, cultural racism builds on scientific racism. According to neo-racism, the exclusion of people happens based on cultural elements in addition to physical difference (as Fig.1. demonstrates). This happens from alleged Western and "civilized" norms that "vilify, marginalize or demand cultural assimilation from groups who also suffer from biological racism" (155). The proof is that cultural antagonism is much more likely to be directed against non-Whites rather than white minorities, for example.

Modood quotes the concluding remarks of a leading study by W.W.Daniel to justify his view, "The experiences of white immigrants, such as Hungarians and Cypriots, compared to black or brown immigrants, such as West Indians and Asians, leaves no doubt that the major component in the discrimination is colour"(165). Thus, I am tempted to ask if a de-racialization of non-Whites within a Western society through hybridity is ever possible when there is, as Modood believes, a racialization of culturally different groups, such as Muslims. This cultural racialization, that still presupposes biological racism, prevents the full-enjoyment of the promises of hybridity?

IV.5. Hybridity, Purity and the Hybridization of Essentialism

Bhabha's cultural hybridity has been fiercely criticized for its many inherent paradoxes, one of which is the "assumption of purity" despite claiming the deconstruction of essentialist categories as one of its founding principles (Pieterse, "Hybridity" 3). As the theorization of "new transcultural forms within the contact zone" between cultures (Aschcroft

et al. 118), hybridity is defined as a counter-hegemonic discourse that scrutinizes and challenges the previous dominant Western discourse with its claims of inherent cultural purity and hegemonic structures of identifications. According to Bhabha, contact between the colonizer and colonized, or between Western and non-Western cultures, leads to the creation of hybrid cultural expressions in a space that exists out of and beyond the binary categorization associated with the traditional essentialist discourse.

These hybrid cultural expressions can only emerge through "the death, literal and figurative, of the complex interweavings of history, and the culturally contingent borderlines of modern nationhood" (*Location* 7). However, this description of hybridity proves that the theory comes with its own problems. The first is that to reach its potential as a form of transgression that deconstructs the rigid binary thinking of the West and transcends its essentialist claim of cultural purity, hybridity has to; first and foremost, admit the very concept of cultural purity that it seeks to annul. For instance, postcolonial critic Gayatri Spivak hails the theory of cultural hybridity for extracting a negative term from the field of sociobiology and recycling it in the cultural and political field to denounce Western hegemonic culture. On the other hand, she still draws attention to the contradictions of the concept, stating that hybridity is "troublesome since it assumes there would be something that was not hybrid," and even if we assume, as some hybridity theorists claim that all cultures are hybrid, that "hybridity is everywhere," then the theory becomes useless in solving the old problems of imperialism, and racism (Spivak, Keele Seminar, 1995)

Hybridity does not annihilate essentialism so much as it simply accounts for the convergence, or hybridization, of essentialist categories. "In the struggle against the racism of purity, hybridity invokes the dependent, not converse, notion of the mongrel. Instead of combating essentialism, it merely hybridizes it" (Friedman 236). The concept of cultural hybridity cannot be defined without tracing the trajectory of its antecedents. This chapter

demonstrates that postcolonial theorists transferred the concept of hybridity from the field of biology and the racial discourse of the previous centuries that equated hybridity with morbidity and regarded the mongrel, the mulatto, the hybrid, the mixed-race as a degenerate human form that violated cultural, racial, and social borders, polluted the white race, and would ultimately lead to the degeneration of human civilization.

Ironically, Bhabha's claim that the Third Space resists binarism and essentialism means that the concept of hybridity is built primarily on the acknowledgment of the existence of essential cultures and polarities. Cultural hybridity, according to critics such as Friedman and Nederveen Pieterse, is *"*meaningless *without* the prior assumption of difference, purity, fixed boundaries" ("Hybridity" 9). Meaningless here does not imply that hybridity is a false or inaccurate delineation of cultural exchange. It means, instead, that without the concept of boundaries and essentialism, there would not be a theory of hybridity.

Moreover, Pieterse explains that recognizing differences between the Self and Other does not transgress the pre-existing boundaries, but only "stretches" and "re-cycles" them. He asks the questions:

> To what extent is recognition a function of the available categories of knowledge and cognitive frames in which self and others are identifiable and recognizable? Can it be that recognition is an exercise in reproduction, recycling the categories in which existing social relations have been coded while stretching their meaning? ("Hybridity" 1)

He answers that hybridity, as a theory that recognizes difference, as "a journey into the riddles of recognition" (2), functions within the same system of identification of self/other that it claims to eradicate. In an attempt of social and cultural re-mapping, hybridity only reproduces, recycles, and stretches the existing categories to include other essentialist hybrid forms, instead of deconstructing the old essentialist categories.

IV.5.1 From Essentialism to Essentialism

The problematization and blurring of boundaries is at the core of the theory of cultural hybridity. Consequently, the real problem of hybridity is, after all, boundaries and their fetishization ("Hybridity" 2). And here lies one of the most blatant shortcomings of hybridity. Historically, since the pseudo-scientific racial theories until postmodern capitalist competitive mode of production, the world has always been viewed as a hierarchy of different competing spaces (Krishna305). There has, thus, always been a social and cultural tendency to fetishize boundaries.

One of Jonathan Friedman's anti-hybridity arguments is that hybridity does not really move beyond the logic of the boundaries. He emphasizes that today's discussion of cultural flow and globalization celebrates and values the formation of new hybrid structures, but such discourse of hybridity is built on "the presumption of the existence of once pure cultures that may have existed before the age of international capital compressed the globe" (73). Not only this, but hybridity discourse is just as normative as colonial discourse since it claims that essentialism must be replaced by hybridity, making the latter an essentialist category that rejects anything that does not belong to it (73).

It may, therefore, be justified to say that hybridity is just another constructed cultural imaginary, for it involves a cultural and ethnic absolutism that only creates new essences. Although fragmented identities and constant states of becoming rather than fixed states of being are the only possible forms of existence in a postmodern age that celebrates mobility, multiplicity and border-crossing for their productive potentials, this celebration may easily turn into over-celebration. The same old record and colonial tunes that valued one category over the other in the past are replayed again in the present, as hybridity has become another face of cultural authenticity, observes John Hutnyk (118). Hutnyk discusses hybridity which has become a fashionable and marketable term due to the appeal of the different and the

exotic. The celebration of hybrid cultural productions encourages the creation of unchecked and chaotic forms, which would not have been a problem if it had not led to the abdication of all other modes of creation and the reinscription of hybridity as the sole valid mode in a globalized world; thus hegemonizing cultural difference altogether (118-119).

IV.5.2 The Ethnocentricity of Hybridity: Not all Boundaries Can be Erased

It has been repeated, *ad nauseam*, that the erosion of boundaries is one of the most important features of contemporary times. Friedman, nonetheless, maintains that "'In a world of multiplying diasporas, one of the things that is *not* happening is that boundaries are disappearing' (241; italics added). The boundaries are not easily wiped for the simple reason that they include many aspects. Ethnicity is one of the forms of boundary fetishism that is resistant to transgression. The fact is that ethnic borders have been able to preserve themselves (Wicker 35). People mark themselves off from each other based on an ethnic delimitation strategy that draws clear lines between different ethnic groups.

Assuming that hybridity is created from cultural convergence within a Third Space, this makes our postmodern globalized world a fertile space for the melting of boundaries and the flourishing of hybrid forms. Wicker demonstrates that the opposite is true. Even when cultural borders melt, as a result of globalization, ethnic borders are not easily softened. Ethnic differences simply resist to be defined as "a relic of pre-modern forms of social organization" that are "doomed to extinction" because ethnic marginalization and racism are still a reality even under conditions of full cultural assimilation (35).

If one of the grounds of hybridity is the recognition of cultural diversity and different identities, how, then, can we explain the fact that the existence of various and comparable cultural units within the same multicultural context leads to cultural incompatibility which, in turn, is the basis of the ideological system of classifying cultures into central and peripheral? The answer lies in the argument that the link between racism and culture is a still an

undeniable feature of our age, which "opposes the principles of a rational order of modernity with its universal norms and values based on the equality of all human beings" (Wicker 34). The reason behind this is that a collective "we" is built around a process of inclusion and marginalization that is still clearly well-established nowadays despite of, if not as a result of, a globalized multicultural context that encourages cultural hybrid productions. The outcome is that hybrid cultural expressions, much like any other form of expression, are still assigned to the margin. An example of this is that "For too many, South Asia remains a site of mystery, aroma, colour and exotica, even when it appears in the midst of Britain" (Hutnyk 120).

Hutnyk suggests to make the right political choice and to abandon the theoretical concept of hybridity, diaspora, globalization, multiculturalism and so on, in favour of presenting the real struggles and circumstance of the people involved. He uses the work of Paul Gilroy on hip-hop music to justify the solution he offers. Hip-hop is a hybrid music style that roots in other forms, and was born in the West Bronx by a Jamaican DJ artist, Clive Campbell, known in the music industry as DJ Kool Herc. In his seminal work, *Black Atlantic*, Gilroy explores the cultural creations in the black Atlantic world, and evaluates hip-hop and other transnational entertainment forms as the conveyors of radical political Black ideas. Hip-hop according to Gilroy, carries issues of race, ethnicity and culture.

Hutnyk analyzes the work of an Asian Hip-hop band in the UK, called Asian Dub Foundation (ADF) whose members defend their cultural space, as Asians living in the UK. They resist cultural and political domination through their music which can best be defined, using Gilroy's words, as transnational, anti-racist, anti-imperialistic, anti-capitalist, or simply post-colonial. The most important and relevant feature of their production is that it defies categorization, even hybrid one. "ADF describe their music as "neither ethnic, exotic or eclectic (the only E they use is electric – 'Jericho')" (129). Their work is described as transgressive, not because it crosses stylistic, ethnic, and cultural boundaries, but because they

use it as means for transmitting coded political messages, which is what Hutnyk wants any theory of cultural diversity to vouch for.

Significantly, the messages the ADF conveys are based on their own experience and the personal oppressions they go through as cultural hybrids living in a multicultural society (131), which opposes to the glossy picture of cultural exchange that elite hybridity theorists paint of themselves. In their track "Jericho" from their album *Facts and Fictions*, for instance, they take pride in their anti-racist political stance and condemn multicultural society with its subjective cosmopolitans and their unrealistic self-serving "mentality of the tourist" for "patronizing" their Asian culture and marginalizing them:

> An Asian background
> That's what's reflected
> But this militant vibe
> Ain't what you expected
> With your liberal minds
> You patronise our culture
> Scanning the surface like vultures
> With your tourist mentality
> We're still the natives
> You're multicultural
> But we're anti-racist.
> We ain't ethnic, exotic or eclectic… (qtd.in Hutnyk 131)

Hence, the songs of ADF with their coded political messages point to the failure of hybridity due to the resistance of ethnic border against erasure.

IV.6 Hybridity as an Elitist Concept

One of the strongest and most significant criticism directed against hybridity is its elitism. Hybridity is accused of being an elitist concept, created by a bourgeois middle-class, culturally hybrid, and elite theorists. As the national has given way to the global, a new global reality has emerged, and we are told, as Freidman states, "that the world is one place now" (70). And the main question is "for whom" is the world one place? Certainly "not in Eastern Europe and the former Yugoslavia, the Middle East or Africa, or in our own inner cities"

(70).Discussions of the realities of immigration and globalization nowadays include words like "fuzzy or porous boundaries", "cultural mixture," and hybridity, as concepts that challenge the homogenous essential culture of the West which is the product of a top-down hierarchical system of categorization that was created during the colonial period, accounting for a "a general subaltern reality defined in opposition to the categories imposed by colonialism" (72). However, these words belong to a discourse that does not represent the realities of all forms of cultural mixing and only express "a certain position and self-identity" (73), that of its elite designers.

Friedman condemns hybridity for being an elitist concept and accuses the cultural theorists for attempting to impose their definition of the world for the rest of us with their claims of cultural mastery of a multicultural world that is constantly changing. His main argument against cultural theorists is that they are "postmodernist cosmopolitans" (74). They are postmodernist because they identify themselves as representatives of the world's hybrid mixtures (ibid). The issue with this self-identification as postmodern cosmopolitan is that it represents the realities of transnational intellectuals and not of the hard realities of the majority of minority people living in contact zones. Postmodern cosmopolitanism "has little to do with the everyday problems of identity in the street, even as it is part of the same world" and looks "elsewhere than the street its realities" (ibid). This "elsewhere" where the hybridity theorists, including Bhabha, find the materials and proofs of their arguments is largely based on fictitious and other artistic creations, on the "analysis of literature, of intellectuals, of films, and—not least—of music," where it is easy to be selective and where identifying multiple roots is easy, rather than on real lived-experiences. As Friedman rhetorically asks:

> For whom, one might ask, is such cultural transmigration a reality? In the works of the post-colonial border-crossers, it is always the poet, the artist, the intellectual, who sustains this displacement and objectifies it in the printed word. But who reads the poetry [...]? (79)

Friendman rightly points a finger at Bhabha, himself a migrant, for promoting a theory that misreads the realities of immigrants, relying exclusively on literary works as his source materials. For example, he explain South African politics and social reality based solely on one passage from Nadine Gordimer's novel (79).

Another criticism comes from Hutnyk. His main accusation of hybridity is that rather than fighting imperialistic and racist politics in the UK over the past twenty-five years, hybridity is a "rhetorical cul-de-sac" that minimizes political revolutionary endeavors of minorities, and presents, instead, " middle-class success conservative success stories" (122). Hybridity, as such, is nothing but an in-vogue concept that deliberately overlooks real political issues, presenting the lives of its dedicated, but detached, elite advocates and "enabling a passive and comfortable– if linguistically sophisticated – intellectual quietism" (122).

Similarly, Pnina Werbner distinguishes between the two forms of hybridity, that of the cosmopolitans versus the transnational immigrants. To illustrates, she creates a metaphor of the beautiful butterflies who travel in a greenhouse, a metaphor for the global village, that is specifically designed for them to move with all elegance and ease, as opposed to the bees and the ants who have to work hard to build their own hives and nest in new lands. She writes :

> Cosmopolitans […] are multilingual gourmet tasters who travel among global cultures, savouring cultural differences as they flit with consummate ease between social worlds. Such gorgeous butterflies in the greenhouse of global culture are a quite different social species from the transnational bees and ants who build new hives and nests in foreign lands. (11-12)

One of Bhabha's strongest critics, Marxist scholar Aijaz Ahmad condemns bhabhas' theory for bearing no relationship to reality. He criticizes Bhbha for inventing a theory that can only and exclusively account for the reality of the migrant intellectual who leads a comfortable life in the Western metropolis. He quotes Bhabha's over-celebration and romanticization of the experience of the hybrids for whom "America leads to Africa; the

nations of Europe and Asia meet in Australia; the margins of the nation displace the centre ... The great Whitmanesque sensorium of America is exchanged for a Warhol blowup, a Kruger installation, or Mapplethorpe's naked bodies" ("Postcolonial Theory" 371). What can be discerned from this passage is that Bhabha's hybrids include only male, bourgeois, privileged, intellectual migrants who can have such life of constant joyous mobility.

Elsewhere, Ahmad notes that Bhabha's theory generalizes and universalizes the condition of the cosmopolitan intellectual elites and presents subjects who are "free of gender and class" ("The Politics" 13). Highlighting the migrant's hybrid reality, Bhabha tells us that the "truest eye may be now belong to the migrant's double vision" (qtd.in Ahmad, "Postcolonial Theory" 371). However, to Ahmad, hybridity operates according to the "truest eye" of the migrant intellectual which refuses to see the concrete reality of most migrants who "tend to be poor and experience displacement not as cultural plenitude but as torment" (ibid 373).

Therefore, hybridity betrays the very colonial binary system it intends to destroy. Rather than dismantling it, hybridity really does frame a new configuration of center/margin where the elite academic is placed at the center and those who do not fit are pushed to the periphery. Correspondingly, Dayal observes that hybridity is just another word for the "cosmopolitan intellectuals" who stand in stark opposition to the struggling immigrant ("Diaspora" 49). The two categories exist in a space of inclusion and exclusion as the hybrids that are welcome in the West are the first category and not the second (ibid 46). Bhabha's Third Space, as a liberating, creating and empowering, space is the one inhabited only by the cosmopolitan intellectual. As Dayal states, "The cosmopolitan doesn't share the same cultural location as the refugee or the exile […] for some diasporics the condition is not as empowering as it is for other relatively cosmopolitan intellectuals" ("Diaspora" 49).

Indeed, the core of Friedman's anti-hybridity backlash is that hybridity is just another form of categorization, based on essentialism and purity. It is invented for the self-serving purposes of privileged postmodern cosmopolitan theorists who used their own privileged lives, as academics, in addition to literary productions and other art forms to define the world of a majority whose reality remains way more different:

> Ethnic purity, racism and hybridity are variations on the same essentialised and fundamentally objectified notion of culture that is continuously reproduced by a specific form of identification, or identity practice, in combination with the general properties of social experience acquired in different positions within the local hierarchies of the global system. (82)

These postmodern cosmopolitans, according to Friedman, belong to a global village that is merely the collection of separate entities "under the political umbrella of super-state, a cultural elite, a council of leaders" (75). There is a self-conscious element of the theorization of hybridity as a necessity for the intellectual elite and their existence as postmodern cosmopolitans to define themselves as the product of hybridization because the latter implies a discourse that is "anti racist" and "anti-ethnic" to support their vision of a "raceless world" (76). Though this world vision is a moral one, it is self-evident "to itself as a subjectivity" (76). Hybridity is, accordingly, a political project that aims to assign an identity to a cosmopolitan Third World cultural elite.

Most postcolonial critics, including for example Bhabha, Gilroy, Rushdie, Glissant, Lionnet, Spivak, Stuart Hall are themselves postcolonial hybrids, who benefitted from imperial rule and colonialism . They come from a privileged position of elite bourgeois upper class in their homelands that is commonly known to have collaborated and benefitted from colonial rule (Acheraïou 110). Then, they travelled to the imperial West as privileged students to pursue their academic careers and created their theory from this privileged position. Their theory presents them both as victims of colonialism (which is not true), and as "hybrid colonial products" for reasons described by Acheraïou, who agrees with Friedman's view

above, as "narcissistic" (ibid). That is because emphasizing their own hybridty they wanted to be acknowledged as "*traits-d'union*" between the Third World and the First world. Most significantly, celebrating their hybrid status, they wished above all to have their theory accepted, "legitimized and credited" by the Western institutions to which they belong (111).

IV.7 Hybridity and Homelessness: Ethnicity as a Game and Identity as a Mask

As essential aspects of postmodern cosmopolitanism, fragmentation, rootlessness and the destruction of boundaries risk rendering ethnicity into a game and alienating identity from the subject, reducing it to "a mere mask or role to be taken on at will" (Friedman 76). Besides, the process of hybridization and the elective shift from one identity to another robs identity from any sense of depth. One can only ponder what would happen to a leaf cut off from its tree, or to a rootless trunk? How desolate and weary is it to play one role after another, or wear one mask after another, without ever settling to one true essence? Indeed, Friedman argues that in their zealous celebration and embracement of difference, postmodern cosmopolitans lose a sense of who they are, as they become a collage of different identities and cultural markers, a chaotic patchwork that represents nothing more than "a gathering of differences, often in their own self-identifications" (83).

In addition to the assimiltionist hybridity that I spoke of earlier, there is on the other end of the spectrum, another form of "destabilizing hybridity" which rejects belonging altogether (Piterse, *Globalization and Culture* 92). Creating a neither/nor space and identity, hybridity condemns its subjects to live in a painful space and state of in-betweenness, homelessness and uncertainty. Dayal states that the fractured self of the hybrid identity is less a "both/and and more a neither/nor," as Bhabha himself claims in his *Location of Cutlure*. He stresses that the destabilization of the zones of cultural boundaries and the doubleness of hybrid identity are a negative experience that is "fracturing of the subject" (48). Bhabha's hybridity, as such, becomes a synonym with fragmentation and represents a threat to the

fullness of selfhood that involves pain and dislocation. For, living in the borderline between cultures, Bhabha's hybrids are eventually lost in masks and pretences.

Friedman insists that ethnocentrism is not the same as racism, for while the latter is wrong; the former is not only morally acceptable but an inescapable part of who we are. He writes that "strong cultural identities are the source of cultural creativity, and that there is nothing wrong with this as long as it does not lead to racism" (77). He even goes further to emphasize that if cultures exchange all their elements together, the world would be reduced to one culture, and there would be no sense of wonder left, "there would no longer be any differences, and thus no mutual attraction" (77).

In a similar vein, Nikos Papastergiadis equates hybridity with a postmodern subjectivity that describes identity as being in some sort of a "hybrid state" (157). He affirms that the poststructuralist approach adopted by postcolonial critics has been successful in their political project of integration and emancipation that stood against ideologies of exclusion and "liberat[ed] the subject from notions of fixity and purity in origin" (157). However, the downside of their project is that it has also been "fragmenting" (157). He emphasizes the process of "bricolage" which he considers a significant drawback of the Bhabhaian representation of hybrid identity that is always formed in the "twixt of displacement and re-invention" (277).

According to Papastergidis, Bhabha's "process of reinscription and negotiation" (*location* 114), is a restless process of identification and bricolage that prevents the construction of a coherent identity (277-278). Moreover, while hybridity is introduced as an antidote to the colonial discourse of authority by creating a new category for the Other, one that defies the binary logic of Western thinking, it fails and produces a confusing category, "The interaction between the two cultures proceeds with the illusion of transferable forms and
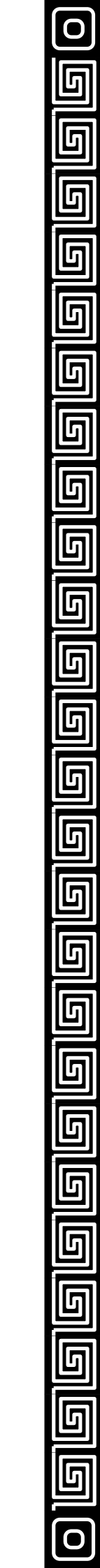
transparent knowledge, but leads increasingly into resistant, opaque and dissonant exchanges" (279).

Conclusion

Different critics have looked at the concept of hybridity from different perspectives. While it is much celebrated for its empowering and liberating potentials that free the individual from the shackles of essentialist discourse of racial purity, cultural superiority and fixed identity, it is also criticized for falling prey to the very essentialist logic it attempts to deconstruct. According to this view, the very idea of the notion of hybridity is founded upon the assumption and recognition that pure and essential cultures exist. In other words, it must first acknowledge that there has been a superior Western culture and an inferior non-Western culture, which means, thus, that it does nothing to promote the non-Western culture out of its inferior position. It has not really destroyed the hierarchies, but only created a third category that mixes different cultures.

Moreover, it is also accused of being an elitist concept, created by a group of bourgeois elite academics who resorted to literature to justify their theory and who have nothing to do with the everyday struggles and suffering of the poor immigrant, the refugee, and the non-elite cosmopolitan traveler. In addition to this, the psychological consequences linked to hybridity should not be overlooked. Hybridity celebrates rootlessness and homelessness, and this reduces identity to be a mask and aggravates the person's sense of non-belonging. The idea of power and hegemony is also brought forth in discussion of the negatives of cultural hybridity. Even if we accept the fact that cultural contact leads to culture interchange, this interchange is characterized by power imbalance since, most of the times, the non-Western is the one who is influenced more by the Western culture as opposed to vice versa.

The novels under question in this study, Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine* and Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*, demonstrate all these negative potentials of hybridity and prove the failure of this concept, especially when the characters carry their own past and their own traumas, in addition to their low social and economic status in the host country, which influences the hybridization process. All these aspects are studied in the third and fourth chapters of this thesis.

Chapter II.Trauma, Trauma Theory and Trauma Fiction

Introduction

The novels discussed in this research all portray characters who display symptoms of what we call nowadays post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a term which has gained enormous fame in what has been dubbed by Lucy Bond and Stef Craps "the age of trauma" (40). PTSD is a debilitating anxiety disorder resulting from exposure to trauma and which has devastating consequences on the individual. This idea of the psychological impact of trauma on individuals is not a new one, nor is it a simple one. Referring to its complex nature, Roger Luckhurst describes trauma as an "exemplary conceptual knot," and a "hybrid assemblage" of various elements from different fields. Any attempts to untie the trauma knot in order to theorize and define trauma involves making sense of a slippery, controversial, and highly mobile concept that has gone through several stages of development throughout history, traversing the boundaries between different disciplines and discourses, and which was contested since its genesis.

Therefore, this chapter precisely aims at writing a genealogy of trauma and providing an overview of its historical evolution. I draw on primary sources to trace how the concept of trauma was created in the nineteenth century as a medical and legal discourse and evolved to wartime trauma of soldiers and eventually to the current understanding of PTSD. Doing so, I distinguish the different labels that were used to express psychological trauma as well as highlight the debates that surrounded this concept which was historically known as railway spine, traumatic neurosis, soldier's heart, Da Costa syndrome, shell shock and currently PTSD.

How does trauma affect the human mind? Why does the mind sometimes repress the traumatic event only to come back and haunt the victim through intrusive and repetitive phenomena? Why is trauma unspeakable and can't trauma be put into words? Cathy Caruth's

trauma theory, which the second part of this chapter examines thoroughly, provides detailed answers to these questions.

All these features of trauma pose a challenge for fiction writers to depict trauma. It might be argued that art is inadequate for the representation of trauma because the latter silences, represses and shatters. As an overwhelming event beyond the range of normal human experience, trauma resists linguistic articulation. Therefore, this chapter also attempts to address this issue, by defining trauma fiction and delineating its characteristics. It is argued, in this chapter, that the most adequate way of representing trauma is through postmodern techniques which happen to align with the symptoms of PTSD. Postmodern narrative structure itself, characterized by fragmentations, repetition, gaps and silences, become a proof of the psychological symptoms of trauma.

Focus then is paid to Michelle Balaev's pluralistic trauma theory, a reaction against the failure of Caruth's theory to take into account the social, cultural, and political contexts where trauma occurs.

I. A Genealogy of Trauma

I.1 Origins or the Traumas of Modernity

The word trauma was originally used in the seventeenth century to refer to external bodily injures and surgical wounds (Leys 19). The onset of modernity in the nineteenth century marks the beginning of the transfer of the term from the surgical field to the psychological one to mean a wound of the psyche. The nineteenth century was characterized by the shocks of industrialization, urbanization, mechanization of labour, economic expansion, social progress, and the rise of the modern metropolis. The process of urbanization created big modern metropolitan cities that were rife with safety and health hazards (poverty, diseases, poor hygiene, poor work conditions, and lack of drinking water to name some). This

was too overwhelming to modern man's psyche and had staggering psychological effects on people even though the concept of psychological trauma was not yet born.

Roger Luckhurst quotes Grant Allen who wrote in 1894 that instead of making life easier, "new machines had come to make life still more complicated […] six penny telegrams, bell and Edison, submarine cables, evening papers, perturbations coming in from all sides incessantly; suburbs growing, the hubbub increasing, Metropolitan railways, trams, bicycles, innumerable" (20). With the surge of these new sensory stimuli, the modern city became a site of one traumatic encounter after another, a "locus of new mental and nervous disorders" (Lerner and Micale 10). In light of this, it does not seem surprising to state that modernity was responsible for the creation of new modern urban selves in the midst of shocking and traumatic encounters within the city.

The official history of trauma and the emergence of trauma discourse begin with one particular nineteenth-century invention: the railway. The railway is considered the epitome of the technological triumphs and industrial development of the Victorian age. Indeed, it is considered as the symbol of the nineteenth century (Harrington 31). Nevertheless, the railway also created the accident[5]. The railway accident was a visible manifestation of the "price" paid for the triumphs of the Victorian era. The unprecedented spread of railway accidents during that time makes the railway also stand as a symbol of trauma, terror, destruction and public distrust of technology.

I.2 Railway Mania, Railway Spine: A Strange Phenomenon

Strangely, it is not advent in modern weaponry that was the origin of the first investigations into the concept of psychological trauma, but advent in modern transportation

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[5]The present meaning of the very concept of the accident as an unexpected, horrible, and destructive event was created "almost entirely" by the railway in the 19th century. Before that, accident meant something that happens by chance. See: Hacking, Ian. *Rewriting the Soul: Multiple Personality and the Sciences of Memory*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995, p. 195

(Caplan, *Mind Games* 12). Despite the advantages of the annihilation of space and the shrinkage of time caused by the railway, as described by an article in the *Quarterly Review* in 1839 (22), railways were fraught with danger and threat. Indeed, the first fatal railway accident occurred during the opening of the first modern inter-city railway company in Britain, The Liverpool and Manchester Railway Company, on 15 September 1830. The company's steam engine, *Stephenson's Rocket*, ran over and fatally wounded the Member of Parliament William Huskisson whose death did little to discourage the spread and use of railroads across the country. Thousands of people were using the train within the next weeks, and many more fatal accidents were reported for the next thirty years, causing more than 200 deaths per year, with the frightening number of 758 deaths in 1874 (Luckhurst 21).

The magnitude of the railway accident, caused by the high speed of the collision and the sheer number of the passenger victims, was something never experienced before and caused new forms of injuries. It led to the emergence of what has been dubbed as "the railway spine" phenomenon, standing for the medico-legal debate regarding the post-traumatic symptoms of railroad accident victims during the nineteenth century. And that is how the railway accident became the "first attempt to explain industrial traumata" (Schivelbusch 131).

Victims of train accidents fell within two categories. The first experienced common visible physical injuries such as bruising, bone fractures, open wounds, brain concussions; in short regular physical trauma. The second category, or what has come to be known as railway spine, involved victims who escaped unscathed, but presented mysterious and inexplicable symptoms days, even weeks, after the accident. These symptoms included, but were not exclusive to, headaches, irritability, anxiety, fatigue, amnesia, insomnia, and general pain. This posed legal questions of liability and responsibility on railway companies when survivors who manifested those complaints were demanding monetary compensations for their *invisible* injuries.

The legal system was facing a dilemma for two reasons: (1) the symptoms appeared only some time after the accident, creating the problem of establishing a causal link between the accident and the symptoms; and (2) there was no obvious physical injury. This led to the appearance of malingers who sought to take advantage of this situation. In order to discover real from fake cases, doctors were given the two tasks of proving that the symptoms were caused by the accident, as well as confirming that there exists indeed an invisible wound of some sort.

To provide a causal link between the traumatic accident and the symptoms, the disease was argued to come from a physical organic origin. Even though the cause of the symptoms was a mystery due to the absence of a discernible injury, doctors attributed it to an invisible concussion of the spine upon the crash, which damaged the spinal matter but was invisible and led to the onset of the symptoms at a later date, hence the name railway spine. The following point presents two exemplary cases of railway spine and its symptoms.

The Case of Mr. Shepherd

On 13 July 1858, the case of a Mr. Shepherd was presented to court to sue the railway company and ask for compensation. Mr. Shepherd claimed that he began feeling seriously ill a day after his involvement in a train accident on 22 March 1858, where he was "thrown violently about the carriage, and other passengers were thrown on top of him" (Harrington, "On the Tracks of Trauma" 211). He did not suffer any injury at the time of the accident and was indeed able to walk in the scene and even to go look around and examine the site of the "defective arrangement of the rails" (ibid 212). It was not until the following day when he reached his work that he found himself seriously unwell and had to return home immediately. "His chief complaint at the time of the trial was a feeling of nervous depression, and particularly that the countenances of his fellow-passengers, with terrified eyes, would come before him whenever he attempted to do any reading or writing" (ibid). The case of Mr.

Shepherd is a perfect example of some railway spine symptoms, mainly what has come to be known as flashbacks at a later stage in the genealogy of trauma, in addition to nervous depression, nightmares and hallucinations. Most especially, it also demonstrates the belated manifestation of the symptoms and the absence of a visible organic injury.

Doctors and lawyers strongly debated Mr. Shepherd's condition. His own doctor believed that his complaints were real, and that it would take him a long time to recover, while the doctors representing the railway company argued that he was a healthy individual who was exaggerating his symptoms. In the end, the jury decided he deserved to be awarded a compensation of 700 pounds for the effects his symptoms had on his ability to conduct his own business. This debate is an illustration of the medico-legal context that led to the first investigations into the concept of trauma.

The Case of Monsieur D…

Such were the strange cases following railway accidents. Victims walked away uninjured only to present later some bizarre, sometimes fatal symptoms, as is the case of Monsieur D… in France who was on a train that collided with another one on 5 September 1881. It was reported that while Monsieur D… was violently shaken during the accident, he could nevertheless, go about to help other victims on the site and then go home. Not long after the accident, he witnessed a dramatic change of behavior. His physical and mental health declined to reach "such a point that it [was no longer possible] to hope for improvement," wrote his examining doctor. Prior to the accident, Monsieur D… was a healthy man who suffered no illness or "troublesome hereditary difficulties." However, just the day before his doctor wrote his report, he seemed particularly nervous, returned home, and attempted suicide by poisoning himself. Impatient with the slow effect of the poison, he "seized a knife and after stabbing himself seven times to the chest, died instantly" (Blum 40).

I.2.1 The Medico-Legal Discourse of Trauma: Erichsen and Page

What is peculiar about the discourse of trauma is that besides the medical context, it also appeared within the context of litigation, liability and responsibility. Horwitz points out that "the initial battles over the reality of psychic traumas were thus mainly fought in courtrooms" (32-33), as I have demonstrated in the cases of Mr. Shepherd and Monsieur D…. In addition to the legal debate, railway spine created debate among physicians who had to explore a mysterious pathology with no obvious physical cause. They were divided into two opposing sides, represented by two main medical figures: John Eric Erichsen and Herbert Page whose works marked the beginning of formal conceptualization of psychological trauma.

Danish surgeon John Eric Erichsen laid out the first medical text to explore the railway spine in details in a series of lectures published in 1866 in his book*On Railway and Other Injuries of the Nervous System.* Erichsen's view was based onthe traditional somatic theory that explained the appearance of the psychological symptoms as a result of a non-discernible physical damage. In his book, Erichsen stresses the effects of railway accidents on the victims who did not have any physical injuries. He notes that there are two striking elements always mentioned in the reports of the patients. The first is that the victims did not suffer anything *immediately* after the accident, and the second is that only some days later, the victims become overwhelmed and start to experience strange psychological symptoms (95-96).

Erichsen's discussion of the psychic symptoms is firmly rooted in the somatic theory that emphasized that illnesses always have an organic (physical) cause. Days after the accident, the patient begins suffering from unexplained fatigue, headaches, depression, and insomnia resulting from horrible nightmares, "The sleep is disturbed, restless, and broken. He wakes up in sudden alarm; dreams much; the dreams are distressing and horrible," Erichsen

explains (99). Erichsen's conceptualization of trauma can be adequately summarized as the view that railway accidents caused spinal cord compressions, or concussions to the spine, which in turn resulted in psychological symptoms. While he could not prove via dissection the existence of visible physical injuries to the spine, he provides the analogy of the magnet and the dropped watch to support his argument. When a magnet is struck with a "heavy blow with a hammer," it loses its magnetic power because it is "jarred, shaken, or concussed" (95). Even if there is no visible damage to the magnet, we cannot really describe the mechanism behind this or how it is exactly that the magnet loses its power. Erichsen argues that, similarly, in railway accidents the blow causes a change to the nervous structure and affects the nervous power of the patient through a mechanism whose nature could neither be seen nor explained.

Gender issues also played a role in shaping Erichsen's theory of railway spine. While both men and women were prone to railway accidents, the majority of the victims were men, who were more likely to travel by trains compared to women who were more confined to the domestic sphere in Victorian England. Upon examining railway spine cases, Erichsen was shocked to discover that both male and female victims suffered the same emotional symptoms. Given the fact that at that time these emotional symptoms strongly resembled the condition of hysteria[6], which was believed to be a strictly female ailment, he had to provide an explanation for the appearance of female-related hysterical symptoms in men. For example, presenting the case of a forty-five-year old male victim of a railway crash, Erichsen astonishingly asks, "Is it reasonable to say that such a man has suddenly become 'hysterical' like a 'lovesick girl?'" (qtd.in Caplan, *Mind Games* 3). The only logical explanation to Erichsen who "could not fathom the possibility of a big, strapping man falling victim to what he and others of his generation held to be an exclusively female malady" was that the disease

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[6]Coming from the Greek work *hustéra*, meaning womb, hysteria refers to a disorder of "the wondering womb." It was believed to be a strictly female malady. For more see: Showalter, Elaine.*The Female Malady: Women, Madness, and English Culture, 1830-1980.* NY: Pantheon, 1986.

resulted from a physical injury (ibid). Erichsen's theory was, thus, based more on nineteenth century androcentric logic and medical somatic orientations than on tangible evidence.

I.2.2 Erichsen's Opponent Herbert Page: Railway Spine as a Psychic Injury

Even though the view of Erichsen, who represented in court the victims who sues railway companies for compensation (Horwitz 29), was widely accepted in the courtroom, there were many opponents to it within the medical field. Skeptical views rejected Erichsen's theory because with the absence of an obvious injury, the victims' claims could not be verified and validated; thus, psychological symptoms could easily be faked for monetary gains. Eric Caplan states, " Some argued that those suffering from this so-called disease were, in fact, conniving malingers who had feigned their symptoms for the purpose of suing the railroads" ("Trains and Trauma" 58). This meant that a number of experts did not even accept the idea that railway spine was a real disorder.

Fellow surgeon Herbert Page dismissed the purely physiological Erichsenian model. Noting that "real and alleged injuries could be aggravated by claimants seeking generous compensation," he defined trauma as a pre-existing mental hysteria that was aggravated by railway accidents and the opportunity for damage claims (Keller & Chappell 1599). In his 1883's publication titled *Injuries of the Spine and Spinal Cord Without Apparent Mechanical Lesion, and Nervous Shock, In their Surgical and Medico-Legal Aspects*, Page surveys different renowned medical figures to dispute the claim that concussions without physical evidence could cause the symptoms associated with railway spine. His argument is that it is impossible for the spine to be physically injured or damaged with no visible organic proof of this damage. Page rejected Erichsen's claim that invisible spinal lesions were the cause of the disease because there was no evidence to support this view, especially upon post-mortem autopsy. The condition, instead, was caused by some kind of a chemical disturbance to the nervous system (25).

Challenging the Erichsenian model, Page, who was a surgeon of the London and North Western Railway, presented his own model that highlighted the psychological aspect of railway spine. Page's view was firmly grounded on the argument that the condition was that of a nervous shock, resulting from purely psychological origins. For him, "the element of great fear and alarm" produced such a strong nervous shock in railway accidents that was sufficient to cause damage to the nervous system and to lead to psychic collapse, causing psychological symptoms that might even lead to death. He explains, "The vastness of the destructive forces, the magnitude of the results, the imminent danger to the lives of numbers of human beings, and the hopelessness of escape from the danger, give rise to emotions which in themselves are quite sufficient to produce shock or even death itself" (148).

Page's contribution to the understanding of psychological trauma is remarkable. Prior to the publication of Page's book, the railway spine condition was, "in the surgeon's hand and studied from a surgeon's standpoint," (Caplan, *Mind Games* 20). Even though Page was a surgeon, his theory did not appeal to surgeons alone, but to neurologists as well, who only "took up the matter seriously" after Page (ibid). Page, therefore, is credited for introducing a new psychological theory of trauma, changing, hence, the orientation of somatic medical discourse. In sum, late nineteenth century witnessed a gradual psychologization of the concept of trauma, with the direction of emphasis shifting from physical to psychological traumatogenic factors.

I.3 The American Civil War and Trauma: The Da Costa Syndrome

As early as the American Civil War (1861-1865), descriptions of post-trauma-related symptoms, known as Da Costa Syndrome, irritable heart syndrome, soldier's heart syndrome have been documented. During this time, war injuries exclusively included only physical type of wounds, and the emotional or psychological damage resulting from military combat was not regarded within any medical framework. Any psychological complaints following, or

during the war, was considered as a sign of moral weakness and cowardice, the worst appellation a soldier could get. Soldiers who suffered from psychological symptoms were viewed as malingers and cowards, faking their symptoms to avoid combat (Horwitz 21).

The American Civil War was not a small war. It had enormous repercussions on all parties involved and led to hundreds of thousands of casualties. The aftermath of the war was severe, with casualties that could reach up to 23,000 in a single day (like in the Battle of Antietam), or 50,000 deaths, after the three-day battle of Gettysburg. Fatalities of the Union and Confederate force were estimated to be more than 600,000 deaths. "On a proportionate basis, this was six times more than in World War II, thirty-one times more than in the Korean War, and sixty-nine times more than in the Vietnam War," as put by Horwitz (21). Most Civil War soldiers were young, even teenage, volunteers, who had not been exposed to war or to violence before and were unprepared for the atrocities that they witnessed, which made the psychological effects on them even worse

Witnessing the horrors of the civil war, many combatants suffered a wide range of symptoms like loss of appetite, sadness and longing for home. Instead of being attributed to the war, these psychological symptoms were explained as cases of "nostalgia" defined as the longing for home and for peacetime, especially amongst young soldiers. In fact, at that time, military medicine had little regard to any mental-related illnesses that soldiers might suffer from as a result of their combat experience. Both doctors and officers, and even families of the afflicted, viewed those who reported psychological suffering, including insanity, as "despicable shirkers," wanting an easy way out of the war by faking their disease, and were even harshly punished (Dean 202).

The fact that the American Civil War was also the first conflict where the majority of soldiers were literate, a good body of written material detailing the psychological agonies of their war and post-war experiences was produced. Many veterans wrote about their post-war

symptoms and how the horrific images they saw during the war came back to haunt their waking and sleeping moments. Almost forty-two years after the war, a veteran described how he could still vividly remembers images of the carnage of Shiloh, " Tho it now lacks but two days of forty two years since that morning, the picture has not faded in the least" (Dean 67). Prominent essayist Ambrose Pierce similarly spoke about how he was haunted all his life by the ghastly visions dead bodies and people dying (Faust 196). Another surviving veteran mentioned that years after the war had ended he still trembled, and his heart "almost ceases[d] to beat at the horrid recollection" (Adams 126). The wife of another soldier similarly reported that her husband would scream "Don't speak to me; don't you hear them bombarding? They are coming, they are coming. See the bombshell" several years after the combat had ended (Dean 104). The reliving of the traumatic event and flashbacks have later been recognized as symptoms of what is now diagnosed as PTSD.

However, even when veterans continued to experience the psychic effects of the civil war years afterwards, if not for the rest of their lives, doctors refused to associate their postwar psychic complaints with their traumatic war experience. Instead, some physicians attributed the condition to the soldiers' immoral lifestyle, primarily tobacco, spirits, alcohol and opiates' addictions, which were indeed resorted to as a way to ward off the terrifying war memories, and not the causes of their ailment. Other doctors attempted to provide a physical explanation for the veterans' psychic condition which was viewed as a heart disease. Surgeon Arthur Bowen Richards Myers in 1870 coined the term "soldier's heart" to describe the condition of severe fatigue, extreme anxiety, heart palpitation, tremors, sweating, and dyspnea among soldiers. The cause, Myers confirms, was nothing more that the soldier's uniform which caused an unnecessary chest compression leading to cardiac hypertrophy observed as a "soldier's spot" on post-mortem examination. The treatment was simple, "Allow the men

[soldiers] to open their jackets" instead of wanting them to look "smart and set up" at the expense of their health (qtd.in Howell 35).

Similarly, American army surgeon Jacob Mendez Da Costa coined the term "irritable heart" in his 1871's study of soldiers' hearts. Da Costa observed that two hundred patients, all soldiers, reported chest pains, shortness of breath, palpitations, dizziness, and fatigue, following strenuous hard field service or battlefield wounds and persisting well after the activity ended and the wounds healed. The disease was categorized as a cardiovascular disease, and was named later "the Da Costa Syndrome." Like Meyers, Da Costa, linked the disease to the waist belt and knapsack the soldiers had to wear and recommended that they stop wearing them to prevent the disease and speed the recovery. It is clear that Myers and Da Costa evaded associating the symptoms to post-war stress. In other words, the medical diagnosis veered towards a physical explanation of psychological symptoms because of the medico-cultural and military discourse at that time deemed psychological symptoms of war-related trauma as signs of weakness and as the coward's excuse to escape the battlefield.

I. 4 Towards the Psychologization of the Trauma Concept

The founding of modern European and American psychiatry and psychotherapy during the period between 1870 and 1910 led to psychological theorizing of new paradigms regarding the concept and functioning of the human mind, which contributed to the genesis of contemporary trauma theory and PTSD. The new psychodynamic approach viewed the mind as having two compartments; a conscious and unconscious one, and focused on issues of memory and the past. New to mainstream psychology and to the medical discourse was the idea that traumatic memories can be hidden in an unconscious part of the brain only to affect the individual later on in the form of psychopathological disorders; such as hysteria, amnesia, paralyses and multiple personality (dissociation). Emphasis, however, was still put on the

somatic/organic origins of trauma and mental disorders. The result was that the concept of trauma created rival views and was still controversial.

I.4.1 Oppenheim and Traumatic Neurosis

The term "traumatic neurosis" was conceived by Herman Oppenheim, leading neurologist of Berlin's neuropsychiatry in 1889 to replace the concept of railway spine. Oppenheim considered traumatic neurosis as a result of physical reaction to the experience of fright, causing "molecular changes in the central nervous system" (Oppenheim 1171). Oppenheim, thus, like Page, acknowledged the primary emotional effect of shock as the causative factor in traumatic neurosis, functioning with another mediating cause (i.e., the molecular changes on the nervous system).

Oppenheim, on the other hand, insisted that malingering only played a minor role in traumatic neuroses. He presented forty-two cases of railway accident victims with minor head injuries and a variety of neurological and psychological symptoms, summarized in Table 2.

Psychological Symptoms
Unrest, excitement, fear, increased arousal, melancholic mood, irritability and phobias.
Neurological/ Quasi-neurological Symptoms
Dizziness, fainting.
Paralytic features, such as hemiparesis, excluding face and tongue.
Disturbances of physical sensation: areas of hyperaesthesia or anaesthesia, affecting irregular zones of the body.
Absence of movements to avoid pain.
Muscular tension, sometimes to the extreme of contractures.
Increased tendon reflexes.
Speech disturbances.
Sensory involvement, especially visual disturbances: reduced sight and concentric visual field restriction.
Inability to stand or to run (astasia and abasia).
Different forms of tremor.

Table 2.Neurological and Psychological Symptoms of Oppenheim's Traumatic Neurosis.

I.4.2 Charcot: From Traumatic Neurosis to Traumatic Hysteria

Between 1878 and his death in 1893, Jean-Martin Charcot published over 20 detailed cases of what he called "névrose traumatiques" and "hystérie traumatiques" (traumatic neurosis, traumatic hysteria), especially in victims of railway accidents. Hysteria encompasses a wide range of psychological symptoms like emotional outbursts and seizures, and physical ones like fainting, chocking, convulsions, paralysis and so on. Charcot established a link between post-traumatic symptoms and hysteria symptoms, codifying them under the names "traumatic neurosis," or "traumatic hysteria." He argued that memories of past traumatic events were hidden in the unconscious part of the mind and would later manifest themselves though hysterical symptoms (Micale 116).

Charcot also studied railway spine cases and stressed that the "neuropathic states," following railroad accident, "are often only hysteria, nothing but hysteria" (99). He agreed with Page that fright, or "the terror experienced by the patient at the moment of the accident" played the most important role in the genesis of the symptoms than the physical wound itself (231). The most pathogenic agent is the nervous shock, "le grand ébranlement psychique," and not the physical wound. As he puts it, "The nervous shock or commotion, the emotion almost unavoidably inseparable from an often life-threatening accident, is sufficient to produce the neurosis in question" (qtd.in Micale 139).

Charcot's contribution to the study of trauma was taking hysteria out its sex-restricted definition as an exclusively female malady (both etymologically and historically), to encompass both men and women. In fact, most of Charcot's writing about traumatic hysteria deals with male patients. In his *Clinical Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System (1889),* he presents six cases of men suffering hysteria following different industrial accidents. He noticed that following accidents, especially those with minor bodily injuries, patients presented physical and psychological symptoms but with the absence of any structural

damage. The symptoms were fatigue, pain, headaches, palpitations, chest pain, dizziness, fainting, trembling of extremities and paralysis, in addition to depression, insomnia, nightmares, phobias, and mental confusions.

Charcot called the disease, "L'hystérie du maçon, du serrurier" (the hysteria of the bricklayer and the locksmith) because in addition to railway spine cases, many of his cases were male-patients who were involved in work-related accidents, "a blacksmith burns his hand and forearm with a hot iron; a bricklayer falls two floors from his scaffolding; a ditch digger is struck in the face with a shovel while unloading a wagon" (Micale 137). Most importantly, he also included cases that were neither work-related nor railway spine. For instance, one of his cases was a man developing his hysterical symptoms two weeks after being assaulted and stabbed on the street one night, another developed symptoms after a near-drowning accident. Traumatic hysteria, as presented by Charcot, could be triggered by any type of traumatic experience, "a dog bite, a burn, the observation of a cadaver, and the experience of a surgical operation" or even by fright "from thunder and lightening" (Micale 137). This is important because Charcot widened the range of traumatogenic incidents.

On the other hand, what is peculiar about the Charcotian theory of traumatogenesis is its insistence on a hereditary predisposition for hysteria. Charcot explained that trauma symptoms resulted from what he called "*unediathèse,*" a hereditary ground/predisposition*,* working in combination with an environmental external shock, or what he called "un *agent provocateur,*" which only brings out the pre-existing pathogenic tendency, hence, leading to the emergence of the pathology (Pignol and Hirschelmann 428).

His theory was informed by late nineteenth century understanding of mental illness based on the Degeneration Theory which postulated that certain (lower) social classes and races (like African natives, criminals, social and political rebels, decadent artists and prostitutes) were genetically predisposed to various neurological and mental illnesses due to

bad heredity. To prove that the existence of hereditary physiological traits as a pre-requisite for hysteria, Charcot studied the family history of his patients, and traced their condition to some biological disorders suffered by other members of the family, "a nervous father, an asthmatic mother, an epileptic great uncle, children with hystero-epilepsy, and so on" (Luckhurst 36). Traumatic neurosis, as put forth by Charcot, was thus "a conjuncture where the accident met destiny, modernity met blood" (Luckhurst 36).

I.4.3 Pierre Janet: Trauma and Dissociation

Pierre Janet, Charcot's most famous student, shared his teacher's view of the heredity of hysteria, but he added another psychological dimension to hysteria; dissociation. According to Janet, memories of past traumatic experiences are stored in the subconscious part of the mind (a term coined by Janet) and would later lead to hysterical symptoms, including most importantly, dissociation. Frightening traumatic events are beyond the power of assimilation of the mind, which leads the patients to develop a dissociated state as a defense mechanism. Accordingly, traumatic memories are split from the rest of other memories and pushed to the hidden subconscious where they become an *idée fixe*. The *idée fixe* is outside the reach of the memory of the conscious mind and would form its own memory chain and association, creating "a new system, a personality independent of the first" (*The Mental State* 492). Sometimes, patients developed two or more distinct personalities, none aware of the existence of the others. Like his mentor, Janet also believed that traumatic events only have this kind of effects on genetically predisposed individuals.

Janet believed that traumatic neuroses and hysteria were caused by non-sexual reasons, and attacked Sigmund Freud for his over-emphasis on the sexual genesis of trauma. His study included patients who had different traumatic experiences, ranging from accidents to diseases to taking care of sickly individuals and observing the death of loved ones. Any event, such as the mere sighting of someone with a skin disease or drowning in freezing

water, can be traumatic and lead to hysterical symptoms like vision-loss, vomiting, paralysis, sleeping disorders and so on. For instance, "One patient has an amaurosis [loss of vision] in her left eye because she has seen a child with scabs on its left eye, and another vomits incessantly because he has nursed a [person with] cancer of the stomach" (*Major Symptoms of Hysteria* 291).

The symptoms were also different. Irene, for example, developed an amnesia that would block any memory or knowledge of her mother's death. Mrs D. had both retrograde amnesia (loss of past memory) and anterograde amnesia (no capacity to create new memories) when she was told, as a joke, that her husband died. Another woman developed phobia of dogs after being attacked by a dog and admitted to the Salpetriere for several months even if she had no memory of both events. Marie had hysterical blindness because when she was six, she had to share her bed with another child with impetigo. Janet's contribution is the inclusion of various events, and the creation of the concepts of traumatic memories and the subconscious.

I.5 Sigmund Freud and Trauma

The father of psychoanalysis, Sigmund Freud is a crucial figure in the genealogy and conceptualization of trauma. He is credited for "cement[ing]" the conceptualization of trauma as a psychic injury and transferring the notion of trauma from the medico-surgical field to the realm of psychology (Leys 18). Believing that the causes of traumatic hysteria were purely psychic changes rather than physiological ones, his thinking was similar to that of Charcot and Janet. Particularly, in his *Studies on Hysteria* (1895), co-authored with Joseph Breuer, he delineated his well-known Seduction Theory and made a link between past traumatic sexual experiences (in childhood) and symptoms of hysteria (in adulthood).

Breuer and Freud considered hysteria as a post-traumatic condition. Their Seduction Theory held that early childhood sexual traumas led to psychopathological disorders later in

life. Childhood traumas produced traumatic memories which remained unavailable to consciousness, i.e. repressed within the unconscious, but would appear later in the form of hysterical symptoms. Freud attributed the aetiology of hysteria to a "premature sexual experience" of sexual abuse that happens in early childhood (even infancy) "up to the age of eight to ten, before the child has attained sexual maturity. *A passive sexual experience before puberty" ("*Heredity" 149; italics in original).

I.5.1 Freud's Deferred Action, or Freudian *Nachträglichkeit*

Central to Freud's Seduction Theory and the conceptualization of trauma is his notion of the *"Nachträglichkeit."* Although there is no precise translation of the concept from German to English, its closest meaning is "deferred action." Freud uses it to refer to the deferred nature of the traumatic event and the temporal latency necessary for its translation as traumatic. To explain further, trauma happens as a result of two moments; a first one which is not traumatic because of lack of sexual maturity, and a second one which triggers memories of the first original event and enables the individual to understand it as traumatic. For Freud, trauma is, therefore, "constituted by a dialectic between two events […] and a temporal delay or latency through which the past was available only by a deferred act of understanding and interpretation" (Leys 20).

To put it another way, *Nachträglichkeit* means that trauma is characterized by a dual temporality wherein "that which occurs too soon paradoxically arrives too late" (Pedersen 28). One of the earliest examples Freud used to illustrate his notion of the *Nachträglichkeit* is the case of Emma in his *Project for a Scientific Psychology* (1895). Emma suffers from a phobia of going into shops alone. She says that this phobia started when she was twelve years old and went into a store to buy something. She escaped from the store, terrified, when she saw the two shop assistants looking at her, laughing at the way she was dressed. Ever since

this incident, Emma developed the phobia of going into shops by herself. Freud calls this incident "Scene I" (352)

Emma's extreme phobic reaction, however, did not make sense to Freud (353). As a result of investigating the issue further, Freud was able to unearth another more serious memory of an event which happened much earlier, and which explained Emma's phobia. When she was but eight years old, she went to a store by herself, and she was molested by the shop keeper who was smiling when he was molesting her. Emma did not realize this event was traumatic at the time of its happening, and the event was repressed into the unconscious part of her mind, which explains why she continued going to shops alone until Scene I occurred. Freud calls this incident "Scene II" (354).

The links between Scene I and Scene II explain Emma's phobia. The first link is that she went to both shops alone. The second one is that in both scenes there is the act of laughing or smiling. In Scene I, she thought the shop keepers were laughing at her clothes, and in Scene II the man who abused her smiled during the act. Freud then explained why it was Scene I instead of Scene II which caused Emma's traumatic symptoms, even when clearly the latter is more traumatic than the former. When Scene II happened, Emma was young and did not possess the discourse of sexuality that would enable her to understand what happened to her as traumatic sexual abuse. Scene II, on the other hand, happened when Emma was sexually mature, and triggered her mind to draw unconscious associations between the two scenes and understood the earlier scene (Scene II) as traumatic.

Trauma is, thus, defined by a temporal delay, as the traumatic event occurred too early, and the ego discovered it too late. This is what Freud meant by his notion of repression and *Nachträglichkeit*. Contemporary theorization of Trauma, as I will illustrate in a later part of this work, especially that of Cathy Caruth, is based on Freudian *Nachträglichkeit* in addition to his concept of the "repetition compulsion" which is discussed next.

I.5.2 Freud' Traumatic Neurosis andthe Concept of the Shield

While Freud gave a psychological dimension to the concept of trauma within a framework of the sexual causation of traumatic neuroses, the experience of WWI and the number of soldiers presenting hysteria-like symptoms called a revision of Freud's theory of trauma. War neuroses resulted, according to Freud, from a conflict between two opposing sides of the soldier's ego, "between the soldier's old peace-loving ego, or instinct for self-preservation, and his new war-loving ego, or instinct for aggression" (Leys 22). Moreover, he emphasized the role of stimuli in shaking the individual. Accordingly, he defined the traumatic as an overwhelming experience that "within a short period of time presents the mind with an increase of stimulus too powerful to be dealt with or worked off in the normal way, and this may result in permanent disturbances of the manner in which energy operates" (qtd.in Leys 23). Trauma originated from the ego's unpreparedness to deal with the large quantity of stimuli presented to it.

Freud developed his theory of the "stimulus shield" to explain war neurosis in his famous book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* (1920). He contends that the relationship between consciousness and the outside world operates with the existence of a skin-layer, or a "crust," formed around consciousness, which he called the "stimulus shield" (22). The function of the stimulus shield is essential for protecting the mental apparatus from harmful exogenous stimuli. It is formed as a dynamic barrier between the inside and outside so as to protect the ego and its integrity. The ability to control excitation and ward off stimuli is vital for the psychological well-being of the individual and the function of consciousness. As he explains that the mental apparatus "would be killed by the stimulation [...] if it were not provided with a protective shield against stimuli" (ibid).

Freud's model of the stimulus shield theorizes that traumatic neurosis occurs when the individual is confronted with an excessive influx of exogenous stimuli which is powerful

enough to pierce the ego's protective shield (ibid 23). It is the extensive breach of the protective shield by an over-stimulating external event that causes the organism to react in such a way as to lead to symptoms of traumatic neurosis. In addition to this, Trauma results from the feeling of "fright," which is defined by Freud, in opposition to "anxiety," as the lack of the ego's preparedness to be suddenly flooded by a large quantity of stimuli. Fright "emphasizes the factor of surprise," while anxiety "describes a particular state of expecting danger or preparing for it, even though it may be an unknown one" (ibid 6). Indeed, Freud believes that anxiety does not produce traumatic neurosis but protects the individual from it because it involves being prepared for danger.

I.5.3 The Compulsion to Repeat

Freud begins his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle* by explaining the dynamics of what he dubs "the pleasure principle" which automatically regulates our mental events (1). The latter, according to Freud, are "set in motion" taking a direction such that their outcome is "an avoidance of unpleasure and a produce of pleasure" (ibid). Freud defines pleasure as the decrease in the amount of excitation present in the mind and unpleasure as its increase (2-3). It is necessary to the mind to function according to the pleasure principle; that is to say to "keep the quantity of excitation present in it as low as possible or at least to a constant" (3).

However, Freud noticed that the repetitive dreams of battlefield which happened in traumatic neurosis are in stark contradiction to the pleasure principle. Why would the mind repeat that which only causes unpleasure and distress and take the traumatized soldier back to the traumatic situation, "a situation from which he wakes up in another fright" (7)? Freud answered that the traumatic experience's sudden occurring and the unpreparedness of the ego for it led to a "compulsion to repeat" repressed memories, in the form of nightmares, in an attempt of the ego to assimilate and to retrospectively master the traumatic experience because the ego was caught off guard at the moment of the happening of the trauma (26).

I.6 Trauma and WWI: Shell Shock

From the beginning of WW1 in 1914 through 1945 and beyond, the discourse of trauma was revived. However, the existing frameworks that defined and understood trauma, especially those linking it to incidents of childhood sexual abuse and hysteria, were not suitable for explaining the wide range of the psychological damages of the war, especially that the victims were soldiers who were supposed to epitomize masculinity, patriotism, bravery and honor.

Moreover, the fact that trauma was initially, and indeed continuously, defined within a medico-legal discourse led to debates regarding the integrity of traumatized victims who were thought to have feigned their symptoms for monetary compensation. Malingering also continued to be an issue in the context of the military, which viewed the psychic symptoms suffered by the victim in the postwar aftermath as either a sign of biological and mental weakness, or faked as a cowardly way of escaping combat, instead of a result of the devastating horrors of the war.

In addition to their psychological breakdown caused by the shocks of the war, victim soldiers also had to face the social stigma surrounding mental disorders, which viewed them as unmanly and dishonorable. This, in particular, prevented from the development of a medically-informed definition of war-related trauma because the belief that psychological distress represented cowardice (Horwitz 52). Nevertheless, due to the massiveness of the war and the large number of postwar traumatized victims exhibiting mental disturbances, the clinical focus of physicians during this era was to study and cure the effects of war experiences on the psychological well-being of individuals (Bianchi 222).

I.6.1 The Great War and its Terrors: Shell-Shock

As the first pan-European war since napoleon, WWI was dubbed the Great War. The word "great" here refers to the enormous scale of the war. Nobody was prepared for the length, brutality and enormous scale of the war. Men joined the war for honor, glory and adventure, but as the war progressed, the excitement of glory and adventure gave way to horror and mass murder. More than 70 million military personnel took part in the war, and by its end in 1918, millions of people lost their lives, which was greater than any previous war in history. As Historian Martin Gilbert details, "more than nine million soldiers, sailors and airmen were killed in the First World War. A further five million civilians are estimated to have perished under occupation, bombardment, hunger and disease" (xv). All sides suffered massive casualties, which was mainly due to the fact that WWI was a highly mechanized war with new developed warfare and technologies such as airplanes, submarines, tanks, machine guns, modern artillery and poison gases. Probably the most significant artillery technology was the artillery shell which wasthe greatest cause of death and injury on the Great War battlefield.

In addition to the loss of lives and physical injuries, there was also the spread of a different kind of wounds. It was one that was new to the military discourse; the psychic wound. Facing the epidemic of soldiers suffering from hysteria-related symptoms[7], such as deafness, loss of vision, paralyses, loss of speech, clinicians and psychiatrists resorted to the previous theories of railway and industrial accident traumas to explain the new phenomenon. Consequently, British psychologist and volunteer military doctor Charles Myers coined the term "shell-shock" in his paper "A Contribution to the Study of Shell Shock" which was published in *The Lancet* in February 1915. Presenting the cases of three soldiers suffering

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[7]Statistics show horrific numbers of psychologically traumatized victims during WWI. For example, there were over 80,000 shell-shock cases in Britain, from 200,000 to 300,000 cases in Germany, and a similar number or higher in France. Source: Stone, Martin. "Shellshock and the Psychologists."*The Anatomy of Madness. Essays in the History of Psychiatry*, edited by William F. Bynum, et al. London: Routledge, 2004, p. 249.

from loss of memory, vision, smell and taste, Myers made a connection between their psychic symptoms and being in proximity to explosions of artillery shells.

The psychic disturbances were justified as resulting from the physical force of exploding artillery shells which caused invisible brain injuries that would ultimately lead to the hysterical symptoms such as "starting eyes, violent tremors, a look of terror, and blue, cold extremities. Some were deaf and some were dumb; others were blind or paralyzed," as Myers listed the symptoms (Jones 4).

I.6.2 The Blurred Lines between Shell-Shock and Cowardice

As soldiers who were actually wounded by shells never presented the above-mentioned shell-shock symptoms, and as more soldiers who were not in close proximity of exploding shells did present clear cases of shell-shock, it became clear that the condition was not that of a physical wound but a psychological one. Twenty years after the end of the war, Myers did admit that the symptoms were a psychological reaction to a strong emotion, such as fear, caused by the war itself (Horwitz 54). The reason that Myers initially did not want to attribute shell-shock to a psychological origin was cultural.

Even though Charcot and Janet made it clear that it was not a strictly female condition, hysteria in the eyes of the public was still something that happened to women. Myers certainly recognized the similarities between hysteria and the cases of the soldiers he was dealing with, " the close relation of these cases to those of 'hysteria' appears fairly certain," he notes (320), but refused to associate the soldiers "with a female-related disorder , so he called it 'shell-shock'" (Horwitz 54). This was done to spare soldiers the stigma of cowardice, giving them the honor of a physical injury that was directly related to the war instead to a biological or mental frailty.

The traditional ideas of masculinity at the time dictated that it was a man's duty to protect and fight for his family and his country. The recruiting song "Your King and Country Want You," written by Paul Rubens in 1914 was heard everywhere. It was a woman's recruiting song used to encourage men to enlist for military service. The lyrics demonstrated clearly the code of masculinity that men had to abide to. They had to join the war to be worthy of the love of their women who were left at home waiting for their honorable return or honorable death, "And no matter what befalls you, We shall love you all the more." The following is an excerpt of the song to illustrate this idea:

> But now your country calls you to play your part in war,
> And no matter what befalls you, we shall love you all the more,
> So come and join the forces as your fathers did before.
> Oh! We don't want to lose you but we think you ought to go
> For your King and your Country both need you so;
> We shall want you and miss you but with all our might and main
> We shall cheer you, thank you, kiss you When you come back again.
> Shell-shock, however, made men hysterical and powerless, as they could not control

their symptoms. There were blurred lines between shell-shock and cowardice. On the one hand, men had to prove their masculinity by joining the war, and on the other hand, shell-shock caused them suffering that was linked to a female disorder. The psychic disturbances broke men down to their cores. Sassoon describes the horrific images he saw at Claiglockhart of soldiers losing control of themselves at night to nightmares and flashbacks:

> By night [the patients] lost control and the hospital became sepulchral and oppressive with saturations of war experience…The place was full of men whose slumbers were morbid and terrifying—men muttering uneasily or suddenly crying out in their sleep. In the daytime, sitting in a sunny room, a man could discuss his psycho-neurotic symptoms with his doctor…but by night each man was back in his doomed sector of a horror-stricken Front Line, where the panic and stampede of some ghastly experience was reenacted among the livid faces of the dead. (*Memoirs*, 556-557)

I.6.3 Debating Shell-Shock and the Psychologization of Shell Shock

That there was a label, shell-shock, given to the condition was true, but the cause was, however, still sharply debated amongst neurologists and military physicians who faced the difficult task of explaining how the war could generate a condition so similar to that of

hysterical women suffering traumas resulting from repressed memories of childhood sexual abuse. Some doctors viewed the condition as a hereditary one, stressing that the traumatized soldiers suffered from pre-existing mental disorders which were only exacerbated the war, instead of being caused by it. For example, Asylum doctor Sir Frederick Mott studied war-related traumas and argued that bursting shells caused invisible lesions to the spine and brain and consequent nervous disorders only to soldiers with a weak hereditary predisposition, "the vast majority of psycho-neurotic cases studied were among soldiers who had a neuropathic or psychopathic soil" (Mott 110). Others focused on the issue of malingering, claiming that soldiers only simulated their symptoms as an easy way out of combat, or to gain compensation after the war.

A third view discarded both, the focus on hereditary predisposition and the physical perspective, and emphasized, instead, on stress as the causing factor of psychological disturbance among soldiers, whether genetically predisposed or not. While the first shell shock models discarded the direct effects of war on the psyche, this model emphasized the mental origin of the affliction. Dr. W.H.R. Rivers, a Cambridge psychologist and anthropologist, who was responsible for treating shell- shock patients at the famous Craiglockhart War Hospital in Scotland, advocated that shell-shock resulted from a psychodynamic conflict, a wound of the mind arising mainly from stress.

Rivers' explanation of the spread of the shell-shock epidemic was that soldiers found themselves passive and helpless for a long period of time, having an internal conflict between their survival instinct and duty to their group, which was detrimental for their mental health. Facing intense danger, they were afraid; but on the other hand, they could not escape because of the military code of honour, duty, masculinity and patriotism. He believed that the symptoms they suffered from were caused by the repression of terrifying experiences which were " pushed into hidden recesses of [the] mind, only to accumulate such for as to make

them well up and produce attacks of depression" (175). Amnesia, for example, was the mind's defense mechanism caused by "the attempt to banish from the mind distressing memories of warfare or painful affective states which have come into being as a result of their war experience," and not due to an invisible physical injury or hereditary mental weakness (173). The treatment, according to Rivers, was the simple act of talking about the horrors of the war to the therapist.

I.6.4 Shell Shock in Literature

Many shell-shock soldiers wrote about their condition publicly in hospital journals. Their written account were usually in the form of stories and poems representing similar themes, like the inner conflict of the patients, the stigma they went through, the hostilities they faced both from doctors and higher-rank officers. Poet Siegfried Sassoon was Rivers' most famous patients who wrote war poetry to portray his psychological ordeal. He was especially famous for his anti-war attitude, pacifism and denouncement of the war altogether when he was still in uniform. In "A Soldier's Declaration," a text of protest written in 1917, Sassoon declared his denouncement of the war for its tragic futility and absurdity. His suffering and the suffering of many of his fellow soldiers came from their sense of helplessness and deception, realizing that innocent men were sacrificed for an unjust war which could have ended had it not been for the evil ends of those who were powerful enough to stop it but chose not it (1).

Sassoon was admitted to Craiglockhart in July 1916 by his friend and fellow officer, poet Robert Graves, who feared that Sassoon would be court-martialed for his anti-war declaration. He was a clear case of shell-shock, suffering from restlessness, nightmares, flashbacks and irritability, which earned him the nickname "Mad Jack" in Craiglockhart (Herman 2). Rivers' treatment of Sassoon reveals the humaneness of his approach. He was not shamed for cowardice or mental weakness, nor was he tortured with electric shocks or

silenced. Instead, Rivers encouraged him to unburden himself of the tormenting war memories by talking and writing about them.

Sassoon wrote in *The Hydra*, Craiglockhart's medical journal under the editorship of poet Wilfred Owen who was himself a patient at Craiglockhart. His poem "Repression of War Experience," is a testament of the psychological burden caused by attempts to repress painful memories of the war. It is told through the narrative voice of a traumatized soldier trying to forget the horrors of the battlefield, claiming he is as right as rain. The fragmentation of the poem comes from the fragmentation of the soldier's mind trying so hard to repress the horrific memories by focusing on everyday activities such as reading and focusing on familiar aspects of nature like the moth, rain, and the garden to distract himself from battlefield memories. However, all his effort to forget proves to be unsuccessful, as every image he is focusing on gets linked by his mind to a war memory, which brings his memories even more to life:

> Now light the candles; one; two; there's a moth;
> What silly beggars they are to blunder in
> And scorch their wings with glory, liquid flame—
> No, no, not that,—it's bad to think of war,
> When thoughts you've gagged all day come back to scare you;
> And it's been proved that soldiers don't go mad
> Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts
> That drive them out to jabber among the trees.
>
> Now light your pipe; look, what a steady hand.
> Draw a deep breath; stop thinking; count fifteen,
> And you're as right as rain ...
>   Why won't it rain? ...
> I wish there'd be a thunder-storm to-night,
> With bucketsful of water to sluice the dark,
> And make the roses hang their dripping heads.
>
> Books; what a jolly company they are,
> Standing so quiet and patient on their shelves,
> Dressed in dim brown, and black, and white, and green,
> And every kind of colour. Which will you read?
> Come on; O do read something; they're so wise.
> I tell you all the wisdom of the world
> Is waiting for you on those shelves; and yet
> You sit and gnaw your nails, and let your pipe out,
> And listen to the silence: on the ceiling

There's one big, dizzy moth that bumps and flutters;
And in the breathless air outside the house
The garden waits for something that delays.
There must be crowds of ghosts among the trees,—
Not people killed in battle,—they're in France,—
But horrible shapes in shrouds--old men who died
Slow, natural deaths,—old men with ugly souls,
Who wore their bodies out with nasty sins.
                    *   *   *
You're quiet and peaceful, summering safe at home;
You'd never think there was a bloody war on! ...
O yes, you would ... why, you can hear the guns.
Hark! Thud, thud, thud,—quite soft ... they never cease—
Those whispering guns—O Christ, I want to go out
And screech at them to stop—I'm going crazy;
I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns.

At the beginning, the soldier attempts to focus on the candles and the moth, but this real present moment is invaded by images from his past with the moth morphing into images of flames on the battlefield. The speaker then expresses the agony he is going through and his inner conflict trying to stop these thoughts of war, "No, no, not that,—it's bad to think of war,/ When thoughts you've gagged all day come back to scare you." Soldiers, the speaker explains, will not go mad "Unless they lose control of ugly thoughts." His present reality is, however, haunted by the terrible sounds, smells, sights, and acts of war, which has already scarred his mind. The scars are never healed, and the memories only find their way out as oozing festering wounds. That is why, by the end of the poem, as he cannot stop those ugly thoughts, the speaker confesses that he has descended into madness, "I'm going crazy;/I'm going stark, staring mad because of the guns." The poem shows the enduring effects of psychological trauma on soldiers, years after the conflict has ended. The speaker clearly suffers from symptoms of what has recently been called PTSD, evident in the flashbacks, the invasion of the present by the past, the compulsion to repeat, and repression.

While treated at the Springfield War Hospital for shell shock, Gunner McPhail wrote his poem "Just Shell Shock" in September 1916 to express that their wounds are just as enormous and serious as physical injuries. Unlike physically wounded war patients who could

wear their wounds like a badge of honour, shell-shock patients did not have an explicit wound. Hence, they had no right to complain. They could not speak proudly of their nightmares and flashbacks; they could not explain why they were paralyzed, mute, blind or deaf but with no visible wound; all they had to do was to repress their feelings, which added insult to their injuries. Nevertheless, many did express these repressed emotions through writing, such as McPhail:

> Of course you've heard of Shell Shock,
> But I don't suppose you think,
> What a wreck it leaves a chap
> After being in the pink.
> What anguish we've to go through,
> Or what pains we've got to bear,
> When we're thinking of our comrades,
> Who are still doing their share.
> Or suppose you loose your speech sir,
> Perhaps you're deaf and dumb as well,
> But you don't get no gold stripe to show,
> Although you've fought and fell.
> Perhaps you're broke and paralysed,
> Perhaps your memory goes,
> But its only just called shellshock
> For you've nothing there that shows.
> And now I ask the public,
> Before I finish up,
> Just think of us as wounded
> Though we have no gold badge up

McPhail pleads the public to stop calling their condition "just shell shock" and to consider them just as honorable as s the gold-badged physically wounded soldiers.

James Norman Hall (1916), an American volunteering for the British army, describes the enormity of the Great War and the extent of the psychological distress and agony brought upon soldiers by the ghastly and revolting scenes experiences in the battlefield. He explains that it was not during the actual combat, "in the heat of battle," that the soldiers suffered mentally, for "Battle frenzy is, perhaps, a temporary madness" (273) Real danger and horror happened to the soldiers after the heat of the moment was past, when they returned home and

began to suffer symptoms of psychological distress, and what has later been know as traumatic haunting and flashbacks. The following is his description of the flashbacks:

> Men look about them and see the bodies of their comrades torn to pieces as though they had been hacked and butchered by fiends. One thinks of the human body as inviolate, a beautiful and sacred thing. The sight of it dismembered or disemboweled, trampled in the bottom of a trench, smeared with blood and filth, is so revolting as to be hardly endurable. (ibid)

> Eventually with Rivers' humane psychoanalytic therapy, the concept of psychological

trauma, or shell-shock was no longer viewed as a sign of weakness and cowardice. It was viewed, rather, as a sign of individual differences, caused by an internal conflict between the fight and flight urges of the soldier, or between his "old peace-loving ego; or instinct for self-preservation, and his new war-loving ego; or his instinct for aggression," as postulated by Freud (qtd.in Leys 22). By the end of the war, shell-shock was regarded as a mental illness caused by an invisible mental wound, and shell-shock victims were regarded, not as malingers, but as victims just as honorable as victims of visible physical wounds.

II. Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder: The *DSM* and the Codification of Trauma

The debate surrounding the extent of the effect of traumatic events was evident in the first versions of the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* (DSM), a manual used to classify mental disorders and to provide a classification system for clinicians, insurance providers, researchers, and policymakers to use in matters related to the diagnosis, research, and treatment of mental illness. The first edition of the *DSM (DSM-I)*, published in 1952, did not include a category for post-traumatic stress. Trauma was classified under a diagnostic category called "Gross Stress Reaction" to highlight the severity of the event considered as traumatic or stressor, as described in the manual that this diagnosis is only made "in situations in which the individual has been exposed to severe physical demands or extreme emotional stress, such as in combat or in civilian catastrophe (fire, earthquake, explosion, etc.)" (40).

While it described the disorder as a reaction to an extreme or unusual traumatic event (stressor) invoking overwhelming fright, the *DSM-I* still emphasized that it was only a temporary disturbance, or a "transient situational personality disorder," which is, hence reversible. In addition to this, it also stressed that the symptoms were due to an internal pathology of the individual rather than external traumatic experience. It was considered as a response to "a danger signal, produced by a threat from within the personality […] with or without stimulation from such external situations as loss of love, loss of prestige, or threat of injury" (31-32). Because the diagnosis of "gross stress reaction" was closely related to war, as it was included to account for the cases of traumatized veterans, it was omitted from the *DSM-II*, which was published in 1968 during a period of relative peace.

It was not until the publication of the third version of the *DSM* (DSM-*III*) in 1980 that post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) was well-established and codified formally within a diagnostic nomenclature. War again played a role in formally recognizing the consequences of combat stress on individual. It was the aftermath of the Vietnam War that was responsible for the recognition of the concept of PTSD and its inclusion within mainstream consciousness. After the war, Vietnam veterans returned home with "an epidemic of suicides, antisocial acts, and bizarre behaviours […] high rates of mental health problems […] alcoholism and drug addiction" (Young Allan108). Thus, along with activist psychiatrists such as Robert J. Lifton, veterans called for the introduction of a diagnostic framework that would account for their condition since the previous diagnostic nomenclature (the *DSM-II*) did not contain an entry for war-related trauma (Scott 298). In 1972, the term "Post-Vietnam Syndrome," coined by Chaim Shatan, was used to describe the symptoms suffered by the returning veterans, which included " guilt, rage, psychic numbing, alienation, feelings of being scapegoated" (Young Allan109).

When a task force was assembled in 1974 by the American Psychological Association (APA) to revise the *DSM*, they were confronted with the question of whether or not to reinstate the diagnosis of "Gross Stress Reaction" within the *DSM* nosological system. The name Post-Vietnam Syndrome was out of the question because it strictly narrowed the range of the disorder to encompass only post-war stressors. Consequently, in 1980, when the *DSM-III* was published, it did included for the first time the diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), establishing that a wide range of stressors can be responsible for causing a wide range of symptoms (biological, psychic, and cognitive).

What made the diagnosis of PTSD, as put forth by the *DSM-III*, eminently different from that of Gross Stress Reaction in the *DSM-I* was mainly that it was a requirement that the symptoms must appear in previously normal individual. This was in contrast with the previous diagnosis of Gross Stress Reaction which emphasized that the disorder could only happen to individuals who were biologically predisposed to develop it, or those with prior disabilities. The second diagnostic requirement was that the etiological factor, or the traumatic event, had to be of an enormous magnitude, "outside the range of normal human experience," so as to narrow what could be considered as traumatic, eliminating "common experiences" like "simple bereavement, chronic illness, business losses or marital conflict" (236). This meant that anyone could suffer from PTSD, which significantly reduced the stigma of trauma victims. It was not their own fault, or their own individual weakness that caused the disorder, but the traumatic event.

The conception of trauma as we know it nowadays developed since the publication of *DSM-III* and was steadily broadened as new editions and revisions of the *DSM* were published to include for examples delayed responses to stressors, like the case of adults who were abused by their caregivers during childhood but only began to experience symptoms during adulthood. One thing is sure, however, that the codification of PTSD within the *DSM-*

III marks the beginning of the understanding of the devastating, and sometimes everlasting, effects of experiencing traumatic events.

II.1 The *DSM-IV* and *DSM-V*: The Symptoms and Diagnosis of PTSD

The *DSM-IV* was published in 1994. It classified PTSD as an "Anxiety disorder," placing emphasis both on the traumatic event as well as on the symptoms of the disorder and the strong emotional reaction of the victim who responds with "intense fear, helplessness, or horror" to the traumatic event. As a result, the disorder was recognized as caused by the interaction between an endogenous and exogenous factor; the individual's response and the traumatic event respectively.

Finally, the *DSM-V*, published in 2013, re-classified PTSD from an anxiety disorder to a new category called "Trauma-and Stressor-Related Disorders." The most striking features of this version is that it has broadened the range of the traumatic event to include "sexual violence", and included the mere "learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend," in addition to directly experiencing the traumatic event and witnessing it as it occurred to others as traumatogenic. The diagnostic criteria are as follows: Criterion A, describing the stressor criterion; Criterion B, describing intrusive and re-experience symptoms, Criterion C, describing avoidance and numbing symptoms; Criterion D, describing cognitive and mood-related symptoms; Criterion E, describing hyperarousal symptoms; Criterion F, describing the duration of the symptoms included in the previous criteria; Criterion G, describing the effects of the disturbances on the victim's life; Criterion H, stressing that the condition does not arise from substance use or medical condition. Table 3 includes a detailed account of all the criteria and symptoms of PTSD.

DSM-5: PTSD

Disorder Class: Trauma- and Stressor-Related Disorders

A. Exposure to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence in one or more of the following ways:
1. Directly experiencing the traumatic event(s).
2. Witnessing, in person, the event(s) as it occurred to others.
3. Learning that the traumatic event(s) occurred to a close family member or close friend. In cases of actual or threatened death of family member or friend, the event(s) must have been violent or accidental.
4. Experiencing repeated or extreme exposure to aversive details of the traumatic event(s) (e.g., first responders collecting human remains; police officers repeatedly exposed to details of child abuse).

Note: Criterion A4 does not apply to exposure through electronic media, television, movies, or pictures, unless this exposure is work related.

B. Presence of one or more of the following intrusion symptoms associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred:
1. Recurrent, involuntary, and intrusive distressing memories of the traumatic event(s).
2. Recurrent distressing dreams in which the content and/or effect of the dream are related to the traumatic event(s).
3. Dissociative reactions (e.g., flashbacks) in which the individual feels or acts as if the traumatic event(s) were recurring. (Such reactions may occur on a continuum, with the most extreme expression being a complete loss of awareness of present surroundings.)
4. Intense or prolonged psychological distress at exposure to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s).
5. Marked psychological reactions to internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s).

C. Persistent avoidance of stimuli associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by one or both of the following:
1. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).
2. Avoidance of or efforts to avoid external reminders (people, places, conversations, activities, objects, situations) that arouse distressing memories, thoughts, or feelings about or closely associated with the traumatic event(s).

D. Negative alterations in cognitions and mood associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidenced by two or more of the following:
1. Inability to remember an important aspect of the traumatic event(s) (typically due to dissociative amnesia and not to other factors such as head injury, alcohol, or drugs).
2. Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world (e.g., "I am bad," "No one can be trusted," 'The world is completely dangerous," "My whole nervous system is permanently ruined").

3. Persistent, distorted cognitions about the cause or consequences of the traumatic event(s) that lead the individual to blame himself/herself or others.
4. Persistent negative emotional state (e.g., fear, horror, anger, guilt, or shame).
5. Markedly diminished interest or participation in significant activities.
6. Feelings of detachment or estrangement from others.
7. Persistent inability to experience positive emotions (e.g., inability to experience happiness, satisfaction, or loving feelings).

E. Marked alterations in arousal and reactivity associated with the traumatic event(s), beginning or worsening after the traumatic event(s) occurred, as evidence by two (or more) of the following:
1. Irritable behavior and angry outbursts (with little or no provocation) typically expressed as verbal or physical aggression toward people or objects.
2. Reckless or self-destructive behavior.
3. Hypervigilance.
4. Exaggerated startle response.
5. Problems with concentration.
6. Sleep disturbance (e.g., difficulty falling or staying asleep or restless sleep).

F. Duration of the disturbance (Criteria B, C, D, and E) is more than 1 month.

G. The disturbance causes clinically significant distress or impairment in social, occupational, or other important areas of functioning.

H. The disturbance is not attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., medication, alcohol) or another medical condition

Specify whether:
With dissociative symptoms: The individual's symptoms meet the criteria for posttraumatic stress disorder, and in addition, in response to the stressor, the individual experiences persistent or recurrent symptoms of either of the following:
1.Depersonalization: Persistent or recurrent experiences of feeling detached from, and as if one were an outside observer of, one's mental processes or body (e.g., feeling as though one were in a dream; feeling a sense of unreality of self or body or of time moving slowly). **2. Derealization:** Persistent or recurrent experiences of unreality of surroundings (e.g., the world around the individual is experienced as unreal, dreamlike, distant, or distorted). Note: To use this subtype, the dissociative symptoms must not be attributable to the physiological effects of a substance (e.g., blackouts, behavior during alcohol intoxication) or another medical condition (e.g., complex partial seizures).

Table 3.Diagnostic Criteria and Symptoms of PTSD according to the *DSM-V*.Source:APA. *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders: DSM-V*. 5th ed. Washington, DC: American Psychiatric Association, 2013. pp. 271-274

III. Classic Trauma Theory: Trauma or the Story of a Wound

In his book *Beyond the Pleasure Principle*, Freud theorized traumatic neurosis and explained the repetitive and intrusive nightmares of the traumas of war, which would later become known as Post-Traumatic-Stress-Disorder (PTSD). In her seminal work *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative and History* (1996), relying heavily on the psychoanalytic theory, and mainly on Freud's work, Cathy Caruth, developed her classical theory of trauma, its impact and manifestations in literary works. She starts with Freud's investigation of the inexplicable, repetitive and literal nightmares of battlefield that war veterans persistently have. The repetitive reenactment of painful events, Caruth stresses, are not invoked deliberately and intentionally by the survivor who holds no control over them and seems to be rather possessed or haunted by them. Caruth derives her definition of trauma from Freud's interpretation of Torquato Tasso's romantic epic *Gerusalemme Liberata (1581).*

The poem tells the story of the hero Tancred, who unknowingly kills his beloved Clorinda disguised as an enemy knight, in a duel. After Clorinda's burial, Tancred enters an enchanted magical forest where he slashes a tree with his sword, and blood gushes out of the wound he has just inflicted on the tree. At this moment, he hears the voice of Clorinda, whose soul is imprisoned in the tree, crying that Tancred has wounded his beloved for the second time (3). To Caruth, Tancred's wounding of his beloved, one time in a battle and a second time, unwittingly also, in the forest, represents the core of Freud's traumatic neurosis, which is the fact that "trauma repeats itself" or what she refers to as "injurious repetition" (ibid).

Additionally, Caruth makes a link between Freud's use of the literary metaphor of the wound and the original Greek meaning of the word "trauma" as a physical or surgical wound, to define trauma "as a wound inflicted not upon the body but upon the mind" (*Unclaimed Experience* 3). However, she argues that unlike the wound of the body which is a "simple and healable event," the wound of the mind happens too suddenly and too unexpectedly for the

mind to fully know it (4).   Caruth provides a general definition of trauma as "an overwhelming experience," that happens to the individual when facing an event of a "sudden" and "catastrophic" nature. Caruth uses the notion of latency, a simplified translation of Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, to reveal that the precipitating event of trauma serves as a failed experience of the past that assumes a belated impact on the present. The individual's response to this traumatic experience, according to Caruth, comes as "delayed, uncontrolled repetitive appearance of hallucinations and other intrusive phenomena" (*ibid* 11). Trauma is, therefore, a belated experience that " is not locatable in the simple violent or original event" in the past, but is defined rather by its " very unassimilated nature—the way it was precisely not known in the first instance—return[ing] to haunt the survivor later on" (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). In sum, trauma isthe pathology of an unassimilated experience that comes back to haunt its victim incessantly.From what has been said above, it can be deduced that the features of trauma are that it is sudden, unexpected, incomprehensible, injurious, belated, and repetitive.

Furthermore, trauma shatters the very spatial, temporal, as well as subjective/personal reality and continuity of the victims who are left with a distorted memory. It is a "breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world," that is experienced "too soon, too unexpectedly, to be fully known" Instead, it manifests itself through repetitive phenomena (*Unclaimed Experience* 4). This explains Tancred's second wounding of the tree and the voice he hears when cutting the tree. The voice represents the suffering of an individual tormented and traumatized by his own past; it is the reliving and "repetition of his own trauma" as it dominates his present. Even though it happens in the past, trauma dominates the present of its victims through repetitions which are out of their control and will continue to affect their future in the form of haunting memories and other intrusive PTSD symptoms. It is "the story of a wound that cries out" endlessly through this re-living of the traumatic event (ibid)

Moreover, according to Caruth, it is not the event per se that is traumatic, nor is it the literal threat to life, but "the fact that the threat is recognized as such by the mind one moment too late" (*Unclaimed Experience* 62). This unpreparedness causes the mind to *miss* the experience, which explains why the victim is possessed by repetitions, nightmares, flashbacks, and other intrusive behaviours. This also, explains the literality of traumatic dreams and nightmares. Painful as they are, the mind re-experiences them literally because at the sudden happening of the traumatic event, it is not registered as a meaningful event due to the element of "fright" that was associated with it (*Unclaimed Experience* 59). They are the mind's attempt to go back to that experience, to relive it, understand it, make sense of it and have control over it.

However, surviving trauma is not a benign stage of one's life, and the repetitions are not simple reminders of the traumatic incident. They are injurious and may destroy the individual psychologically. Caruth describes these repetitions as "destructive" because they "govern a person's life" and trap the individual in a vicious cycle of "retraumatization," which can be life-threatening and can "ultimately lead to deterioration" (*Unclaimed Experience* 63). Deterioration may happen in the form of identity disorders (such as Dissociative Identity Disorder, schizophrenia, paranoia, or psychosis) and may even lead to suicide.

III.1 Double Trauma: The Survival of Trauma and the Trauma of Survival

According to Caruth, trauma implies an "enigma of survival" (*unclaimed Experience* 58), because it does not involve solely facing the threat of death during the moment of trauma, but the very fact of surviving is itself traumatic with all the haunting and the repetitions that come with it. This gives trauma a double temporality and makes it a double wound because it paradoxically happens too soon (as the mind is unprepared for it) and too late (as it is constantly repeated). Therefore, trauma victims experience a double trauma; that is, the

trauma of death (the moment of the traumatic event) and the trauma of survival (after the traumatic event).

Consequently, far from escaping the reality of the threat of death, the story of trauma "attests to its endless impact on a life." And this gives rise to an important question regarding what trauma, in fact, is. "Is trauma the encounter with death, or the ongoing experience of having survived it," as Caruth asks? The answer suggested by Caruth is that the crux of traumatic stories is "the oscillation between a *crisis of death* and the correlative *crisis of life*: between the story of the unbearable nature of an event and the story of the unbearable nature of its survival" (*Unclaimed Experience* 7; italics in original).

I want to call particular attention to the notion idea of the historicity of trauma and the issues of referentiality that are part of Caruth's theorization of trauma. Survivors of trauma, as explained above, are constantly haunted by nightmares and flashbacks of an original traumatic event. What makes trauma the bearer of real history is the literality of these repetitive acts. Real history is inaccessible and unverifiable, but the mind of trauma victim records the traumatic incident as it actually happens.

Caruth states that trauma is a pathology of "history itself" (Trauma 5). Due to trauma's peculiar temporal structure evident in the blurred line between the past and present, its victims do not experience time and space the same way normal people do. Consequently Caruth proposes as definition to PTSD:

> If PTSD must be understood as a pathological symptom, then it is not so much a symptom of the unconscious, as it is a *symptom o f history. The traumatized, we might say, carry an impossible history within them, or they become themselves the symptom o f a history that they cannot entirely possess.* (ibid; italics added)

Hence, there is "historical power" to trauma coming from the referential truth that exists within "the space of unconsciousness" which is "paradoxically, precisely what preserves the event in its literality" (*Unclaimed Experience* 17-18) and allows for an indirect access and reliving of history.

III.2 The Unspeakability of Trauma

Caruth's classic trauma theory strongly advocates the idea that trauma is unspeakable. The unspeakability of trauma means that it cannot be represented since the traumatic experience cannot be processed as it occurs. Trauma ruptures the individual's memory as well, creating a traumatic memory that is fragmented, which makes a consistent, linear and verbal narrative of trauma impossible. As a consequence, trauma narratives face the paradoxical task of representing an unspeakable event and an inaccessible memory, as Caruth states "the ability to recover the past is thus closely and paradoxically tied up, in trauma, with the inability to have access to it" (*Trauma* 152). As such, Caruth's classical trauma theory insists on the dialectic between traumatic event and narrativity.

Trauma "precludes all representation because the ordinary mechanisms of consciousness and memory are temporarily destroyed" (Leys 266). Although there is a "literal" recording of the traumatic event, it dissociated from normal mental processes. This creates a gap in consciousness, which leads to resistance to meaning and to the failure of language to represent the traumatic event that can only be re-experienced through repetitions, belatedly, in the form of post-traumatic symptoms. Caruth regards repetitive symptoms not as representation but as interruptions and disruptions of "a representational mode" (*Unclaimed Experience* 115). Therefore, language is successful in representing trauma only through its "*failure* of witnessing or representation" (Leys 268; italics in original).

III.2.1 The Unspeakable as a Reaction to the Unbearable

Trauma theorists explain the unrepresentability and unspeakability of trauma in reference to the Holocaust using the notion of witnessing. The Holocaust is defined the traumatic event *par excellence*, which is, hence, non-representable. Analyzing the testimonies of Holocaust survivors, Shoshana Felman, along with Dori Laub, who is a psychoanalytic practitioner and child survivor of the camps himself, present the notion of the "impossible witness" to highlight the silence and unspeakable conundrum that survivors face when describing the events they witnessed, and yet are unable to speak about. The inability to speak results from the horrors they confronted and their overwhelming nature even if there is a desire to tell their story. As they describe, there is:

> an imperative to *tell* and thus come to *know* one's story. Yet no amount of telling seems ever to do justice to this inner compulsion. There are never enough words, or the right words, there is never enough time, or the right time, and never enough listening or the right listening to articulate the story that cannot be fully captured in *thought, memory* and *speech.* (78; italics in original)

Felaman and Laub argue that bearing witness to such a traumatic event as the Holocaust is impossible, not because there is no witness to it, or because it did not happen, but to the contrary, because it is unbearable. Trauma is unspeakable specifically because when an event is so overwhelming that it shatters one's subjectivity, temporal reality and memory, it defies attempts to be represented.

In a similar vein Trezise asks whether the unspeakable simply stands for the inexpressible, unimaginable, the verbally-undescribable. He sets forth three main reasons for the unspeakability of the Holocaust; first, the Holocaust is "verbally unrepresentable;" second, it is "inexpressibly bad;" and third, it is a holy incident. No language, thus, is suitable to represent the atrocities of a traumatic event (45).

III.2.2 The Unspeakable and the Failure of Language

Referring to the gap, or the black hole, in consciousness that reflects the extent of the horrifying nature of traumatic experiences, Mandel agrees with Caruth, stating that trauma is characterized by an "acute silence and epistemological gaps that reflect the impact of traumatic experience on the speaker's psyche" (100). The unspeakability of trauma comes from the limitation of language to account for the horror of trauma and for its effects on the individual. It comes from the failure of language to convey the experience, rather than from the failure of the speaker. Language is too cheerful when compared to the horror of a traumatic experienced. Thus, horror can only be expressed through silence. Relevantly, Julia Kristeva questions the adequacy of language to represent pain, "how is the truth of pain to be spoken when the available rhetoric of literature and even of everyday speech always seems festive?" (140).

Simply put, "pain and trauma defy representation" (Hron 34).The unspeakable is thus a trope of textlessness that serves to re-inscribe the repression of traumatic memories, as well as the inadequacy of language to cater for the traumatic experience and the harm it brings to the psyche. It is proof of the damage and rupture that trauma causes to the system of representation by a reality beyond its limits.

In addition to the failure of language, a number of trauma theorists, including Caruth, Van der Kolk and Van der Hart, and Laub, draw special attention to the moral and ethical dimension related to the representation of trauma. Representing a traumatic event may downgrade its horrors. Caruth stresses that attempts to narrativize trauma risk "betraying the truth of the trauma defined as an incomprehensible event that defies all representation" (Leys 269). In other words, trauma is unspeakable because verbalizing it risks undermining it.

Similarly, Felman and Laub points out to the ethical issue involved in testimonies of trauma witnesses, from the part of the victims and perpetrators alike. They cannot bear

witness to traumatic events and testify about them because being able to put them into words would be paradoxical with the intensity of their horror. The silence associated with trauma means that "a more direct confession is inauthentic" (205). Trezise also agrees that that it is unethical to attempt to describe the Holocaust using figurative or literary language, as to give meaning to it would lead to "aesthetic success and ethical failure"(45).

III.3 Traumatic Memory

Before exploring how trauma is represented in literature, it is necessary to define what is meant by traumatic memory. Van der Kolk et al. define traumatic memory as memory of "a personally traumatic event" in which "the person's experience involved intense fear, helplessness, or horror" ("Exploring"11). According to the *DSM-V*, memory is the second criterion (Criterion B) for the diagnosis of PTSD. It describes traumatic memory as involuntary, intrusive, recurrent, usually involving a re-experiencing of the "sensory, emotional and physiological" responses to the traumatic event as if they are happening all over again (APA, *DSM-V* 275). Traumatic memory can re-appear through intrusion symptoms, such as recurrent nightmares which replay the traumatic event or are related to it thematically, as well as through "dissociative reactions," like flashbacks, in which the events are relived and the victims feels and acts as if he is taken back to the moment of occurring of the traumatic event (APA, *DSM-V* 271-5). Accordingly, traumatic memories, described by Charcot as the "parasite of the mind" (qtd.in Zepinic 1980), are a mark of the traumatic event that is out of the victim's control.

The traumatic experience confronts the individual with such unprecedented and unusual intense emotional reactions that his/her mind is unable to comprehend what is going on according to the "existing cognitive schemata" (Zepinic 1980). As a result, the traumatic memory is dissociated from conscious awareness and registered independently of the previous schemata. The mind, simply, fails to register traumatic memories as narrative memory and

cannot accept them as belonging to the individual's personal past, which is what essentially leads to the symptoms of PTSD.

Traumatic memories cannot be translated into personal ordinary or narrative memory. They can only intrude as re-enactments and re-experiencing. To understand the difference between traumatic memory and narrative memory and their characteristic, a revisiting of Pierre Janet is necessary.In his work, *L'Automatisme Psychologique*, originally published in 1889 and considered as one of the first and most important books on trauma and dissociation, Janet notices that aspects of experience are categorized and integrated by the mind into larger meaning schemes. `When one faces an expected and familiar experience and responds to it in appropriately, the mind easily integrates the experience subconsciously and automatically because there already exists a cognitive meaning scheme suitable for its assimilation.

On the other hand, traumatic experiences do not fit into the existing meaning schemes, and thus, fail to be integrated and assimilated appropriately. The memory associated with normal expected experience can be retrieved in the form of what Janet calls "narrative" or "ordinary memory" which is a voluntary and conscious recollection and narration of events, as opposed to "traumatic memory" which is dissociated from conscious awareness, unassimilated, involuntary and has a mind of its own manifested in its capability of re-appearing intrusively as recollections and behavioural re-enactments (Van der Kolk & Van der Hart 159-160).

III.3.1 Narrative Memory vs. Traumatic Memory

Because traumatic memory is "fixed" in the subconscious in an unassimilated manner and cannot be "liquidated" or "translated" into a personal narrative, it continues to manifest itself as "terrifying perceptions, obsessional preoccupations, and somatic re-experiencing" (Zepinic 1980), especially when the individual is exposed to a trigger that reminds him/her of the trauma, which can be anything ranging from a sound, smell, a person, the weather, and so

on. The victim becomes fixated on the traumatic experience, suffering from PTSD symptoms such as "chronic irritability, startle reactions, and explosive aggressive reactions, or no reactions at all" (Zepinic 1980-1981). This leads to a change in the person's sense of the Self in relation to the Other. Intrusive thoughts and behaviours, resulting from the traumatic memory, trap the Self in the moment of trauma, or the "there-and-then" and prevent it from having an ordinary and proper interaction with the environment (the Other) in the present time, or the "here-and-now", making the person "withdrawn and detached" (Zepinic1981).

Zepinic states four main features that distinguish traumatic memories from narrative memories as follows:

1) Traumatic memories are composed of the images, sensations and affective state; narrative memories are semantic and symbolic;
2) Traumatic memories are inflexible and unstable (invariant) over time; narrative memory serves one's social and adaptive functions;
3) Traumatic memories cannot be evoked but elicited under specific circumstances (triggers) of the original event; narrative memory is assessible without trigger; and
4) Traumatic memories take time to be remembered; narrative memory is a common response on social demands. (1981)

The first difference is that traumatic memories, born out of a traumatic experience, are imagistic, sensorial, perceptual and emotional because they are a faithful re-enactment of the traumatic event with all sensory and emotional responses to it. Narrative memories, on the other hand, are semantic and symbolic, meaning that they contain one's accumulation of world knowledge, facts, ideas and concepts which constitute ordinary human experience. The second difference is that traumatic memories are not subject to alteration or modification, but remain the same, unlike narrative memories which serve a social function, and can, hence, be modified or adapted according to the social situation of necessity. The third difference is that traumatic memories are involuntary and intrusive reactions to reminders of the traumatic event, as opposed to narrative memories which are under the control of the individual who can recollect them without a trigger. The final difference, as put by Zepinic, is that it takes a

long time for a traumatic memory to be narrativized coherently, whereas narrative memory is easily accessible.

I might add another difference which lies in the very properties of the word "narrative" in narrative memory. A Narrative is a sequential, coherent, and logical presentation of events that are causally related. It respects a linear time perception and clear lines between the past, present, and future. Contrastingly, containing fragmented and unassimilated parts of the traumatic experience, traumatic memories disturb linearity and present themselves intrusively through non-linear time perception where the lines between the past and present are blurred, and the past becomes the present in the flashbacks and re-enactments of the trauma.

IV. Trauma Fiction: The Trauma Paradox and Narrative Representation

The notion of the unspeakability of trauma means that trauma entails the absence of a cohesive narrative framework and structure that permit the representation of fragmented traumatic experience and memory. This renders the portrayal of traumatic experience problematic for fiction writers since language and narrative are the media of literary expression. However theorists resorted to Freud's explanation of trauma using no other means than a literary work to illustrate his understanding and definition of trauma. The unspeakable nature of trauma is represented by Freud in the compulsion repetition (in the story of Tancred as explained above).

The relationship between trauma and literature is a topic that has been attracting the interest of theorists from various disciplines. Caruth herself credits Freud for the foundation of trauma theory in literary studies, as he turns to literature to interpret the symptoms of his patients. She states that literature and psychoanalysis can both be helpful in representing and analyzing traumatic experiences:

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

However, the paradoxes of trauma, the gap between "knowing" and "not knowing," its inherent latency and belatedness, in addition to the fact that trauma disrupts narrative time and causes a crisis of representation require the theorization of new means and techniques of representation that can adequately represent the unrepresentable and verbalize the unspeakable.

IV.1 Trauma Narratives: How to Represent the Unrepresentable

Traumatic memory is encoded as images and sensations rather than verbal narrative, as I explained earlier, and this makes it difficult to place trauma, which challenges representation, within a coherent linguistic, textual, psychological, narrative context. Literature faces the question of what it means to "to transmit and to theorize around a crisis that is marked, not by a simple knowledge, but by the ways it simultaneously defies and demands our witness." (Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience* 5).

Despite the linguistic challenge, without a narrative of trauma, the latter would remain hidden and unknown, which would not do justice to the traumatized victims. According to Kali Tal, trauma narratives are born from a "need" of telling and retelling of traumatic stories so as to make them " 'real' both to the victim and to the community" (137). Telling cannot happen without language. For James Berger, even if trauma belongs to a non-linguistic realm, language still has the ability to convey trauma because the symptoms of trauma are "not only somatic, nonlinguistic phenomena; they occur also in language" (574).

However, not any language that is literary can be suitable for the representation of traumatic experiences. Instead, traumatic stories demand artistic forms that focus more on structure and disruptions rather than on the themes of the text. Trauma narratives must be

presented in a way that highlights the problems of expression associated with traumatic memory; such as silence, repetition, gaps, and so on. They must " go beyond presenting trauma as subject matter or character study […] [and] reveal many obstacles to communicating such experience: silence, simultaneous knowledge and denial, dissociation, resistance, and repression" (Hartman 2). Representing an experience that destroys the temporal and memory systems of the victims, as well as their very ability to speak calls for the invention of new trauma aesthetics deemed suitable for such representation. Transforming traumatic memory into narrative memory can only be achieved through new formal means of portraying such unspeakable concepts as pain, the shattering of the psyche, repression and forgetting.

IV.2 The Trauma Genre: Transmitting rather than Representing

Examining the literary manifestations of trauma and its aesthetic prescriptions in a number of literary works, Alan Gibbsnotices that the trauma paradigm influenced cultural production and led to the emergence of a "trauma genre" based on "aesthetic models approved by existing trauma theory" especially following the events of 11 September 2001 (2). The 9/11 events have revived interest in trauma and its representation in literature. Following the Freudian and Caruthian models of trauma, writers created a specific trauma genre and a canon of trauma literature that conform to specific critically-approved aesthetics of representation.

The first criterion of the trauma genre aesthetic is an ethical one, which is related to the writers' desire to make visible some traumatic historical events and the risk of betraying the trauma by making it available in a straightforward realistic way. LaCapra considers trauma narratives as testimonial art with writers of trauma fiction standing as witnesses to the traumatic event they are trying to portray. He, nevertheless, warns against the rigidity of the "documentary" model of narrating history which is simple-structured and linear. Instead, he

prefers the use of a more complex and innovative model. The latter, according to LaCapra has more ability to provide a deeper insight into trauma because it can provide a transmission of the "feel" of the phenomenon, and the emotional reactions of the people who went through it. Trauma fiction, according to LaCapra, should be concerned "not only [with] the processing of information but also its effect, empathy, and questions of value" (35).

Moreover, Laurie Vickroy particularly points out to the notion of the transmissibility of trauma and stresses that trauma fiction should diligently be preoccupied with "transmitting" trauma rather than "representing" it (20). That is to say, educating readers about trauma should be done through an aesthetic that represents its affects rather than directly represents the trauma itself in a "straightforward or realistic representation" (Gibbs 26). This can be reached by representing the psychological impact of trauma through experimental non-verbal aesthetic modes of representation. These provide an alternative medium through which trauma can "speak" and the wound of trauma can find a voice to be expressed and heard.

Transmitting trauma rather than representing it means employing experimental artistic forms and narrative devices designed around the symptoms of PTSD, which according to Caruth and other trauma theorists are nightmares, flashbacks, shame, guilt, numbness, arousal, violence, depression, dissociation and even paranoia. The impact of trauma on the individual's psyche and life can be adequately conveyed through an anti-narrative representational framework that focuses on the symptoms of PTSD and their disruption of temporality, language, and subjectivity.

IV.3 Towards a Postmodern Trauma Aesthetic

The unspeakability of trauma translates into profound silence and haunting repetitions. Therefore, as explained above, trauma narratives require a trauma aesthetic capable of transmitting affect onto the reader rather than directly representing trauma. This can be

achieved through the indirect experimental aesthetic forged by the postmodern theory. Trauma disrupts the person's sense of self and the world, and leads to many gaps, silences, and mute repetitions in the individual's life story. Consequently, the disruptive formal techniques of postmodernism that include fragmentation, non-linear temporality, shifts in narrative voice, and repetitions can be successful in portraying the experience of trauma and the symptoms of PTSD.

Theorists Laurie Vickroy and Anne Whitehead present aesthetic models suitable for the representation, or rather transmission, of trauma, employing postmodern techniques. Vickroy argues that the incomprehensibility of trauma, and the fragmented, inaccessible, silent, and enigmatic nature of traumatic memory are best represented though new experimental forms (1).She furtherpoints to the links that exist between postmodern structures and the symptoms of PTSD sufferers, stating that the "stylistic innovations" of postmodernism "have proved effective in approximating for readers the psychic defenses that pose obstacles to narrating and recovering from trauma" (xi).

Definite links exist between postmodernism, trauma and literature. Literature helps giving voice to the traumatized when normal language fails to do so. Valentina Adami, notes the structural similitude between postmodernism and trauma, both of which are unstable, incoherent and disordered:

> In our postmodern and post-Holocaust era, disorder is an integral part of life, meaning and coherence are systematically undermined, and reality is unstable. Recognizing the analogies between the postmodern condition, the structure of traumatic experiences, and that of literary texts may help us clarify the symbolic processes of signification that organize knowledge both in the individual's mind and in literary texts. (7)

Postmodernism provides unconventional structural means for representing the denied, the repressed and the forgotten that characterize traumatic experience and memory. As put by Luckhurst that within the core of trauma narratives there is a tension between "narrative" and "anti-narrative" (80). Postmodern techniques and stylistic devices provide narrative possibility and vehicles of representation to overcome narrative impossibility.

Similarly, Anne Whitehead tackles issues of narrative possibility and memory, maintaining that the belatedness of traumatic memory poses a challenge to conventional narrative frameworks and epistemologies. She emphasizes that, "memory and forgetting do not oppose each other but form part of the same process" (82). This process, I believe, is the very remembering and transmission of trauma itself. Whitehead, additionally, states that through "its innovative forms and techniques," postmodernism has a certain affinity to trauma fiction which "seeks to foreground the nature and limitations of narrative and to convey the damaging and distorting impact of the traumatic event" (82).

Trauma is a crisis of representation, and trauma fiction faces the challenging of representing the paradoxes of trauma, that is to say, representing the non-representable, remembering the forgotten, putting into words the unspeakable, and articulating silence, and portraying the blurred lines between the past and the present. Whitehead, indeed, begins her monograph *Trauma Fiction* asking the very question, "how then can [trauma] be narrativised in fiction" since trauma is an overwhelming and shattering experience that "resists language or representation" (3)? The key to the answer, according to her, lies in the need for trauma fiction to shift its attention from what is remembered of the traumatic experience to "why" and especially "how" it is remembered (3).

Onega and Ganteau also call for the need of new modes of representing trauma and focus in their analysis on the difficulty, or impossibility, to represent it though "traditional realism." They highlight the difference between *representation* and *presentation*, between *poiesis* and *mimesis* within the context of trauma. Representation is associated with the more traditional aesthetics of realism which necessitates faithful portrayal, and trauma needs new forms "so as to achieve faithfulness perhaps not of representation […] but of presentation" (7). What they mean by faithful presentation, as opposed to faithful representation, here is a faithful presentation of the symptoms of trauma. As they put it, trauma narratives should

"present or *perform (poiesis)*" rather than "*represent (mimesis)*" the alienation from the Self that the traumatized subject suffers from (11). This aligns with Vickroy's argument that trauma fiction should adopt an ethical-aesthetic model that transmits rather than represents the traumatic experience and its psychological effects.

IV.4 The Postmodern Tropes of Trauma Fiction

In the attempts to narrate traumatic experience and transform traumatic memory into narrative memory, postmodern techniques mirror the traumatized voice. The main association between the two is structural narrative distortion. As Whitehead writes, "traumatic knowledge cannot be fully communicated or retrieved without distortion" (84). The main aspects of postmodern techniques that resemble PTSD symptoms are fragmentation, repetition, silence, and intertextuality.

IV.4.1 Non-Linear, Fragmented and Circular Narratives

The most basic feature of trauma fiction is that it is non-linear with an unconventional beginning, middle and end, to mimic the working of the memory of the traumatized character. The belated nature of trauma and the fact that it is not "assimilated or experienced fully at the time" (Caruth *Trauma* 4-5) makes the individual unable to fully grasp it as it occurs so as to narrate later at will. Rather, it possesses the traumatized victim and returns intrusively and repetitively at a later date out of his/her control. This breaks the direct pattern of causality of events and "renders [trauma] resistant to narrative structures and linear temporalities" (Whitehead 13).

A non-linear narrative is one that is a fragmented, disruptive and multi-vocal. Trauma fiction writers refuse "the consolation of beautiful form" (Gibbs 26), in favor of an experimental form that fragments chronology and subjectivity in order to transmit the incomprehensible, belated and confusing nature of trauma. Using a fragmented narrative may

also result from the telling and re-telling of events differently or from different narrative perspectives (Whitehead 88). The effects of the inherent latency of trauma, as put by Whitehead, "can be discerned in the broken or fragmented quality of testimonial narratives" (15). Fragmentation comes from the broken temporality of the character and splitting of the narrative voice, as well as from the intrusions of past traumatic memories into the present of the character. The incoherence of fragmented narratives, using incoherent form, a plethora of styles, different tones and multiple voices throughout the narrative are textual manifestation of the confusing and incomprehensible nature of trauma.

Portraying characters that experience flashbacks of the traumatic incident is another way that causes a non-linear narrative. Flashbacks are a mark of the intrusiveness and latency of trauma as they are experienced when there is a temporal disruptiveness and the character is transported back to the moment of trauma. This happens when the lines between the past and present dissolve, and time seems to stand still when the character's experience of the present and his/her attempts to lead a normal life are disrupted, and s/he is taken back to the past and feels as if s/he is living in that past moment of trauma. Flashbacks are one of the diagnostic criteria of PTSD, and they stand as proof that traumatic memory is literal as traumatic characters "experience their trauma as photographic reenactments" (Gibbs 4). Flashbacks, in short, are a mark of the unprocessed traumatic experience of a character trapped in a perpetual, sudden, and unbidden transference to the past.

Moreover, non-linear narratives of trauma are characterized by their circularity. Circularity is a familiar trope of the representation of trauma's resistance for closure. A return to the beginning, usually to the moment of trauma, is an example of repetition, acting out of trauma, as well as of the inability to break free from the past. A trauma narrative "does not succumb to closure and coherence, but retains within itself the traces of traumatic disruption and discontinuity" (Whitehead 142). The disruption of temporality, through incoherence, non-

closure, and circular narrative style, implies that working through trauma and recovery are not always easy and possible.

IV.4.2 Repetition

Another key postmodern device that mirrors the traumatized voice is repetition. Repetition of scenes, words, images, phrases and events is a textual evidence of the repetition compulsion. Whitehead explains that repetition is an indispensible stylistic feature of trauma fiction that helps to transmit one of the effects of trauma which forces the individual to experience an "insistent return of the event and the disruption of narrative chronology or progression" (86). Indeed, the involuntary reliving of the traumatic event is one of the most significant PTSD symptoms. As Van der Kolk and Van der Hart explain, "One of the hallmarks of Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder is the intrusive reexperiencing of elements of the trauma in nightmares, flashbacks, or somatic reactions" (173). This symptom can, therefore, be represented through repetition, as "the impact of trauma can only be adequately represented by mimicking its forms and symptoms, so that temporality and chronology collapse, and narratives are characterized by repetition and indirection" (Gibbs 3).

Repetition in narratives of trauma is another device that is directly related to the latency of trauma, suggesting that the character is haunted by the traumatic event and cannot help but re-collecting it multiple times throughout the narrative. Repetition suggests not only haunting, but as an ambivalent act itself, repetition is an "appropriate artistic means" to portray the overwhelming impact of trauma on the individual, whose compulsive and involuntary narration and re-narration of the traumatic event indicate his/her inability to work through the traumatic experience (Gibbs 46).

IV.4.3 Silence and Gaps

Another ethical-aesthetic way of displaying the unrepresentability of trauma is through gaps and silences. The persistent inability of the traumatized character to speak and falling back to silence, represented sometimes by gaps and empty pages in the narrative, allude to the failure of language to account for the extent of the horrors of the traumatic event. Silence demonstrates the non-communicable nature of trauma and the breakdown of linguistic mastery in the face of trauma. Versluys explains that the extent of the effects of trauma symptoms, especially its inexpressibility and the silence associated with it, is portrayed in trauma fiction in a sort of "metalanguage" that uses special "visual, paralinguistic means of communication (photographs, blank pages, illegibly dark pages, pages in cipher) [to] introduce the unsettling nature of the events into the very texture of the prose" (81). Gaps and silences in the narrative signal the limits of language and the inexpressibility of trauma as attempts to recount it linguistically fail and can only produce empty pages.

IV.4.4 Intertextuality

According to Whitehead, intertextuality is a key postmodern device in trauma fiction. Intertextuality occurs when the author makes use of other literary texts within their own narrative. It is defined by Robert McLaughlin as "repetition of and transformation of previously heard stories-the practice of texts speaking through other texts" (xxii). Because the traumatic experience and its effect on the individual are personal, it does not exist in the non-traumatized reader's reality. Thus, intertextuality is used as a layering technique by trauma authors who re-articulate existing texts to familiarize the traumatic experience they intend to portray through associating the trauma narrative with an original text. Thanks to intertextuality, the resulting trauma narrative "will already be familiar to the reader" (Whitehead 89). Therefore, trauma novelists resort to intertextuality to depict an unfamiliar

experience that cannot be portrayed straightforwardly through a return to the original text in an attempt to make sense of "what was not fully known or realised in the first instance [of trauma], and thereby to depart from it or pass beyond it" (ibid 90).

Another link between intertextuality and trauma lies in repetition. Using traces of previous familiar texts encodes another symptom of PTSD; the compulsion to repeat. The textual echoing involved in intertextuality gives the impression that the traumatized character is trapped, "repeating the actions of a previously encountered story […] that the reader knows in advance" (Whitehead 89). Connecting many texts together produces a "pattern of suffering" and a "motif of an inescapable trajectory or fate," which helps express the effect of trauma on the character (89, 90).

Moreover, Whitehead argues that when the traumatized cannot find a voice to articulate their own stories, intertextuality allows these "silenced voices" to repossess a voice and indirectly speak of their experience (93). It provides the distance necessary for the uncomfortable process of telling and re-telling of painful events. She states, "A self-conscious use of intertextuality can introduce reflexive distance into the narrative" (92)

Whitehead also highlights the active role of the reader in an intertextual novel. Intertextual narratives implicate the reader into a dynamic relationship with the text, as s/he has to participate in assembling the pieces of the narrative and connecting the dots. As she explains, "The intertextual novel constructs itself around the gap between the source text and its rewriting, and depends on the reader to assemble the pieces and complete the story" (93). The ultimate goal behind trauma narratives, which is to tell the story, involves that the story is heard, and this can be achieved even better when the reader becomes an active agent in the meaning-making process of the narrative.

V. Towards a Pluralistic Trauma Model

The insistence of the Caruthian model of trauma on the symptoms of trauma, its disruptive psychological impact, and its disregard of the historical, social, cultural, and political contexts of the trauma received serious criticism. Thus, Michelle Balaev calls for a reconsideration of literary trauma theory and proposes a pluralistic trauma model instead. She gives credit to Cathy Caruth for taking the first steps in literary trauma theory and introducing a theoretical trend based on the notion that trauma is unrepresentable. However, she argues that Caruth's classic model of trauma is based on a poststructuralist psychoanalytic Freudian-Lacanian model which treats trauma as a crisis of linguistic expression, as "an unsolvable problem of the unconscious that illuminates the inherent contradictions of experience and language" (1). Trauma, based on the Caruthian model, can only be expressed through "referential expression" that transmits its affects and alludes to "the recurring sense of absence" and "unspeakable void" that characterize experience of extreme traumatic events. Consequently, the classic trauma model, according to Balaev, is partial and does not look at the entire picture that surrounds the traumatic experience, so new models were laid to reconsider the classic model's emphasis that trauma is utterly and absolutely incomprehensible, and that language fails "to locate the truth of the past" (ibid).

Barry Stampfl, one of the contributors in Balaev's anthology *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, revises the notion of the unspeakability of trauma. He declares that the key to prove the possibility of expressing trauma is a pluralistic reconsideration of the unspeakable as only a "trope" or a "linguistic expression" within the wider and more diverse realm of traumatic experience. The unspeakable, Stampfl states is merely "a phase in the process of traumatization, not its predetermined endpoint" (22). The unspeakable to Stampfl is not the core feature of trauma, nor does trauma necessarily and eventually lead to a state of silence. It has a positive function because attesting that one's

experience cannot be conveyed in words, one has actually begun to speak. It is the first step of breaking the silence and the beginning of communicating the traumatic experience, "Evocations of the unspeakable often give rise to paradoxical attempts to speak the unspeakable" (ibid). To illustrate this thought, Stampfl cites the example of a lover who stresses that the beauty of his beloved is unspeakable, and cannot be put into words, yet he continues to try to describe it. In fact, the very fact of saying that her beauty is unspeakable attests to its extent, and likewise, stating that the atrocities an individual faced during a traumatic experience are unspeakable is proof of their horror.

More significantly, the new pluralistic model challenges the classical model and its restrictive view on trauma which does not take into consideration the external factors that might play a role in the traumatic experience, permitting, hence, a new range of representational possibilities. The renewed engagement with trauma attempts to locate it within "a larger conceptual framework" that stands in contrast to the classical Caruthian model which is born out of the "marriage of psychological laws that govern trauma's function to the semiotic laws that govern language's meaning" (Balaev 2). Balaev praises these new approaches to trauma for not being restricted to the psychological-neurobiological realm and for taking into account the contextual factors encompassing the traumatic experience. Considering their wide range and their use of various interdisciplinary approaches and theories in their investigation of trauma, Balaev labels the contemporary approaches to trauma under the umbrella term "the pluralistic model of trauma" (3).

The pluralistic model of trauma adopts what Balaev dubs as "neoLacanian" and "neoFreudian" approaches which examine linguistic representation of "pathological dissociation" and the semiotics of "silence" associated with trauma and focus, at once, on "the particular social components and cultural contexts" of traumatic experiences (4). Revisionist critics who adopt the pluralist trauma models reject the universal definition of trauma forged

by the Freudian-Caruthian model. Instead, they found a new understanding of trauma as a specific experience.

To insist on the specificity, as opposed to the universality of trauma, means to shift emphasis from its unrepresentability and inexpressibility to the social and cultural contexts of traumatic experience, which makes trauma a specific experience. Balaev does not deny that trauma shatters the individual's consciousness, which makes it incomprehensible, unassimilated and unspeakable. However, she is also adamant that there are wider individual, social, and cultural factors that shape and influence a person's response to a traumatic experience.

Overestimating the psychological dimension of trauma as an unknown, deferred and unclaimed experience which manifests itself in a belated manner through intrusive symptoms, the classical trauma model completely overlooks "agency" from the victim "by disregarding [his/her] knowledge of the experience and the self," shaped by his/her interaction with his environment (6). This tendency of classical trauma theorists to ignore the historical particularities of trauma and the lack of contextual historical and socio-cultural situatedness of trauma leads to the homogenization of the concept of trauma and denies the specificity of traumatic experience. As a result, moving beyond the "pathological universalism" of the classic model, the pluralistic model promotes the "variability" and "social specificity" of trauma which may make it less incomprehensible and give it some sense at the moment of its occurring (6).

Universalizing the experience of trauma neglects all the factors that contribute in the production as well as response to traumatic experiences, "forgetting that trauma occurs to actual people, in specific bodies, located within particular time periods and places" (7). The pluralistic model gives importance to personal histories and the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts of the traumatic experience, but more importantly, it insist on the

possibility of language to express and represent it (7). According to this model, it is possible to identify and locate the meaning and value of traumatic experience by giving attention to the multiple contextual factors behind it. Balaev's pluralistic trauma model call for a shift from viewing trauma as unspeakable, indecipherable, unrepresentable, and purely neurobiological experience to one that is specific, variable, valuable and meaningful, depending on its contexts, and especially as one which can be represented in many ways in literature.

Emphasizing the socio-cultural and historical frameworks that shape the traumatic experience means that some events that are not traumatic to some people may be traumatic to others. PTSD as defined by the *DSM-III* results from exposure to "an event that is outside the range of usual human experience" (250). According to the diagnostic Criterion A of PTSD included in the more recent *DSM-V,* the disorder is caused by exposure to "to actual or threatened death, serious injury, or sexual violence" (271). These definitions are the ones adopted by classical trauma theorists who focus on the wounding impact of such exposure.

The drawback of these definitions of PTSD is that they are Eurocentric. As Laura Brown maintains that they are based on the experience of "the dominant class; white young, able-bodied, educated, middle-class, Christian […] Trauma is thus what disrupts these particular human lives, but no other" (121) Classical trauma theory excludes the everyday experiences that are traumatic to marginalized non-Western minorities, such as "political oppression, racism, or economic domination" (Craps 28). These are experiences that are well within "the usual range of human experience, and yet are capable of inflicting PTSD. In his *Postcolonial Witnessing: Trauma Out of Bounds,* Stef Craps studies "the impact of everyday racism, sexism, homophobia, classism, ableism, and other forms of structural oppression" and asserts that they can be as traumatic as any other overtly violent traumatic event (25-26). The accumulation of micro-aggressions, of one covert racist act after another against marginalized minorities, leads to a form of intense insidious trauma:

> [Racism] typically takes the form of daily micro-aggressions such as being denied promotions, home mortgages, or business loans; being a target of a security guard; being stopped in traffic; or seeing one's group portrayed in a stereotypical manner in the media […] traumatization can result insidiously from cumulative micro-aggressions: each one is too small to be a traumatic stressor, but together they can build to create an intense traumatic impact. (26)

Similarly, Kenneth Ponds defines what he refers to as "racial trauma" as "the physiological, psychological, and emotional damage resulting from the stressors of racial harassment or discrimination" (23). It results from micro-aggressions, such as " "everyday verbal or non-verbal slights, snubs, or insults (whether intentional or unintentional) which communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative messages to targeted persons" (ibid).

Feminist psychotherapist Maria Root developed the concept of "insidious trauma" to account for the experience of everyday oppression, dehumanization, objectification and marginalization that minority groups suffer from. She states that insidious trauma is "usually associated with the social status of an individual being devalued because a characteristic intrinsic to their identity is different from what is valued by those in power" (240-241). Such experience is traumatic, as it becomes a "distinct threat to psychological safety, security, or survival" (ibid). Brown calls "insidious trauma" an injury to the soul. She defines insidious trauma as "the traumatogenic effects of oppression that are not necessarily overtly violent or threatening to bodily well-being at the given moment but that do violence to the soul and spirit" (Brown 107).

Conclusion

With the growth in popularity of the concept of trauma and PTSD, it has become rather simplistic. Few readers are aware of the complex history of the discourse of trauma and all the knots and controversies that has surrounded it since its inception as a medico-legal discourse in the 19th century. Therefore, this chapter explores the complex history of this concept and traces it back to its origins as railway spine.

Nowadays, classical trauma theory, founded by Cathy Caruth, and the representation of trauma in literature and other artistic means are highly informed by the nosological classification of PTSD in the *DSM-V*. Trauma is characterized by gaps and silences, by a fragmentation of the victim's spatio-temporal reality, as well as by the shattering of his/her sense of Self. Trauma is a double wound because of its belatedness. It manifests itself countless times; the first time when it is still unprocessed, unassimilated and unknown, and the other times when it imposes itself over and over again by resurfacing repeatedly in the form of nightmares, flashbacks, and other symptoms of intrusion. All these pose a challenge of representation for the individual who finds it hard to express his/her trauma and for writers as well to depict it, for how can a phenomenon that is defined as outside the range of human experience and linguistic expression and characterized by its unspeakability, silence, incomprehensibility, and fragmenting effect be represented through literature whose main means is linguistic representation? This chapter provides the answer to this question. Trauma can be represented in literature through postmodern techniques, mainly fragmentation, repetition, gaps, silences, intertextuality, and non-linearity, that mimic and mirror its symptoms rather than traditionally represent it.

Moreover, this chapter also demonstrates that other critics, led by Michele Balaev, argue against Caruth's classical trauma model and call for a more pluralistic approach towards trauma and its representation in literature and art. While the Caruthian model presents trauma as a crisis of linguistic expression, emphasizing its unspeakabillity, Balaev's pluralistic trauma model puts more emphasis on the individual, social, cultural and political contexts that surround the traumatic experience and shape the individual's response to it. Trauma, as such, is not a universal concept, as put forth by classical trauma theorists, but is rather characterized by its specificity, in the sense that its contextual frameworks shape it and its impact. Related to Balaevian trauma model is the notion of insidious trauma. It is a concept that developed as

a response to the Eurocentrism of Caruth's model and its disregard of the different kinds of oppressions (such as racism, sexism, and marginalization) and the micro-aggressions (covert violence) against minorities. According to insidious trauma, even if not outside the range of human experience, oppression and micro-aggressions are traumatogenic injuries to the soul and may lead to the same symptoms of PTSD.

The aim of the following chapters is to read Rabih Alameddine's and Rawi Hage's works adopting both Caruthian and Balaevian approaches to trauma and its representation in the novels. My reading of both novels takes into consideration the social, political, and cultural contexts behind the trauma of the characters and how they influence their hybrid identities

Chapter III.A Caruthian-Balaevian Reading of Trauma Rabih Alameddine's *I, the Divine:* PTSD and the Failure of Hybridity

Introduction

Reading Alameddine's *I, the Divine* using a Caruth's classic trauma approach as well as based on the symptoms of PTSD in the *DSM-V*, this chapter seeks to demonstrate that postmodern techniques are the perfect way to represent the non-representable and the unspeakable because of their unconventional nature. Rabih Alameddine's portrayal of Sarah *I, the Divine* is anything but traditional. *I, the Divine* is a novel of literally thirty-eight first chapters that reflect the protagonist's inability to speak her traumas. She has undergone the traumatic experiences of rape and the Lebanese Civil War and attempts to write a memoir to reconcile with her traumas and arrive at a sense of who she is. Yet, whenever she starts a chapter she fails, quits writing and start over.

This act of writing and re-writing makes her narrative characterized by fragmentation, gaps, silences and repetitions which mirrors her traumatized Self. Her traumatic memories resist being told in a coherent, chronological and linear narrative. Therefore, she is doomed to a life of suffering, exhibiting all the symptoms of PTSD and caught in painful repetitions of past traumas through dreams, flashbacks, and the dialectic between remembering and forgetting.

As the daughter of a Lebanese father and American mother who enjoys a great degree of individualism and liberation, Sarah's multiethnicity and hybridity would have allowed her to become whoever she wants and act however she wants. However, what prevent her from enjoying the positive potentials of hybridity are her past traumas which stand in the way of her sense of belonging to both cultures and places. Lebanon is the place, which through its patriarchal values, has allowed her rape to happen. The USA, on the other hand, is the place she escapes to for its values of individualism only to find herself depressed, alienated, alone and literally has nowhere to run to. Therefore, the objective of this chapter is to prove that

hybridity is experienced as a painful state of homelessness, rootlessness and unbelonging instead of empowering and liberating. In addition to this, applying Balaev's pluralistic trauma model on the novel, I also aim to study the cultural, social and political context behind her trauma, focusing on the patriarchal values of her society and the loss of order during the war which allowed her rape to happen and which are the reason behind her refusal to belong to Lebanon.

I. The Representation of a Crisis and the Crisis of Representation

In addition to her war trauma, Sarah went through the trauma of sexual violence when she was a sixteen-year-old girl back in Lebanon. Her rape plays an important role in her life decisions, such as leaving her country and deciding her belonging. Therefore, it is no wonder that this traumatic incident is central to her life narrative, or its failure for that matter. Rape is the experience that Sarah strives so hard to wipe out from her memory and from her life story. Even if her narration constantly oscillates towards this incident, her attempts are unsuccessful. She writes it with great difficulty, as revealed in its repetition three times. trauma's unspeakability and the inadequacy of language to account for it are illustrated through her narration of the rape episode, which is characterized by repetition, fragmentation and shift in languages (English and French) and genres (memoir and fiction).

I.1 Fragmentation,Repression and the Writing of Rape

Through its postmodern narrative structure, the novel translates into the tropes of unspeakability, repression, splitting, silence and introjections which are the psychic defense mechanisms that rape victims rely upon in order to cope with their traumas. The text is itself a testimony of rape's resistance to representation. Alameddine portrays the dialectic between the attempts to forget and attempts to remember, a chief characteristic of the life narratives of traumatized victims. However, the problem is that Sarah is writing a memoir, a word that

etymologically comes from the French mémoire (masculine), a special use of mémoire (feminine) that means memory. A memoir is, accordingly, a record of memories. Thus, Sarah is writing her memories while she is, in fact, struggling so hard to forget them.

Sarah's first attempt of narrating her major trauma, the story of her rape, is her twenty-third first chapter, "Chapter One," where she recalls the memory of a hot evening in August 1976 in Beirut. On a visual and structural level, this short chapter looks like a fragmented piece of poetry, mirroring Sarah's own fragmented memories of the event. Sarah presents to her reader a series of disconnected images, propelled one image after another in a disjoint manner, which points to a traumatic memory recorded as images not words. It also signifies that she is transferring into words the mental images in the succession that they appear to her mind, but the full memory is still absent from her consciousness. The short sentences and the scattered images disrupt the linearity of Sarah's narrative and prevent the success of full disclosure. It is necessary to quote the chapter at length to demonstrate its structural narrative fragmentation:

> On an exceptionally hot evening early in August, I stood on the sidewalk in
> Beirut waiting for a taxi to take me home.
> The Mediterranean sun was still blazing and I was about to faint.
> […]Beirut is detestable in August.
> Even the air is filthy.
> I wanted to be home, in my bed.
> It was 1976. The city was beginning to look damaged.
> I could feel the ripening sun burn my skin, pale from having spent most of the summer indoors.
> I was too skinny, my stepmother said.
> Too sickly.
> I wore a black linen dress.
> The linen was perfect for the weather, but the color was not.
> The dress was covered with tiny colorful flowers, a happy motif.
> The black was a stark contrast to my skin.
> The dress exposed my shoulders, which the sun attacked mercilessly.
> Merciless. That evening was merciless.
> […]
> I was sixteen. I should have been invincible.
> A taxi approached. It was full. Five passengers already in it.
> I felt crushed.
> The dress was French, bought from a catalogue. I loved it.

I looked at the sea behind me, oblivious to the play of colors. (78)

With the mention of Beirut and the war, this may seem like a war chapter. However, the real content of the chapter is only revealed in another one. Sarah suddenly ends the chapter and goes silent before she reaches the moment of her abduction, a strong indicator of her psyche's repression of the traumatic event. Her rape is still not available to her consciousness and has been pushed to a dark inaccessible corner of her subconscious.

A closer look at Sarah's diction in this short chapter reveals a lot about what she fails to remember. She describes war-wrecked Beirut as "damaged" and its summer sun as capable of striking a "merciless" "attack," using the word "merciless" three times. These words foreshadow Sarah's rape, a merciless attack that has damaged not only her body, but her subjecthood as well. When she describes feeling "crushed" inside the crowded taxi, she is, in fact, expressing her powerlessness facing her rapists, and the shattering effects of the sexual assault on her which has crushed her and destroyed her life. Moreover, describing Beirut as "detestable" and the air as "filthy" mirrors how she feels about herself following her rape; filthy and detestable.

Using Jacques Derrida's theory of deconstruction, Pamela Layoun explains that what Sarah's text "omits" is more significant than what it says (6). Indeed, what the text does not say in Sarah's two failed attempts to narrate her rape is the memory she wants to repress, which is the very *raison d'être* of the text. Thus, Derrida's notion of *différance* can best justify Sarah's writing choice which is based on abrupt stops, silence, omission and the resulting fragmentation.

The central premise of Derrida's thinking is simple—discovery. Deconstruction is all about the discovery of the ideas that lay hidden behind and within the text. The complete meaning of a signifier is both differential (that is, in relation to an absence), as well as deferred (that is, postponed). The content of the text, Derrida argues, takes place "*outside of*

language, that is to say, in the sense that we give here to that word, *outside of writing in general*" (158; italics added). Reading, accordingly, involves a "doubling" of the text, as the latter becomes a signifier of an "absent referent" or a "transcendental signified" (ibid). Différance is a "trace" of meaning that is absent but that has left its mark, Derrida stresses (65).

In this sense, Sarah's rape story is the absent referent, the transcendental signified, or the différance that she does not state, but is hidden within her words, silences and fragmented text. Through her narrative style and word choice, she leaves "traces" that hint to her story, but the meaning of her unfinished story is deferred until she herself can make sense of it as a traumatic event characterized by its very incomprehensibility.

I.2 Silence, Ellipsis and the Failure of Language in the Writing of Rape

Sarah resumes narrating her rape story ten chapters later in only half-a-page long chapter written entirely in French, titled "Premier Chapitre." Here, Sarah adopts the third-person narrative, using the pronoun "Elle." The chapter starts with a description of a hot day in Beirut and a girl who has been waiting for a taxi for ten minutes:

> Il faisait chaud ce jour-là. Elle avait porté sa longue robe noire et fleurie. Elle aimait cette robe. Sa belle-mère disait qu'elle la rendait trop maigre. Mais elle en aimait le fin tissu frais. La chaleur l'étouffait. Elle était au bord de la route depuis bientôt dix minutes, et aucun taxi ne semblait vouloir s'arrêter. Ses cheveux lui collaient au front. Elle détestait Beyrouth en été. La chaleur et l'humidité rendaient la ville sale. (129)

Then she proceeds to describe the appearance of a car in front of the girl. After looking at the driver, the girl signals with her head that she does not want a ride because she has always been told to beware of young taxi drivers (129).

The content of this chapter may seem similar to the first one. However, there are many differences that suggest retrieved traumatic content. While the first one is fragmented with its short disjoint sentences and images, this one seems more like a coherent narrative. This

signifies that Sarah has been able, though only to some extent, to collect the scattered mental images she has of that day and transfer them into a meaningful verbal expression.

Sarah describes Beirut saying that "she" *detested* it in summer, "Elle détestait Beyrouth en été," and that humidity made the city *filthy* "sale," (129), which are the same words she uses in the previous chapter. Yet, she omits other details she mentions in her first rape chapter; the merciless sun, the war, the exact date, as well as her age. The reason for removing the imagery of the sun's merciless attack is because at this point she remembers what was merciless that day; it was her rapists and not the sun, a memory which, due to repression, was not fully accessible to her the first time. She does not mention the war here because now she knows that the traumatic memory she was trying to remember in her first narrative was her rape story not the war. The omission of her age and exact date signifies the insignificance of these details to her; what she is about to narrate is an experience that women of all ages and at all times go through in her country, a point she makes clear after her rape, as I will demonstrate later.

The way Sarah ends the chapter holds much meaning. Before reaching the moment of her abduction and rape, she suddenly ends the chapter with the statement, "Il faisait tellement chaud qu'elle se sentait au bord de l'évanouissement …" (129), closing her chapter with an ellipsis (…). The ellipsis, as the textual manifestation of silence is a deliberate pause that is pregnant with significance.

Anne Toner links the ellipsis to the speaker's mental state and defines it as "a means of promoting access to emotional or psychological states" (1). She argues that the ellipsis manifests a structurally visible lapse into silence inspired by strong emotions, especially fear (161). She maintains that the ellipsis serves a pragmatic function of saving the reader the trouble of reading situations of extreme violence which are intentionally removed and substituted by the three dots (108). While this is not Sarah's intention, yet the part she

suddenly removes from her narrative is beyond doubt violent. She uses the ellipsis to protect her own Self the agony of having to confront it. In addition to this, Toner refers to the ellipsis as "the sentimental condition of anguished non-expressibility in extremis" (108), and Sarah's rape is an extreme and inexpressible experience, which explains her intentional silence and deliberate omission of this story from her life narrative.

Therefore, Sarah's sudden and repeated eschewal of an ending to her rape narrative bespeaks a mind racked by the memories of this experience. Rape is an experience that Sarah equates with death, as she states when she is able to fully narrate it. The ellipsis, which "commonly signifies death" (Toner 108), is the perfect symbol to represent it, suggesting covertly that there is still more to be told. The Ellipsis is a simple truncation of the story, but it leaves room for Sarah to return to her story whenever she is ready to finish it. Sarah takes refuge in silence, but the elliptical punctuation traps her suffering in a distressing pause unless she completes her story and fills out the ellipsis.

Moreover, this chapter also demonstrates the failure of language to represent unspeakable trauma and the emotions associated with it. Sarah makes this point clear through the shift to another language. Shifting language, she is searching for a language that narrates and preserves the frightening dimension of her experience. Besides, French is a language that is not accessible to all English and worldwide readers of her memoir, which suggests that she wishes to unburden herself of this painful story but not share it with a large audience because of the feelings of both pain and shame associated with this memory.

I.3 Filling out the Ellipsis: Genre Hybridity and Recovered Traumatic Memories

The subject matter of Sarah's two failed attempts is finally revealed in her third and last rape chapter which she writes immediately after the French rape chapter "Premier

Chapitre." Titled "Spilt Wine," this chapter is a literal translation of the French one, except that this time she finishes writing her rape story.

I, the Divine is a bifurcated book with distinctive linguistic and genre fragmentation that has a solid psychological core. Like the previous chapter, Sarah uses the third-person omniscient narrator, which signifies her inability to include her rape story in her memoir. She has to distance herself through shifting genres because the memoir is a personal genre that tells the events that really happened to its author/narrator. Contrastingly, writing her rape story as a novel, a genre of fiction, provides Sarah a fundamental split between her as the protagonist of her story and as its author. Or to put it differently, dropping the "I" of her memoir to a third-person narrator allows her to remain outside the story and creates the necessary distance that gives her much more control over the content of the narrative and over her emotions.

Without this shift in genre, it simply would have been impossible for Sarah to move forward with her life narrative and she would have been trapped in an endless repetition of a past event. As Bakhtin explains that as opposed to the memoir, the novel is the perfect genre to express one's psychological disturbances, which is necessary for the life narrative to advance and for the individual to really develop, "to catch human beings in the process of real development one could neither address them directly nor let them speak directly: one had to address them through the novel, so that even the motion of plot seemed a permanent provocation to their deepest anxieties and concerns" (Hirschkop 150). Therefore, the novel is the perfect means for Sarah to reclaim her story and voice.

She narrates that after "she" refused to take the first taxi with the young driver, which is where she stops the previous chapter, she took another taxi with a driver who was "as old as her father," and another young passenger, "she knew she did not have to worry because the driver was a seat away and she was not alone" (130). Unbeknownst to her, she would be

gang-raped by the driver, the passenger, and another teenage boy. In a lengthy five-page description of her rape, she gives a painstaking account full of graphic details.

The novel portrays the way raped victims profoundly internalize the worthlessness and humiliation communicated to them by the perpetrator during rape. Sarah fiercely fought her rapists, giving the driver "a kick on his shin" and biting his fingers when he tried touching her lips (131). Her resistance angered her rapist who gave her a blow on her stomach, a slap on her face that rattled her head and injured her lips, and a kick on the kidneys that "blinded her" (132). More importantly, her rapists use language as a weapon, calling her "*slut. Fucking bitch*" (131), and kept repeating, "*Slut . . . Whore . . .You will pay me for this, bitch . . .*" (132).

This injurious use of language is a dehumanizing act that functions as a form of control over her and justification of their aggression. Her rapists represent a patriarchal culture that holds women responsible for male sexual aggression. To her perpetrators, even though she was but a sixteen-year-old girl, she was not a victim, but she had brought this on herself; thus, she had to pay for it, as her rapist told her. She "heard the older man heap insults. No, just one.*Whore*. The word rang in her ears" (132), which disturbed her self-perception. As a traumatic event, rape destabilized Sarah's meaning structure, causing such negative emotions as self-blame and guilt. Following her rape she had to remind herself repeatedly that she was not responsible for her rape, but a victim. "She was raped. She was not guilty, she kept reminding herself. She was a victim," as she writes (134).

Rape is not really sexual in that it does not serve a sexual purpose in the rapist's psyche. It is rather an anti-sexual act driven by sheer aggression and the desire to exercise and assert power and dominance over the female. What brings satisfaction to the perpetrator(s) is the humiliation of the woman rather than the sexual act per se (Eriksson 57-58). Indeed, when Sarah dared to look at her rapist's eyes for the first time, she was stricken with terror because

"[w]hat she saw froze her. A scary mixture of lust and disdain. The desire was not of coveting, or lust, not even of possessing. It was a primitive desire, dominance, aggression" (131). It is not lust that drove those men to rape her, but the terrible concoction of the most primitive masculine impulses: dominance and aggression. Sarah saw "lust" mixed with "disdain" in her rapists' eyes because they saw her merely as a worthless object that deserved to be the subject of their denigrating and humiliating assault.

Feeling emotionally overwhelmed with fear and unable to cope with the brutality of the attack, Sarah resorted to dissociation. She could not physically escape the traumatic situation; thus, her only way to protect her mind and self was through a mental escape. Looking at the sky provided her with the dissociation she needed to elude the pain and suffering inflicted on her during her rape:

> She did not want to believe this was happening to her. She wanted to wake up and realize this was nothing more than a nightmare. She raised her eyes and saw the pale sky. Blue, no cloud in sight […] She would not look at them. (132)

The sky initially looked pale and untainted just like her. However, once the man began raping her, pain sent her in a haze and her perception of reality was altered. Correspondingly, "the sky was hazy" (ibid).

Sarah's dissociation is directly related to rape's shattering effect on selfhood. During rape, a woman's feelings of worthlessness pose a direct threat to the Self and bring about a sense of annihilation. As defined by Eriksson, rape is "an intrusion into the most intimate parts of the woman's body and many victims experience feelings of annihilation, arising from the nature of rape as 'a direct attack on the self'" (60). When her fear and suffering escalated as the man penetrated her using a gun, the psychologically-shattered Sarah cut connection to her physical body and clung to the image of the sky above her to remind herself that she was still alive, "The sky . . . Where was the sky? It had disappeared . . . She felt she was about to

dissolve as well" (132). This quote captures the degree of the harm of rape, the "dissolving" of the self. Sarah could not locate the sky that disappeared just like she dissolved.

As her rape continued, she continued to look for the sky, but "she saw nothing […] She only saw the sky for a second" (132). Sarah needed to find the sky because it was her mental retreat. Inability to detect it symbolized the impossibility of escaping her rape. When the man was done raping her with the gun, "He pulled down his pants and threw himself on her," and this time Sarah, "lifted her head to look at the sky. It was darker, but the sky was there, assuring her. She was still alive. She was not dead" (132). However, the Sky changed color from pale to take on a darker hue matching the dark void left in place of the lost part of her Self and her altered dark perception of reality.

When the second man was raping her, Sarah tried to look for the sky, but she was so overwhelmed with negative feelings about herself that she failed to locate it. She could not escape to the sky now just as she could not escape the reality that this rape led to a complete dissolution of her Self, changed her and would change her life and her future. She narrates, "The sky had disappeared. She closed her eyes, out of pain, out of bitterness, out of shame […]She tried to recapture a visual support, something to get a hold of" (133), but her sky was forever gone.

I.3.1 War and Sexuality

In addition to portraying the psychological state of the victim, a pluralistic trauma model requires that rape narratives should focus on the socio-cultural and political forces that permit and corroborate violence against women as well. War brings the worst out of human beings, but more particularly it brings the worst out of men. Examination of Sarah's rape scene demonstrates that Alameddine wants to portray the entanglements between war and sexuality especially in patriarchal societies where men affirm their masculinity by dominating

women. As Evelyne Accad argues, "war and violence have roots in sexuality and in the treatment of women" in the Arab world (4). That is mainly because as a masculine realm, war, much like sexuality, is a symbol of male domination. Accad notes that the postwar Lebanese novel portrays characters that suffer a dreadful fate, but women, who have to assert autonomy in the midst of antagonistic conditions, "are the principal victims of both political and social violence" (4). The horrors of Sarah's rape, for example, are depicted through the fusion of sexual and aggressive imagery as the men raped her with the gun:

> [the young man] bit savagely. He lifted his head, a smile plastered on his lips, a smile disfigured by ugly desire. *Are you feeling pain, whore?* He lowered his head to kiss her, but she tried to turn her head. *I don't want to kiss you, bitch! I want to shove the gun in . . . Slut! (132)*

Guns are the emblem of masculinity. At the center of this relationship between guns and manhood lies one of the most highly-charged symbols of masculinity: the phallus. A phallic symbol, according to Freud, is an object shaped like a phallus, which men use to reaffirm their masculinity. Therefore, guns are powerful weapons not only because of their obvious function of inflicting violence and death, but in their obvious symbolic power as phallic symbols used to represent power and domination. In an act of sexuality without sex, penetration by a gun became a symbolic rape. It deeply humiliated and objectified Sarah, but used as a proxy for the phallus, it became a compensation for a lost and threatened masculinity.

This idea can best be explained by Henri Myrttinen's thought on war and sexuality. During war, the "fear of loss of male power and privilege" leads to a crisis of masculinity (37). War, thus, is considered as a "symbolic sexual act" (40) where performance is put to the test, those who perform better are the winners. When masculinity is threatened, men feel emasculated, as if they lost their phallus. Therefore, they resort to reaffirm their manhood and regain power through the use of the gun in addition to rape. Similarly, stressing the myth of the use of gun for protection, psychiatrist Lawrence Blum states that, "guns are often used by

men who feel very weak and angry to bolster their fragile sense of manhood […] Although many gun owners claim that guns are for personal protection, frequently what firearms most protect is a sense of manhood." Living in a country enveloped in civil war with many groups fighting for dominance posed a threat to manhood in Lebanese society. Thus, they resorted to sexual violence and drugs for compensation (Accad 51). Consequently, feeling disenfranchised, Sarah's rapists used the gun, the most violent phallic symbol, to deflower her and rob her of her most valuable possession, as per the rules of their traditional Arab society, her virginity, to prove the power of phallus and to regain a semblance of power and domination.

Many studies emphasize that war and rape are similar in yet another way. There is a dimension of territory attached to them as conquering strategies that involve dehumanization, control and possession. The former conquers land and the latter a body. As a dignitary harm and offense over one's most intimate and personal areas of the self, rape is a crime of "'border crossing' into one's area of autonomy" (Eriksson 59). Falling under the mercy of the rapists and losing her self-determination and control over her own body, the woman's dignity is attacked, and she feels, occupied and invaded. As Accad states that "In the Middle East […] Man uses his penis the way he uses his gun: to conquer, control, and possess" (31-32).

Sarah was raped using both types of weapons; the military and the sexual ones, and the way she felt about herself and body during her rape demonstrates this idea of rape as invasion. She continuously describes that undergoing this sexual invasion, her body was no longer hers, "*She is ours,*" as one of the men said (133). Raped with the gun and then repeatedly by the men, she felt dehumanized and transformed to an object to satisfy a sick and perverse fantasy of sex and domination, "She felt dispossessed of her own body" (133), and "for the first time" in her life "she wanted to die" (131).

I.3.2 Rape and Patriarchy

Postwar Lebanese novel functions as a "reading of society, one that reveals hidden dimensions in gender, power and hierarchy" (Accad vii). For these reasons, Alameddine's novel touches upon such taboo zones as patriarchy, sexuality, war, and violence. His choice of gang rape is not haphazard. Sarah's gang-rape is aimed at criticizing a patriarchal culture that places much importance on man's masculinity through the subjugation of the female, as well as the double standard of Arab society regarding male and female sexuality.

Violent enactments of masculinity are hegemonic, with the weapon, both military and sexual, used symbolically and literally in the marking of power against the Other. Males seek to "accomplish" or "do" hegemonic masculinity through rape as a visible display of a violent model of masculinity that has roots in historical and socio-cultural contexts. In an unsafe hypermasculine social setting, such as the Lebanese society especially during the Civil War, masculinity is asserted through gang rape (Franklin 52). Having an audience to bear witness to the act, gang rape provides solid proof that the sexual assault, and hence doing masculinity, took place rather than "mere boasts of sexual virility, strength, and boldness" (53).

Alameddine reads rape as cultural, as a learned practice within the violent and patriarchal Lebanese society. Sarah was gang-raped in a public demonstration of masculine strength contrasted to her weakness. When the two men were raping her, she saw a silhouette of a teenage boy, a year or two younger than her, approaching. For a moment she had a glimpse of hope. She saw terror in his eyes, and was relieved, thinking he would help. However, in no time his look changed "From pathetic and poignant" to "desire," when one of the men told him, "*You want to remain a virgin all your life. Come. Come find out the pleasures of being a man" (133).*When he showed hesitation, he fell under the laughter and sarcasm of the two men and felt obliged to prove his masculinity to them. As Sarah recalls, "*Come on. What are you waiting for? Inspiration? [...]* The older man had a conniving smile.

The boy nodded. He jumped on her, penetrating her brutally and clumsily" (133). The reward for gang rape is more social than sexual. Once done, the boy was socially approved by the other men. Therefore, Sarah was reduced to a mere object that enabled cohesion between the members of the gang as well as the symbolic possession and conquest of the female body.

I.3.3 Rape and the Politics of Silence

Sarah's rape is permitted by a patriarchal system characterized by masculine hegemony which turns a blind eye to macho behaviors, including sexual violence. In deeply ingrained patriarchal societies, such as Arab societies, women's autonomy, including control of their own body, is limited. The female body is a site for the inscription of social rules, expectations and male power. It is the root cause of her oppression and subjugation; to the rapists, and to men in general, it is a symbol of affirming masculinity, power and domination, and to the males of her family, it is the carrier of the family's honor. Good women are those who uphold the honor the family.

Such patriarchal systems condemn raped women as dishonorable and force them to silently carry the burden of dishonor and shame. The brutality of Sarah's rape scene ends with Sarah's body on the ground, "filthy, covered in dirt and blood," (133).She bitterly lamented, "One hour. In only one hour, her life had come to an end. In only one hour, her dreams were shattered. In only one hour, she thought bitterly, she had become a woman" (134). Upon returning home, Sarah's main concern was that neither her parents nor anybody else must ever know what happened to her. She chose to bear the burden of silence than that of the shame and stigma of rape. She even wondered about the countless other girls in her society like her, who were raped but remained silent (134)

The "the ideas, beliefs and metaphors" that a certain culture assigns to a particular event is a determining factor in the meaning ascribed by the victim to the traumatic event

(Lebowitz and Roth 364). Sarah's "shame" and feeling "filthy" (133), "dirty," and "soiled" (134) come from an earlier childhood's memory where her father explained to her the difference between a boy's and a girl's sexuality. A man can get away with rape, but a woman carries the shame of destroying, polluting and defiling he honor of the family for the rest of her life. Using the metaphor of the split wine, her father summarized the sexual double standard in Lebanese society that indirectly legitimizes rape by sentencing the woman to carry the honour of the family:

> A boy's sexuality is like a plastic tablecloth…If a carafe of wine is spilled on it, you can easily wipe it off. A girl's sexuality, on the other hand, is like fine linen, much more valuable. If a carafe of wine is spilled on it, it will never come off. You can wash it and wash it, but it will never be the same. (87)

The title of this chapter "Spilt Wine" is a metaphor for her rape. Once wine is spilt, the fine linen is soiled and will never restore its original state, just like Sarah's virginity. Her dad's metaphor defined the meaning Sarah gave to her rape and to her Self after she was rape. When she got home and cleaned herself, she was so overwhelmed with feelings of guilt and shame for "tainting" the family's honor that she looked at her father and wondered if he still loved her the same (134). She understood that the value of her sexuality defined her as a person. She had levels of worth; to the rapist s she is worth nothing but an object to affirm masculinity, and to her father she is worth her virginity, so long as it remains pure.

I.4 Recurring Motif: the Possession by an Image

Sarah's traumatic rape stained her and left a mark that cannot be easily wiped. She carries this mark with her for the rest of her life in the form of PTSD symptoms. She never mentions her rape again after this chapter, but taking a bath is a recurrent rape motif that Sarah repeats throughout different episodes in her memoir, which points to a repressed traumatic content.

Right after she went home the day she was raped, Sarah took a bath, "vigorously rubbing her skin, to erase the marks, the bruises, any trace. She scrub[s]" (134). It is clear here that Sarah wanted to erase this traumatic memory and go back to her untainted virgin state, but she knew that once wine is spilt over fine linen, it is destroyed forever.

In an earlier first chapter in Sarah' memoir, entitled "1—," a one-page chapter, Sarah mentions a similar bath scene in the USA in the present. In this chapter, the bathroom, a harmless place, becomes a motif for her rape and takes her back to the past. She is still trapped in trauma's time, or in what Tal calls trauma's liminal time:

> She steps into the tub. It is smaller than the one in Beirut. Still, she remembers being lost in that tub, totally immersed, she remembers trying to get clean. She scrubbed herself with the loofah, over and over, as if there was some dark stain and she Lady Macbeth. Out, damn spot. She was dirty, all of her. She wanted to rub herself raw, remove any traces of herself. She wanted out of her skin. She wanted to be a different person, a better person, her tears adding salt to the bath. She scrubbed her arms, her legs. (57)

At this point, it is impossible for the reader to make sense of this chapter which is situated at the beginning of Sarah's memoir while her rape chapter is in its middle. Written in the third-person point of view, like her rape chapter, this one also belongs to the "fiction" part of her book, meaning that she is attempting to keep distance from the painful event. This signals the everlasting impact of trauma on Sarah, as fragments of the past traumatic event continue to disturb and disrupt her present life even when she is a grown-up woman living in the USA.

In chapter "1—", Her rape story is still inaccessible and repressed. As a traumatic and incomprehensible experience characterized by its belatedness, her rape continues to haunt her through traces and fragments that resurface in this chapter, making her relive the experience of taking the bath following her rape, and all the strong emotions associated with it. Her rape was a transition from one Self to another, from a state of innocence to a state of corruption. Here in the USA, she feels a compulsive need to scrub herself anew, to remove the "dark

stain," that "damn spot." She wants to be a "different person, a better person" (57) and to reclaim her lost innocence and purity. The bath is filled with her tears, but she does not remember why, all she wants is to get "out of her skin" and "remove any trace" of her soiled self (57).

Though short in length, this chapter demonstrates the elliptical style that characterizes Sarah's writing and reflects the impact of trauma. Her use of the long dash as a title of the chapter, "1—", signifies an unspeakable thought. Both the three dots (…) and the long dash refer to denied access to psychological states, but the dash signals an even more disturbing omitted psychological content. While, as Sommey puts it, "the three dots are vague and emotional," the dash is "the sob, the stammer, the mark of unutterable emotion, and the mark of ignorance" (qtd. in Toner 13). Thus, Sarah's use of the dash as the title of this chapter signifies an unspeakable, incomplete and incomprehensible thought. She still ignores the reason for her psychological state, and "sobs" for an unexplained emotional distress, echoing the nature of the incomprehensibility and non-verbal nature of trauma and traumatic memories.

It is only once Sarah tells her rape in the chapter "Spilt Wine" that the reader can make sense of this chapter and understand that the unnamed woman in it is the same unnamed girl in "Spilt Wine," who is Sarah herself. "Spilt Wine" tells the story of sixteen-year-old girl Sarah, who feels so guilty, ashamed and filthy that she wants to "erase the marks, the bruises, any trace" (134), and chapter "1—" is told in the voice of adult present-day depressed Sarah who still feels filthy and ashamed.

I.5 On the Impossibility of Writing Pain and Violence

Sarah's inability to write about her rape is depicted through a game of French Pictionary that she played with her friends six months after she was raped. The only person

she told about her rape is her best friend Dina. Six months later, Sarah, Dina and a group of friends decided to play a French Pictionary game. The team of the artists, to whom Dina belonged, tried to draw a very hard word, "rape," and Sarah's team had to guess it. Dina was unable to make her pencil move on her paper, and the other artists drew two "Stick figures in various forms of coupling" (135). The other team yelled their guesses "*Have sex* […] *making love*" (ibid). Sarah started to have a feeling what the drawn word was, but refused to admit it. She felt "a lump stuck in her throat," and yelled "*Fucking. It has to be fucking*" (ibid). She did not want it to be the word she was thinking of because of the memory and emotional state attached to it. Indeed, Sarah choked up because she was trying to suppress a sad traumatic memory.

When Dina, with tears in her eyes, dared to look at her, Sarah realized that her initial guess was correct, the word she did not dare to utter. "Rape?" she asked "quietly, incredulously" under the astonishment of her other friends at her wits for discovering such a difficult word (135). Then she told Dina that the way she drew it was not correct, "*You should have drawn it differently. How can I tell this is rape and not just fucking?*" Her friend put lines around the two figures to suggest violence. Sarah gets a little bit defensive that such a horrible experience was represented by those tiny lines, *"Those lines mean violent? You're crazy"* (ibid). However, Dina answered that she did not know how to draw rape (ibid). To Sarah, neither Dina nor the rest of the group can draw an accurate depiction of an experience that defies representation and wondered why would a game that is all about representation include a word that resists representation. For the rest of her life, Sarah was preoccupied with a question that is the heart of the novel, *"How does one draw rape?"* (ibid). This question, indeed, is a mirror to the larger question, how does one write rape? A question that seems to lie behind Sarah's various attempts at writing her rape story, signifying the failure of language to capture pain and trauma.

II. War Trauma and PTSD

Narratives of trauma are not simply about traumatic events, but about the impact of those events on victims. Sarah's recollections of the Lebanese Civil War begin in the seventh "chapter 1" of her memoir where she remembers the first day of the Civil War. "Setting my memory in time is easy. The first day of the war in Beirut, April 1975. I was fifteen," she writes (27). This statement signals that it is far easier for her to give the exact date of this traumatic event than retrieve the memory of the atrocities that happened that day. The way she narrates them is consistent with trauma narratives and with symptoms of PTSD, characterized by a resistance of telling and repression of traumatic memories.

Sarah's strange reminiscence of the war follows the peculiar temporality and fragmentariness of traumatic memory. Her narrative is disrupted and fragmented through the incorporation of trivial memories into narrating such a serious and life-threatening traumatic incident as the war. Her war chapter begins with the recollection of a rather insignificant detail about the first day of the war; her second-floor teenage neighbor playing a specific song, "What I recall from all the craziness of that day is the sound of the opening stanza of Deep Purple's 'Smoke on the Water' being massacred by Mazen" (27), she writes. She does not delve into the particularities of the war, such as what happened exactly, how the war started, who was fighting who and the casualties of the day.

However, the vocabulary she uses here to describe Mazen's terrible guitar performance points to the fact that even if she attempts to expunge painful war memories from her consciousness by focusing, instead, on unimportant incidents, she subconsciously cannot escape the real memory behind April 13th, 1975. Mazen's "massacr[ing]" of the song echoes the massacre that took place that day. The Lebanese Civil War broke out with an incident known as "the Bus Massacre" when a bus carrying Palestinian civilians, including children and women, was attacked by a group of Phalangists, a Lebanese Christian

paramilitary organization, in Ain el-Rummaneh in its way to a refugee camp at Sabra, massacring 27 civilians.

Sarah's memory of her family and what they were doing is rather clear and vivid. She succeeds in articulating it and transforming it into a narrative memory unlike the traumatic memory of the war which remains in the background of her narration, leaving it to be exhumed by the reader. She chooses to remember how all her family was sitting in the stairwell, believing it was the safest place. She further recounts how her father looked that day, smoking his cigarette, all handsome and well-dressed up except that she recalls noticing, for the first time in her life, a flaw in his look; the skin between his socks and the hem of his pants was exposed. Just like this flaw destroyed the perfect image of her father on that fateful day, it can be read as a symbol for the end of the vision of a perfect homeland and of the looming horror that is about to sweep the country.

II.1 Repressed Traumatic Memory and Fragmentation

The repression of memories lies at the heart of trauma, causing the latter to disrupt memory, history, life-narratives and meaning. As a consequence of this disruption, it is impossible to articulate trauma and traumatic memory in a direct and straightforward manner. Trauma, as LaCapra puts it, "brings about a dissociation of affect and representation" (42), which is portrayed in the novel in Sarah's fragmented and disordered track of thought.

Rather than narrating the devastating effects of that day on them, suddenly Sarah's narrative gets fragmented and stops abruptly, which demonstrates her attempts to repress the painful memory. Her mind gets disrupted, wandering off towards focusing, instead, on her father's name, a detail of little relevance to the more important context she wants to narrate, "My father's name is Mustapha Hammoud Nour el-Din, M.D. Everyone called him Doctor, even his children sometimes. I called him *Docteur Baba*" (27). This reveals the abeyance in

Sarah's rational mind, as the horrors of the war have conquered and interrupted her reason faculties.

Unarguably, trauma leaves its traces on the individual, and the nature of trauma fiction is such that the narrative portrays its symptoms on the victim. Alameddine's novel and Sarah's memoir certainly demonstrate this, proving Dominick LaCapra's argument that in its failure to represent the traumatic experience directly, "writing trauma is a metaphor" (186). It is a metaphor that stands forthe unspeakability of trauma and its resistance of representation. The novel indirectly displays repressed and dissociated traumatic content, and showcases a sort of pathological attempts of forgetting, as revealed in the amnesia and fragmentation.

Thus, the novel confirms that fragmentation, as a postmodern literary tool, becomes a symbolic depiction that points beyond itself to a hidden and repressed human experience. Sarah enters into a pact with her readers whose task is to discover the meaning behind the fragmentation and locate the unspeakable traumatic memory. Fragmentation is read as both a symbol and symptom of the attempts of Sarah's memory to distance itself temporally from the painful event. It becomes, in other words, the safest means for her to confront her trauma because in not saying much, she is, in fact, saying everything.

Traumatic memories defy the basic notions that memory is declarative, readily-available in consciousness to be retrieved and articulated verbally at will. Rather than focusing on telling the story of the war, Sarah chooses to focus on describing every member of her family. Her father, his attire, and his name, as described above, her stepmother, her elder sister Amal, wearing "Jordache jeans and a lavender angora V-neck sweater," her eighteen-year old sister Lamia with her "acne-scarred face," as well as her stunningly beautiful half-sister Rana who was so intensely focused on documenting all the events of the day in her dairy, "All the noise. Where it comes from, how unexpected. Why the stop, start, stop and start again. All the different sounds. Always coming from different places" (27).

Interestingly here, Rana's ability to write everything is contrasted to Sarah's failure to write a satisfactory account of the day. The expression "stop, start, stop and start again" mirrors Sarah's own memoir which is fragmented because of her many failed attempts at writing and her sudden stops.

Strongly linked to emotional experiences, Sounds and odors are important factors in the pathophysiology of PTSD. In this chapter, they are the only things that Sarah recalls from the war. While she cannot produce a straightforward account of the war itself, Sarah occasionally interweaves her account of her family with bits that remind the reader that the chapter is about the war and not her family. She recalls the memory of the stifling smell of cordite, garbage, urine and decaying bodies, which the war would make "familiar," "banal and clichéd," in addition to the three loud explosions that made her younger half-brother Ramzi scream loudly (28). Sarah remembers these olfactory and auditory details, because trauma records sights, smells and sound instead of events.

Given that PTSD is characterized by increased sensitivity to threat cues, and that war trauma is usually associated with sounds and smells of explosions, burning and bodies. The latter are thought of as contextual reminder of the war which would become a poignant cause of involuntary re-experiencing of vivid traumatic memories, visual intrusions, distress and anxiety, a point which I will return to in my discussion of July 4th scene and her dream episode.

It is intriguing that Sarah's chapter ends the same way it begins, with Mazen playing "Smoke on the Water" again, breaking the family's silent contemplation of their future thinking if the fight would continue. This time, Lamia leaned against the railing of the stairwell and screamed loudly, "Stop making all that noise. We're trying to think here." Lamia then "sat back down" (28), and the chapter closes suddenly, without any further discussion of their thoughts, the destruction that took place outside, and how the war proceeded. The

resonance of Mazen's song played in the midst of destruction that day conforms to the Caruthian argument that being haunted by an image, event, or sound in this case, is one of the most salient features of trauma. Unless she reconciles with her trauma, Sarah would forever be haunted by her traumatic war memories, incessantly hearing Mazen's "massacring" of the song reverberating around her subconscious, constantly reminding her of that fateful day and all the horrors that followed.

The abrupt end of the chapter and the shift to a new first chapter that is one of only two chapters written entirely in French in the novel under the title "Le Commencement" are also noteworthy. The memory Sarah is trying to narrate is so painful that she has to end her chapter and shift to a new language, as if using a different language would transport her, in the Bakhtinian sense, to a different consciousness, a different self that has not been through this trauma. Her mind's constant wandering off from one memory to another and the effort it spends to ward off painful memories cause her the mental fatigue, a PTSD symptom according to the *DSM-IV*, that is evident in her failed attempts at writing and many sudden stops.

II.2 Sounds and Shocks and the Everlasting Impact of Trauma

Another direct mention of the Lebanese Civil War in the novel is in the eighteenth "Chapter 1" as Sarah wakes up way too early one morning in her apartment in the USA. Restless, she is still is unable to leave her bed because it is July 4th. Her restlessness is captured in the opening paragraph of the chapter:

> She turns over on her side, closes her eyes, in hopes of catching a little more sleep. It is too early in the morning. The sun is still not up. It is July 4. Doesn't the sun come out at some ungodly hour in July? She turns over again, lies on her right side. Where does she put her right arm? Is it too squished? With her left arm, she reaches behind her for her Piggy, her stuffed toy. She hugs it with both arms. Closes her eyes again […] She lifts her head slightly, noting the time on the digital clock. Four twenty-three. Damn. It is much too early. She closes her eyes again. She must sleep, especially today. (54)

The psychological state that Sarah goes through on the Fourth of July in the USA every year ever since she has left her home country twenty years ago is a classic PTSD case.

The behavioural symptoms that characterize PTSD are proposed, in the *DSM-V,* as four distinct criteria. They are described as: intrusion symptoms, avoidance of stimuli, negative mood and cognition, and hyperarousal (171). Having gone through both experiences of the Civil War and rape, Sarah experiences all of these symptoms consistent with PTSD.

II.2.1 Intrusion Symptoms

External stimuli may trigger the onset of PTSD symptoms if the mind associates them with the original traumatic event. Accordingly, Sarah associates the fireworks of July 4th with the sound of explosions in Beirut. This is directly related to Caruth's belatedness of trauma and its intrusion. Trauma is not really about an original event in the past much as it is a history that failed to be registered at the moment of its occurring, or an unclaimed experience that "returns to haunt the survivor later on" (*Unclaimed* 4). Sarah's reaction to the fireworks, her restlessness, hyper-arousal, fear, and depressed mood are all evidence of this unassimilated and belated nature of trauma. At the age of forty, twenty years after she has left Beirut to a distant land, she is still possessed by her past war trauma. Exposure to the fireworks, as an external sensory trigger, transfers her right back to the site of the traumatic event of the war.

Sarah's trauma finds its way to disrupt her here-and-now even when she is miles and years away from the site of her original trauma because trauma is entirely manifested "only in connection with another place, and in another time" (Caruth, *Trauma* 8). Losing her agency to a past she cannot control, Sarah is trapped in a past that continues to be re-enacted every July 4th in all its terror and intensity and disturbs her presence. As Felman and Laub explain this sense of entrapment within a past event that invades the present of the traumatized:

> Trauma survivors live not with memories of the past, but with an event that could not and did not proceed through to its completion, has no ending, attained no closure, and therefore, as far as its survivors are concerned, continues into the present and is current in every respect. (69)

II.2.2 Symptoms of Hyperarousal and Negative Self-view

The mind's defense mechanism against trauma is to repel its memory from consciousness. However, atrocities refuse to be banished and buried and continue to psychologically harm the victim long after they are gone. Overwhelmed with the haunting terror of the war, Sarah's perception of her present reality becomes distorted and inaccurate. July 4th is a day of celebration, but to Sarah it is just another horrible day from the past. Her inability to distinguish what is real and what is memory and the incompatibility between her feelings and impulses with the innocent present situation are because her nervous system is "disconnected from the present" as a result of PTSD (Herman 25). She, therefore, exhibits symptoms of hyperarousal, which makes her respond to the triggers as though they were real and dangerous.

Hyperarousal refers to the chronic alertedness of the nervous system even when the danger has long passed. Its sufferer, like Sarah, "startles easily, reacts irritably to small provocation, and sleeps poorly" (Herman 25). The greatest fear of trauma victims is the recurrence of the moment of terror, which explains Sarah's hyperarousal and its accompanying emotional distress, anxiety, and agitation.

Trauma victims do not experience the world the same way as others. Instead, they see environmental stimuli that remind them of the trauma and trigger a strong emotional response in things that other people see as otherwise harmless. Innocent or neutral signs become signifiers that are difficult to be understood by people who did not go through a similar experience. Kalí Tal, explains that to the traumatized, words and objects are stripped of their original meaning and gain a new one because the normal frame of reference is replaced by a

new one which is strange to non-traumatized people. As she explains that, "within the context of the trauma, and survivors emerge from the traumatic environment with a new set of definitions" (16).

Referring to the "alphabet" of the signs that victims assign to traumatic events, she gives the example of the gained symbolism of a bakery's bread oven to a Holocaust survivor compared to its meaning to a non-survivor (118) (the oven is associated to the gas chambers used to kill Jewish people during the Holocaust during WWII).Trauma, consequently, not only disrupts history and temporality, but language and meaning as well, which is the reason why the celebrations of July 4th hold a different meaning and reality to Sarah.

As explained in Chapter Two of this thesis, trauma deactivates the linguistic encoding of memory and activates its sensory and iconic encoding. Given that war trauma is associated with loud noises, the fireworks of July 4th are sensory triggers that evoke intense and involuntary response from Sarah because past memories of war bombings are experienced as if they are taking place in her present, producing a sound-evoked time misperception that brings with it all the negative emotions of fear and terror she went through during the war. When exposed to "internal or external cues that symbolize or resemble an aspect of the traumatic event(s)," the fight and flight mode is turned on, evoking a myriad of symptoms such as estrangement, isolation, diminished interest in activities, depression, sleep disturbance, avoidance, and hyper-vigilance (*DSM-V* 271-272). The following passage deserves to be quoted in all its length as it perfectly captures Sarah's sense of being trapped, her inability to fall back to sleep, her hyper-arousal, psychological distress as well as the direct link to the war in Beirut:

> Sarah looks at the clock again. Four forty-one. She must have dozed a bit. Try again. Closes her eyes. She curses. She should have taken Restoril. Too late now. She should have taken melatonin even though it makes her feel bad. Should she take a Xanax? This is not an anxiety attack. It may relax her though. No. She should be able to relax herself. She has survived the Fourth of July before. She goes under the covers, just like she used to do in Beirut when it got too noisy, too violent […] She lies back

down, her head on the pillow. Closes her eyes again. No use. Sarah uncovers herself, sits up, dangles her feet off the side of the bed. Should she get up? If she does, it means she is giving up. She lies back down, fetal position, closes her eyes. One sheep, two sheep, three sheep, lamb chops. (54)

This passage points to the persistent impact of war trauma on Sarah. Relocating herself physically from Lebanon to the USA, she still has to take anti-depressants to treat an anxiety attack caused by memories of a war she witnessed twenty years ago. Even the protective act of going under the covers transfers her through time to her war-torn country where she used to do the same in the midst of the loudness of the bombs and the violence. To borrow Tal's words, the covers and the act of going under them become symbolic of the war, part of the "alphabet" of her trauma. Thus, it is not surprising that it fails to calm her. Agitated, she curls up into a fetal position in an instinctual way of protection. Hence, she shuts down temporally to protect her mind/self from the damage of the memories triggered by July 4th. It can also be explained as a return to the safety of the mother's womb, to a prenatal state which death cannot presumably harm.

Even Sarah's self-perception has been rendered negative because of her past traumas. When she calls her best friend Dina to complain of her restlessness, Dina wonders why she does not get depressed like normal people. Sarah bitterly replies that she is "not normal" and that they "figured that out a long time ago" (55). This refers to her negative emotions and distorted sense of self. Negative self-view is another symptom of PTSD that belongs to Criterion D, negative alterations in cognitions and mood, described as "Persistent and exaggerated negative beliefs or expectations about oneself, others, or the world (e.g., 'I am bad,' 'No one can be trusted,' 'The world is completely dangerous" (*DSM-V* 272). Therefore, suffering from PTSD, Sarah believes that her painful traumatic memories have completely shattered her and changed her into some sort of an anomaly.

Still unsettled, at five twenty, Sarah decides to take a bath to unwind and ease her thoughts. Frightened by her "ghastly" self-reflection in the mirror, she "begins to rub a

Lancôme *fond de teint* on her face" (55). As if applying the foundation would give her a new face and a new Self which do not bear the horrendous marks of trauma. She steps into the bath, hoping "this is not [going to be] a bad day" (ibid). Water signifies purity and cleanliness; thus, the bath becomes remarkably symbolic of her need to cleanse and release herself from her agonizing past, hoping against all hope that she will emerge out of the water all fresh and new. She submerges her head under the water in the midst of all the outside chaos that surrounds her to muffle her ears from the sound of the fireworks and to block the nasty memories away. In its quietness and tranquility, the water becomes a refuge for her, and all the havoc above is forgotten.

II.3 Traumatic Memory, Dreams and the Return of the Repressed

Sarah mentions the war another time in her thirty-eighth chapter one, titled "Faint." Narrating a strange dream that she had, this chapter demonstrates the skewed temporal structure of trauma which results from the disruption of temporality caused by intrusive memories and the compulsion to repeat. The fact that this is the last time that Sarah narrates her war experience, near the end of her memoir, attests to the prolonged impact of war memories on her, proving that she has still not come to terms with her war trauma.

The chapter starts with Sarah describing a rainy day in San Francisco where "everything seems mortal […] and the color of death is everywhere" (129). While everybody is at home, Sarah is outside, in a café, waiting for her cup of coffee, which when arrives, feels "so much too gloomy on a gray morning" (ibid). Sarah's vocabulary, again, foreshadows the picture of death and destruction that she is about to be swept into.

The sky is "filled with bright light and the sound of an explosion" of thunder (ibid). In the midst of a thunderstorm, Sarah looks up at the sky and sees more lightning and more thunder. Deafened by the loud sound of thunder, she feels dizzy and faints. From dark and

gloomy San Francisco, she wakes up in a dark and unfamiliar room. However, she realizes that "[o]nly in Beirut" light can filter through closed window shutters. She panics because she knows that Beirut means only one thing: war (ibid).

The loudness of thunder and the brightness of lightning are sensory stimuli that trigger Sarah's war memory and send her straight back to her past. Lying down on the floor, Sarah does not dare to move, but she scans the room, "I was in an old Beiruti house," she says (130). Suddenly, she hears the sound of a shot, "shaking [her] out of [her] stupor," causing her head to move dizzyingly. "I have been through this. Instinct took over," she thinks (ibid). As a PTSD victim and having these involuntary intrusive and distressing memories, Sarah is showing symptoms of intrusion. She is exhibiting what Freud refers to as the return of the repressed. Surviving a traumatic event does not mean that the victim is unharmed, even when s/he physically seems well. Weeks, months, and even years, as the case of Sarah, after the traumatic incident, the victim begins to suffer symptoms of traumatic neurosis, a pathology characterized by the return of traumatic memories, resurfacing as flashbacks, dreams, or hallucinations, following a period of latency.

Stating "I have been through this" indicates that this is a traumatic repetition, a return of repressed memories and an externalization of internalized trauma and terror. The dream she has, as an intrusive PTSD symptom, points to the existence of an unspeakable secret which she tries so hard to deny. The dream happens in all its vividness as if it were real, a telltale feature of literal traumatic memories. She writes:

> I heard another shot. Then another. A staccato burst […] It was going to be fierce. The shots were intermittent, a funny rhythm, a five over four, not a disco beat […]Machine gun fire from every direction. Cannons, rockets, missiles detonated at the same time, enough to wake the dead. I should concentrate. I used to be able to figure out who was fighting whom by differentiating the sounds of gunfire, used to be able to tell Belgian missiles from Russian rockets. (130)

Sarah's past is, thus, only known to her through belated deferral, "in its insistent return, absolutely *true* to the event" in Caruth's words (*Trauma* 5). Judith Herman's accurate

observation that "the story of trauma surfaces not as a verbal narrative but as a symptom" (1), perfectly fits Sarah's war narrative.

In its literality, her dream is significantly more expressive than her other attempts to narrate the war. In her other two war chapters, Sarah does not say much about the war, and does not narrate any details about the fights. In this chapter, on the other hand, the reader is taken, along with Sarah, right to a fight in the midst of the Lebanese Civil War. This is mainly because traumatic memory lacks a verbal narrative context and is stored within the subconscious as vivid images and sensations, which gives it a "heightened reality" when it breaks, uninvited, into the present shattering the victim's life, his experience of time, place, self and meaning (Herman 27). Sarah cannot put her traumatic experience into words, but she says it all through this dream which feels as real as can be.

Having a literal re-enactment of the war, Sarah tries to make sense of where she is and how she got there. She asks the question "where am I?" several times, but could not get an answer. She looks through some broken windows to figure that out, but only realizes that the situation is dangerous and that she must move down to the first floor. As she is moving down, a bullet whizzes past her. In utter panic, she closes the door and sits at the corner of the room, her knees folded to her chest. Sarah re-experiences this traumatic event as if it is real when she is in San Francisco miles away from the site of her trauma. Therefore, the lines between dream and reality and those between the past and present are clearly blurred. As she contemplates, "I will survive this, I said to myself. I have before and will again. I Must distract my mind. How did I get here? Where was my family?" (130). The emotional force of the original event, its terror and fright, are relived in all their vividness.

The only clue that Sarah is dreaming is her description of a bookshelf she finds in the room and the second bullet that almost hits her. The books on the bookshelf are all English, all romance novels written by American authors. To her amazement, she finds out that the

bookshelf contains every book written by Danielle Steel, in hardcover. Two hours pass with no shooting; she walks slowly to the window only to realize she has never been to this neighborhood before. She sees three starving dogs cornering a cat; a sniper shoots the dogs, "head exploded, panoply of red." The cat does not move, then bolts running quickly when Sarah hears a fourth shot that gets the running cat. "'Good shot,' screamed a voice in Arabic, coming from way down on my right. 'Allah is great,' came the reply from way down on [her] left" (130). She then describes how another bullet came through the shutters and "lodged itself in one of the books in the bookshelf […] I looked at the bookshelf. I saw the Danielle Steel book that was shot. It began to bleed. Blood dripped from it slowly. Drip.Drip.I fainted" (130-31).

This description of the bleeding romance book relates to Sarah's inner thoughts. In Beirut, death is everywhere. It surrounds and touches everything. Even a book cannot escape the cruelty and absurdity of the war. Identifying the book as a romance may suggest that in her war-torn country love, a basic human need that glues human beings together, cannot survive. The absurdity and the unspeakable atrocities of the war are also reflected in the scene where the dogs and cat are killed. There is no reason to kill the animals; they are not participants in the war. Yet the fighter does it for the fun of it. Praising the fighter for the accuracy of his shot only indicates that war has reduced life into a mere game. The scene, therefore, depicts the relentless apathy and destructiveness of the war.

Feeling terrified from the sight of the bleeding book, Sarah faints again. This time she wakes up in her ex-husband's car, still in Beirut. Looking around, she discovers she is in "Never Never Land, the green line of Beirut, not too far from Martyrs' Square […] Destruction was all around, but so was greenery. Trees and bushes sprouted from unrecognizable buildings. A jungle attempting to reclaim its glorious past from its concrete counterpart" (131). Sarah here juxtaposes life and death with greenery is growing out of

ruined concrete buildings. Calling the place "Never Never Land," an ideal imaginary or utopian place, can be interpreted as a reflection of her unconscious desires for her country, hoping for it to rise from the dust of destruction to regain its ideal past days of glory and peace just as greenery is thriving out of concrete.

Still inside the Volvo, she saw the silhouette of a young boy, with a machine gun on his hip, emerging on top of a hill of ruins and approaching her. She expresses that she is more scared of the silhouette than of the machine gun. Readers can make sense of this fear in another chapter where she describes the silhouette of a boy who raped her when she was sixteen, another trauma that is central to her life-narrative and identity, as I will address in another part of this chapter. In vain, she attempts to start the car in order to escape the approaching boy:

> I tried the ignition, but the car would not start. The only sound that could be heard was the false starts of the Volvo. The engine caught. I stepped on the gas. The car lurched forward, toward the approaching boy, and died. I tried again. Another false start. The engine caught again and died before I could step on the gas. (131)

This statement can be interpreted as her sense of entrapment in her traumatic past. It also mirrors her many failed attempts at starting and finishing her chapters and the inability to move forward with her writing, unless she faces and reconciles with all her traumas.

Assured that the boy looks innocent, she follows him to take refuge in a shelter after they hear gunfire again. They access the building through a hole at ground level caused by a past explosion. There, she is greeted by "The smell of burned refuse, decaying flesh, excrement, and urine" (132), a smell that is registered in her mind for the rest of her life as the smell of the war. They enter a windowless room lit with a kerosene lamp, and equipped with decrepit furniture covered by a thick layer of dust. She sees some rifles, three hookahs, a guitar stand without the guitar, a dead rat and a backgammon game board.

Interestingly the image of the boy himself, the guitar stand, the smell of urine, burning, and decaying flesh takes the reader back to the chapter of the first day of war, with

Mazen, their teenage neighbour, playing his guitar, and the same peculiar smell of cordite, urine, garbage and decaying flesh that she smelled for the first time in her life. But now, the electricity is replaced by a kerosene lamp, the silly boy who refused to put down his guitar has stopped playing, the guitar is lost and replaced by the M16s, and battles "going full blast" have taken place of the boy's song. Now, the building is ruined, the room is lifeless, and death is surrounding them everywhere. This scene portrays, on the one hand, the destruction the war has brought to their lives, reducing everything to ruins and killing all signs of life. On the other hand, it shows the endless impact of trauma on Sarah who still in her present dreams about smells and images she experienced more twenty years ago in a different place.

Exposing humanity at its worst and showing the precariousness of human life, all wars are horrific. But, if any war is cruelty, civil wars are even crueler. A civil war means a country divided against itself, leading to political, public and religious chaos. It is a fight against the Self because one may fight his friend, neighbor or even family. In a civil war the line that separates hero from villain is confused.

I, the Divine not only portrays the anguish and wanton destruction of the Lebanese Civil War that was dismantling the beautiful mosaic of Druze, Sunnis, Shi'ites, Maronite Christians, and Palestinians that made up Lebanon, but its absurdity as well. In a meaningful conversation she has with the boy, Sarah passes her own judgment on the Civil War through the boy's words. She asks the boy why the men are fighting, to which he answers that they are simply fighting because it has become a habit. They are caught in an endless meaningless fight, the reasons for which have long been forgotten. "Who can remember anymore? Habit, I guess. Nobody knows anything else. They start shooting, forgetting why. They stop. They start in a different way. They stop again. Try a different attack. They can't seem to be able to finish a battle. It's endless," he says (132).

The novel demonstrates that the Civil War is an absurd fight that has taken away everything from them; most specifically, it has robbed children of their childhood. Forced to take part in an absurd war, children learn that they either kill or die. Instead of playing his guitar or his games, the boy now uses guns, as the first thing that Sarah sees when she meets him is his machine gun on his hip. Instead of enjoying the fundamental human right of education, ruthless violence has become endemic to his life. He has learned war jargon and gained knowledge about the war. For instance, he tells her that the shooting will continue for ten minutes then stop because the men are exhausted and assures her that a "shell never hits anywhere twice," when she gets worried that a shell fell there before causing the hole in the ground. After ten minutes, like the boy said, the battle stops indeed (132).

When the fight stops, Sarah holds the boy's hand to leave the shelter. As they go through the hole, Sarah is suddenly blinded by sunlight and disoriented by the strong smell of cordite and smoke. She looks at the boy one last time and faints for the third time. She wakes up to the voice of "Bernard Shaw reciting the news on CNN," with her neck hurting because she slept "slouched at [her desk]" (133). She looks outside her window, and this time she sees "a dreary stormy day in San Francisco" (ibid). Sarah is brought back to the present after her last fainting episode.

In a bizarre twist, the chapter ends just as it begins, with the reader taken back to the beginning of the chapter, as Sarah decides to go out to get a cup of coffee to ease the tension in her neck (133). This suggests that Sarah will forever be stuck in an endless loop repeating the same dream over and over again, which is all too confusing. Yet, this narrative circularity mimics trauma's circularity and how it traps its victim in endless repetition.

Strangely, Sarah feels irritated but does not have any recollections of the dream. However, war is referred to symbolically in this part. When she looks at her computer, its screen saver is on. As She describes, "Fish swim languidly across my laptop's screen. A red

fish eats a blue fish and swims away. Blue fish swallows the red fish. Fish come and go without any discernible purpose" (133). This image of the red and blue carnivorous fish purposelessly devouring each other signifies the vicious circle and endless destructiveness of the war. Just like the fish are of different colors, but belong to the same carnivorous kind, the different cultural groups in Lebanon, though all Lebanese, were caught in an absurd vicious cycle of violence in their merciless and purposeless killing of one another. This also echoes the boy's description of the war in Sarah's dream, "They start shooting, forgetting why. They stop. They start in a different way. They stop again. Try a different attack. They can't seem to be able to finish a battle. It's endless" (132). Significantly as well, it also echoes Sarah's own attempts of writing her memoir, never finishing her first chapters and starting again because she is constantly disturbed by her non-reconciled traumas.

To sum up, war never ends. It remains alive in the memories of the traumatized who are forced by the intrusive memories to relive it endlessly with all its emotional intensity. War follows Sarah in her peace. Sarah has not reconciled with her past, not even in the USA. Thus, her traumas track her down, so to speak. Shattering the boundaries between the past and present and between the here and there, her dreamed journeys to Beirut signify that even when one escapes the war, and physically relocates to another place, one's psychological luggage and past also travel along.

III. Trauma, Hybridity and (Un)Belonging

Largely, due to her history of trauma and her bi-cultural, Arab-American, identity, Sarah fails to belong to either part of her identity. Her fragmented identity results from being geographically and culturally divided between the West where the mother she yearns for is and the East where the rest of her family is, with an inability to commit herself to either places. Moreover, Sarah's in-betweenness comes also from the fact that she is trapped in

trauma's liminal time with her past memories haunting her present, and her failure to work through her traumas even through the act of narration.

Sarah's fragmented subjectivity literally reveals itself in her memoir through its non-linearity, repetitions, failed starts, and abrupt ends. In fact, her fragmented memoir is a testament of her homelessness, unbelonging and her failure to understand who she is. She is not only writing her traumatic experiences, but she is also trying to make sense of who she is. In her movement between the East and the West, literal and symbolic through the act of writing, she is constantly revising and reconstructing her Self.

III.1 Trauma and Un-belonging to the Homeland

The dynamics and experience of belonging are influenced by personal, political and socio-cultural factors. Belonging is shaped by one's attachment to a specific social group, but it operates on multiple scales ranging from home, to the nation state to transnational global communities. To say that belonging is shaped by attachment is to put a direct link between belonging and emotions. Consequently, belonging involves a feeling that one fits in and has an emotional connection to family, home or the nation.

Defining belonging as an emotional mode of attachment means precisely that belonging, like identity, is not stable, immutable and fixed. Instead, there are experiences that lead one to slip in and out of a sense of belonging to a particular place and social group. Since trauma disrupts the individual's systems of control, connection and meaning (Herman 24), it constitutes a direct threat to the sense of belonging. Basic human relations are jeopardized in the aftermath of traumatic events. As Herman summarizes the impact of traumatic events on the individual's sense of self and attachment not only to others but to belief systems in general:

> [Traumatic events] breach the attachments of family, friendship, love, and community. They shatter the construction of the self that is formed and sustained in relation to

others. They undermine the belief systems that give meaning to human experience. They violate the victim's faith in a natural or divine order and cast the victim into a state of existential crisis. (37).

When trauma occurs, the victim experiences a crisis of faith. Alameddine's novel portrays this severing and distortion of the inner schemata of the Self in relationship to the world. As a victim of trauma, Sarah ceases to see Lebanon as a safe place, and herself as a valuable and important individual within the patriarchal Arabic society. Her sense of connection to her community is shattered as a result of her traumas. She testifies to the loss of security, of the basic trust the individual should have in the values and beliefs of his community.

Sarah perceives her Lebanese identity as a mental jail, a burden to be discarded. Assuming a Lebanese identity means accepting the identity imposed on her by the same patriarchal system that indirectly permitted her rape to happen and forced her to carry the insufferable weight of silence and shame. Her inability to reconcile with her traumas prevents her from being in touch with the Arab part of her identity and from admitting her belonging to Lebanon as her home. She thinks that by rejecting her Lebanese identity, she can free herself of the unbearable burden of the past.

The novel portrays the failure of cultural hybridity as a result of the influence of past traumatic experiences through Sarah's denial of her hybrid status and adoption of only one part of the hybrid identity. Eloping to the United States with her first husband Omar in 1980 in the midst of the Civil War, Sarah escapes both the war in addition to the shame she attaches to herself following her rape. Sarah moves from the Arab society with its fixed expectations and rules that pin down women to specific identities to the American society that values freedom and individuality. She feels suffocated by the oppressiveness and overwhelming expectations of the Arab culture and longs to fashion herself free of the shackles of her Arab community and past.

As an Arab-American woman, she chooses to bury the Arab part of her identity within the darkest, deepest corners of herself, along with her past, and to identify solely with the American half of her identity, which values her as an individual. As she says, "I hated Umm Kalthoum. I wanted to identify with only my American half. I wanted to be special. I could not envision how to be Lebanese and keep any sense of individuality. Lebanese culture was all consuming" (153).Sarah hates the simplest things that remind her that she is Arab. For example, while her husband only drinks Turkish coffee, she never cares for it and only drinks American coffee. She describes Arabic coffee as "too thick, too permanent" (139), just like the heaviness and permanence of the rules patriarchal Arab society imposes on women.

Sarah leaves Lebanon to escape her traumas, to realize and re-invent herself as a free American woman, away from the "unwavering gazes" and "pernicious tongues" of Lebanese society (68-69). However, because one's conception of home is shaped according to the experiences s/he has in it, Sarah's and Omar's feelings towards Lebanon and the USA are diametrically opposites. As she narrates, "I did not understand his alienation in New York. I loved the city, he hated it. I felt at home while he felt like a foreigner" (38). Sarah's freedom has only seen light after she moves New York, but all Omar keeps thinking about after his arrival there is that in only a year and a half he "will be free" and go back to his homeland (140). As a Lebanese man, he understands human relations based on the plurality, solidarity and conformity of the collective as opposed to Sarah who favors the freedom and particularity of the individual. He feels foreign in New York and misses the familiarity of Beirut and the way everyone recognizes everyone there. Unlike Sarah who feels devalued as a human being in Lebanon because of the experience of rape, Omar thinks, "you felt human in Beirut" (141).

The politics of belonging involve both geographic/physical and symbolic borders that separate the individual and the world. Containing a symbolic dimension, these boundaries are, therefore, not rigid but subject to challenge and resistance. Accordingly, Sarah contests the

symbolic boundaries of her belonging to the Arab society by her rejection and rebellion against its ethics and values. When Omar's stay in the USA comes to an end after he finishes his studies, she has already given birth to their son, Kamal and hires a nanny to take care of him while she returns to school. Omar's disapproval of Sarah's choices creates a rift between them. As her feelings towards him begin to change, she realizes that "[her] own fairy tale had ended" (38). She decides to divorce him, abandon her son to his father, and stay in the USA. Moving from a "country that ostracized its non-conformist," such as herself, "to one more tolerant," and deserting her husband and son, Sarah walks "a path unbeaten by other, to touch the untouched" (152).

Maintaining her relationship with her husband and son would have meant to Sarah her acknowledgment of Lebanon as home and identification with her Arab identity. Her decision has to do with what Herman calls the "dialectic of trauma" that disrupts the inner life of the victim and her close relationships, forcing her to form "intense, unstable relationships that fluctuate between extremes" (40). Similarly, Sarah's feelings towards Omar change from one extreme to another, from love to hate because he wants to take her back to the place where she was faced with unthinkable suffering. Herman further explains, "The profound disruption in basic trust, the common feelings of shame, guilt, and inferiority, and the need to avoid reminders of the trauma that might be found in social life, all foster withdrawal from close relationships" (ibid). Needing to escape her trauma, Sarah loses trust in her husband and decides to withdraw completely from their marriage.

Sarah's narrative is, consequently, one of trauma and unbelonging (unbelonging to a given identity, to the homeland, to the family, and to relationships). Belonging is a relational concept that arises from the interconnectedness between the individual with other people and with the socio-cultural context and institutions. It is born out of an intersection between the Self and the social on the basis of conformity to the same beliefs, values, and socio-cultural

practices and ideals. However, Sarah does not share the same values as her Arab society; thus, she willingly refuses to belong to it.

Therefore, the main reason Sarah chooses to walk this path untrodden by other women in her community, consciously destroying her fairy tale and giving up motherhood, is that Omar turns out to be just another Arab man, an agent of domination within a larger patriarchal power structure, who wants to exercise what she views as a tyrannous control over her. She begins to feel objectified with him, the same way she saw herself years ago when she was raped. As she describes, "I also underestimated his sense of property. I belonged to him. I was his wife. Kamal belonged to him. If the man wanted to go back to Beirut, then we were all going" (39).Sarah defines Lebanon as a deeply patriarchal society, where married women are seen as the rightful property of their husbands. She refuses to end up like her mother, Janet, who gave up her freedom and education to marry a Lebanese man and move from the land of individuality to a patriarchal land of conformists that destroyed who she was and transformed her into the property of Mustapha Nour el-Din.

Sarah simply wants what the Arab society fails to grant her. Besides, she was utterly traumatized by the shocking revelation that, as the third daughter born to her American mother and Lebanese father, she was the reason behind her mother's divorce for failing to give a son to the Nour el-Din family. This causes her to lose all faith in this patriarchal society that requires women to produce a male heir to bear the name of the family, a matter over which she has no control. She realizes that the fate of women lies at the hands of the patriarch of the family who has all power to dispose of her like an invaluable possession, and to "sent her packing" back home like her father and grandfather did with her mother (11). For this reason, Sarah refuses to go back to Lebanon and chooses her own freedom instead.

While the novel depicts a protagonist who can easily move across permeable borders between multiple locations thanks to her mixed parentage and financial ability, Alameddine

problematizes the notions of home and national belonging. Undermining the idea of nostalgia through Sarah's conscious rejection of national belonging, he adopts a stance opposite to the first wave of Arab American writers of the New York Pen League and their strong attachment and nostalgic vision of their homelands (Fadda-Conrey 169). Fadda-Conrey aptly confirms that instead of the homesickness that characterizes narratives of home and diaspora, Sarah's narrative is one that displays a "sickness *of* home" for all the traumas that her homeland stands for (172 ; italics in original).

Accordingly, we should read the novel's non-nostalgic tone not exclusively as a reflection of a sentimental state, but as an implicit criticism of the social, cultural and political injustice of Lebanese society. Sarah's narrative of the Lebanese society is stripped of all nostalgia, whether as a longing to return to the mythic vision of homeland that characterize diasporic writing or to a former better time. All her former home and past seem to represent to her is pain and loss.

III.2 The Pain of Unbelonging and the Mask of Individuality

Cultural discourse and ideologies shape the female self in Arab society. In Sarah's case, her multiethnic background permits her to question and reject her identity as an Arab woman, but it does not offer her an identity she can fully embrace as her own. In one of her first chapters, titled "On Running," Sarah presents a different view of the USA than the one she expresses when she first moves there with Omar. After living there, she seems to have revised her belonging and identity. Initially she moves to the USA to escape the collective ideals of Arab society and seek the sense of freedom, tolerance and individualism of American society. However, she discovers that she has moved to a land that is "more hypocritical." She describes herself as being fooled by the "myth of the rugged individualist [that] is integral to the American psyche," when she recognized that while Lebanon ostracizes

the "non-conformists," the hypocrisy of the American practice of rugged individualism is that it "leads to poverty, ostracism and disgrace" (152).

However, the most important realization that Sarah reaches after living in the USA is that underneath the mask of individuality there is the pain of loneliness and unbelonging. She wonders "whether there is such a thing as a sense of individuality" at all. "Is [individualism] all a façade covering a deep need to belong? Are we simply pack animals desperately trying to pretend we are not?" as she asks (153). Deserting her homeland, she realizes that the price of her freedom and individuality is loneliness and alienation. Even though she marries a second time to an American and has friends there, she does not really have a sense of belonging to the USA either. In the USA, Sarah "avoid[s] Umm Kalthoum, but not because [she] hate[s] her. [She] avoid[s] her because every time [she] hear[s] that Egyptian bitch, [she] cries hysterically" (153). She cries because underneath the mask of the free individual woman who challenged and escaped her community, there is really a damaged woman who feels alone, rootless and homeless, and hides a strong need to belong.

It is highly significant when Sarah gives titles to her first chapters, but what has running to do with individualism, conformity, and belonging? The answer is found in the opening sentence of the chapter where Sarah draws an analogy between runners and individuality. Running is all about competition and the assertion of one's self. One has to push through alone, to keep on running, just like individualism (152). However, it is the concluding sentence of the chapter that captures the message that Sarah attempts to convey through this chapter. She writes, "In 1988, I cut out a story from the *New York Times* about members of a high school football team in Hoboken who ambushed a solitary runner and beat him senseless, leaving him in a decaying ditch, shoeless" (153). Eight years after she has left her country, Sarah admits that parting from the solidarity of the pact to the singularity of the individual,

she feels like a solitary runner, who is under constant threat of being ambushed (by life's many surprises) and left " in a decaying ditch shoeless," and alone.

III.3 "Here and There" : Dislocation, Rootlessness and Homelessness

The novel can be read as a critique of the idea that diasporic subjects can easily negotiate their hybrid identities. Instead, we are faced with a protagonist who is ambivalent towards her identity. She is trapped in a permanent state of physical, cultural and mental in-betweenness, and caught in an unstable third space that offers neither solace nor a resolution to her various psychological problems. Her hybrid status only aggravates her sense of unbelonging, in addition to the traumas that she transports with her from the past to the present and from her homeland to this cultural borderland that she dwells.

Bhabha's emphasis on the productivity of cultural hybridity through the creation of new trans-cultural forms seems to ignore the psychological turmoil that hybrid subjects experience within the Third Space. The clash between the contradictory elements of the Arab and American cultures destabilizes the security and certainty of cultural borders, leading to tension and restlessness. Sarah experiences the Bhabahian Third Space as a site of dislocation, unbelonging and ambivalence, never arriving at a true sense of who she is and where she belongs.

A deep rooted identity crisis and perpetual feeling of alienation, isolation and disconnection define her and her narrative structure. Although Sarah possesses a transnational identity and comes from a well-off family, which allows her to move freely between Lebanon and the USA, psychologically her movement across cultural borders is neither free nor easy, as the two parts of her identity and the contrasting values that they represent incessantly clash. This identity crisis is evident in Sarah's description of her hyphenated identity, which she views as a "curse:"

> I have been blessed with many curses in my life, not the least of which was being born half Lebanese and half American. Throughout my life, these contradictory parts battled endlessly, clashed, never coming to a satisfactory conclusion. I shuffled ad nauseam between the need to assert my individuality and the need to belong to my clan, being terrified of loneliness and terrorized of losing myself in relationships. (153-154)

Her use of the oxymoronic expression "blessed with a curse" clearly points to her ambivalence towards her own hybrid identity. She is perplexed towards her belonging and is unclear about which part of her identity is the curse and which one is the blessing .The curse of Lebanon is that it is an emblem of her trauma, but its blessing lies in the Arab values that celebrate community, duty and solidarity. On the other hand, in the USA, Sarah is blessed with its values of individualism, freedom and the promise of personal happiness, but it comes with the curse of loneliness and depression.

The Third Space that Sarah inhabits is far from being a creative and liberating space of negotiation, but a space of constant tension, struggle, and interrogation. Although she always revises and reinvents her identity and her views regarding both places and their values, her revision cannot be considered a panacea for her identity crisis. In fact, Sarah can never fully realize and reinvent herself as an independent American woman, nor can she solely embrace her Lebanese identity. She is "confused, tugged on by both worlds," as she describes herself (69). Despite coming to the realization that her "American patina covers an Arabic soul" (153), she paradoxically belongs to neither part of her identity.

Sarah portrays herself as a restless, rootless and homeless transnational subject. These aspects of her identity are articulated in her failure to decide who she is and what place she considers home, which are depicted in a chapter titled "Here and There." This chapter is told using a third-person narrator. My analysis of Sarah's rape chapters demonstrates that she is only able to communicate her rape story once she replaces the autobiographical "I" of the memoir with the third-person narrative. In that case, it is clear that shifting perspectives is a distancing narrative strategy she uses to evade immersing herself in painful traumatic

memories. Resorting to this generic hybridity in her chapter "Here and There" indicates that the sense of unbelonging and homelessness that results from her ethnic and cultural hybrid identity is as painful as traumatic experiences

In this chapter, Sarah expresses that she does not feel at home anywhere in the world. She realizes that identity is not a mask to be worn and thrown at will. She cannot just simply discard her Lebanese identity and slip into her American one. She is free in the USA, but her decision to leave her family, husband and son comes with the high price of alienation, dislocation, and unbelonging. In the USA, "She feels alone, experiences the solitude of a strange city where no one looks you straight in the eye. She does not feel part of this cool world, free for the first time. But at what price?" (68). Even the way she describes New York as a cold and gray city is a reflection of her tormented inner state:

> This city is cold, slushy, and gray. It is only November, but the people have already journeyed inward […] Autumn carpets the ground in colors of decay. Ominous clouds dress the solemn pedestrians in gray-colored spectacles. With lonely eyes, she notes the subtle images of death and destruction. Here, she may be the only one with eyes to see. (68)

Beirut, on the other hand, is "warm," with "death's unremitting light shin[ing] bright for all to see, brighter than the Mediterranean sun, brighter than the night's Russian missiles, brighter than a baby's smile" (ibid).

Gray is a color that Sarah repeatedly associates with death throughout the novel. However, it is also a liminal color that exists halfway between polar opposites of black and white. As neither the former nor the latter, it stands for Sarah's in-betweenness, uncertainty, ambiguity and undecidability. Gray is the "dark end of the light and the light end of the dark" (Flaherty), which may represent Sarah's ambivalence towards Lebanon and the USA.

The chapter "Here and There" captures the complicated nature of Sarah's unbelonging and existence in a gray zone of in-betweenness. In New York there is no war, but she lives all alone by herself, dead in the inside like this strange and cold city where she does not belong.

In Beirut, death surrounds them everywhere, but there is the warmth of the family, represented by the smile of the son she abandons to move to the USA. Still, Sarah cannot go back to Lebanon because she does not belong there either. She narrates, "Yet she cannot go back there. She does not feel part of that world either. She never did. The family she abandoned is there. Her husband.Her child. She will put it behind her. There will always be *there*" (68).

There is a dimension of emotionality to the concept of belonging. It is not merely about membership to a certain group or place and the sense of rights and duties associated with it, nor is it about simple identities or identifications related to the individual and his relationship to the collective. Belonging is, rather, a deep emotional need of connectedness to people. Thus, the reason Sarah fails to enjoy a sense of belonging in the USA is because her emotional need of people is not met there.

On the other hand, the concept of home has a dual quality as a "spatiotemporal imaginary" (Mühlheim 18). As such, it is a spatial marker with a temporal dimension that is shaped through our past experiences and memories. The novel portrays the walls of home as torn down by the traumatic experiences of rape and war. Sarah ceases to see Lebanon as a nurturing place of safety and shelter but as a site of pain and heartache. It becomes impossible for her to accept her Lebanese identity and belong to a place that has robbed her of her mother, her virginity, and her own Self.

In one of her trips to Lebanon to visit her sick father, Sarah is asked by her sister Amal to return for the sake of the family that loves and cherishes her. However, at the age of forty, twenty years after she has left Lebanon, Sarah still refuses stating that she "can't move back for many reasons," but she gives vague and indirect ones. "This country is just appearances," she first tells Amal (182). She does not say it explicitly, but as readers we may link this to Sarah's traumatic rape experience. Sarah considers the ideals of her Arab society

as hypocritical, especially with its notion of honor and the double standard regarding male and female sexuality, which have forced her to endure, in addition to PTSD, the heavy weight of guilt and shame. Amal does not accept this excuse and comments, "We'd love to have you here. I need you. Your son needs you" (183). In Lebanon, she has what she misses in the USA; connectedness and the warmth of the family, but it is the place where she has lost herself a long time ago. Therefore, she admits at last, "Beirut holds terrible memories for me" (183). Lebanon will always stand for the unstable, intimidating, and unforgiving place that has shattered her Self; thus, she does not feel part of it.

The concept of home as an affective relational place of acceptance and belonging becomes a problematic notion that cultural hybrids struggle to grasp in their movement between two communities. As a cultural hybrid, Sarah does not belong to either culture but resides on the margins of both. As a result of her rejection of both cultural scripts, she finds herself living in a state of chronic homelessness. She cannot *be* at home unless she *feels* at home, which is impossible for her. Home is unattainable to Sarah who carries with her a sense of longing for her other home wherever she is.

In *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Avtar Brah contends that home is really a "mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination" (192), and as such, a place of no return. Sarah's home is neither the USA nor Lebanon, but a psychic place she cannot pin down. As she wonders, "Can there be any *here?* No. She understands *there.* Whenever she is in Beirut, home is New York. Whenever she is in New York, home is Beirut. Home is never where she is, but where she is not" (69; italics in original). In a Derridean sense, Sarah understands home as a floating signifier existing in an eternal state of différance, forever different and deffered. To her, home is not lived as a spatial experience that exists in the *here* and *now*, but as a *non-lieu*, an unattainable no-place that only exists in her imagination wherever she is not as an unreachable *there*.

Sarah's sense of rootlessness is expressed when she states that "her heart remains there. To survive here, she must hack off a part of herself, chop, chop, chop" (69). Sarah must painfully "hack off" one part of her identity, to "chop" her roots to be able to move freely through geographical and cultural territories. Since she is ambiguous with regard to where "here" and "there" exactly are, a part of her is always missing, as this agonizing disposal of her roots occurs in both places whether she is in the USA or in Lebanon.

In her book Rootedness, Christy Wampole defines rootlessness as a "synonym for alienation and disconnectedness" (3). More significantly, she points to a link between rootlessness and loss of faith in the values that home represents. As she rhetorically asks if rootlessness is but "a metaphorical way to say that people can no longer count on institutions they believed in and cannot depend on security, community structures" (3)? Accordingly, as a rootless diasporic subject, Sarah feels disconnected in both places because she has lost faith in the American values of individualism she has once believed in, for their hypocrisy, as well as in the security of Lebanese society and its values for the traumas she has faced there. Furthermore, rootedness is an "elementary human need" which Wampole links to "the desire for temporal, spatial, epistemological, and ontological continuity" (15), but this continuity is brutally ruptured by Sarah's traumas, traumatic memories and failure to belong, condemning her to live in a painful state of rootlessness.

IV. Rigid Cultural Borders and the Failure of Hybridity

Sarah's relationship with her American mother, Janet Foster, who has been absent from her life since she was two years old, plays an important role in her identity and relationship to the rest of her family. She tells the story of her mother who fell victim to the rules of patriarchal Arab society. In Lebanon, Janet transformed herself into patriarchy's ideal woman, yet she was not accepted, simply because she was not Lebanese. No matter how hard

she tried, she was always viewed as the foreign American woman. Janet represents the failure
of hybridity, as she had to suppress one identity even when she lived in a cosmopolitan city
such as Beirut. She demonstrates that Bhabha's notion of hybridity is not deemed to work in
all "hybrid" cultural settings.

Janet arrives to Lebanon at the age of twenty as a strong independent woman who
wants to explore the world beyond the boundaries of America, and chooses to finish her
Bachelor's degree in the prestigious American University of Beirut. Like an adventurous
nomad traveler with a free spirit, she wants to have a taste of the Middle East in Beirut, a
hybrid city itself that "hid its Arabic soul and presented the world a Western veneer […] 'a
kind of Las Vegas-Riviera-St. Moritz flavored with spices of Araby.' But not too spicy"
(153). However, not long after her arrival to Beirut and Janet is transformed from an
independent and free-spirited woman into patriarchy's ideal woman when she falls in love and
marries a Lebanese man. She drops out of college so that her husband finishes his studies, and
decides to become the ideal housewife to her husband and children.

Through the characters of Janet and Sarah, the novel questions the possibility of
cultural hybridity. Upon moving to the USA for the first time, Sarah refuses to acknowledge
her hybrid identity and chooses to identify only with her American self, highlighting the
failure of hybridity in the face of power imbalance between the two cultures. Contrastingly, to
survive in Lebanon, Janet has to suppress her American identity and become Arab, pointing to
the failure of hybridity in the face of strong and rigid traditional values.

In order to fit in and to be accepted by her husband's Druze community that rejects
their union(35), Janet has to "subdue any sense of individuality she may have had in order to
fit in, to conform to what was expected of her" (153). Marrying an Arab man, Janet is
"swallowed whole" by the Arab society and its patriarchal expectations. She becomes a
submissive Arab wife, restrained her free spirit and her individuality and makes "Mustapha

the most important thing in her life" (35). The "strong," "lively" and "gregarious" American girl morphs into a woman who "never say[s] too much" (36). She becomes "quiet in deference to her new position within the community" as the wife of an Arab man (36). The following quote perfectly describes Janet's metamorphosis into the perfect Arab housewife:

> Janet became more Druze than any Druze woman […]She learned to cook; her dishes became the talk of the town. To this day, it is said that her kibbeh, a dish of raw meat and cracked wheat, is unequaled in all of Lebanon. She became an impeccable hostess, generous to a fault, her house the cleanest it could possibly be. She never missed a funeral or a wedding, was the first on congratulatory visits when a birth was announced and the first at hospitals when an acquaintance was ill. She began to speak Arabic, with a mountain Druze accent even. (35-36)

After her marriage, her American Self completely dissolves as she immerses herself within the values of Arab society, learns, and applies their codes of hospitality. Mastering the kibbeh dish, the national dish of Lebanon, even better than Lebanese women themselves, speaks of her complete transformation.

Janet's portrayal in the novel is also part of its fairy tale intertext. However, unlike Sarah's resistance and subversion of patriarchal expectations of femininity, domesticity and submissiveness, Janet's radical transformation into patriarchy's most desirable woman makes of Janet an image of Snow White. A contextual allusion to the *Snow White* fairy tale in the novel is the mirror, a motif that is repeated in the novel several times. It is imbued with symbolic meaning and associated with the process of transformation and destruction of selfhood. The mirror serves, in a Lacanian sense, as an initiation into a new stage of identity and Self. It stands for the dismantling of a strong female Self through an experience that leads to the loss of her ego, her fragmentation and eventually to her complete psychic breakdown and suicide.

In the fairy tale, "Little Snow-White," the queen asks her magic mirror, "Mirror, mirror, on the wall, / Who in this land is fairest of all?" And the mirror answers, "You, my queen, are fairest of all. Then [the queen] was satisfied, for she knew that the mirror spoke the

truth." The truth the mirror stands for is the affirmation of the self-view and identity the queen has of herself. In Alameddine's novel, on the other hand, the mirror's role as a simple reflection and affirmation of identity is reversed. It is used to deconstruct the notion of a full and stable female self. The mirror in *I, the Divine* proves that the wholeness of the self is a fantasy and emphasizes the process of metamorphosis, fragmentation and alteration of the self by patriarchy's rules.

For example, in one scene, Janet has a strange experience of doubling, or schizophrenic splitting, a foretelling of an ominous fate and future when she looks at her reflection in the mirror. Newly arrived to Lebanon, twenty-year-old Janet, even before meeting Mustapha, wants to try to look Lebanese. She braids her hair, wears a "gold chain with dangling trinkets around her forehead," and applies kohl to her eyes and a "yellow eye shadow and [...] blood-red lipstick" (144). The hybridity is unsettling, as she describes "the dichotomy was disconcerting.She did not look Lebanese, yet was no longer American" (ibid). She continues staring at herself in the mirror thinking that "she appeared so exotic, straight out of a Sinbad Hollywood movie" (ibid). The name of the original Arabic story "Sindibad" is distorted into "Sinbad" which is a combination of the words sin and bad, as Sarah comments, "Yes. Sin and bad.That was the girl in the mirror" (144). Sarah deems Janet's giving up of her American self to please her Arab husband and family a sinful thing to do.

The mirror in the novel does not confirm reality but distorts and creates a strong sense of the fragmentation and doubling. Looking at her reflection, Janet develops a new self-narrative, looking at an otherness staring back at her. As she starts referring to herself as a "she," she does not see herself but a "girl in the mirror [...] Shahrazad, a drunk Shahrazad spinning tales" (144). Janet has seen her face in the mirror countless times in her life, so she knows "every minute detail of it," yet when she asks the questions:

> Mirror, mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all? [...] what started back at her was a face she did not recognize. She raised the corner of her mouth for a smile

attempting to recapture some glimmer of familiarity. The face staring back at her became more distorted. She shivered perceptibly. (144-145)

Terrified by this deformed transformation, Janet feels so dizzy and shaken that she has to "grab the mirror to steady herself" (144). At first, her quest seeking unity and self-affirmation through looking at the mirror is characterized by fragmentation, alienation and alterity. Instead of feeling whole, of "not looking so different from everyone" (145), her Self is refracted and doubled as a strange, unfamiliar and uncanny amalgam of two opposite selves.

However, next, the image that has started as a "not-I" but "she" is transformed into a new Self. Janet comes full circle to her identity in an oscillation between the image as Self and the image as Other. She internalizes the reflected image and embraces a new one with her eventual identification with what begins as an otherness. She is finally "captured, caught up" by that image. As she is described, "She must force herself to like this amalgam of East and West, to embrace it […] she should accept any discernible change," and asks her friend, Fatima to pour her a drinks, asserting "I want to celebrate the new me" (145). Janet embodies what Lacan refers to as "the see-saw of desire,"a desire to assert the Self and at the same time to identify with the Other, which paradoxically leads to the destruction of the existing Self. She sees an Arab Janet, she saw an American one (hence "see-saw"). However, Janet's see-saw is an unbalanced one; it settles on the side of the Other, which eventually leads to her destruction.

This mirror episode in the novel is concluded with a dark vision of Janet's existence within the Arab society, a warning to her and a foreshadowing of her sinister future, one that is full of sadness, bitterness and loneliness:

> Janet kept looking at the mirror. She saw looking back at her a middle-aged woman, sad, lonely, desperate. She saw someone bitter. The woman in the mirror shook her head and told her, "Don't." The phrase repeated in her head over and over, a ringing. She was terrified. She covered her ears with her hands, felt faint. (145)

To survive in the Arab world, Janet goes through a radical transformation of the Self, but even her transformation into a woman who is "more Druze than any Druze woman" is not enough. Her image in the mirror is not just a simple reflection of a simple physical change, but a foretelling of an unhappy fate within a patriarchal society whose cultural boundaries are rigid and immune to the transgression that Janet, with her hybrid identity, represents. The voice in the mirror that tells Janet "Don't" serves as the truthful voice of criticism towards the Arab social norms that would lead to the destruction of a happy fairy tale, not only Janet's, but Sarah's and her sisters' as well. The mirror only speaks the truth, and it tells her that she will lose herself forever to the expectations of a society that would not be appreciative.

In *I, the Divine*, Janet stands as the perfect example of the abuse and ingratitude of patriarchal society, represented by Sarah's father and grandfather. All of Janet's sacrifices and efforts melt into thin air, and she is sent by Mustapha and Hammoud (Sarah's grandfather) right back to America when she fails to give the Nour el-Din family a son. Sarah repeats this statement "My father had divorced my mother, sent her packing back to America" several times throughout the different chapters of the novel (11, 27, 34, 36, and 83). Janet is expelled to America like a piece of luggage. Sarah uses the expression "sent her packing" repeatedly to account for the negation of her mother's agency even regarding whether she can stay in Lebanon and be part of her daughters' lives after the divorce. Repetition indicates trauma, and while the divorce is traumatic to Sarah, the revelation that she was the reason behind it is another heavy psychological luggage she has to carry her entire life.

Throughout her life, Sarah is treated differently by her grandfather than the rest of all the other females in the family, including her other sisters, her grandmother and her stepmother. Sarah thinks it is because her grandfather chose her name after the French actress Sarah Bernhardt, whom he had admired since his childhood. Sarah attempts to tell the story behind her name in many times in her memoir, repeating the sentences "my grandfather

named me for the great Sarah Bernhardt" (6, 44, 54, and 187). Repetition, as I mentioned earlier, means repressed traumatic memories. Not only is Sarah unable to finish the story of her name in her first chapter one, but she repeats it across the length of the entire novel, from beginning to end, and only succeeds in telling it near the end of the novel, which points to a trauma behind the story.

Born with a "little tuft of red hair, direct from [her] American mother" (187), her grandfather names her after the redheaded French actress Sarah Bernhardt. He fills her head with made-up stories of the "Divine Sarah, the greatest woman who ever lived" (54), and so Sarah grows up "infatuated" with her, believing she was Sarah the Divine (54). The discovery that her grandfather's love is all pretense based on nothing but lies and deceits is traumatizing to Sarah. She finds out that he does not love her because she reminds him of the Divine Sarah whom he never met, but because as the third girl in a row, she is the reason he can send her mother back to America and get his son a proper Druze wife (who ironically can neither cook nor do house chores half as good as Janet).

Through her sister Amal, Sarah finds a truth she could not see before about her grandfather. Amal tells Sarah that she was "Hitler's favorite child" (187). She is told that her grandfather is a "Machiavellian asshole, prejudiced as hell, xenophobic and bigoted," She has hard time believing that he is a "a manipulative bastard […] a misogynist. He hated all [of them] girls" (188) including Sarah herself. He even regularly beat their grandmother, and mistreated their step mother and mother (ibid).

It takes Sarah a long time to finally accept this truth about her grandfather, when years later, her mother, Janet, confirms this. One day in New York, Sarah visits her mother who is, unusually, in the mood to talk to her. Janet begins describing how "evil" the grandfather was with her:

> He made my life miserable. Whenever no one was around, he would whisper things like, 'You may think you have him because you spread your legs […] He even called a

couple of times and I picked up the phone and bang, he'd call me a whore or a slut. (198)

Janet then discloses to Sarah what he said the day she was born and reveals the reason why she is his favorite daughter. The grandfather picked Sarah up and told Janet, "'You know, Janet, I love this girl so much. Do you know why?' Like an idiot, I asked, 'Why?' And he said, 'I love her so much because she's the reason I am going to be able to return you to your fucking country'" (198-99).

The fact that Sarah's conversations with Amal and then with Janet are placed in the same chapter, only two chapters before the end of the novel points to its traumatic nature. This is a story that Sarah is trying to tell since the beginning of her memoir but keeps repressing. Sarah has always thought her mother abandoned them. She thought that their mother did not write to them because of her "distaste for epistolary communication," as she says (100). Janet comes up with all sorts of excuses to avoid meeting Sarah in New York. She even refuses to meet her grandson, neither when he is a baby nor when he is twelve years old (33). However, knowing the real story behind grandfather's love, Sarah comes to the realization that she "reminded [her] mother of her failures" (38), the failure of keeping her family together, of keeping herself together.

Janet, thus, embodies a Derridean postmodern paradox in a narrative where she is both present and absent at the same time. She is an absence whose presence is felt in her influence on Sarah's life choices and behavior. She represents the deferred and unattainable missing piece in Sarah's life that she is constantly chasing but keeps eluding her. Her presence/absence also points to a trauma aspect in her relationship with her daughter. Janet's leaving to the USA, not contacting her daughters, is conceived as a trauma of abandonment by Sarah and her sisters. The weight of this trauma falls heavy on Sarah, especially when she learns that she is the reason behind her mother's divorce. Not only is the revelation traumatic, but it comes with a tormenting sense of guilt, which added to Sarah's other negative

experiences of trauma and shame, contributes to her psychic suffering, unbelonging and self-imposed exile.

Janet represents another failure of hybrid identity in the face of the exclusivity of cultural identity. After her divorce and her ostracism from a culture she tried so hard to embrace, Janet has never been strong again (36). Janet is wronged by a culture's essentialist attitude and rigid categorization of cultures as separate and opposite, rejecting the creation of a hybrid form that comprises both Arab and American. The result is that when she is shunned and sent back to her country, she can neither forget nor come to terms with her past. She leads a life of loneliness and depression, seeking therapy through writing and painting, never able to finish any of her works, just like Sarah. One night, More than thirty years after her divorce, she surrenders to the pain of rejection, of unbelonging, that governs her life and "cut herself with a razor in the bathtub, not just her wrists, but all over, and bled to death" (41).

Sarah does not explain the reasons behind her mother's decision to commit suicide probably because she sees herself in her mother. The similarities between their life choices and trajectories are scary to Sarah who fears she will end up like her mother, as suggested in a chapter she titles "Mirror, Mirror on the Wall. I am My Mother After All" (94). As readers we can still decipher the reason when we discover, along with Sarah, that her mom has been using the name "Janet Nour el-Din" in the USA even after her divorce, for the rest of her life. Shocked, Sarah asks the concierge of her mother's apartment building, "she didn't go by Janet Foster?', 'No ma'am. Janet Nour el-Din" (175), and wonders "why would she keep our name? […] She hated our family? […]Why keep reminding yourself of past pain" (175-176)? Till her suicide, Janet holds on to a name and a hybrid identity she was painfully denied. Janet Nour el-Din did not choose not to belong. She was forced not to belong by a rigid culture that rejected her, and this was too painful to live with.

V. Trauma, Hybridity and Madness

The trauma of abandonment is another source of Sarah's rebellion against her society, her fragmented identity, all of her life choices, and loneliness. Janet's absence, however, influences the entire hybrid family which fails to lead a meaningful and full life after she is sent to the USA. Sarah reflects that after her divorce, Janet put a curse of loneliness on all of them:

> The curse was a life of loneliness. If you took all eight of us, the parents and the six siblings, scrutinized our hearts, you would come across a loneliness so enveloping, so overwhelming, it frightens the uninitiated.My family's leitmotif is loneliness. We exhibit characteristics of the curse differently, deal with it differently. We have different forms of loneliness. (83)

Though Sarah thinks that she is the one affected the most by her mother's abandonment, she eventually discovers that its impact has been the most serious on her sister Lamia who "inherited her [Janet's] insanity" (101). Sarah comes to this realization when she and her family find out that Lamia, a nurse, has killed seven patients and attempted to kill two others "so they would not disturb her while she worked at night," and then attempted suicide but fails (86).

In the chapter "A Serial Killer in Our Midst," Sarah describes Lamia as her nemesis. She is an "awfully" and "neurotically" shy and unattractive girl whose existence is uninteresting (84) and presence "anonymous" in their family. She "spoke so little many assumed she was a deaf-mute" (99). However, Amal, the eldest of the three, tells Sarah that Lamia has not always been that way. She remembers her as a "playful" and even "rowdy" kid before their parents' divorce. After their mother's "sudden" disappearance, five-year-old Lamia "wove an impenetrable cocoon" around herself and has never emerged out of it (99). Lamia's identity, like Sarah's, has been greatly affected by the trauma of abandonment.

While Sarah assumes that Lamia has always hated Janet for leaving them, she is shocked to find a hidden cache of unsent letters when she is packing her sister's belongings. The letters were worn at the edges having been read many times and all addressed to Janet,

spanning thirty-five years "beginning the day [their] mother disappeared and lasting long past the day [their] mother committed suicide" (100).

As I have pointed out earlier, Sarah shifts from the first person perspective to the third-person narrative when narrating painful events. She shifts this time to yet another genre, the epistolary, to represent what she, as the author of the memoir, fails to narrate using the autobiographical "I." She adds the voice of Lamia by inserting her letters directly to give us a direct access into Lamia's damaged psyche. Through more than four hundred and fifty letters, written about once a month throughout her life, Lamia shares with her mother all the details of her life. In them, we see "all the pain, all the loneliness, all the insanity," of Lamia's psyche written in "jumbled, nonlinear prose" and broken English (100).

Lamia uses the letters as a means of escaping a harsher reality of unbelonging by creating an imaginary bond with the mother she longs for her entire life. Seeking connection with her, she starts them with "Dear Mommy," and ends with such expressions as, "Love, Your lovely daughter Lamia" (104), "Love, your good daughter Lamia" (106), "Only love, Lamia" (111), and "The good daughter Lamia" (112). They are written as if Lamia is having a direct conversation with her mother, probably a symptom of her insanity. Her psychological disorder is clear in the letters where she discloses to her mother her feelings towards her family, especially Sarah and her father, and towards society, in addition to her anger and alienation. She even writes about the Civil War, the cause of her a sensitivity to noises, which in turn, leads her to murder her patients who "were demanding and made too much noise" (86).

In one of her letters, she expresses her anger towards her father for favoring Sarah over her, and then asks her mother to forgive her for talking about him, as if she is having a direct conversation with her. Lamia's anger towards her father is because, like Sarah, she does not forgive him for divorcing their mother. She hates Sarah because she is the reason their

mother left. Lamia's letters reveal her need and desire to converse with her absent mother as if she is physically present. As she writes:

> Can I ask you a question which is do you still have the woolend dress I always like and I know there is about thirty years but it was a nice dress and I thought you maybe still had it maybe I doubt you still wear it but maybe you saved it because a penny saved is a penny saved. If you did, can you save it for me? Don't leave it to any of the other girls because I don't think they loved it as much as I did and they don't appreciate beautiful things, dont like pretty things, don't know nice things, they don't do they? (106)

Unlike Sarah's relation to her past, which is not nostalgic, Lamia is trapped in a tangled web of nostalgia where her mother is still in the picture. She addresses her mother like an innocent little girl and clings to a beautiful past image of her mother that she saves in her mind and wants to preserve in the here and now. The danger of her nostalgia is that it shades towards pathological melancholia. Melancholia is a form of pathological mourning in which the patient, like Lamia, expresses "an ongoing and open relationship with the past—bringing its ghosts and specters, its flaring and fleeting images, into the present" (Eng and Kazanjian 4). She refuses to let her mother go, which points to her mental disorder. The letters serve as a liminal space, born from the trauma of abandonment and unbelonging to her family, which pathologically connects her to an absent figure and to a distant past.

Lamia stands as a liminal figure herself. She is a nurse who is supposed to take care of her patients, yet her letters reveal that she is the one who needs being taken care of. She inhabits an in-between position between cultural identities, patient and nurse, sanity and insanity, and between belonging and unbelonging (as an anonymous part of the family whose absence is not even noticed).

The symbolic importance of Lamia in the novel cannot be overlooked. As Sarah's least favorite sister whom she describes as "the black sheep of the family" (86), an expression Sarah uses to describe herself as well (154), she serves as Sarah's doppelganger. Along with Janet, she represents an extreme version of what may result from a severe form of

unbelonging and alienation. Her fate is one that could have well been Sarah's if the latter had not attempted to maintain real contact with her mother as a way of working through her own trauma.

VI. Traumatic Divorce, Unbelonging, and Intertextuality

As a traumatic event, the divorce of Sarah's parents changes who she views herself and how she feels towards her father and her homeland. Although she does not state it directly, but her narrative of the divorce has trauma written all over it; in its repetition, the shift of language and intertextuality. Sarah resorts to these aesthetic narrative strategies that serve the pragmatic function of pointing to the importance of this event as well as an attempt of mastery and understanding of extreme emotional states too painful to be spoken directly. Unsing intertextual allusions to fairy tales, Sarah attempts to map this experience in her chapter "Chapter One—Beginning," and then repeats the content of the chapter, almost verbatim, in French in the chapter "Premier chapitre: Le Commencement," only a few pages later.

Sarah reflects that stories and fairy tales were an important part of her childhood when her father "would regale [then] with stories, some fairy tales, some real stories from his days as a child" (94). Their influence is apparent in the subtle intertextual references to fairy tales scattered all over her memoir. She often perceives her own life like a fairy tale. As she writes, "I had a fairy-tale childhood complete with the evil stepmother" (25). In the French chapter, she explicitly mentions Grimm fairy tales, "Il est des histoires qui ressemblent à un conte de fées. L'histoire de mon enfance, par exemple, semblait être tirée d'un conte de Grimm" (31). Sarah describes herself as a fairy tale princess and her stepmother as the evil witch trying to destroy her life.

My interpretation of the novel's fairy tale intertext is based on Gilbert and Gubar's analysis of "Snow White" in their work *The Madwoman in the Attic*, where they describe the stepmotheras "a plotter, a plot-maker, a schemer, a witch, an artist, an impersonator, a woman of almost infinite creative energy, witty, wily" (38-39). This description perfectly fits Sarah's own portrayal of her stepmother. She sees Saniya as a "family intruder" (11), who just "arrived at [their] house one day" (25), or as she says in the French chapter "Elle débarqua un jour dans nos vies" (31), to suggest her sudden, unexpected and unwelcome appearance in their family. She considers her, to use Gilbert and Gubar's word, an impersonator who tries to take their mother's place.

Sarah compares Saniya to a witch in the French chapter where she states that she fails to picture the hideous witch that she reads about in fairy tales because, in her eyes, the word witch can only be embodied in one person, her beautiful step mother:

> (mon imagination), stagnait à chaque fois qu'on me parlait de sorcières. Je ne me prenais jamais à imaginer diverses figures féminines au physique hideux et aux cheveux hirsutes. Les sorcières des histoires qui m'étaient narrées avaient un visage qui m'était douloureusement familier, des cheveux longs et lisses comme de la soie, une élégance recherchée, et surtout une jeunesse hantée et menacée par la mienne. Invariablement, dans mon esprit, toutes les sorcières se retrouvaient en une seule: ma belle-mère. (31)

In "Snow White" there is rivalry between the evil stepmother and Snow White. Similarly in the novel, the "witch" Saniya feels threatened by Sarah and views her as an enemy. As Sarah narrates, "She decided early on she did not like me and set a course of discipline that would last until my teenage years. She was strict with my two sisters as well, but she was a Nazi with me" (25).

Conforming with Gilbert and Gubar's definition of the stepmother, young Sarah also considers her stepmother a "plotter" and "schemer." Sarah has always considered herself her father's favorite daughter, "his Cordelia," but "After years of her [Saniya's] nagging, he

began to see [her] as a lost cause, an embarrassment to the family" (26). With her plots and schemes, Saniya succeeds in filling her father's head with the idea that his daughter is "wicked" (ibid). She even convinces him to send her away to *Carmel St. Joseph* boarding school, the strictest school in Lebanon run by cruel Carmelite nuns, just because she objects to Sarah playing soccer "on the streets with the boys" (26-27), similar to the way stepmothers in fairy tales send their stepdaughters away to dangerous places.

Snow White is innocent and "angelic," as interpreted by Gilbret and Gubar, which Sarah definitely is not. Sarah grows up "angry with [her] father because he destroyed the fairy tale" by bringing in Saniya to their lives (34). Following a path of "demonic trickery and shenanigans," Sarah becomes "mischievous" towards Saniya and spends her childhood "to make her life miserable" (11) for turning her father against her (26).

The intertextual hints in the text are used to invite comparisons and provoke reconsideration of Sarah's attitude towards established social rules. Snow White is the epitome of beauty and femininity. However, Alameddine, markedly, uses the fairy tale intertext to criticize patriarchy by subverting the image of Snow White. Sarah's beauty and fair skin is expressed in a game she and her sisters play with their father. She describes the game, "He would show us each a mirror and in a solemn voice, tell us in English 'Mirror, Mirror, on the wall, who's the fairest of them all?' My sister, Amal, would shout, 'Sleeping Beauty' […]I would shout, 'Me!' My father loved that" (94). Though fair and beautiful, Sarah's behavior subverts the image of femininity that her patriarchal society demands women to adhere to. For example, as a child, Sarah describes herself as a "true poet" in the art of cursing (9), who masters "all kind of pornographic swear words" in the Lebanese dialect (25), which her father and uncles find hilarious, but her stepmother finds them too offensive and punishes her with "hot peppers" (25). In addition to this, Sarah is a "natural tomboy;" she

cuts her hair short, never wears dresses and make up, and is "frequently filthy" from playing footballwith the boys on the streets, which drives her stepmother crazy.

Snow White in the fairy tale is reduced to a passive "inanimate *objet d'art* patriarchal aesthetics wants a girl to be" (Gilbert and Gubar 40). Despite their explicit physical similarities, Sarah stands in clear opposition to Snow White, the obedient and passive "housekeeping angel," and "servant" to the dwarves (ibid). While her sisters are taught household duties like cooking, cleaning, sewing and embroidery, Sarah refuses because she "could not stand it" (26). Saniya treats her like the "house servant," constantly demanding her to do menial tasks, such as getting her a bottle of water, her slippers under the bed, her face cream, walking on her back to massage her (25). Sarah frequently rebels, but always gets smacked for it. The passivity of Snow White makes her "docile, submissive, the heroine of life that *has no story*" (Gilbert and Gubar 39; italics in original). What Sarah, on the other hand, fears the most is to have no story to tell, a point she makes when she insists, "I have a great story to tell you. I was there," in a chapter where all the sentences start with "I saw," placing herself right in the middle of her own story (93). Though she fails at writing a linear narrative, the totality of her chapters succeeds in telling us her life story.

Fairy tales are a powerful discourse that elicits and perpetuates certain truth and knowledge about culture and society. They are used to teach children lessons, to shape their values, behavior, and relationship to society. Consequently, appropriating them shows the author's defiance of cultural values. The most important subversion of the *Snow White* fairy tale I could discern from Alameddine's work is related to Sarah's rape and her feelings towards herself and society in its aftermath. The beautiful and obedient Snow White is "patriarchy's ideal woman" (Gilbert and Gubar 40) because with her "absolute chastity, her frozen innocence, her sweet nullity," she represents the ideal of "contemplative purity" (ibid 39). In the novel, the purity of Snow White is contrasted to Sarah's failure to preserve the

chastity and innocence so important to her culture and the way she feels polluted with an unwashable stain after her rape

Anne Whitehead highlights this potential for revisionism that underlies intertextuality, especially in connection to trauma. She stresses that if the source text is considerably revised and subverted, then intertextuality is used as a point of departure to portray a possibility of change and resistance, "In stylistic terms, intertextuality allows the novelist to mirror the symptomology of trauma by disrupting temporality or chronology, and to repossess the voices of previously silenced characters, enabling them to bear witness to their own exclusion" (94). Whitehead's argument can adequately be applied to Sarah who uses Snow White's story to regain the voice she needs to portray temporal disruption, her criticism of society, and her sense of unbelonging and exclusion from her own family, following Saniya's arrival, as well as from her society following her rape.

Donald Haase analyzes intertextual allusions to fairy tales in a number of trauma narratives and argues that they are emotional survival strategy used for the narration of a childhood lived in a landscape scarred by violence. He stresses that "children who have been displaced by violence may perceive an affinity between their traumatic experience and utopian projections, on the one hand, and the landscape of the fairy tale, on the other" (362). The utopianism of fairy tales helps authors represent traumatic childhood experiences, providing them with a structure to "integrate evil without trauma" (Postman 94). It allows for a "reconstitution of home" within an imaginative landscape to alleviate the trauma.

In all fairy tales the protagonist is alienated and exiled (from home into the woods for example). This gives them the potential to represent actual human experiences of displacement, "[Children] who have been alienated from their surroundings either by physical displacement or by the perception of a violently altered landscape ("bomb-sites," "waste land")—sometimes map their experience with the fairy tale's geography of displacement"

(Haase 363). Sarah does just this. The traumatic experiences of war, rape, her parents' divorce and the arrival of Saniya upset her familiar environment and force her into exile within an unfamiliar perception of home. Her psychological alienation eventually leads to a real physical displacement and self-imposed exile, which propels her to establish a form of belonging, even if it is to a story.

Alameddine's text, "Snow white" is used as a subplot to interpret Sarah's trauma. Placing herself in another story is a textual conduit that Sarah uses to overcome trauma's resistance of articulation and to familiarize the unknown. She does not understand her parents' divorce, as a traumatic event, and wishes that by using familiar fairy tales, she can invite the reader to participate with her in the production of meaning in the text. She wants to represent evil but without facing the trauma. It makes more sense to her that she is a princess wronged by her evil step mother than to face the reality that her father is the evil one who sent her mother away. Drawing parallels between her life and fairy tales provides a rationale for her behavior and an insight into her relationship to her father, Saniya, and herself. It also explains the reasons she does not forgive her father, her mischievous behavior towards Saniya, and her fascination with her mother (the dead Queen in "Snow White").

Conclusion

Sarah's story is a story of dislocation and disconnection that has behind it a painful traumatic past, which she attempts to write through remembering, writing and rewriting. She presents to her reader a memoir in a disjoint form that never really moves beyond the first chapter. What cannot be mastered in Sarah's life story are traumatic experiences which are registered in her mind as traumatic memories that resist linguistic articulation. Her narrative is characterized by fragmentation, non-linearity, intertextuality, silences, gaps, repetition mirroring the symptoms of PTSD, its shattering effect on Sarah's life narrative, her temporal

and spatial experience, as well as the dialectic between the attempts of remembering and forgetting.

Alameddine delineates a postmodern narrative that is itself hybrid. Its fragmentation, the use of different genres (memoir, novel, epistolary), the fragmentation of the autobiographical "I" and the shift of languages (French and English) are, to put it in Garrigos words "textual representations of a hybrid reality" (189-190). This hybrid reality, I may argue, is not only related to her cultural identity, but to being trapped in trauma's liminal time with the boundaries between the past and present, the here and there, Lebanon and the USA are blurred through traumatic haunting which is translated in the very postmodern aesthetics of the narrative.

The novel's textual hybridity (linguistic and genre) portrays the protagonist's multiple layers of her identity and reflects her splintered subjectivity. Her text reveals the fragmentation and sense of unbelonging, alienation and disconnection from both parts of her hybrid identity that are caused by many factors such as her traumatic past and her current situation in the USA. For example, the "I" that is writing the memoir is a different persona than the traumatized "she" which she narrates in other first chapters, such as her rape chapter or the 4th of July chapter; the child "I" is different than the adult "I" and so on. Textual hybridity, therefore, points to an identity crisis, a hybrid identity really, that fails to be fully registered and the tension that her sense of unbelonging causes her.

Sarah's fractured, unstable and decentered self, along wither indecisiveness regarding her belonging result from the destabilization of the concept of "home," the center that is supposed to hold her whole and unified, by both the experience of trauma as well as her rejection of the values that both parts of her identity stand for. She refuses to call Lebanon home and rejects the Arab part of her identity for the patriarchy, conformity, and sexist traditions they represent. On the other hand, she also revises her belonging to America once
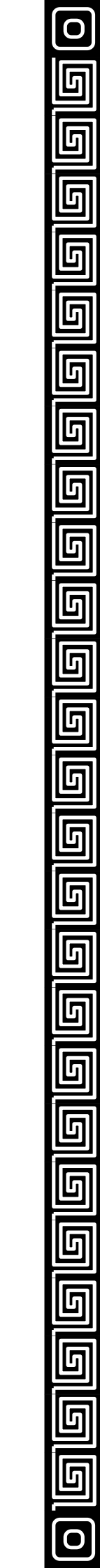
she lives there for a while and rejects the American part of her identity for the hypocrisy and alienation underneath American individualism.

Using a pluralistic trauma approach, this chapter situates Sarah's trauma within its cultural and socio-political contexts. The novel portrays not only Sarah's trauma, but that of her American mother, Janet, and sister Lamia, who are all victims to the values of patriarchal Arab society. The loss of order and the crisis of masculinity during the war, in addition to the hypermasculintiy of the Lebanese society that permits men to perform their masculinity through the subjugation, objectification and possession of the female body were the catalyst behind her rape. Moreover, Alameddine criticizes the double standard regarding male and female sexuality that forces women to carry and preserve the honour of the family and turns a blind eye towards man's sexual violence towards women. These patriarchal social mores indirectly allow rape to happen and condemn victims, such as Sarah, to carry the burden of silence, shame and the guilt of staining the family's honour for the rest of their lives.

The same patriarchal society and its rigid traditional and cultural borders were the reason behind the trauma of her American mother, Janet. Janet abandoned her American identity and its values when she moved to Lebanon and fell in love with Sarah's father. She became more Lebanese than any other Lebanese women. However she was always rejected by the rigid Druze society and its rigid cultural boundaries which prevented the success of her hybrid American-Arab identity. Eventually, she was sent back to her home country when she failed to give a son to the family. In the USA, Janet Nour el-Din, who still kept the Arabic part of her name, led a life, like her daughters, of loneliness and depression and committed suicide thirty-five years after her divorce in her lonely apartment. Lamia, Sarah's sister, was the most traumatized by the divorce, which she experienced as a trauma of abandonment. Like Sarah and the rest of the family, Lamia was also affected by the curse of loneliness. She

eventually turned mad, killed seven of her patients and, like her mother, and attempted to take her own life. The three Arab-American women portray the failure of hybridity.

This chapter reveals that due to different kind of traumatic events; rape, war, rejection, and abandonment, none of the women of the Noure-eline family got to enjoy their multiethnic and hybrid identity. The Third Space they inhabit is far from Bhabha's empowering, liberating and creative space. On the opposite, they experience it as an agonizing, alienating and depressing space. Sarah's hybridity is lived as a state of chronic homelessness and rootlessness. Her movement between geographical and cultural spaces does not allow for a negotiation of identities but an interrogation and questioning that are never resolved, the same way she can never move past the first chapter in her process of writing and re-writing her life.

Chapter IV. A Balaevian Reading of Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*: Insidious Trauma,

Human Injustice and Mental Illness in a Multicultural City

Introduction

Presenting a protagonist who fails to embrace a stable identity and refuses to belong neither to his homeland nor to the host country, Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* clearly belongs to the diasporic genre. However, like Alameddine's novel, it is diasporic without the notion of nostalgia to the homeland. In fact, both authors neither idealize the homeland nor romanticize immigration. As Syrine Hout argues that Alameddine and Hage belong to a group of diasporic writers who are interested in "the debunking of two myths: the return to a golden age of a romanticized Lebanon and the slavish imitation of a supposedly superior Western lifestyle" (*Postwar* 9). Thus, Even if it portrays an exiled protagonist who escaped a past life marred with trauma and violence, *Cockroach* does not celebrate the image of the happy and grateful immigrant.

Canada prides itself to be the epitome of multicultural acceptance and tolerance. It presents itself as a benevolent, peaceful and welcoming cosmopolitan haven where the traumatized immigrants is invited "to tell his/ her terrible story of trauma and in so doing begin to find empathy and healing in his/her new home" (Libin 75). However, Hage's novel rejects this idealistic disposition and questions Western claims of embracing difference and unconditional welcome of the traumatized immigrant. *Cockroach* undermines the utopian quest of equality and justice that multicultural contact is claimed to accomplish. The unnamed protagonist's meaningless, troubled and anonymous existence, in addition to the prejudice and racism he faces disrupt this myth of Canada as a promised utopian sanctuary.

The trauma of the protagonist, who believes he is a half human, half cockroach hybrid creatures, takes the form of schizophrenic dissociation. While it is true that his schizophrenia and attempt of suicide are a response to past trauma and symptoms of a grave form of PTSD, they are only partly so. His frustration with his present living conditions as a poor immigrant in a cold, unwelcoming city where he is pushed to the fringes of society is another reason the

protagonist snaps, loses touch with his unlivable and harsh reality and morphs into a cockroach.

Hage explicitly mentions that *Cockroach* is a novel that seeks to portray the socio-economic conditions that immigrants face, "I'm exploring poverty issues, class, religion, fundamentalism, displacement" ("Hage's Cockroach Crawls"). Hage's novel simply highlights the fact that with the feelings of alienation and unbelonging that result from facing all kinds of hardships in the host country, such as xenophobia and poverty, experienced as insidious trauma, immigration does not necessarily guarantee improvement and upward mobility. Indeed, talking about his own experience, Hage himself states that while his past traumatic experience of living in a war-torn country was certainly detrimental, his present conditions in Canada were even worse, " I found my early years of displacement more brutal and devastating that the war itself" ("On the Weight" 229).

Hage represents the condition of unbelonging both in the homeland and the adopted country, and emphasizes the double burden of traumatic past and present marginalization as well as the insidious trauma in the new country. While the Lebanese, Iranian, and North-African immigrants in the novel have escaped the violence, hatred, persecution, oppression, war and exploitation in their home countries, the new country is not free of violence, hatred, prejudice and micro-aggressions that are as traumatic as their past. Moreover, Hage's immigrants cannot rid themselves of their past. One way or another, they transport it with them, in the form of mental illness, such as PTSD, paranoia, or schizophrenia.

He fails to leave behind this pathological survival strategy when he immigrates because the rejection he faces in the host country exacerbates his already-fragile mental state. Thus, one might ask if *Cockroach* is about a mentally-ill immigrant or an immigration-induced mental illness, Hage seems to lean more towards the second. As he states:

> Transformation is bound to affect every immigrant and exile. The transformation can encompass a range of emotional states, from happiness and well-being to depression,

culture shock, longing, *anger, resistance, and in extreme cases madness*. The existent of an immigrant is volatile, and this volatility can lead to aimlessness and a perpetual sense of loss and non-belonging. (ibid; italics added)

In other words, Hage portrays immigration as an experience of loss, displacement, alienation marginality and un-belonging rooted in a pre-immigration traumatic past, then, transferred and intensified by racism and other negative experiences within the host country. My main concern in this chapter is to apply a Balaevian pluralistic trauma approach in interpreting the protagonist's mental illness as pointing to larger socio-economic, cultural and political issues related more to his present life as an immigrant than to his past. I seek to do so by analyzing his relationship to the urban setting of the novel, which causes a form of trauma of geographical dislocation, in addition to his relationship to the white Canadians, such as his therapist, rich white Canadians and the police, a relation that proves to be based on a top-down power dynamics that judges and excludes the protagonist based on his ethnic identity, which triggers his mental illness. Doing so, this chapter also seeks to prove the failure of multiculturalism and Bhabha's hybridity in accounting for all forms of cultural mixing.

I. The City and the Trauma of Geographical Dislocation

Cockroach presents an urban space represented within a symbolic context that reflects the immigrants' experience. The city in the novel plays an important role as a space of immigration and a space of interrogation, negotiation and creation of identities. The symbolic context of the city in the novel is of paramount significance in providing an ample insight into the protagonist's mind, and understanding how he defines himself in relation to his position within the hierarchical space of Montreal, and how the others in the city view him and the other immigrant.

The events in *Cockroach* revolve around the reminiscences of the past of its vagabond protagonist as well as his ceaseless daily and nocturnal roaming in the city of Montreal.The city is ever-present as a background to the events; its streets, the snow falling from the sky,

the cold weather and its people are all continuously mentioned throughout the novel. Montreal is represented like a living creature, a cruel beast whose indifference and inhospitality wreak havoc upon the protagonist's psychological state. The novel invites the readers to imagine a city-organism that is as xenophobic as its inhabitants. Therefore, the city is given a psychological dimension that reflects the mental state of the protagonist and the way he creates a mental landscape that represents reality as he perceives it.

Cockroach depicts the exterior world of the city in relationship to the clandestine inner world of the protagonist. The narrator-protagonist's hallucinatory, nightmarish and sometimes even grotesque imagery he uses to describe the city is a projection of his inner feelings and his sense of disillusionment, pessimism, displacement and discomfort in what he identifies as an extremely hostile, unfriendly and unwelcoming environment. This reflects the way he feels about the city, but also the way he believes the city feels about him in return; total rejection of him and his likes. Hence, the city stands as the invisible antagonist in the novel, preventing the protagonist from enjoying a sense of home and belonging. Hage illustrates this mainly through his portrayal of the weather of Montreal.

The dreams of the cosy and welcoming Montreal depicted in the postcards that the protagonist and the other immigrants have before moving to Canada are displaced by a harsh reality of a cold and discriminating city, poverty, racism, constant job hunting, and hunger. The author uses the imagery of snow to portray this idea. Snowy of Montreal is nothing like the romantic and Christmassy city the narrator has seen once in his country of origin in "photos of *la compagne rustique, le Quebec du nord des Ameriques*, depicting cozy snowy winters and smoking chimneys […] pasted on every travel agent's door; big baby-seal eyes blink from the walls of immigration offices, waiting to be saved, nursed and petted" (22; italics in original). Snow here is just unforgiving and indifferently cold. Instead of being "saved," "nursed" and "petted" in this city, he finds himself " blowing breath onto [his]

fingers like a cold God creating the world, sniffing like a junkie, shivering like a ghost" (277), and has to detach and alienate himself from this unwelcoming climate by wearing " layers of hats, gloves and scarves" and lots of "zippers and buttons" (21).

The protagonist's feelings towards the city with its antagonistic attitude towards him reveal a type of trauma described by Salman Akthar as "the trauma of geographical dislocation," which immigrants suffer from as a result of their geo-cultural dislocation (*Immigration* 11). Akthar explains that because places are significantly different, change of the physical landscape can be so overwhelming that it has huge psychological impact on the immigrant. He stresses that the trauma of the new landscape results in internal fractures and "give[s] rise to considerable perceptual and emotional imbalance" (11). This trauma happens because "when we leave a place we lose ties not only with friends and relatives but also with a familiar nonhuman environment" (20) that includes "landscape, little and big animals, vegetation, space, and the physical objects that populate that space" (11).Thus, Immigrants go through some "disorienting anxieties" because of the change in the non-human element of the environment, and the encounter with a non-familiar landscape and climate, which severs their sense of connectedness to the place and feeling of safety within it, "and therefore becomes traumatic" (11). Loss of familiar topography has a destabilizing effect on the continuity of the ego, which causes mental pain and an agonizing sense of unbelongingness. Simply put, "One just does not feel "at home"" (23) when one suffers the trauma of geographical dislocation.

Experiencing a major environmental change causes the protagonist considerable psychological disturbance. His ceaseless movement throughout the novel from one place to another and constant reporting of his whereabouts point to a strong sense of unbelonging to this place. He is always on the move searching for an elusive feeling of being "at home."

The harsh weather of Montreal represents the existential agony, the despair and the hopelessness of the protagonist. The snow which claims "every car windshield, every hat,

every garbage can, every eyelid, every roof and mountain" (10) embodies the sense of the protagonist being trapped in an unfriendly and threatening city. The infinite number of the small snowflakes terrifies the narrator and invokes the imagery of death and army that he frequently uses in his description of the city. As he describes, "Little creatures that seem insignificant and small are murderous in their sheer vast numbers, their conformity, their repetitiveness, their steady army-like movements, their soundless invasions. They terrify me" (143). Snow is personified here which makes the imagery even more vivid and shows how deep the feelings of terror and oppression the city makes him experience.

This scene of the small yet "murderous" "army-like" snowflakes even triggers a traumatic memory in the narrator's mind and leads to a temporal disjunction in his experience of the present as the narrative suddenly shifts to the past. The snowflakes remind him of a traumatic story of the famine days that his grandmother told him about, "when zillions of grasshoppers came and invaded the countryside and ate all the grains, all the fruit, all the vegetables" causing famine that took "the lives of half the population" (143). What is traumatic about this story is that his grandmother spent most of her life sad and crying for the little boy, who was her age, and "came everyday and asked [his] grandmother's mother food. All he said was, Aunty, I am hungry. But her mother chased him away. And then [his] grandmother chased him away. And then one day he didn't show up" (143); the little boy died of famine. This story is the roots of the protagonist's constant fear of hunger and preoccupation with food throughout the novel.

With its cold weather and indifferent people, Montreal only exacerbates the protagonist's feelings of loneliness and alienation instead of brining him closer to other people. As he describes the mechanized and conformist life led by its inhabitants:

> And how about those menacing armies of heavy boots, my friend, encasing people's feet, and the silenced ears, plugged with wool and headbands, and the floating coats passing by in ghostly shapes, hiding faces, pursed lips, austere hands? Goddamn it! Not even a nod in this cold place, not even a timid wave, not a smile from below red,

sniffing, blowing noses. All these buried heads above necks strangled in synthetic scarves. (10)

The Montrealers, with their "menacing armies of heavy boots" are depicted here as mechanical, detached and alienated from their surrounding and from the protagonist. He is a stranger in a strange city and cannot even see the faces of the people around him because they are buried under their scarves. Their "hiding faces," "pursed lips" and "austere hands" indicate their xenophobic attitude which prevents them from exchanging small gestures of greeting like nodding, waving and smiling. They are just as emotionally cold as their city.

As a result of the protagonist's mental derangement, the continuity and wholeness of the world is broken by his alienation. He sees people around him as empty, fragmented objects, describing them as "ghostly shapes," empty "floating coats," "buried heads" and "strangled" necks. Significantly, these images are all related to death, which also reveals his subconscious state, as this description is provided a few pages after attempting suicide in an existential act of challenging the universe, as he puts it.

The extent of the psychological impact of the protagonist's contact, or lack of contact, with the people in the city is so strong that all the faceless and detached shapes make him feel nervous and provoke an agonizing existential self-interrogation, expressing his estrangement and sense of loss in this depressing city, "it made me nervous, and I asked myself, Where am I? And what am I doing here? How did I end up trapped in a constantly shivering carcass, walking in a frozen city with wet cotton falling on me all the time?"(10).

They portrayal of Montreal reveals the dissatisfaction of the protagonist in an inhumane, cheerless and indifferent universe that treats him as an insignificant creature. Cold weather is personified as xenophobic, angry and merciless, as someone who is "mean" and "oblivious to the suffering" of others. If they complain, "he" would simply ask them to go back to their countries:

> you can shiver all you want, sniff all you want, the universe is still oblivious. And if you ask why the inhumane temperature, the universe will answer you with tight lips and a cold tone and tell you to go back where you came from if you do not like it here. (134)

His feelings of insignificance and estrangement in this cold, unwelcoming city are so strong that he curses the moment he set foot in this place. He says, "As my feet trudged the wet ground and I felt the shivery cold, I cursed my luck. I cursed the plane that had brought me to this harsh terrain" (9).

For Caruth, as discussed earlier, trauma is understood as a mode of haunting, "to be traumatized is precisely to be possessed by an image or event" (*Trauma* 4-5). Since the onset of the novel, the protagonist is obsessed with death (as suggests his unexplained suicide attempt). His preoccupation with death and violence is a remnant of war trauma that he transports with him from his homeland. It is a form of being haunted by an idea that influences his urban experience, coupled with his feeling of socio-economic marginalization.

Everything in the city reminds the protagonist of the futility of his existence and of death. Even public phones assume an image of death. As he notices, "in this city there is a public phone on every corner. In the cold they stand like vertical, transparent coffins for people to recite their lives in" (28). In this city, the air has a mournful sound that transports the narrator back to his war-torn country. The whistling air, he notes, "sounded like mournful trains and sirens of war howling at the sight of fighter planes that descend and ascend and tumble in the air and land and freeze on the ground" (53-54). Such description of the sound of the air denotes the ever-presence of the horrors of his past.

Whenever he strolls in the city, the protagonist is met with aspects in the city that make him complain of death and the absurdity of life. In one of his promenades in the old city, the view of the old houses and churches slowly disappearing and modernized makes him think of the inevitability of death and of nothingness. He even contemplates his own death:

 I wondered how I ended up here. How absurd. How absurd. The question is, where to end? All those who leave immigrate to better their lives, but I wanted to better my death. Maybe it is the ending that matters, not the life, I thought. Maybe we, like elephants, walk far towards our chosen burials. (113)

Stating that while the other immigrants are preoccupied with improving their lives, he wants to find a better place to die is a strong indicator of his hopelessness vis-à-vis his entire existence.

Montreal is not just a geographical place. It becomes a symbol and a reflection of a man's fate, his helplessness and frustration in a careless world where he feels doomed. In a mutually defining relationship between the protagonist and the city, it becomes psychologized, reflecting the change of his mental state when the weather changes and vice versa. As he narrates one of his strolls, "as I strolled, a few clouds moved over the sky and covered the sun. All of a sudden things started to turn grey and damp, and the darker side of nature appeared on people's Faces […] My mood, like the weather, suddenly changed, and I felt the need for darkness again" (195-96). Hage's Montreal as seen through the eyes of the protagonist is unstable, confusing, hostile and threatening. It is a metropolis that becomes a psychogeographical map that reflects the psychological state of the protagonist. Bonnet explains that in psychogeographical writing, there is a "transgressive wandering around and through the many barriers, forbidden zones and distinct atmospheres of the city" (47). The protagonist in *Cockroach* often wanders in the city transgressing the geographical and social boundaries that the city sets between the rich people's area and the poor area, by breaking into rich people's houses as an act of defiance against the discrimination that he faces in the city.

II. A Brief Overview of Canadian Multiculturalism: Paradoxes and Criticism

To explain the insidious trauma the protagonist suffers from as a result of his marginalization within the multicultural mosaic of Canada, it is necessary to define it. Canada has always been praised for its multiculturalism. As opposed to the American melting pot

characterized by assimilation, Canada has been celebrated for its cultural mosaic based on its policy that immigrants can be fully integrated within Canadian society while still retaining their original cultural heritage. Aiming to cater for the ethno-cultural diversity of Canada, the Multiculturalism Act of 1988, the first of its kind in the world advocates a policy based on the promise that immigrants "might fully participate in Canadian society" while still able "to identify with the cultural heritage of their choice." It claims to remove the ethnic and racial barriers preventing full participation in Canadian society and to preserve and "enhance the multicultural heritage of Canadians" while at the same guaranteeing "equality of all Canadians in the economic, social, cultural and political life of Canada."

However, Canadian state multiculturalism, whether as a philosophy, government policy, social awareness, or cultural practice, has consistently been the topic of intense controversy and criticism since its enactment as a constitutional law. It is criticized for failing to deliver the promises of full integration and equality. It is a policy that remains ink on paper, a mask or a façade, "devised to manage the country's divisive contemporary history" (Gana 7) while hiding underneath it an exclusionary and compartmentalizing core under the pretext of liberal concepts of personal freedom, tolerance and the right retain one's cultural and ethnic heritage. Similarly, Neil Bissoondath, one of the harshest critics of Canadian multiculturalism, states that by advocating its policy of multiculturalism, Canada also accepted and advocated "the psychology of separation" (152). He calls the practice of multiculturalism "a kind of psychic apartheid" that creates, to echo Salman Rushdie, "homelands of the mind" (152).

Therefore, there is a paradox of racism in multicultural Canada. With its policy of inclusive multiculturalism, Canada promotes itself as a post-race and color-blind nation on the ground that equal opportunities are given to all Canadians regardless of their race and ethnicity. Yet, a huge gap exists between the ideals of multiculturalism and the realities of racialized people in Canada. I have discussed in the first chapter how races were arranged in a

hierarchy of superiority and inferiority. Race remains the same old powerful tool of exclusion and division and continues to exist as a relic from the past. Nowadays, there are new covert forms of racism implied through the subtle ways in which racialized bodies are often marginalized, excluded and do not have the same access to spaces of privilege, resources, power and wealth as white Canadians. Despite, if not as a result of, its multiculturalism, racism, as aptly argued by Fleras, is "a constitutive component of Canadian society that conflates racialized hierarchies with differentials of power, privilege, and property (income and wealth)" (x).

Multculturalism has also been criticized for its superficiality and focus on ethnic festivals, neglecting more important issues such as political representation and power distribution which remains monopolized by white Canadian (134). Perhaps one of the dangers of the discourse of multiculturalism, insists Himani Bannerji, is that it conceals the real class and social struggle and the socio-economic marginalization of hyphenated minorities as a mere cultural struggle, hence deflecting critical attention from a constantly racializing Canadian political economy" (9). He asserts that the same orientalist and racist discourse behind the creation of racial hierarchies and exclusion according to skin color still functions within multicultural Canada. Multiculturalism is built on contrasting a white "Canadian culture," which is the "core" culture of the nation against its non-white "multicultures" (10).

In a similar vein, Eva Mackey exposes the discriminatory attitude that Canada's multicultural policy really shows towards its ethnic minorities as opposed to those considered as "true" Canadians. One of the most significant arguments against multiculturalism made by Mackey is that racial and cultural differences are articulated in multicultural Canada in such a way that there is racial exclusion and hierarchies of difference that emphasize the divide between the hyphenated minorities and those considered as "mainstream" or "Canadian-Canadians" (16). She uses the same word as Bannerji, "core" culture, to refer to the

construction of a dominant "'core' English-Canadian culture" within the multicultural Canadian mosaic, as opposed to the other hyphenated "French-Canadian, Native-Canadian, and 'multicultural-Canadian'" cultures (15). The privilege of gaining inclusion within the "unmarked" and "non-ethnic" Canadian-Canadian (or simply Canadian without the hyphen) group rests upon whiteness (33). She argues, hence, like Bannerji and Fleras that racism and neo-Orientalist binary thinking are still at play nowadays in a supposedly post-colonial, post-racial era.

Tolerance and acceptance are another myth that multicultural Canada alleges. Tolerance proves to be but a self-serving claim used in the construction of the narrative of Canada as a welcoming haven, which is ironically just a recycling of the Orientalist configurations of the West as the savior. The hierarchies of difference and the racialized realities in Canada prove that even when the existence of the racially and ethnically different other is *tolerated*, it is not *accepted* within the same space, as demonstrated in the marginalization and exclusion of ethnic minorities from the spaces of privilege reserved to white Canadians. As Bissoondath explains:

> I will enjoy your curries, I will applaud your dances, I will admire your costumes, I will enjoy feeling tolerant (if slightly uncomfortable) at the sight of you and your kind in the street. But don't expect me to truly accept you as one of us, especially not when the chips are down. I *tolerate* you, I don't *know* you and I certainly don't accept you. (197; italics in original)

The ethno-cultural tolerance of Canadian multiculturalism has been put under the test after the events of 9/11. The profound anxiety about national security gave birth to a number of legislative measures and policies regarding the admission of ethnic minorities and immigrants, especially of Arab and Muslim origins. The Arab immigrant has become a stain in the cultural mosaic of Canada. Thus, to ensure national security, it became necessary to strengthen the borders in the face of Arab immigrants who are perceived as potential threat according to discourse of clash of civilization that "posits every Arab and Muslim as guilty by

association, thereby increasing Arabs' and Muslims' sense of exclusion from mainstream notions of what/who constitutes 'Canada'" (Arat-Koc 223).

III. Insidious Trauma, Phobic Neurosis and the "Bourgeois Filth"

In this part, I seek to demonstrate that the presence of the non-Western Other is still considered as a threat to the Western Self even in a cosmopolitan setting. Cultural hybridity claims to celebrate amalgamation and to shift the Manichean division between white and non-white that characterized the colonial world. Yet, racism still exists today and prevents its success. Canada is a racially-charged space, and state multiculturalism proves to fail in protecting ethnic minorities from being the target of discrimination and racism.*Cockroach* investigates this very issue of the marginalization of the Other's racialized body in multicultural Canada and its exclusion from the privileged spaces of white Canadians.

The novel captures the reality of the relationship between power and space, as well as the social limits imposed on the non-white body within the spaces of the white in a scene where he is not allowed to stand outside a fancy restaurant in a rich neighborhood. Observing a white rich couple dining (probably driven by hunger himself), a neatly-dressed waiter "in a black suit, came out and asked [him] to leave" (62). When he protests that "it is a free country, a public space," police came. "Not two minutes later, a police car came," and after asking for his papers, he is reprimanded and forced to leave despite finding nothing wrong with his papers (62).

What is significant here is the narrator's description of the window that separates the restaurant from the street, "I like to pass by fancy stores and restaurants and watch the people behind thick glass, taking themselves seriously" (61). The thick window plays the role of physical and symbolic boundaries between the protagonist, a visibly poor and racialized immigrant outside the restaurant, and the rich white people inside. This scene highlights the

spatial power hierarchy which requires that public space be managed in such a way that the white and wealthy should remain cocooned within the safety of their own private space, unbothered by the poor immigrant.

Therefore, the novel demonstrates that to be a poor non-white immigrant in multicultural Canada is to have one's freedom circumscribed by impassable boundaries. This creates anxiety to the protagonist for not being able to exist beyond the limits of a primordial mythology of white Western civilization as opposed to non-white and non-Western strangeness. Anxiety also characterizes the reaction of the white towards the presence of the non-white within the same space, as the novel depicts.

Fanon's notion of "phobic neurosis" provides the perfect lens to analyze the rich couple's attitude towards the narrator. In the sixth chapter of his work *Black Skin, White Masks*, "The Negro and Psychopathology," Fanon argues that the West creates a racial fantasy that is characterized by anxiety, or a phobia, regarding the non-white body. The man of color acts as "phobogenic object, a stimulus to anxiety" (156). When the man of color enters the white man's space, he is no longer an "actual" person, but an Other that arouses both fear and repulsion. The Other is perceived as the "unassimilable" and the unacceptable body that cannot be given access to the white space (163). Fanon explains the "paralogical" thinking behind this "phobic neurosis" and insists that its root is not "real traumatism" (151) that occurred in the past, but an "inner attack" on the white ego, an internal fear of an "imaginary aggression" that transforms into external anxiety (163).

The rich couple's reaction to what they perceive an invasion of their sealed space can be explained, in Fanonian terms, as a phobic reaction. The protagonist acts as a phobogenic and anxiogenic agent. With his mere sight, the couple undergoes an "imaginary aggression" where the narrator, because of his visible physical difference, is constructed as the foreign,

dangerous aggressor and them the defenseless aggressed. As a result, he must be controlled, surveilled and removed by the police.

The narrator uses a grotesque imagery to reveal how this incident makes him think of himself and of his marginalization. He feels neglected and treated like consumed and excreted food. As he describes:

> They watched as if from behind a screen, as if it were live news. Now I was part of their tv dinner, I was spinning in a microwave, stripped of my plastic cover, eaten, and defecated the next morning just as the filtered coffee was brewing in the kitchen and the radio was prophesying the weather, telling them what to wear, what to buy, what to say, whom to watch, and whom to like and hate. (61-62)

Significantly, the protagonist's description of himself as "stripped […] eaten and defecated" corresponds to Fanon's description of both the fear and repulsion evoked by the non-white body. They result from a past colonial articulation of black and white "corporeal schemas" based on "cultural impositions" that fixate the non-white body as the corporeal symbol of "dirt, sin, and excreta" (Bery and Murray 113), a point I also explained in the first chapter. In other instances in the novel, he is often called a "dirty Arab" (14), "filthy Turk," "dog," and "filthy Turkish dog" (29). These insults associate him, as an immigrant, with filth, dirt, and uncleanness, hence, dehumanize him. The protagonist's self-representation, thus, is a projection of what he believes the Other feels about him.

The quote portrays the narrator's sense of inferiority, but also points to the regulation of identity and the hegemonic discourse that creates a racist social imaginary that determines inclusion and exclusion, represented by the "radio" that tells them "what to wear, what to buy, what to say, whom to watch, and whom to like and hate" (62). It is precisely the psychic work of white man's phobia and their racist anxiety that fixes and perpetuates this unconscious cultural hatred.

The "spectacle" that takes places highlights the continuation of a long-lived imperial and colonial logic that shapes this relationship between the immigrant and the West. The

protagonist is, yet again, subject to the degrading gaze of the West in this scene. The couple who had nothing to say to each other a few minutes ago, and who were eating "slowly neither looking at the other," suddenly, "seemed entertained by all of this" (61). He becomes a real spectacle and falls victim to their voyeurism, a point that is emphasized by his repetition of the verb "watch" seven times in only a few lines:

> I *watched* the couple *watching* me, as if finally something exciting was happening in their lives. They *watched* as if from behind a screen […] whom to *watch*. The couple enjoyed *watching* me, as if I were some reality show about police chasing people with food-envy syndrome […] I *watched* that same couple from behind the glass of the entrance to an office building [...] And I *watched* the owner come to their table and talk to them as well. (61-62; italics added)

However, throughout the novel, the protagonist is presented as a character that refuses to be a victim and reacts to his feelings of victimization through acts of subversions and transgressions. In this scene, we are in the presence of a form of voyeurism in which the line that separates the "watcher" and the "watched" is blurred. The glass acts as a screen. The rich couple is suddenly amused and, as if watching a television program, is captivated by their screen. On the other hand, the narrator, being watched is also watching them. He is the director of this show. He creates the entertainment and in creating it, amuses himself with the spectacle he sees and the disturbance he is causing into this private space. The narrator does not have access to this type of places. He, nevertheless, decides to access it in a deviant way. He "stand[s] and stare[s]" (61) at the rich people inside, which not only gives him a privileged view of the restaurant, but causes inconvenience to the rich customers. We are again in the presence of a situation that allows the narrator to resort to a form of social revenge and to access despite everything a forbidden space and disrupt its order.

Still, the protagonist's revenge does not end here. This scene depicts one of the many examples of the micro-aggressions that immigrants go through in a country that claims to be color-blind. Exposure to repeated, insidious and subtle forms of racism is traumatic. For the protagonist, this insidious trauma triggers his metamorphosis into a cockroach as a psychic

defense mechanism. As he does with Genevieve, the narrator transforms into his cockroach alter to gain the invisibility and agility he needs to literally break into the couple's house. He sneaks into their car where he hears their racist thinking explicitly stated by the woman, "St-Laurent Street is becoming too noisy and crowded with all kinds of people. I knew what the bitch meant by noisy and all kinds of people" (62).

Their racism and his marginalization dehumanize him; and as a result, he responds to the racist comment of the woman:

> He was the driver.
> She was the driven.
> I was the insect beneath them. (63)

Stating that he is both an "insect" and "beneath" the white rich couple, the protagonist expresses his sense of dehumanization and inferiority. He is denied border-crossing because the whites view him as less than a human being. His cockroach alter-self acts, thus, as both a reflection of his dehumanization by the xenophobic mainstream Canadian society as well as a means of empowerment and resistance.

The narrator is not only a "master of escape" but a master of subversion as well. He reverses inferiorization in the linguistic realm by referring to the couple as "bourgeois filth" (62), placing them in the same category where he is often placed as a "filthy" racialized body. Another subversion occurs when he crawls "under the door" of their house and carefully watches their bedtime routine and scrutinizes their every move, placing them under his gaze and turning them into his spectacle. He crawls "up the bedroom wall" and watches them sleeping "from above" (63). Looking down at them does not satisfy him, so he places himself "inside" their dreams of "high-end cocktail parties" and helps himself to the fancy food there, "a few shrimp cocktails […] a few hors d'oeuvre […] another glass of whiskey" (64). He exits the dreams and steals some of their belongings making sure to take clothes that suit his "dark complexion" (64).

He crawls out and walks the "dreadful" Canadian suburbs with their beautifully paved roads, fancy houses, cars, gold clubs and even sailboats, with their neat lawns and maple trees. He thinks that in this space the "bourgeois filth," that includes doctors, dentists, computer programmers and executives shield themselves from the other "kind" of "noisy" people like him (62). He notices that even their dogs recognize that he is an intruder and bark loudly at him. In rage against his exclusion from this space, he transforms into another alter-self, a skunk this time, and urinates on all cars there, to confuse the "filthy dogs […] those privileged breeds" (64). At the thought of the chaos and disruption this will cause the rich people who will be late for work the next morning, he "laughed […] And [he] rejoiced and howled" (64). The protagonist's schizophrenic dissociation into a cockroach and then into a skunk is, consequently, a reaction against the insidious trauma he goes through in multicultural Canada. It is a transformation that gives him the power to transgress the spaces he cannot otherwise access.

III.1 Police, Surveillance and the "Compartmentalization" of Multicultural Space

In emphasizing diversity and the fixity of ethnic and cultural identity, Canada's multiculturalism really perpetuates the colonial and essentialist notions of fixed identities and categorizations and undermines the idea of a shared national space and encourages its compartmentalization. The protection of borders from transgression and transgressors has, therefore, become a necessity for the assertion of power. Senja Gunew asserts that Canada's multicultural policy is simply a means to control Canada's diverse population and maintain control over them under the guise of freedom, acceptance and tolerance. The discourses that really manage diversity, he confirms, are embodied in the form of "police and control" (15).

The protagonist of *Cockroach* can only achieve the invisibility he needs to survive in this multicultural space, facing the Western gaze and its constant surveillance, through turning

into an undesirable insect. With such protagonist and the discourse of surveillance that controls him, Hage questions whether those who do not belong to the categories of the rich, white, Western citizen or the happy, grateful and successful immigrant are allowed to enjoy a sense of belonging and are recognized as human at all in the eyes of a racist and xenophobic society.

Indeed, besides the racist Canadians and his therapist Genevieve, the police are yet another disciplinary power that emphasizes the protagonist's identity of the stranger who needs to be placed where he belongs within this Western space. The police are a state apparatus that embodies the controlling and corrective power towards those who do not fit into the image of the ideal citizen. The alleged multicultural, postcolonial, raceless space of Canada proves to be as divided as any colonial world with rigid boundaries between the white colonizer and non-white colonized. Fanon discusses the spatial organization of colonial cities where the police, like in Hage's novel, serve as guards to the borders that maintain spatial separation:

> The colonial world is a world divided into compartments […] The colonial world is a world cut in two. The dividing line, the frontiers are shown by barracks and police stations. In the colonies it is the policeman and the soldier who are the official, instituted go-betweens, the spokesmen of the settler and his rule of oppression. (*The Wretched of the Earth* 37-38)

Hage, like Fanon, paints a portrait of division, inequality and Manichean dualism that prevents integration, except as transgression and a psychopathological form of hybridity. The police in the novel are representatives of colonial rules whose role is to maintain such order and prevent the protagonist's transgressions of boundaries. In the scene with the rich couple, the police arrive in no less than two minutes and force him to leave the scene even after protesting he simply wants to and look at his "own reflection in the glass" (61). To the police, the comfort and safety of their white citizen is more important than the rights and freedom of the non-white immigrant, which causes his anger and triggers his metamorphosis.

The protagonist's need to escape his human body makes more sense when we consider that his immigrant status and visible racial/ethnic otherness and poverty make him a highly noticeable and threatening figure. His mere presence in certain spaces requires police surveillance. As he describes, "But I couldn't just stand there on the street for too long, not working, not moving.I would raise the neighbours' suspicions […] Stillness and piercing foreign eyes would soon be questioned by uniforms under whirling police-car lights" (184). His sense of confinement and control is further expressed in his description of the city's shop signs, "Everything has turned into shapes and forms that confine you and guide you, between the city streets and building walls, to your final, inescapable destination" (184). This last sentence makes it seem as if the narrator knows that he will forever be controlled since he will always be confined to the body of the conspicuous poor foreigner.

In another occasion, one summer night the narrator climbs up to a roof to smoke a cigarette and "watch the neighbourhood from above" (189). However, in less than two minutes the police arrive and question him. He tells them that he has always done this like "millions of people on countless planets do in this universe. […] [to] contemplate" (ibid), referring to the fact that it is a common habit everybody does in his homeland. The policeman replies, "*here* people do not look at each other from their roofs" (ibid; italics added).

The policeman's reply is an explicit example of the Western "here" and "there," "us" and "them" discourse. If the narrator wants to be accepted "here" he has to correct his behavior as the state dictates to him. Due to his inferior socio-economic and cultural position, he is not allowed to look at the city from "above" and has to be brought *down* by the police and put in his right place; *under* constant surveillance and control. As the foreigner, he is the one that should be the subject of the scrutinizing Western gaze (Genevieve, the rich inhabitants, the police) and not vice versa.

III.2 Overt Racism and Psychological Dissociation

Racism against the protagonist is overtly expressed when he is denied upward mobility in his work because of his skin color. After working in an upscale French restaurant as a dishwasher, he asks its *maître d* for a promotion to the position of a waiter. However, the pretentious Maitre Pierre turns him down:

> He looked at me with fixed, glittering eyes, and said: *Tu es un peu trop cuit pour ça* (you are a little too well done for that)! *Le soleil t'a brûlé ta face un peu trop* (the sun has burned your face a bit too much). I knew what he meant, the filthy human with gold braid on his sleeves and pompous posture! (24)

Maitre Pierre represents the overt racism that immigrants face in Canada. He traps the protagonist in a body that is too visible to gain the anonymity needed to climb the socio-economic ladder in a space that is predominantly white. His brown skin color gives him away as an inferior Other. Thus, despite the fact that he can speak good French, he cannot be promoted into a position that puts him in direct contact with the rich white customers of the restaurant because his skin is not white enough.

Therefore, *Cockroach* describes the literal and symbolic separation that keeps the racialized, especially Arab/Muslim, body immobilized, fixed, pinned down, or to use Fanon's terminology "walled" within the boundaries of a specific socio-economic status and identity (*Black Skin* 117). Fanon argues that "the white man is sealed in his whiteness and the black man in his blackness" (*Black Skin* 9). Using this metaphor of "sealing," Fanon perfectly describes that skin color simply closes the pores of social and cultural boundaries and stands as an obstacle to geographic, social, and economic mobility, impeding dreams of social uplift. He aptly explains:

> I am given no chance. I am overdetermined from without. I am the slave not of the "idea" that others have of me but of my own appearance. I move slowly in the world, accustomed now to seek no longer for upheaval. I progress by crawling. And already I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am *fixed [...]* I slip into corners, [with] my long antennae […]
> I slip into corners, I remain silent, I strive for anonymity, for invisibility. (*Black Skin* 87-88; italics in the original)

Thus, the narrator's visible non-white body is the root cause of the discrimination he faces in multicultural Canada. He is reduced to a mere "brown" body, to a physical appearance without substance, or with a very different and dangerous one that poses a threat to the white Self. Thus, he is "given no chance" of free movement, and must be *fixed* in his place.

The parallels between Hage's novel and Fanon's thought are striking. In the above-mentioned quote, Fanon uses the same metaphor of the cockroach with its "long antennae," "crawling" and "slip[ping] into corners," that Hage uses repeatedly in his novel. Like Fanon's "Negro" who seeks "invisibility" and "anonymity" via becoming a cockroach, the protagonist does exactly the same throughout the novel. Here he escapes his inferior bodily confinement and morphs into a cockroach to face Maitre Pierre's insult, " I shouted, and I stuttered, and I repeated, and I added, as my index fingers fluttered like a pair of gigantic antennae," he says (24).

The discrimination the narrator faces makes him renounce his human Self and triggers a dystopian vision. He prophesizes the triumph of the cockroach in their invasion of the world, promising revenge and the destruction of all colonial, racial and capitalist systems that dehumanizes poor, non-white immigrants to the status of a despicable insect. In rage, he shouts at Maitre Pierre:

> Impotent, infertile filth! I shouted at Pierre. Your days are over and your kind is numbered. No one can escape the sun on their faces and no one can barricade against the powerful, fleeting semen of the hungry and the oppressed. I promised him that one day he would be serving only giant cockroaches on his velvet chairs […] And you had better serve crumbs and slimy dew on your chewable menu, Monsieur Pierre […]Doomed you will be, doomed as you are infested with newcomers! (24)

The protagonist here uses the cockroach as a symbol of the vulnerable, the poor, the underprivileged, the invisible, the "hungry" and the "oppressed," those who cannot escape "the sun on their faces," those who are inferiorized and categorized by white Canadians as the Other, socially, culturally and economically. These inferior groups are stripped of their

humanity and viewed as infesters. However, the narrator speaks from a position of power, trying to subvert and challenge the white-supremacist argument by presenting the cockroaches (and the people they stand for) as powerful invaders. As he warns Maitre Pierre, "Doomed you will be, doomed as you are infested with newcomers!" (24), promising the victory of the cockroaches, the poor, the marginalized and coloured immigrants.

The novel also criticizes the double standard of Canadian multicultural policy in its treatment of white immigrants from European countries, especially France, and the other non-European immigrants. The narrator notes that Canada encourages the immigration of Europeans to increase the number of its "white" population against the "brownies" and "darkies" who escaped the dictatorship of the former French colonies, referring to North African and Lebanese immigrants (22).

Right before his scene with Maitre Pierre, the protagonist complains that Canada is being invaded by "whining Parisians" who "come to this Québécois American North and occupy every *boulangerie*, conquer every French restaurant and *croissanterie* with their air of indifference and their scent of fermented cheese" (ibid). Here, it is clear that the narrator is viewing the French in colonial terms using words like "occupy" and "conquer." He criticizes the discrimination of the Canadian government against the different ethnic groups, encouraging the immigration of those with a more privileged white ethnic background, like the Parisians, even when "with their low birth rate," they do not really fulfill the aim the government is hospitable towards them. As he wonders, "But what is the use? The Frenchies come here, and like the Quebecois they do not give birth.They abstain, or they block every Fallopian tube and catch every sperm before the egg sizzles into *canard à l'orange*" (ibid).

Ironically, after his scene with Maitre Pierre, as he is leaving the restaurant in anger, the narrator meets a dark-skinned woman passing the street with her five children, "On the way out I almost tripped over the stroller of a dark-complexioned woman with five kids

trailing behind her like ducks escaping a French cook" (24), which emphasize his prophecy of the cockroaches' invasion.

IV. Therapy as an Oppressive Space

Cockroach's multicultural space is divided according to a blatant social, economic and cultural hierarchy. This political division of the city is based on virtual but highly symbolic borders that act as marks of exclusion. The therapy sessions themselves are another example of such space where unequal vertical power relation is at play. The gaze of the West, embodied by his therapist Genevieve, is placed on the non-Western protagonist who feels, "X-rayed […] anticipated, watched, analyzed and bet upon" (156).

IV.1 A Medical Approach to Mental Illness and the Construction of Identity

The protagonist is forced to attend therapy sessions to assess his mental state and decide whether he should be integrated within Canadian society. He is to be read and interpreted by his therapist Genevieve. She is a white, middle-class Canadian psychiatrist who embodies state authority and all the ideals of liberalism and the perfect Canadian citizen. Her diagnostic approach is a way that serves to fix the identity of the protagonist according to a discourse that builds Canada as the benevolent host country that welcomes and heals traumatized immigrants. In her interactions with the protagonist she either uses a classic trauma medical approach to diagnose and treat his mental illness or attributes it solely to his past or to his inferior Arab identity, completely dismissing any of his stories that present a negative image of Canada. She, thus, reads and analyzes him through a homogenizing lens that reduces him to the image of an immigrant saved from a past marred with suffering and trauma.

Genevieve's seeks to interpret the protagonist's deviance and mental illness according to a classic trauma model that reads symptoms as a medical condition. The protagonist's

suffering that results from his social exclusion, discrimination, marginalization and alienation manifests itself in a schizophrenic subjectivity, identifying himself as a human-cockroach hybrid creature. He finds within the multiple layers of the schizophrenic self a possibility for freedom and resistance against his living conditions. However, his therapist fails to read his mental illness as symptomatic of the larger disease of the discrimination, racism and poverty that characterize his life in Canada. Instead, she insists that his schizophrenic dissociation into a cockroach is only "hallucination" (143), "episodes of delusion" and "delirium" (114) caused by his drug abuse. She often reprimands him for it and tells him "If you still do drugs, I can't help you" (142-143).

Ironically, Genevieve truly cannot help him, not because he continues doing drugs, but because she fails to get to the root causes of his condition. Anti-psychiatrist R.D Laing rejects the organic cause of schizophrenia and considers it of socio-political origins. He contends that schizophrenics suffer from an "ontological insecurity" as a result of facing threatening and traumatic situations, which leads them to form a divided self as a defense mechanism. The heart of Laing's theory is that schizophrenia is "a special strategy that a person invents in order to live in an unlivable situation" (114). In the novel, the therapist refuses to acknowledge the fact that her patient resorts to splitting as a voluntary reaction against negative experiences that comes from living in a place he views as threatening.

Laing gives a political dimension to his reading of schizophrenia and argues that labeling a person as schizophrenic is itself a political event, in which a "legally sanctioned, medically empowered, and morally obliged" social group determines the fate of other people (100). This is represented in the novel by Genevieve, the figure of Western authority, who attempts to decide whether or not the protagonist is worthy to be integrated within Canadian society. The traditional medical trauma model that she adopts has behind it the discourse and

practice of social exclusion that the protagonist keeps facing and fighting through his schizophrenic splitting.

Accordingly, she sees pharmaceuticals as the only cure for his mental illness. "We have medicines now that can help you," she proposes (91). She tells him that she recommends him to stay in a mental hospital to be supervised by a psychiatrist. When he asks, "what would a psychiatrist do for me?" She answers, "It is more of a medical approach. You might be put on pills" (195). The narrator is warned about this by a woman who was institutionalized in the same mental institution where he has his therapy, "Never take them. They will transform you into what you are not. […] you will believe that you don't exist unless you look at yourself in the mirror. You will disappear, and the only thing you will be able to see is your clothes" (108).

This suggests that his mental illness is another form of othering in addition to his immigrant status. Society cannot accept him as both a poor racialized immigrant and a mentally ill individual. To be assimilated into "normal" society, his only option is to be rendered invisible, to cease existing as he is, to "disappear," to accept the identity assigned to him by Canadian society, and to become someone he is not. The woman describes this transformation as dehumanization since taking the pills strips them of their human self and reduces them to the clothes they are wearing.

This invokes Foucault's notion of power and discipline. The therapy sessions and the pills are disciplinary measures taken to ensure that the protagonist is controlled. As Genevieve tells him, "They might want to monitor your behaviour at the hospital" (195). They seek to mold him according to the norm of the general society, becoming hence an object of asserting the power of the state. As Foucault states, *"discipline 'makes' individuals; it is the specific technique of a power that regards individuals both as objects and as instruments of its exercise" (Discipline and Punish* 170).

IV.2 The Depoliticization of Mental Illness and the Us vs. Them Discourse

The protagonist's human/cockroach schizophrenia can be reframed, according to Laing's understanding of the condition, as his survival strategy against an otherwise unlivable traumatic condition. However, to use André Forget's words, Genevieve seeks to "depoliticize" his struggles (108), by attributing them to his past rather than identifying what could possibly be wrong with Canada that worsens his symptoms. The protagonist's metamorphosis into a cockroach happens in the novel at moments in which the narrator is worried about money, food, finding a job, and facing discrimination. For example, he describes seeing his cockroach self in the mirror the moment he realizes he has no food and money:

> I saw my face, my long jaw, my whiskers slicing through the smoke around me. I saw many naked feet moving. I rushed to close the window and draw the curtains. Then I went back to bed, buried my face in the sheets, and pulled the pillow and covers over my head. I closed my eyes and thought about my dilemma.
> My welfare cheque was ten days away […] My kitchen had only rice and leftovers and crawling insects that would outlive me on Doomsday. (17)

He takes on the identity of the cockroach because he regards them as resilient creatures that can live on very little food and would even "outlive [him] on Doomsday."

Although Genevieve constantly reminds the protagonist that she wants to help him to be "reintegrate[d] into society" (54), she is always blinded to the fact that his most basic needs are not met. With her persistent insistence on the protagonist's past, Genevieve attempts to break any possible association between his experience as an immigrant in Canada and his mental state. She dismisses the poverty, hostility and discrimination he faces in Canadian society as the cause of his anger and mental instability.

Indeed, Genevieve's conversations with the protagonist conceal her malignant intentions to control and regulate the narrator's stories to assimilate them within the discourse of the West as superior and the non-West as inferior. As Chloe Taylor notices that

psychiatrists "seek out certain kinds of memories, asking certain questions rather than others, to find confirmation of the theory in which they are personally and politically invested , or which is currently a social norm" (qtd.in Macura-Nnamdi 158). Genevieve does so by adopting a strategy of evasion, asking specific questions that divert the narrator's story away from addressing the real issues at hand.

An example of Genevieve's evasion strategy can be seen in a conversation she has with the protagonist where, seeking to psychoanalyze him, she asks him whether his mother was nourishing. However, when he attempts to steer the conversation towards his current situation and his lack of food, she intentionally ignores his worries and shifts the conversation to his past wanting to attribute his "food envy syndrome" to the shortage of food in his own homeland, which he denies:

> Was your mother nourishing? Genevieve asked. With food, you mean?
> Well, okay, food. Let's talk about food.
> I like food, I said. Though I worry about food shortages lately. Did you have enough food in your youth? For now I am interested in your past.
> Yes.
> A lot of food?she asked.
> Yes.
> Hmmm. No shortage of food?
> No. (35)

Here, Genevieve thinks according to a Manichean mindset based on her clichéd assumptions of the Third World as a place where people suffer from famine and poverty, and dismisses the possibility that these might exist in her First World country. She strategically pushes the conversation away from her First World country to a distant land, time and culture. She attempts to build a narrative that confirms her view that the Arab world where the narrator comes from is deficient in both motherly love and food, which in contrast, Canada is not. Her main aim is to manipulate and control the course of their sessions so as to invent a problem (lack of motherly affection and food in this example) to reproduce the narrator's identity as a victim to another non-Western reality that needs the healing embrace of the West.

Moreover, the therapy is useless because of the unbridgeable gap between the protagonist and his therapist. They do not have a shared experience of the world, which causes a lack of understanding naivety from the part of Genevieve. For example, she criticizes his criminal background and his violent means of survival while he explains that violence is the only means of survival when/where justice is not a valid ethic. When he tells her that during war, "A gun could be useful […] To get things, accomplish things, defend things," she shockingly interrupts him, "It will be by means of force — you realize that? […]You are not a pacifist, I assume" (69)? He poignantly tells her that "It's not wrong if there are no other options […] pacifism is a luxury" (69).

He reminds her that the pacifism that is so highly regarded as the most ethical principle in her war-free country is an extravagance that is impossible to be attained in a country where violence is the only way to survive and to attain justice. It is an indulgence available only to those who are fortunate enough to have no immediate safety concern and whose existence, like hers, is not reduced to mere survival when one is unable to make moral choices. As he elaborates:

> You have to be well off to be a pacifist. Rich or secure like you. You can be a pacifist because you have a job and a nice house, a big tv screen, a fridge full of ham and cheese, and a boyfriend who goes with you to nice resorts in sunny places. (69).

Genevieve's questions are the result of her privileged white, educated, wealthy Canadian background. Referring to the thick boundaries that separate them, he observes that she is "Gentle, educated, but naive, she is sheltered by glaciers and prairies, thick forests, oceans and dancing seals" (73). Moreover, the protagonist's argument that "pacifism is a luxury" that can only be afforded by "the rich or secure" has a strong resonance in is present as well, which Genevieve refuses to see. His deviant behavior (petty thefts and breaking into rich people's houses) is a reaction to his status of an immigrant who is neither rich nor secure in this unwelcoming and hostile land.

This gap acts as a barrier that prevents Genevieve from looking at the big picture to arrive at an adequate understanding of her patient. The protagonist admits to Genevieve "I used to be more courageous, more carefree, and even, one might add, more violent" (6). Using the phrase "I used to" clearly indicates a transformation has already taken place. As he further explains that he has modified his behavior once he moved to Canada for the simple reason that "in this northern land no one gives you an excuse to hit, rob, or shoot, or even to shout from across the balcony, to curse your neighbours' mothers and threaten their kids" (6). He is clearly inviting his therapist to take into account that his behavior back home and the motives behind it cannot be used to interpret his behavior in Canada where there is no war.

Therefore, Genevieve criticizes the protagonist all the time, but she is not willing to look inwardly at her own nation and its racist privileged inhabitants as the real cause of his misery, which emphasizes the binary Us vs. Them, the Canadian vs. the immigrant, and the Western vs. the Arab. She displays this when she insists on the narrator's inability to cry to dehumanize him. When he describes his mother's death, she condescendingly asks questions seeking to prove his incapability of displaying human emotions:

> Did you cry?
> No, I did not.
> Do you ever cry?
> I can't remember crying. But I must have when I was born and was pulled out of Manduza's thighs.
> Do you ever feel sad for other people? (96)

Asking him these questions, she implies that she does, yet nowhere in her therapy sessions does she demonstrate any signs of empathy or understanding towards her patient. It is as if Genevieve is putting herself and the state she represents with their claim of emotional generosity and compassion in contrast to the narrator's cold-heartedness. Informed by a neo-Orientalist logic in her invocation of the stereotype of Arabs as heartless, she essentializes the protagonist as emotionally inferior to Western people. Her demand conceals an archaic colonial reasoning of the West's *mission civilisatirice*. She claims to humanize him to make

him feel the suffering of others when she asks him to cry while she is actually dehumanizing him by denying him this human trait.

In a scene where the narrator is cold and hungry, eating the food he begs from his Pakistani neighbors, which is too spicy that it burns him and makes him cry. He thinks of collecting his tears to Genevieve as evidence that he is vulnerable and capable of emotions. "I felt like getting a little jar, collecting my tears, walking to Genevieve's office, opening her door, and showing her the bottle. Here — is this what you want? Here — these are my tears. Does that make me sane, normal, cured," he narrates (100).

While his statement may seem humorous, it hides the sad story of a cold and hungry immigrant who literally has to dilute the spicy rice with water because he has nothing else to eat, a story that would bring tears to Genevieve's eye had she been there truly to help him. He, then, imagines himself gathering his tears in little spice bottles labeling them "tears from laughter, tears from spicy food, tears from pain, tears from nostalgic memories, tears from broken hearts, tears from poverty" (100). He literally, though indirectly, states all the reasons why he is a brokenhearted and vulnerable person; his nostalgia for the happy moments with his beloved sister, his hunger, and his poverty. He insists that nobody should feel entitled to exhume another person's painful memories and exclaims, "Tears must be seen then buried. Even Genevieve wanted my tears!" (100).

Genevieve wants to see him manifest his pain visibly, and he understands that to be accepted he has to respond to this cultural demand to represent the image the image of the battered immigrant, crying from the wounds of his past traumas and needing the safe embrace of this benevolent multicultural sanctuary. As readers, however, we know that the protagonist's vulnerability is, indeed, the reason behind his misery. He only refuses to satisfy Genevieve's need of seeing him vulnerable. On several occasions, he expresses his sadness and cries for himself and for all those who suffer on Earth. As he expresses in one of his

metamorphosis scenes, "A deep sense of fear and sadness overcame me […] and tears dropped from my eyes for no reason, as if I was crying for someone else" (83-84).

IV.3 Deconstructing the Image of the Grateful Immigrant

When the immigrant's life has been shattered from losing the stability of such notions as home, family, future, dreams, and rights (such as by the experience of war and past traumas), immigration offers the possibility of rebuilding a new life and identity, except that it must be done within a framework of success and gratitude. Nguyen questions the aim behind the narration of the socio-economic and even "psychic" success of immigrants who have been violently uprooted from their homelands and gone through the horrid experience of the war and its consequences (19). The answer is simply that the success of the traumatized immigrants who have been "rescued" by Canada is portrayed as proof of the success of Canada's liberal and multicultural ideology of tolerance, inclusivity, freedom, and equality (18).

Nguyen identifies a trend in this type of narratives. The model immigrant is one who is a "compliant, normative 'good' subject" (19). The narratives circulate immigrants' success stories that depict the immigrant as the grateful beneficiary of the benevolence and generosity of the Canadian nation "for providing the opportunities and the conditions for the possibility of life and success" (22). With his mental illness and deviance, Hage's protagonist by no means fits within this image the "compliant," "normative," "good" and thankful immigrant, nor does the novel belong to the ideal immigrant discourse that celebrates the virtues of liberal nationalism and multiculturalism.

Hage's work stands as a counter discourse to this rhetoric of salvation, by deconstructing the image of Canada as a benevolent refuge as well as the image of the grateful immigrant. Hage himself insists that portraying grateful model immigrants

dehumanizes them and presents them as pathetic victims who only manage to succeed thanks to the generosity of the Western host country:

> In a lot of Western literature and maybe in Canadian literature too, you cannot portray an immigrant as somebody that's evil […] But if you create characters who do only good, who are all oppressed, who were the victims of something an then come here and are saved, then you're not presenting them as humans, you're representing them as somebody to pity. I believe you should include the element of evil in every person [. . .] Once you omit that element of evil, you are no longer presenting a real human being. (qtd.in Hout, *Post-War* 163)

Therefore, to humanize his protagonist, Hage presents the story of a failed immigrant and departs from the grand narratives of the successful immigrant. The protagonist stands in stark contrast to Nguyen's definition of the "good" successful, hardworking and grateful immigrant.

In many occasions Genevieve reminds the protagonist that he is indebted to the state for providing him not only a shelter and welfare but therapy as well. Feeling frustrated with his silence, they have the following conversation:

> Frankly, you do not give me much choice with your silence. I have a responsibility towards the taxpayers.
> Tax prayers? I asked.
> No tax*payers*, people who actually pay taxes. Some of us do. (42-43)

Genevieve here enacts the rhetoric of us vs. them again. She casts herself as the example of the perfect law-abiding, successful, educated citizen who fulfills her job's responsibilities as required and pays her taxes. She contrasts herself, as the exemplary white Canadian, to the protagonist with his joblessness, deviance, failure, and inability to contribute to the country's economy. Only taxpayers belong to the state, to the "us" part of the dyad; the rest, such as the protagonist, are foreigners.

In another session, she suggests to him that he is under the care of the state; and thus, he should be grateful for the government and the people who are paying taxes for him to live in their society. Irritated, she tells him that good, law-abiding Canadians are paying the taxes

for his therapy. "People are paying taxes for you to be here. Do you understand my responsibilities," she asks (143)?

Gratitude, she insists, is the immigrant's duty. Thus, he should show his thankfulness by becoming the ideal immigrant who, unlike him, can contribute to the state's economy by paying taxes. She tells him that if he gets a job it "will be a good step, a very good step in [his] assessment" (54), implying that the therapy sessions are not really an assessment of his mental health much as they are an assessment of whether he is a legitimate refugee who should be integrated or someone who wants to live as burden on the state's economy.

In all instances, Genevieve conveys a neoliberal thinking that dictates inclusion and exclusion based on "economic calculation" (Macura-Nnmadi 153). In other words, within this capitalist state, his value is measured by whether or not he participates in economy. He should get a job to repay the money paid by her and the other taxpayers. Otherwise, he cannot be accepted and welcomed within Canadian society. When he tells her that he found a job as a busboy in a restaurant, she cannot hide her enthusiasm, "That is such wonderful news. It will be such a good step for you to reintegrate into society," she comments to him (54). This implies that not contributing to taxes and not having a job makes him an outsider, an aberrant individual who does not fit within the multicultural mosaic of Canada.

The narrator bitterly communicates his feelings of inadequacy in a place where his presence is deemed to be a tax burden. He contemplates that he and his likes, the "unfortunate exiles" (11) are regarded as the "scum of the earth in this capitalist endeavour" (86). They are the unwelcome vermin that survive on the crumbs they scavenge from the wastes of the greedy humans. "But it is I! I and the likes of me, who will be eating nature's refuse under dying trees. I! I, and the likes of me, who will wait for the wind to shake the branches and drop us fruit," he says (18).

Despite the fact that he is impoverished, hungry and cold in this new land, the protagonist is not allowed to express anything but gratitude to the state and the taxpayers. He explains that the only way to be a "good citizen" (193), to "improve" (42) and to be "saved" is "if you sit, wait,behave, confess, and show maybe some forgiveness and remorse, you, my boy, youcould be saved" (159). As depicted in the grand narratives of immigration, he can only be welcomed if he conforms to the ideals of the model immigrant who is passive, grateful and behaves as expected.

However, unlike Genevieve, the narrator can see the irony of expecting him to pay taxes when he is poor and literally has to steal food to survive. While eating a stolen chocolate bar, he mocks Genevieve and the state's expectations of him:

> TAXPAYERS, THE SHRINK SAYS. Ha! I thought as I finished my chocolate in the alley. Well yes, yes indeed, I should be grateful for what this nation is giving me. I take more than I give, indeed it is true. But if I had access to some wealth, I would contribute my share. Maybe I should become a good citizen and contemplate ways to collect my debts and increase my wealth. (46)

His remarks are sarcastic because what this place offers him can never allow him to "increase [his] wealth." In fact, in the novel, the protagonist and all the other immigrants are underemployed despite high qualifications. Even the jobs he manages to get exploit him for cheap labor. When he gets the position of a busboy with such a minimum wage as "part of the tips and three dollars an hour" (66), he comments sarcastically, "Another immigrant landing a career!" (75).

IV.4 Deviance as a Reaction to Hopelessness

The success of psychiatric therapy sessions rests on recognizing the patient's humanity through showing empathy and paying attention to his narrative. Nevertheless, the encounters between Genevieve and the narrator occur within a dynamics of unequal and hierarchical power relations that permits Genevieve to suppress his narrative. As explained previously, she is not only selective with regard to what questions to ask him and what information she takes

from his narrative, but she seeks to dehumanize him and has no empathy towards him whatsoever. She shows hostility when she coerces him to tell her stories about his childhood and homeland in return for her therapy. He often expresses his frustration with her lack of understanding, or rather refusal to look beyond her clichéd assumptions about his Arab identity. As he describes the anger he feels towards her "laconic behavior" which points to her lack of empathy and mechanical way of dealing with him, "the therapist annoyed me with her laconic behaviour. She brought on a feeling of violence within me that I hadn't experienced since I left my homeland" (7).

The protagonist feels hopeless due to what psychiatrist Salman Akthar describes as "environmental failure" (*Hopelessness* 5) between him and the therapist. He does not feel connected to her and reacts to this frustrating position through deviant acts such as stealing her intimate objects like her lipsticks. As he states, "she told me that I have a lot of hidden anger. So when she left the room for a moment, I opened her purse and stole her lipstick" (6).

Being aggressive is a subconscious reenactment of aspects of his trauma as a behavioral coping style to the therapist's attempts to recover his memories and explain them in a way he sees as wrong and meaningless. Forcing the wound of his trauma to surface, only to be dismissed or misinterpreted, represents an act of violation on his psyche, and he responds to it in the language he knows best; deviance and aggression.

Deviance is understood by Akthar as a pathological anti-social behavior that expresses the hope and need to be recognized and accepted (*Hopelessness* 5). The protagonist's anger outbursts and petty theft are an expression of hopelessness, frustration. Moreover, his anti-social acts can also be interpreted as his only way of establishing a sense of unattained and denied authority over her, as a figure of the state, especially that when he breaks into her house, he returns the stolen lipstick, leaves it "open and red, on dining table" and steals her slippers (59).

IV.5 Subversion and Returning the Western Gaze

The narrator resists this power hierarchy that inferiorizes him through silence, exercising male dominance through the power of the gaze as well as through his metamorphosis and actual intrusion into the spaces he is denied.

IV.5.1 Silence as Subversion

The narrator is not an active and free agent in these controlled sessions, but an object, a tool Genevieve uses to hunt for clues of his own inferiority. His story and identity are regulated and controlled. She forces the narrator to break his silence, "to tell [her] more," as she frequently asks him (6, 35, 42, 54, 55, 68, 95, 116,117), and threatens to institutionalize him when he refuses to speak "I might have to recommend that you go back to the institution. Frankly, you do not give me much choice with your silence" (42).The protagonist's speech is important because it is necessary to the depoliticization of his condition and the formation of a hegemonic discourse. Without a story about his violent and traumatic past, his mental illness would mean that it is a reaction to his current unlivable conditions; not the story that Genevieve and the state want to hear and construct.

This point is made clear when the narrator frankly asks her "what do you want to hear" (43)? His question reveals that he is aware that he is not the author of the story. He is merely a dictating machine, reading a story as already molded by Genevieve. Moreover, this question underscores the uselessness of the therapy sessions since their controlled content is really Genevieve's and not the protagonist's. This is further expressed in another instance where Genevieve asks him to "tell [her] a happy incident with [his] mother" (35), and He responds:

> Well, I cannot think of any now […]Well, if you give me some time for a long walk, maybe in the park across the street, among the trees, I will light a cigarillo somewhere around the war-hero statue, and consult with the pigeons and the begging squirrels. I might be inspired and be able to get back to you next time with wonderful stories. (35)

The significance of this sarcastic statement is that the protagonist admits his unreliability as a narrator. He can tell her stories that did not really happen if that is what she wants. It also undermines Genevieve's therapeutic approach which focuses on some fictitious account about the protagonist's past rather than on facts regarding his present condition. He only goes with the flow and does what they want to avoid institutionalization, as he says, "So, I will tell her stories, if that is what she wants. It's better than going back to the madhouse" (43).

The protagonist is well aware of the cause of his problems; his poverty and alienation. To be cured, he does not need to tell stories but food, warmth, hospitality, companionship and understanding, which he does not find in the inhospitable city. As he thinks during one of their sessions, "Maybe all I ever needed to be cured was to be held by warm arms, above silky sheets, and fed by food in a full fridge, and gazed at from pillows, and feel my hair caressed" (68). He explicitly states that "words" will not change his skin colour and hair texture, alluding to the racism he suffers. He thinks that what he needs is hospitality and intimacy in this unfriendly, xenophobic place, "I am thinking: Doctor […] I confess to you that we should touch. Words have no effect on my skin, will never straighten my hair" (ibid).

Silence is used to subvert a situation where the protagonist feels threatened or frustrated. The narrator views the therapy as an invasion of his history and Self. His silence and calculated answers may be read as resistance against satisfying Genevieve's need of constructing the narrative of the traumatized immigrant that is crucial for the construction of the discourse of Canada as the safe haven. Libin explains that the novel depicts therapy as "an invasion, an infiltration, an infestation, and indeed an invitation to rewrite the narrative in one's own narcissistic image" (80). Thus, I read his silence not only as a symptom of repressed traumatic memories, but as refusal to succumb to and acknowledge the authority of the state, represented by Genevieve.

Genevieve seeks to confirm a certain truth about the protagonist and her country. However, Truth is just another name for opinions suitable for the benefit of those who decide what is true and what is not. Montebello links truth to the assertion of superiority. He points that politically, what is dubbed as truth, "may simply be a way of stating one's own presumed or wishful superiority over others; a claim to some kind of superseding power" (15), which is exactly what the protagonist seeks to defy with his silence. The protagonist in *Cockroach* is able to see that therapy really veils oppressive power dynamics. Genevieve twists the interpretation of his stories to fit her own perceptions. She manipulates the questions to suit her distorted vision of the Other and wants a story that dances to her own tune. As a result, the therapy sessions hold no cathartic potential to the protagonist.

In addition to this, the protagonist's silence is a reaction against Genevieve's refusal to see the truth. It is a result of anger and frustration against being misunderstood and a practice of the freedom that Genevieve/state regulatory discourse denies him. The unspeakable nature of his traumatic past, mainly the death of his sister at the hand of her husband, the militia man, the abuse of his alcoholic and violent father and his neurotic mother as well as all the chaos caused by the Civil War, makes the protagonists choose silence as a discursive mechanism against communicating his traumatic experiences with his therapist for many reasons. The first one is to spare himself the pain of going through them again. The second is that he cannot see Genevieve as a genuine and sympathetic witness to his testimony.

Feeling forced to sit in the "interrogation chair" (90), and talk about his childhood, the narrator's psychic trauma is manifested in the linguistic realm through his silence. He describes his therapist's reaction to his silence, "she was frustrated with me for not talking enough" (12), but he also answers her, angrily, expressing his refusal to confess his traumatic memories, "I burst out: I am forced to be here by the court! I prefer not to be here" (12).

As Genevieve constantly demands that the protagonist carry on his story from where they left the previous session, she wants to elicit a traditional personal narrative with a beginning, middle, and end and a temporal continuity from an individual whose sense of self is fragmented, incomplete and discontinuous and whose temporality is disrupted by two kinds of traumas; his past trauma and the present's more insidious trauma he suffers from as a marginalized poor immigrant living on the fringes of society and denied access to a decent job.

The wound of the trauma on his psyche and its inexpressible nature are even marked as a wound on his skin, the scar on his forehead, which everyone sees and talks about, yet no one dares to touch, "may be because it looked fragile, as if it was about to burst wide open and spray a fountain of blood" (164). The scar is always there, waiting to explode and ooze out blood, a grotesque imagery that reveals his damaged Self and mind. Just like he refuses to share his memories with Genevieve, he also refuses to share the story of how he got his scar. He even fabricates stories about it, "I had showed them my scar. I made up stories about it" (343), the same way he manipulates his discourse with the therapist and decides what to tell her.

In an interview with Rita Sakhr, Hage argues that *Cockroach* is a satire on Western institutionalized culture of confession. It "reveals how impersonal and intrusive such cultures and institutions are. The main character's silence is violated as he is pushed by his therapist to tell his 'stories'," he asserts (348). The protagonist is forced, not encouraged, to express his repressed memories in an institutional and authoritative environment which is disciplinary and confessional rather than embracing and welcoming. Analyzing him in a cold methodical and systematic way instead of a using a therapeutic communication based on mutual interaction, Genevieve reminds him of "priests in the confession booth. Nodding all the time, and then

telling us to go kneel and mumble a few prayers for a virgin, and one for a man with a beard" (148), as he tells her.

His sarcastic comment is a clear hint to her that her way is not working, yet again all she can think of is to try to find a psychoanalytic explanation to what he has just said, asking if the priests hit him or molested him sexually in his childhood, even if it has nothing to do with his line of thought, "Did the priest hit you? / Well, of course. Sometimes. / Did they do anything else? / Like what? Like may be asking you for something or touching you? / No, not that I remember" (149). Coerced and controlled, confession as Taylor argues, "discursively fixes identities" (qtd.in Macura-Nnamdi 159). The protagonist seems to be well-aware of this, which explains why he does not give her the whole truth behind his stories sometimes.

IV.5.2 Mental Illness, Voyeurism and Returning the Gaze of the West

Hage uses metamorphosis, mental illness and voyeurism as expressions of the narrator's damaged relationship to reality. They are also means of empowerment. His metamorphosis into a cockroach allows him to become a voyeur to inverse the situation where he feels pinned and gazed upon like a strange specimen. At the onset of the story, he describes being possessed by an uncontrolled "need to seduce and possess every female of the species that comes [his] way" (6). He introduces himself as a grotesque human/cockroach creature that is driven by primitive, predatory and excessive sexual urges whenever he is in the presence of a woman:

> When I see a woman, I feel my teeth getting thinner, longer, pointed. My back hunches and my forehead sprouts two antennae that sway in the air, flagging a need for attention. I want to crawl under the feet of the women I meet and admire their upright posture, their delicate ankles. (3)

Although the protagonist's thoughts are immoral, I read Hage's invocation of the Orientalist stereotype of sexual aggression and the objectification of women as providing his protagonist with a way to transgress boundaries. It is a form of invasion that he resorts to in

order to assert the only form of power he feels capable of.The choice of a female therapist and a protagonist governed by a strong sexual need to "possess" all women attests to this.

The protagonist plays the role of the transgressor over Genevieve once he suddenly realizes that she is not only his therapist, but she is a woman above all, and hence, subject to his sexual urges. He feels violated and invaded by Genevieve's Western gaze. Therefore, he subverts this situation by becoming a sexual voyeur himself, transforming her into a subject of his lustful gaze and even touch:

> that same urge has started to act upon me in the shrink's presence […] I realized that she is also a woman, and when she asked me to re-enact my urges, I put my hand on her knee while she was sitting across from me. (6)

Identifying Genevieve as a woman rather than as a therapist, he seeks to undermine the authority of the state that she represents. He subverts her authority and subjects her to the same objectifying and dehumanizing gaze she uses against him weekly during their therapy session. Therefore, through his sexual voyeurism, the protagonist reverses the colonial gaze by placing Genevieve's female body on display to be watched, conquered, possessed and even touched by him as the more powerful male. Thus, turning Genevieve into the object of the narrator's sexual fantasies empowers him and diminishes her. He admits that part of the reasons he keeps silent during the sessions is simply because he is fantasizing her, "May be all these formalities, these thick clothes, this claustrophobic office, these ever-closed thighs and pulled-back hair are making me reluctant to open my innermost thoughts. (68). At some point in the novel, when he tells he about his job, she touches his hand, but "she drew back fast, knowing full well that [he] was willing to take her hand and lead her to a spacious bed where [they] could always have the session in horizontal," a fantasy he has where the "horizontal" sexual act with Genevieve subverts the vertical power dynamics that characterize their sessions (68).

IV.5.3 Dissociation, Spatial Intrusion and Subversion

The protagonist's "episodes" of schizophrenic splitting are numerous and occur regularly throughout the novel. Though not real, his metamorphosis is invoked at will. It is triggered in situations where his feelings of social inferiority and exclusion are emphasized. But above all, his metamorphosis is a fantasy of power that turns him into a powerful creature, a "master of escape" (19) who is able to crawl under doors, beds and into fridges. It allows him to become an undetected invader who is able to cross real, symbolic and ethical boundaries that exclude him as the abject immigrant from the privileged spaces of white Canadian elites.

One of the most important scenes of such transgressions happens when he follows his therapist, crawls up a pipe, and breaks into her house in her absence. Narrating this scene, the protagonist shifts the narrative perspective from "I" to "the stranger," to "the cockroach" and then to "the intruder." Therefore, he goes through several displacements of the Self, which refers to the different status of the narrator and his self-view.

Following her, the protagonist first notices that the city that is inhumanely cold to him has no such effect on Genevieve who "did not seem cold." Genevieve is immune "oblivious" to "the cold wind" (57) because she comes from a privileged social position and is already well-integrated as an indispensible part of the spatial fabric of the city. Therefore, she gets to enjoy its hospitality unlike the poor immigrants who, still disintegrated, only get to face its cold hostility.

The narrator is also surprised that she does not stop to buy food. Hunger is the central issue of the protagonist's life, which points to the gap between him and Genevieve who is not as preoccupied with food as he is. Genevieve lives in a wealthy, tranquil and green neighborhood in Outremont, area of the Francophone elite, with upscale boutiques and chic cafés and restaurants:

> She lived in a rich neighbourhood with shop windows displaying expensive clothing and restaurants that echoed with the sounds of expensive utensils, utensils that dug swiftly into livers and ribs and swept sensually above the surface of yellow butter the colour of a September moon, a cold field of hay, the tint of a temple's stained glass, of brass lamps and altars, of beer jars, wet and full beneath wooden handles. (57)

The detailed description of food and the color of butter here also highlight his obsession with food which, understandably, comes from his poverty and from what he calls a "food-envy syndrome" (62). The kind of food that Genevieve eats and the place where she lives compared to his food (such as crumbs and diluted rice).

When he breaks into her house as a cockroach, its luxury and the warmth of her bed compared to his make him cry. He narrates, **"**I covered myself with a sheet, inhaled, and wept a little under clouds of cotton and the blue sky" (57).Once the differences between Genevieve and the protagonist are highlighted even more inside her house, the narrative perspective shifts from "I" to "the stranger."Referring to himself as the "stranger" emphasizes the stark difference between Genevieve as a white Canadian elite and himself as the foreign immigrant, the stranger. In the next paragraph, he repeats the word "stranger" five times to insist on his status of the foreigner, "The stranger stood up and walked to the kitchen," "And the stranger laughed," "But the stranger was intrigued," "the stranger thought," "The stranger finished his sandwich" (58).

After finishing his sandwich, the stranger suddenly turns into "the cockroach." The cockroach "closed his eyes and rested his cheek on the slippers and acted dead […] satisfied with his full belly, feeling the soft carpet" (59). This displacement of the Self indicates that his poverty and hunger put him in an inferior status to Genevieve who, by not sharing his preoccupations, dehumanizes him and makes think of himself as a cockroach beneath her slippers. However, this is not the only reason he turns into a cockroach. The cockroach metamorphosis shifts the focus from the "stranger's" thoughts and actions (which are more about him) to Genevieve's apartment and intimate space. Becoming a cockroach, hence invisible, he is able to see and assess Genevieve's world.

The third displacement of selfhood happens when the cockroach turns into the "intruder," shifting the focus back to the character and his actions. He inspects a picture of Genevieve and a handsome man, with their heads "heads leaning in towards each other. In the background there was a blue beach glittering with pools of sunrays" (59). Unlike the narrator who is obsessed with escaping the oppressive sun, Genevieve and her lover enjoy the sun and have no need to escape it.

The word "stranger" is defined by the *Merriam-Webster's Dictionary* as someone "who does not belong to or is kept from the activities of a group." It emphasizes difference and unbelonging. The word "intruder," on the other hand, is someone who forces himself into another's space without invitation and welcome. This displacement of selfhood echoes the narrator's own journey in this new hostile land. He comes as a stranger seeking a new start in this land only to be faced with dehumanizing conditions (such as poverty and racism). He eventually comes to the realization that he would always be treated as the unwelcome intruder. However, he also vengefully adopts the identity of the intruder, to make himself at home and to trespass into this forbidden space.

In their final session, the protagonist discloses to Genevieve that he has broken into her house as an act of defiance against her, and the state's inhospitality, as well as against their invasion of his deepest feelings and intimate stories:

> There is nothing wrong with offering some hospitality, I said. [Narrator]
> I never invited you into my personal life. [Genevieve]
> No, but I went anyways. [Narrator]. (177)

Genevieve's house becomes the land via which the protagonist reverses the imbalance of power and the rigid hierarchy between Genevieve and himself. The intrusion scene is an inversion of the clinical encounter where Genevieve is the one who usually "breaks into" his personal life; this time he literally breaks into hers. She feels entitled to control and possess his most intimate stories; this time her most intimate objects; her bed, slippers,

lipstick, fridge, living-room, books, photographs all become subjects to the invasive gaze of the stranger-turned-cockroach-turned-intruder. The narrator has never been willing to share his stories with her; he never invites her into his life. As a reaction, he enters her life like uninvited, like an intruder. She dehumanizes him and hurts him with her false assumptions and refusal to understand the broader, present socio-political background behind his issues, and he seeks to harm her by breaking into her house.

IV.6 Suicide as a Reaction to Oppression

According to Genevieve neither poverty nor his marginal immigrant status and the racism he faces from mainstream Canadian society are to blame for his suicide attempt. Instead, she narrows down the roots of his problems to his relationships with women. She "assesses" the protagonist through a homogenizing neo-Orientalist lens and views him as a stereotypical Arab man whose evil, misogynist and violent nature, his "intimacy problems" (42), are the cause of his anger, which in turn leads to his suicide attempt. As the narrator states, "She did not understand. For her, everything was about my relations with women, but for me, everything was about defying the oppressive power in the world that I can neither participate in nor control" (7).

The protagonist opens up to Genevieve that his suicide was motivated by feelings of oppression and a nagging impulse to resist them when he states that his suicide was about "defying the oppressive power in the world that [he] can neither participate in nor control" (7). He admits that contrary to her conclusions, his suicide was defiance against the oppressive power structures of white Canadian society which fixes an inferior identity to him. He feels physically and psychologically marginalized and neglected by such powers that regard his existence as necessary only to prove its success.

Throughout the novel, the narrator uses the metaphor of light and the sun to refer to these oppressive powers and to all established orders that promise hope and salvation, but still function according to a neo-orientalist, neo-colonial logic that seeks to control him. Light, thus, refers to the socio-political systems of inclusion and exclusion that shapes relations in multicultural Canada and that are the root of his insidious trauma. The protagonist insists that he was not driven by mental illness, schizophrenia, or traumatic loss to commit suicide but by the "light" that covers all aspects of his life and shackles and engulfs him:

> It was not deceit, depression, or a large tragedy that pushed me to go shopping for a rope that suited my neck. And it wasn't voices. I've never heard any voices in my head […]No, the thing that pushed me over the edge was the bright light that came in my window and landed on my bed and my face. (25-26)

Feeling "insignificant" and "neglected" by the indifferent light that was "oblivious" to his existence, convinced the protagonist of the meaninglessness of his life. Becoming "obsessed with escaping the sun" (26), he really seeks to escape life's "nothingness," and the "void" (86). He thinks that putting an end to his existence would stop the light. As he puts it himself, "I thought: It is precisely because I exist that the light is still there. What if I cease to exist" (26)?

This presentation of light, the void, nothingness and their link to suicide adds a definite Camusian flavor to the novel. In *The Myth of Sisyphus*, Albert Camus investigates the relations between the absurd and suicide, viewing the latter is as the fundamental example of existential crisis. It is a decision one takes once he realizes, like the narrator of *Cockroach*, that life is meaningless, as the only solution to the "divorce between man and his life" (Camus 6). In this sense, the protagonist is a Sisyphean existential anti-hero *par excellence*. He wants to die to put an end to this feeling of being under the control of light with its permanent presence as "a reminder that this whole comedy of [his] life was still at play," as he says (26). This very idea of death as the solution to life's "ridiculousness" is expressed by Camus as well, who states that suicide "implies that you have recognized, even instinctively, the

ridiculous character of that habit [of living], the absence of any profound reason for living, the insane character of that daily agitation, and the uselessness of suffering" (5-6), conclusions which the protagonist has reached about his life.

Moreover, according Camus the "stranger," a word the protagonist also uses to refer to himself in the novel, is an individual who is preoccupied with the question, "[H]ow far is one to go to elude nothing? Is one to die voluntarily or hope in spite of everything" (16)? Just like the narrator wonders in the above mentioned quote. Camus too uses the light/shadow metaphor to describe the two contradictory sides of reality. He says, "There is no sun without shadow, and it is essential to know the night" (123). Similarly, the protagonist is driven to suicide after recognizing the "night" or the "shadow" of injustice, racism and inequality cast out by the false promises of established orders (the light).

During their final therapy session, Genevieve wants to convince the protagonist that his suicide attempt was a result of his unresolved guilt towards the trauma of his sister's death even though he denies this and explains to her his motives several times. She tells him, "Dealing with death is a hard thing. You have anger, you have guilt, and you have to deal with your loss […] Let's go back to your sister's death. Perhaps you think by committing suicide you can rectify what you did" (176). The protagonist, this time, reaches the conclusion that this therapy is simply inadequate, that Genevieve will never understand and sees the futility of his efforts to draw her attention to the root of his problems, the oppressive light. As she continues to shower him with interrogations about his sister's death despite his insistence that she does not understand, the frustrated narrator simply remains silent then decides to leave the clinic for good this time:

> You do not understand anything, I said.
> Well, help me to understand. Is that why you wanted to hang yourself?
> No.
> I think it is.
> No.

What did you do after your sister's death? Why did you leave your country? You do not want to talk? All right, you can leave if you like.

[…] I stood up, took my jacket from the back of the chair, and walked towards the door. I am not coming back, I said. (176)

V. Failed Hybridity, Trauma and Immigrants' Zones of Marginality

There is an undeniable omnipresence of the excluded immigrants in the multicultural world of *Cockroach*: Middle Easterners, Iranians, North Africans, Pakistanis, Indians, Greeks and Russians, which makes *Cockroach* essentially an immigration novel. Hage's immigrants belong to the majority of immigrants, who are "poor and experience displacement not as cultural plenitude but as torment," as described by Aijaz Ahmad ("The Politics" 16). Despite their different homelands, they all share the same woes, escaping traumatic pasts of wars, persecution, and sexual exploitation to a Western country where they manage to "survive out there but can never thrive" (Hout, *Postwar* 168). They are all trapped in untangled webs of trauma, poverty, hunger, inadequate houses, underemployment and discrimination, and lead desperate lives of crimes, theft, drugs, lies and violence in order to survive.

The protagonist describes the Iranian immigrants as, "Iranian exiles— runaway artists, displaced poets, leftist hash-rollers, and ex-revolutionaries turned taxi drivers" (13) to account for the political circumstances behind their immigration and their current status of underemployment. Amongst them, are his lover Shohreh and her friend Majeed who were both jailed and tortured by the Shah and the mullahs (103). Shohreh was barely eighteen when she was arrested for participating in the student movement during the revolution in Iran. She was jailed in a "cell as big as a coffin" (170) and raped for three years repeatedly by her jailer, Shaheed whom she meets one day in Canada and have all her past wounds opened. Majeed was a socialist, leftist and intellectual journalist and poet who escaped Iran twenty years ago and has ever since been working as a taxi-driver for twelve hours a day. Majeed expresses his past sacrifices to the protagonist and the price he has to pay to come to this land to find that it

does not really offer him a better life, "I fought for democracy. I was tortured for democracy […] And you know what I do now because of democracy? I drive a car for twelve hours a day" (153-154).

Another Iranian exile with a traumatic past story of oppression and sexual exploitation, and a present life of discrimination in Canada is his Iranian non-conformist gay friend Farhoud. He tells the protagonist that After Khomeini won the Revolution, the gay community in Iran were hunted down and persecuted. Farhoud was arrested in a secret gay party and was put in jail with women until a strict bearded mullah transferred him to a single cell where he beat and raped him for months. He became the mullah's concubine and slowly convinced him to release him from jail. When he was released, he managed to escape to India where he met and became the lover of a closeted Canadian diplomat who helped him immigrate to Canada. However, when they moved to Canada, the Canadian diplomat "slowly turned into a monster" and became "xenophobic over time" (78). He adopted the same stereotypical view that associates immigrants with dirt and uncleanness with Farhoud. "Here, clean yourself […] You are not in your own country anymore," he told him once (78). Despite this, Farhoud is satisfied with the mere fact that he is alive here in Canada, "I am alive and here and I don't care […] I am here now, alive. Farhoud started to cry" (79).

In addition to this, *Cockroach* portrays the immigrant who has to play the role of the Western-constructed image of the exotic Oriental Other to survive. The Iranian Reza is an example of the battered and traumatized immigrant who uses and exaggerates stories of his violent homeland to be integrated into Canada's multicultural society. Reza is a "compulsive liar" and a "master charlatan," a musician who plays "exotic tunes" and fabricates stories of "suffering and exile" for the "gullible heads" and "compassionate eyes" in the Iranian restaurants where he works and at bars (20). His made-up stories, such as the one of how he almost "lost all his fingers" by the "Iranian Hezbollah, the Guards of God" for performing a

fast "non-religious" song for the Ayatollah Khomeini (20), give him access to Canada's

bourgeois circle and guarantee him food and the love of sensitive women. With his exotic

stories:

> blankets would be extended on sofas and beds, fridges would burp leftovers, and if the
> rooster was lucky, it would all lead to mchicken thighs and wings moistened by a
> touch of beer or wine, and hot showers seasoned by pizza pies delivered to the
> bedroom and gobbled in front of trashy movies on tv. (21)

Reza is an immigrant who manages to secure a stable job, and his exotic stories permit him to

"couch-surf in women's houses," (20) and gain something extra. The novel highlights that

Reza's success and integration into Canadian society is only allowed because what he does is

simply circulate and confirm to the Canadians their Western stereotypes of the Muslim world

and its religious fanaticism.

By playing the role of exotic and "noble savage," the protagonist gains himself access

While the protagonist is contemptuous towards Reza's "schemes and lies" (21), he

uses the same strategy to get into the circle of white and privileged Canadians, Sylvie and her

bourgeois friends. Sylvie is a middle class Quebecoise, a piano teacher, who lives a snobbish

and pretentious life. The protagonist despises her shallow artificial life where everything has

to be perfect (127). She and her friends represent the façade of beauty and perfection that

conceal the harsh reality of the city. The protagonist regards them as wearing a mask that

hides their nonchalance and indifference to the misery of those who are lower than them.

They, "lived in a state of permanent denial of the bad smells from sewers, infested slums,

unheated apartments, single mothers on welfare, worn-out clothing. No, everything had to be

perfect, every morsel of food had to be well served— presentation, always presentation, the

ultimate mask" (127).

By playing the role of exotic and "noble savage," the protagonist gains himself access

in Sylvie's circle of socialites, but he only does for the free food (127). They only "admire"

him for his exoticism, and he "despises" them for their hypocrisy, "corrupt[ion],"

"empty[ness]," and "selfish[ness]" (ibid). They are so self-absorbed that they have no regard

for the suffering of those who do not belong to their circle. If the protagonist shows any "hint of misery […] of problems" it was "automatically dismissed and replaced with something happy" (ibid).

The narrator uses his manipulative skills and manages to be accepted into their circle as "l'aventurier" by giving them a "sense of the real […] fuckable, exotic, dangerous foreigner" (138). He often steals their wallets and takes their cash, knowing that neither the girls nor their boyfriends dare to confront him about it. His fabricated stories and their stereotypical notions of his "savagery" and "danger" prevent them from doing so, "They knew that I would slash their tires, enter their homes, poison their dogs, and break their stereos. They knew because I had showed them my scar. I made up stories about it" (127). Therefore, the only time in the novel that the protagonist is accepted and welcomed into the space of the privileged whites is when he assumed the identity of the exotic, savage and dangerous Other.

Another group that the narrator strongly scorns is those immigrants who cling to their past while seeking a new homeland in the host country, not able to decide their belonging. The protagonist disdains their undecidability, their "holding on" to their "vanishing" pasts and homelands (102). He calls them "miserable dogs" who do nothing but "howl about the past." He despises them for their "overt pride" despite their meager existence as "welfare dogs" in Canada (101). Hage's presentation of hybridity here is far from being celebratory. Instead, the narrator describes these hybrids with one foot in each place as "lost mutts," hybrid dogs, who "don't know what colour they are. They can't decide what breed they belong to" (102).

One of these "lost mutt" immigrants who fancy themselves different and pretend not to be poor is the exiled Algerian professor, Youssef. He is a "lazy, pretentious pseudo-French intellectual" whom the protagonist hates. He pretends to be a government councilor. However, he is just another "charlatan," a "suave beggar," (82) and a "coffee beggar" (85)

who sits at the Artista Café all day and survives on scavenging free food, coffee and cigarettes from his North African compatriots, those "nostalgic souls," in the café who are bewitched by his "grand theories" and heroic stories of how he escaped the Algerian religious fundamentalists (82).

Through the character of the professor, the novel demonstrates than even the acculturation of the immigrant subject does not provide a solid guarantee for integration. The professor thinks that coming from a former French colony and having received his education in the empire's nation make him better than the other immigrants such as the protagonist. The professor assumes that letting go of his roots and identifying with the Western culture would secure him a sense of belonging, high status within Canadian society and a nice office job while in fact he is just like the protagonist, living on welfare and having his Algerian compatriots fooled that he is a government consultant. As he describes him

> He is in total denial that he is just like me – the scum of the earth in this capitalist endeavour. I'll bet he thought that, coming from Algeria and having lived and studied in Paris, his *vocabulaire parisien* would open every door for him in this town. (86)

When the protagonist meets him in the welfare office one day, he exposes his lies and feels angry that "the socialist does not want to be identified as poor, a marginal impoverished welfare recipient like [him]" (85-86).Even in Paris, his situation was no better despite claiming he led an easy-going life of an intellectual journalist. He lived in "one of those Parisian shitholes, washing his ass and cleaning his dishes in the same tub," as the narrator states (86).

Indeed, the professor is more similar to the protagonist than he can imagine. They are both mentally unstable. The latter is a schizophrenic and paranoid petty thief, and the former is also another individual whose "paranoid tendencies were more developed" than the protagonist himself (82), and who lives an imaginary double life, pretending to be someone he is not. Even their apartments are similar. After following him one day, the protagonist

discovers that he lives in "in an even smaller place than [his]" in a "dark and smelly" semi-basement apartment (105).

Despite their similarity and their insignificant existence in Canadian society, the protagonist does not have any respect or empathy towards the professor for being a hypocritical imposter who, unlike the protagonist, refuses to accept and acknowledge his reality. "At least I am not a hypocrite about it. Yes, I am poor, I am vermin, a bug, I am at the bottom of the scale. But I still exist. I look society in the face and say: I am here, I exist," he strongly admits (86).

As readers, however, we cannot be completely unsympathetic with the Algerian professor. After the protagonist breaks into the professor's house, he discovers his traumatic past, being indeed tortured during the Algerian Civil War. In his decrepit semi-basement apartment, the protagonist finds an old green suitcase that contains his immigration papers, an envelope labeled "Torture" with X-rays of his injuries inside and "an official letter of amnesty" addressed to him (106). The professor, like the protagonist and the other traumatized immigrants, is just another "unfortunate exile" (11), who escaped to this land seeking a better life but is stuck in trauma's liminal time. He is unable to break free from trauma's strong hold over its victims, displayed in the psychopathological paranoia that he has transported with him from his past to the present. In his past, being a socialist journalist, paranoia was how he "survived the executioner's bullet and the fanatics' knives" (82). In his present, he still suffers from severe paranoia demonstrated in the way he walks holding his old suitcase to his chest all the time, stopping several times to look back and make sure nobody is following him. As he often repeats to the protagonist, "Only the paranoid survive, my friend" (82).

The professor may be the protagonist's nemesis, but the group of immigrants that evokes his strongest disdain is the prosperous successful middle class immigrants. They are

represented in the novel by the Iranian owners of the Persian restaurant where he works. He considers them the worst type of human beings and wants nothing to do with them, "Filth! They are the worst — the Third World elite are the filth of the planet and I do not feel any affinity with their jingling-jewellery wives, their arrogance, their large tv screens" (112). The reasons underlying the protagonist's contempt of them are simply because they are the residue of colonialism. They regard themselves as aristocrats, but they would not have acquired their status as "Third World elite" if they had not been the offspring of disloyal colonial subjects who betrayed their country for the colonizer:

> Filth! They consider themselves royalty when all they are is the residue of colonial power. They walk like they are aristocrats, owners from the land of spice and honey, yet they are nothing but the descendants of porters, colonial servants, gardeners, and sell-out soldiers for invading empires. (112)

Therefore, due to political and historical reasons, this group of elite immigrants represents the only group who gets to enjoy Bhabha's hybridity, and is easily integrated into Canadian society (a point I discussed in Chapter I of this thesis).

The novel exposes the exploitation of poor immigrants and their marginalization by the rich. Their poverty and immigrant status makes them both visible; that is physically, and invisible; that is symbolically within the socio-economic hierarchy. For example, even in this restaurant, the protagonist cannot dream to be a waiter. He can only get the position of a busboy, a "servant" who vacuums the floor and carpets and cleans the kitchen and bathroom otherwise his visible poverty would scare away the rich clientele of the restaurant who want a taste of the exotic flavor of the Persian culture without having any contact with poor immigrants. The narrator comments, "The bastard of an owner has a nose for poverty. He knows what a threat to his business an impoverished presence might be. The rich hate the poor […] A servant should be visible but undetectable, efficient but unnoticeable, nourishing but malnourished" (60).

The dehumanization of the poor immigrants and the divide between them and the well-off immigrants is expressed in an instance when Sehar, the teenage daughter of the Iranian owner of the Restaurant who does nothing but sits idly all day there, tells the protagonist, "You will never be rich," and waves "with the back of her hand at [him]" ordering him to "to go back to work as the poor should" (179). This exchange reveals the stark inequality between the poor immigrant who must work, even for a minimum wage, to survive, and the rich immigrants who earned a higher socio-economic position simply because they are the "residue of colonial power" (112).

With the depiction of the different groups of immigrants and the white inhabitants of Canada who push the immigrants outside their space, except in the cases where they serve to confirm the fantasy and stereotype of the foreign, exotic Other, the novel really proves that even in a setting where cultural contact is possible, hybridity is not always possible. It may account for the experience of "elite" travelers and immigrants, but it does not after all, as Friedman stresses, represent the experience of the immigrant in the street, such as the protagonist, Majeed, Shohreh, Farhoud, Reza and the Algerian professor.

VI. Of Cockroaches and Human Injustice: Pathological Hybridity

Hage's protagonist is a hybrid creature that exists in a liminal space traversing geographical, social, cultural, and even species boundaries. As the borders between sanity and insanity, between his psychic inner experience and his physical world collapse, his fantastical metamorphosis into a half-human half cockroach hybrid occurs, serving several purposes. It specifically aims to portray complicated issues associated with trauma, history, immigration, social injustice, and even colonialism. Hage states that most critical interpretations of *Cockroach* mainly focus on reading it as the story of an ungrateful immigrant, not taking into consideration the harsh material conditions of poverty, social, class, racial discrimination and

marginalization which cause his feeling of ungratefulness and madness. ("On the Weight" 233)

The protagonist's self-imposed alienation and his marginalization by mainstream Canadian society are proof of the failure of cultural hybridity. His rejection of all forms of cultural belonging and inhabits a space that is far from Bhabha's liberating Third Space but rather an in-between space that exacerbates his sense of unbelonging, exclusion and estrangement. Even if his refusal to "identify with the cultural heritage of his choice," as permits Canada's official multicultural policy, is both intentional and voluntary, the consequent sense of un-belonging is excruciating, as reflected in his poignant existential wondering, "But how, how to exist and not to belong" (144).

The narrator lives on the edge between sanity and insanity and is excluded to the margins of society, which causes him extreme mental turmoil. Feeling lost in a dehumanizing space, he contemplates, "Where am I? And what am I doing here? How did I end up trapped in a constantly shivering carcass" (10). Thus, seeking to assert "an identity, a space" for himself and trying to assign meaning to a life "at at the border of physical and psychological death" (Hage qtd. in Sakr 345), the protagonist undergoes an existential crisis that results from his sense of un-belonging and in-betweenness. Indeed, since the beginning of the novel, he states, "the question of existence consumed me" (7).

The protagonist expresses his fragmented sense of self when he admits, "I was split between two planes and aware of two existences, and they were both mine. I belong to two spaces, I thought, and I am wrapped in one sheet" (84). The twoness and hybridity of his existence is not manifested as a shift between two cultural planes. Instead, he is torn between his existence as a human being, trapped in a "shivering carcass" in an unforgiving city, and, on the other hand, between his cockroachian existence in an underground space with all the power, freedom and invisibility it allows him.

His metamorphosis into an insect is a symbol of refusing his dehumanization and an inversion of the rules of society that pushes him to the bottom of the social scale. The cockroach is an insect that is associated with dark dirty places, impoverished conditions and squalor. Hage explains his choice of the cockroach as "the closest thing to the ground" (qtd.in Molnar, "Psycho-spatial" 77), referring to the protagonist's negative self-worth as the holder of the lowest social status. On the other hand, the cockroach is also a creature of great resilience and resistance towards attempts of extermination and control. As Hage also describes the symbolic power of this insect as a "conqueror who can never be eliminated" ("On the Weight" 235). In addition to this, the cockroach is an insect that is an invader and a transgressor of borders, like the protagonist, which explains its use to traverse the boundaries between poor and rich.

The protagonist's transformation into a cockroach is a decolonizing act against the hegemonic order of the city that denies him agency and freedom, which is the root of his desire to escape his body and gain the invisibility of the vermin. In his human form as the visibly poor non-white immigrant his agency is restricted and controlled; thus, escaping it and assuming that of the cockroach is a strategy to regain agency. He discloses to his therapist, "I am part cockroach, part human" because "being human is being trapped." Being a cockroach, on the other hand is "to be free […] you are more invisible… to everything, to the light" (142). Hage himself states that fantasy and madness are the only way for his characters out of overwhelming situations, "when [my characters] are in some kind of trauma, psychosis, or disillusion they try to escape […] And the way they escape is through *fantasy*. In a way, it's another kind of madness" (qtd.in Molnar, "Psycho-spatial" 77).

In fact, the cockroach image is used to emphasize the protagonist's abhorrence of the entire human race and his resistance to be assimilated into its unjust systems. He links his choice of un-belonging to colonialism and expresses that the root of his troubled psyche is his

inability to belong to humanity for all the oppression and suffering humans cause to one another when they wage wars:

> How can I explain all of this to Genevieve? How can I tell her that I do not want to be part of anything because I am afraid I will become an invader who would make little boys hunger, who would watch them die with an empty stomach. I am part roach now. (144)

The protagonist believes that humans are the only creatures who take more than they need, and their greed is "the biggest stupidity" (156). He chooses to belong to another species because "other creatures only take what they need. That is not greed" (167). Driven by greed, humans wage wars, drive "little boys" hungry, kill, rape, steal lands, and disrespect other religions. As he tells Farhoud, "what army does not spread semen and blood" (78), referring to humanity's dark history of violence, miscegenation and rape. Elsewhere, he lists all the vices that cause his repulsion of humanity:

> its stupidity, its foulness, its pride, its avarice and greed, envy, lust, gluttony, sloth, wrath, and anger […] not taking off its shoes before entering homes, before stepping on the carpets of places of worship. I also forget about the bonny infants with the African flies clustering on their noses, the marching drunk soldiers on their way to whorehouses. (155)

The protagonist, indeed, fantasizes the defeat of humanity and its unjust system and the victory of the cockroaches. Early in the novel he is stopped by two Jehovah witness ladies who give him an apocalyptic prophecy of a future that he sees as divine punishment to society's and humanity's sins. They present him with the vision of the cockroaches taking over the planet after the hole in the ozone layer burns all human beings and all creatures with the exception of the cockroaches, "we shall all fry. Only the cockroaches shall survive to rule the earth...Repent!" (9). The narrator finds the perfect utopian prospect of a world governed by justice in this apocalyptic promise of an underground world as more superior than the aboveground world and of the powerful cockroaches overtaking humanity.

Throughout the narrative the protagonist has a "mutant urge" (25), a tension between his cockroach and human selves that is brought to light in one of the most important scenes in

the novel where the narrator, under the influence of cocaine, has a hallucinatory conversation with a giant albino cockroach. The idea of the underground cockroach revolution against the oppression and injustice of the humans returns in this conversation. The giant cockroach tells the protagonist of the higher revolutionary project of the cockroaches that are conspiring to rise to the aboveground and become the "ruling race," saying, "Yes, we are ugly, but we always know where we are going. We have a project […] A change. A project to change this world" (140).

On the other hand, the narrator's long conversation with the albino cockroach proves that he is stuck in trauma's liminal time. The cockroach represents surviving unpleasant and traumatic events to him. Surviving a traumatic experience, however, cannot be equated with getting over it. Indeed, the giant albino cockroach is nothing but the protagonist's imaginative alter ego who has always been part of his self, during his past, present and future. When the protagonist attacks the albino cockroach and accuses him/it of having "an evil, oppressive" project, "to subordinate and kill all those who do not conform to your project" (140), the albino cockroach confirms to him that acts of killing, wars, and oppression are traits associated with humanity. To prove his argument, he reminds the narrator that he has always been part of his traumatic past and recites to him a traumatic war memory that the protagonist has long kept repressed:

> Kill? Did I hear you say kill? Dear child, let's not be judgmental here. Let's not open wounds and recite the past. I have known you since your childhood. I even bit you once […] When you hid in your mother's closet I was also there, and when you stole candy from the store I was there, and when you collected bullets, and when you followed Abou-Roro down to the place of the massacre and watched him pull golden teeth from cadavers, I was there. (140)

Syrine Hout argues that given the protagonist's age, the cockroach is making an allusion to the Sabra and Shatila Massacre that took place on September 1982. The young protagonist was deeply traumatized by the massacre, and more by Abo-Roro's "macabre scavenging in the aftermath of the barbaric act" (*Postwar* 176) that he needs to keep this

incident repressed within the deepest recesses of his memory. This point is further proven by the fact that the protagonist is only able to unearth this traumatic memory when he is high on cocaine, feeling "like someone else's double" (139) and not himself.

The albino cockroach suggests to the protagonist that the only way to dispose of his marginalization and constant need to escape is to discard the "worst part" of his Self (his human Self), to fully embrace his more powerful and superior part (his cockroach Self), and join the underground:

> You are one of us. You are part cockroach. But the worst part of it is that you are also human […] Now go and be human, but remember you are always welcome. You know how to find us. Just keep your eyes on what is going on down in the underground. (141)

The narrator's namelessness, along with the title of the novel *Cockroach*, might after all be read as a sign of his rejection of any form of human identification.

VI.1 The Underground as a Cosmopolitan Space

The protagonist's dissociation allows him to access the underground, an imaginative and highly symbolic space he creates to escape the world of the humans. He became fascinated with the underground since his childhood when he realized that it was a refuge, a space hidden below society, which welcomes all that is abject, dirty, and repellent, "it was simply the possibility of escape to a place where the refuse of stained faces, infamous hands, dirty feet, and deep purple gums gathered in large pools for slum kids to swim, splash, and play in" (19).

During his childhood, the protagonist's underground cockroach existence provided him with the ability to escape difficulties: his alcoholic, abusive father, his neurotic mother, the teachers' blows, the priest, and most importantly the war. Transforming into a cockroach, he became "a master of escape" (19). He specifies that what he needed to escape the most was the cruelty of the human world and the sense of being "trapped" in this world. "Primitive and

uneducated as I was, I instinctively felt trapped in the cruel and insane world saturated with humans," he says (19).

He has always abhorred the hierarchical relationship between human beings and challenged it through the figure of the cockroach that can crawl under their world. As a child, his cockroach metamorphosis and the underground gave him a sense of power over the adults. As a cockroach, he was a sovereign of the underground and not a powerless victim of the aboveground:

> I loathed the grown-ups who were always hovering over me and looking down on me. They, of course, ruled the heights: they could reach the chandelier, the top of the fridge; they could rumple my hair anytime they pleased. But I was the master of the underground. I crawled under beds, camped under tables. (19-20)

Therefore, since his childhood, the protagonist escapes the world he does not belong and its oppressive authority and cruelty to the underground. As an adult, he takes refuge in the underground to escape the coldness, hostility and injustice of the city.

The underground is a radical space of subversion, resistance and revolution against the order of things in of the aboveground. The human/cockroach protagonist takes refuge in the space below the city to escape the authoritative and prejudicial gaze of the West that alienates him, and also to defy the discourse of cleanliness of the city. With his vision of the underground, a space where nature's refuse, waste, dirt, and pestilent creatures all gather shamelessly and equally, he challenges the hygienic, white, oppressive, well-ordered space of the city that only assimilates and accepts those who conform to its rules, expectations and order.

Dirt is repulsive, but the protagonist gives it a subversive power. He describes a scene while making love to Shohreh, "we rolled in dirt and made love in dirt until dirt became our emblem, our flag to pledge allegiance to, and we got drunk and composed new anthems with groans" (38). Here, he presents a transgressive and counter-hegemonic discourse that defies national ideals and affiliation, represented by the words "emblem," "flag," "pledge

allegiance," and the "anthem," and celebrates "dirt" and the repulsive body of the abject Other in all its gross animalism.

The underground provides a perspective of removal from the city of everyday bourgeois life, a removal that is centered around social commentary. The underground's physical filth is a subversion of the moral filth of the aboveground city and its privileged and hypocritical inhabitants. "Filth" is, indeed, a word the protagonist uses repeatedly, twenty-nine times, throughout the narrative whenever he is not satisfied with certain people. But, the sentence, "Filth! They are all filth, these people, walking above the earth" (177) really summarizes his feelings towards humanity in general. The protagonist deconstructs the binaries privileged/underprivileged, desirable/undesirable, rich/poor bodies through his idea of the underground.

He expresses the inescapability of the materiality of the human body and the equality between the rich and poor, when he contemplates that the fancy food the rich people eat is transformed into something ugly and repulsive that eventually goes to the underground along with the waste of the poor, "whatever they eat, no matter how presentable it is, the food that comes on fancy plates that is savoured as it is illuminated by small candles on red tablecloths, that gives off the aroma of spices, will always, always be transformed into something ugly and repulsive" (128-129). The underground, thus, is a repository for all that is cast off by the ideologies that rule the social and political world above.

Cities like Montreal are perceived as cosmopolitan. Nevertheless, Hage's work presents a pessimistic vision of intercultural relations and the idea of cosmopolitanism because of the power hegemony, social injustice, inequality, and economic exploitation that characterize cosmopolitan Montreal. While his work is based on the fundamental cosmopolitan idea of border-crossing, integration, freedom and are not guaranteed to all inhabitants. The protagonist assumes the figure of the cockroach as a substitute to humanity

and the underground as an ideal cosmopolitan space where he can exercise the agency he is otherwise denied in the aboveground.

There is, thus, a dialectic between the aboveground and underground in the novel. Montreal's vertical power relations, its bright light, hostile environment, the bureaucracy of the welfare system, the oppressive therapy, discrimination, micro-aggressions, political alienation and social injustice are all set up in sharp contrast to the warm, dark, nourishing, accepting space of the underground characterized by horizontal equal power relations between its creatures and objects. Unlike the multicultural city that filters its inhabitants, deciding who can be integrated, rejected or has to modify his identity, the underworld is a tolerant and welcoming space that "swallow[s] everything, nothing [is] filtered, recycled, tossed away. All [is] s good, all [is] natural, all [is] accepted" (110)

The utopian vision of the underground with its "warm and vaporous tunnels under this glaciered city" (13) mocks the idea of Canada as a promised sanctuary. In one of his furious ramblings against the city, the narrator says that he has been deceived to come to this land, thinking all his woes would end:

> Nothing in this northern terrain. I thought: I will tell every tourist I encounter, every sister who has ever received a postcard, that nothing here exists; there is no queen, there are no seals, no dancing bears, moose, cabins, high trees, bonfires. Descriptions of these are all a ploy, an illusion, a conspiracy. (172)

Here, he deconstructs the discourse of Canada as a haven, and presents it instead as a frozen land. In contrast, he provides an idealistic, lyrical description of the underground as the only way to escape, as the place where everything shall meet and enjoy a happy, just and equal existence:

> There is nothing but that which freezes, and the only way to escape it is to dig deep holes, dig and sail under it. There, my friend, you can encounter rivers of steam, tropical paradises with noisy crickets, crocodiles, muddy rivers, green fungus arching like wallpaper over trees, and expert scuba-diving rats, and troops of roaches receiving signals, conspiring to take over the world. All that exists, all that will ever exist, shall pass through this passageway under the ice, the dead corpses when they turn to dust, the big happy meals, the wine, the tears, the dead plants, the quiet settling storms, the

ink of written words, all that falls from above, all that ascends, all that is killed, beaten, misused, abused, all that have legs, all that crawl, all that is erected, all that climbs, flies, sits, wears glasses, laughs, dances, and smokes, all shall disappear into the underground like a broken cloud. (172)

VII. Madness, Revenge, and "Counter-imperial looting"

According to André Forget, *Cockroach* is a traditional revenge narrative that explores the notion of vengeance in a Canadian multicultural setting characterized by displacement, oppression, inhospitality and exclusion. The protagonist's hybrid human-cockroach identity and the underground space provide him with a space of freedom and power and allow him to engage in what Forget calls "refugee vengeance" to assert his self-worth, agency and justice (103). Hage presents revenge as the only way for the protagonist to act as a moral agent and defy a system that denies him "political personhood" as an immigrant who exists outside of the "established structure of political belonging" (104). The protagonist's revenge is initially directed towards specific instances of injustice, discrimination and racism. As the narrative unfolds, his revenge is directed towards larger issues such as colonialism, imperialism and political oppression.

In his cockroach image and within the space of the underground the protagonist seeks vengeance against humanity's dark history of colonialism, as revealed in his theft of a trunk of an elderly British widow who lives in his apartment building. With his Russian neighbor, Natasha, he plots and steals the trunk full of artifacts stolen by the old lady's husband who served as an officer for the British colonial armies in Asia. Natasha explains that she steals from the old lady because her husband "stole everything from the Indians, or the Chinese. Maybe he paid nothing, or very little" (31), to which the protagonist responds, "And what high culture did not steal, borrow, claim, or pay very little" (31)? Despite being in a dire need of money, the protagonist reveals to Natasha that he does not wish to get paid for the theft but

wants to do it "for history's sake […]to watch the loot of war buried, the stolen treasure put back where it belongs, in the underground" (32).

Consequently, the context of imperial plunder and dispossession is reversed in the underground where the ravaged cultural treasures are returned from the Westerner to the non-Westerner and divided over a cup of tea in the basement. Through this act, described by the protagonist as "counter-imperial looting" (173), the underground provides the protagonist, as a subaltern political agent, a space to challenge hegemonic power and subvert the idea of the colonized/subaltern as a victim of political and historical forces. Rejoicing at the thought that "history is coming to the basement" (32), Natasha and the protagonist debase the imperial history of the West, shaped by the "theft and destruction" of weaker nations, as the narrator exclaims, "what land is not stolen, what seat is not claimed, what container is not the product of theft and destruction" (186)?

After symbolically burying the trunk in the underground by taking it to Natasha's basement apartment, the protagonist takes only two objects from it, the husband's pair of army boots and thick socks. The boots allow him, for the first time to walk "above the earth and its cold white crust, feeling warm and stable" (253). Once he slips into the colonizer's boots, the protagonist, who is usually excluded from the city, suddenly confidently occupies a space "above the earth" and feels belonging towards the city:

> The grip of my boots' soles anchored me more firmly than ever in the soil hidden beneath the street's white surface […]I crossed my legs thinking of the old lady's husband marching to confront his enemies beyond the trenches and muddy battlefields. Now that I had laced my feet into boots, blood, and mud, this health clinic had started to feel homier. (222)

After he wears the boots that stepped on "blood" and "mud" during the old lady's husband's colonial journey in Asia, the protagonist's existence in this land becomes more possible and more bearable because the boots somehow link him to this land's colonial history of greed and violence.

In addition to this, in *Cockroach* there is a direct allusion to Canada's shameful history of colonization and genocide against its indigenous inhabitants hidden underneath the state's angelic multicultural self-image. With the European colonization of North American in the late 16th century, the British and French empires began to occupy the entire land, and with their brutal genocide of the indigenous people, they forced them to give up their culture and to abide to the rules and culture of the white. *Cockroach* expresses the view that Canada is a stolen land.   Its colonial past is revealed in a story told to the narrator by an indigenous cook. After the creation of the earth, mountains, the sea and everything, God left a giant drum and ordered all creatures not to play with it, otherwise the "sun would come closer to listen, never go back to sleep and melt all the snow," which would destroy Earth. All creatures abode until one day a coyote came on a large ship from a foreign land. Looking for "anything he could steal and take back with him to the other side of the sea," the coyote stole the drum. With his theft of the drum, the coyote woke up the sun and made it shine, which made the birds that guarded the drum grow bigger wings and fly towards the sun, leaving the earth to the bugs that "covered the land and ate everything" (200). Coming from the "other side of the sea," the coyote is a metaphor of European colonizers whose imperialistic actions were based on theft and destruction. The bugs that invaded the land are a metaphor of the genocides committed against the indigenous populations and the destruction of their culture by the culture of the white who invaded the land and outnumbered them.

In this story, the narrator alludes to another human sin in addition to imperialism, which is the environmental destruction of the ecosystem and global warming. The drum in this case is read as a metaphor of the ozone layer whose destruction causes climate change, "melting all the snow," and is slowly bringing the destruction of the earth. Making this association between global warming and European colonialism, Hage emphasizes that both are paradigmatic cases of human injustice, the former is political, socio-economic and

cultural, and the latter is an environmental injustice with consequences that might be even more destructive and larger in scale than the former, to encompass humanity, other creatures, and the entire planet earth.

VII.1 Descent into Madness, Dictatorship and Political Double Standard

While guns and violence are not as present in the peaceful Canadian setting of the novel as in the protagonist's war-ravaged Middle-Eastern country, there is a hidden ugly reality beneath Canada's façade of pacifism. All the Middle-Eastern and North-African immigrants in the novel, including the Iranian Majeed, Farhoud, Reza and Shohreh, the Algerian Professor, and the protagonist himself, have escaped political persecution, torture, imprisonment, and rape, made possible by the dictatorship of their homelands, and sought refuge in the peaceful and democratic Canada. Yet, *Cockroach* aims at exposing the hypocrisy of Western democratic countries and their contribution in supporting and perpetuating violence and dictatorship in Third-World countries.

Besides its multiculturalism, another myth the novel seeks to debunk is related to Canada's self-definition as a "global peacemaker," that views military interventions as "inevitable necessities" to achieve humanitarian benefits, keep peace and spread ideals of democracy in Third World countries (Lapierre 564). However, such self-designation is based on nothing but the age old imperialistic construction of the Self as superior and civilized and the Other as inferior and savage, hence, justifying military interference as necessary to save the Other from their own cruelty and dictatorship even though Canada participated " in torture (Somalia), imperialism (Afghanistan) and bombardments (Serbia, Kosovo)" (ibid).

Canadian state and white population, as represented by Genevieve, maintain and promote their firm belief that they are pacifist in contrast to the violence of, for example, the protagonist and his homeland. However, this image is shattered towards the end of the novel

when the protagonistdiscovers that Shaheed, Shohreh's rapist and torturer, is in Montreal under diplomatic immunity and protection to conclude a weapons' purchase deal between Canada and Iran. Majeed tells the protagonist that Montreal is manufacturing and selling light arms to Iran where they will be used with more ease by the children soldiers who are forced to join the army. The narrator is shocked upon this discovery, and his first reaction is to interrupt Majeed in disbelief, "But, Canada…" (192). The romantic vibe that Canada casts of itself to the world masks "an ugly side," as Majeed explains, "Of course, Canada! Montreal, this happy, romantic city, has an ugly side, my friend. One of the largest military-industrial complexes in North America is right here in this town. What do you think? That the West prospers on manufacturing cars, computers, and Ski-Doos" (ibid)?

In an interview with CBC, Hage voices this view regarding the participation of seemingly "happy, romantic" Western cities in indirect neo-imperial military involvement in non-Western countries, "I'm not naive about cities, I'm not naive about nations," Hage states, "just because a city has some culture and looks nice, doesn't mean it hasn't got an undercurrent of violence. Montreal is a large military industrial complex. Under all that beauty there is something very ugly" (qtd.in Sakr, "Expanding" 90)

The novel, therefore, puts under scrutiny Western countries' peacemaking, democratic and human rights ideals. The reality of Canada's relationship with the dictators of the Middle East and the masking of its real interest is exposed when Majeed talks about the West's involvement in the wars and the political condition of their homelands, saying "we come to these countries for refuge and to find better lives, but it is these countries that made us leave our homes in the first place" (153). While Canada promotes and functions according to the values of democracy on a national scale, on a global international level, they are the sole benefiters from the dictatorship of Middle-Eastern countries. Majeed justifies, "these countries we live in talk about democracy, but they do not want democracy. They want only

dictators. It is easier for them to deal with dictators than to have democracy in the countries we come from" (ibid). Supporting dictators and supplying them with weapons to sustain their regime are done in exchange for money and the natural resources of their lands. This mutual relationship demonstrates the hypocrisy of the West, as it contradicts its national commitment for democracy.

VII.2 Madness and Redemption

The protagonist reacts to this shocking revelation in the novel's dramatic finale where his cockroach self finally wins over in the novel's dramatic and violent finale when Shohreh fails to kill Shaheed, her rapist, and the protagonist steps in to save her. He stabs the bodyguard, shoots Shaheed twice, and then escapes down the kitchen drains towards the underground in his cockroach form:

> I crawled and swam above the water, and when I saw a leaf carried along by the stream of soap and water as if it were a gondola in Venice, I climbed onto it and shook like a dancing gypsy, and I steered it with my glittering wings towards the underground.

Hout reads this ending as a cathartic resolution to the protagonist's "unresolved trauma complex" ("Cultural Hybridity" 339). Drawing parallels between Shohreh and his sister Souad is a thought put into his head by Shohreh who asks him to help her with her plan of killing Shaheed:

> My torturer and your brother-in-law are the same kind. [Shohreh]
> You and my sister are the same kind. [Narrator] (171)

Consequently, the protagonist's assassination of Shaheed provides him with a second chance to avenge his sister and redeem himself of the guilt of her death.

While I agree with Hout's reading, I might propose another interpretation of this scene. I equate the protagonist's act of killing Shaheed as his complete renouncement of the human part of his Self, the "worst part," as the albino cockroach tells him before. Shaheed represents all the aspects of humanity that the protagonist abhors. He stands for the Iranian

regime's religious hypocrisy, as he raped Shohreh for months while forcing her to listen to religious lessons with the voice coming from TV "talking about God" playing in the background (170). He also stands for political oppression, violence, and dictatorship concealed under a mask of democracy, as explained earlier. For this, the protagonist's disposing of him is a symbolic act of his disposal of his human self with all its greed, hypocrisy, arrogance, inhumanity and injustice.

Conclusion

The unnamed protagonist's phantasmagorical metamorphosis into a cockroach and the underground space in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* point to mental illness and a deeply entrenched trauma. They illustrate the protagonist's quest for a Self in the margins of a socio-economic hierarchy in multicultural Montreal. Montreal's geography itself becomes an invisible antagonist that reflects the inhospitality and xenophobia of its privileged white inhabitants in addition to the traumatized psyche of the disillusioned protagonist.

While the traumatized narrator has escaped his war-torn country and the trauma and guilt of his sister's death, my reading of the novel focuses on his present immigrant condition. This is mainly for the reason that the protagonist, himself, refuses to share his past unless coerced by his therapist. Therefore, I read his therapy sessions as an oppressive space, representative of the state's oppressive power that seeks to construct a narrative of the benevolent multicultural Canada as the welcoming sanctuary for the battered and traumatized immigrant. This can only be realized by painting an image of the protagonist and his homeland based on the binaries Western vs. Arab, superior vs. inferior, pacifist vs. violent and so on. This reading, hence, proves that Western Manichean mindset has never ceased to exist as Bhabha claims. Hage challenges it through his portrayal of an unsuccessful immigrant who refuses to be grateful.

The novel portrays the depoliticization of the protagonist's present issues in Canada, such as his poverty, joblessness, and hunger, which his therapist refuses to acknowledge. Attributing his psychopathological splitting into a cockroach by his therapist to his traumatic past while he resorts to it to survive deeply frustrates him and triggers his mental illness. His dissociation and hybrid human-cockroach identity give him a sense of power and allow him to transgress denied boundaries and return the oppressive gaze of the West represented by Genevieve and other white Canadians.

My Balaevian reading of the novel studies the socio-economic setting of the impoverished hungry immigrant in multicultural Canada. It proves two key points. First, the socio-economic marginalization of the immigrants who are denied access to white spaces and upward economic mobility at work despite high qualifications in addition to racism are experienced as an insidious trauma, as shown by the protagonist's metamorphosis as a psychic defense mechanism to defy them. Second, in a country that claims to be multicultural, global, and cosmopolitan where cultural contact and mixing are possible, hybridity has really failed to dismantle the rigid hierarchies and melt the racial and socio-economic borders in the face of non-Western and non-white immigrant (this includes in the novel all the Iranian, Middle-Eastern, and North African immigrants), with the exception of Third World elites, as discussed by Friedman, Ahmad and other anti-hybridity critics.

The novel, indeed, is built on a pessimistic attitude towards humanity and its values altogether. The protagonist is hopeless regarding the idea of a flat, welcoming and accepting human world, hence regarding the ideas of globalization and cosmopolitanism themselves. That is not only due to the socio-economic injustice and racism he faces, but due to humanity's dark history of imperialism and colonialism. Although, their age has long passed, Western countries have simply turned into neo-colonialist and neo-imperialist countries through their military interventions in Third World countries, represented by Iran in the novel,

in return for their natural resources and for financial reasons, as well as through its double standard regarding democracy. While Western countries promote ideals of human rights in their countries, they make sure, through their interventions, that the Third World is governed by one dictator after another to secure their own benefits.

For these reasons, the protagonist refuses to identify neither as an Arab-Canadian nor as a human-cockroach, and in a final statement of madness, in a symbolic suicide that mirrors his actual suicide attempt at the beginning of the novel, he renounces his human Self and embraces solely his more superior cockroach Self and swims to the warm, welcoming and accepting underground. My reading of *Cockroach*, therefore, illustrates the failure of Bhabha's hybridity not only for its elitism and inadequacy to represent the realities of the hybrids in the street and the insidious trauma they suffer, but for its failure to destroy the larger self-justifying neo-colonial logic and hierarchies.

General Conclusion

General Conclusion

This thesis has explored the topics of cultural hybridity and trauma in Rabih Alameddine's novel *I, the Divine: A Novel in First Chapters* and Rawi Hage's novel *Cockroach*. My aim has been threefold: first, I analyzed the personal and collective traumas the characters suffer from in their homelands prior to their immigration or the insidious trauma they suffer from in the host countries within the framework of trauma theory, particularly from the viewpoints of Cathy Caruth and Michele Balaev, second I studied the change that occurs to the protagonists in the novels when they move to a new country and the extent to which they succeed or fail in establishing a hybrid identity, and third I explored the link between past traumas and their hybrid identities and how the former leads to the failure of enjoyment of the positive potentials of the latter.

My investigation begins with Bhabha's theory of hybridity which has for long been considered the leitmotiv of cultural mixing and mobility. As part of a postcolonial discourse, hybridity entails that traces of the Other are found in the Self, thus, allowing for the deconstruction of essentialist identifications based on notions of purity. It denotes an active exchange that leads to creative transformation on all cultures involved. This exchange occurs in what Bhabha calls a Third Space, a space laden with transformative power and potential for liberation, productivity and creativity.

Hybridity and the Third Space are exalted by postcolonial theorists as benign and beneficial. This perspective, which I consider idealized and utopian, has overlooked that in this interplay between cultures and identities, the hybrid subject risks losing a sense of who s/he is. The negotiation of identities, upon which hybridity is grounded, does not necessarily and automatically lead to the creation of a liberating and powerful third hybrid identity. Identity is stripped of any depth and may altogether be lost in the process, as it gets reduced to a mere mask to be worn and thrown at will. This condemns hybrids to live in an unstable,

uncertain, painful in-betweenness, homelessness and rootlessness. Hybridity as such translates into a tormenting splitting of subjecthood and unbelonging.

Hybridity is seen as an outcome of a world defined as an age of immigration and diaspora, postmoderniam and heterophilia, an age that celebrates mixing, heterogeneity and transgression. It is the logic of multiculturalism and globalization that stands for the erosion of boundaries between nations, cultures and geographies, and the destruction of the erect hierarchies and essentialist notions and significations. In this celebratory view of hybridity, hybrids are seen as "lubricants in the clashes of culture; they were the negotiators who would secure a future free of xenophobia" (Papastergiadis 261). However, to say that hybrids are the lubricants and negotiators in the clash of cultures and the antidote of essentialism, purity, racism and xenophobia implies an easy and smooth movement between cultures, which does not really describe the experience of all cultural mixing, as this thesis seeks to prove

Therefore, on a less utopian note than that of hybridity theorists, I must ultimately argue that hybridity is for the elite only and does not reflect social realities of the immigrants in the streets, as my reading of *Cockroach*demonstrates. The intellectual elites enjoy border crossing, but to the real border-crossers, the process is not easy, smooth, pain-free or even possible sometimes. The borders are rigid and the fences high in the face of the poor, racialized, and traumatized Third World immigrant.

Hybridity originated in the racist discourse of the 18th and 19th centuries and was transferred out of this colonial discourse to the realm of postcolonial studies where it was endowed with revolutionary and subversive powers. However, the social realities of diasporic hybrid figures attest to its failure in abating inequalities. Thus, I interpret hybridity as neither post-hegemonic nor post-racial, for today in our multicultural global age, the world is still compatmentalized ethnically, culturally and economically and the boundaries are still as erect as ever. Neo-racism, neo-colonialism, and neo-imperialism are new phenomena that exit

today in our globalized world, proving that the West still looks at the non-West through neo-orientliast lens; and the white people still have their own privileged spaces that deny access to the dangerous, foreign, inferior, non-white immigrant.

To say we live in an age of immigration and mobility means also that we live in an age of trauma that lie behind the wars, forced migrations, diasporas, marginalization and racism. This takes us to the second issue explored in this thesis. Trauma is an experience that defies spatial and temporal coherence. It shatters the victims's perception of the world and Self and breaches his/her time, history, language, and meaning. As an unclaimed and belated experience that is not known as it happens but manifests itself through repetitions and intrusive phenomena, trauma condemns the individual to a lifetime of suffering trapped in its liminal time.

The belated nature of trauma and its sudden occurring raise problems of representation. Thus, a new genre, known as trauma fiction is born to address the issues of the representation of trauma and the portrayal of an experience characterized by its inaccessibility in the here and now in favor of a more distorted and split experience of reality through spatial dislocation, temporal disruption, and self dividedness. Trauma, as an unclaimed experience cannot be spoken about, or represented, in a conventional and direct way. This is mainly because traumatic memory cannot be narrated directly since it can only happen in a fragmented and non-linear way through flashbacks, nightmares, silences, and other intrusive phenomena.

Following a classical Caruthian trauma approach, I have read Alameddine's novel, *I, the Divine* as a postmodern fictional memoir, focusing on the PTSD symptoms and how they are represented. The novel's fragmentariness mimics, on the one hand, the irregular encoding of traumatic memories and, on the other hand, the protagonist's splintered subjectivity. Sarah's traumatic experiences are registered in her mind as traumatic memories that resist

linguistic articulation. Consequently, The novel is unfinished, shifting and revisionist, reflecting the disrupted temporality of trauma that results from the return of repressed memories in the form of PTSD symptoms (such as Sarah's dreams, resistance of telling, repetition, silence and intrusive stimuli).

Moreover, the fragmentation of the novel is also linked to Sarah's hybrid identity. It reflects her attempts to revisit, re-assess, and revise her past experiences, her relationship with the people around her, as well as her own identity. Her constant oscillation between the past and present and between Lebanon and the USA portrays her restlessness and failure to undertake a constructive journey of self-discovery, which resists to be told in a linear and chronological narrative. Hence, this proves my arguments that trauma influences the success of hybridity and the smooth movement between cultures.

Moreover, another important postmodern concept that is manifested in the novel is the collapse of time into a set of past repetitions and the blurring of the boundaries between the past, present and future. While Sarah's future remains unknown and ambiguous, the contours of her past merge with those of the present since her past traumas still permeate every corner of her Self and life, and stand in the way of the enjoyment of all the potentials of her hybrid transnational identity.

Cultural hybridity is articulated in the novel through its postmodern aesthetics and decentering moves. Sarah's inability to complete her chapters and to move beyond the first chapter underlies her inability to make sense and articulate her unstable hybrid identity. The linguistic, textual and generic hybridity of the narrative are simply means to articulate Sarah's splintered multicultural and hyphenated self located between multiple homes. She comes from a well-off multiethnic and hybrid background, being the daughter of an Arab father and American mother, which permits her to move freely between Lebanon and the USA. However, her sense of unbelonging, alienation and disconnection from both parts of her

hybrid identity is influenced by many factors such as her traumatic past and her current alienation and PTSD affliction in the USA.

In fact, the obsession with narrativity really conceals Sarah's frustration with her dividedness and her obsession to make sense of her shattered self. When asked how successful the narrative of the novel is in depicting cross cultural identity crisis, Alameddine responds that the narrative is driven by Sarah's "urgent need, a neurosis really, to make something of her life." The style of the novel reflects a mind fragmented by the traumatic experiences of rape and the Civil War and by its cross-cultural background, "how she writes each chapter, where she leaves off, is caused specifically by her background," as Alameddine says (Devlin).

Using a Balaevian pluralistic trauma approach to read the novels, I also focused on the socio-cultural, political and economic contexts within which the characters' traumas occur. It is through this pluralistic trauma model, that I have established a link between trauma and hybridity through studying the impact of collective and personal trauma on the characters' belonging, identity and the experience of space, which is of central importance in Alameddine'sand Hage's novels. Space itself becomes a bodily experience in the novels. Any assault on the body is perceived as a traumatic assault on the Self as well.

The relationship of the protagonists in Alameddine's and Hage's novels to Lebanon is defined by their bodily experiences of the Civil War, physical, mental, and sexual abuse (in the case of Alameddine's novel). For example, following a pluralistic trauma model reading of Alameddine's *I the Divine*, I studied the socio-political context where her rape took place. During war, masculinity is threatened. Thus, Men seek to perform and assert their masculinity through both physical and sexual violence, especially within hypermasculine societies such as the Lebanese. Still a teenager, in the midst of the chaos and loss of order of the war, Sarah became the object through which a group of men sought to prove themselves by raping her.

Not only this, but her patriarchal, though well-educated, father have taught her at a very young age the notion of honour which the female should represent and preserve in Arab societies. A man gets away with rape, but a raped woman stains the family's honour and brings shame to them.

Accordingly, Alameddine criticizes the patriarchal Arab culture and society that indirectly allow rape to happen and force the woman to carry the burden of trauma, guilt and silence. Sarah's traumatic bodily experiences, both that of the war and rape, are the peculiarities of place that influence how she views her Self and cause her to sever her relationship to her homeland. They are also scars, which she carries with her through time and space as the continuity of her existence in the USA is ruptured by the intrusiveness of the traumatic memories which disturb her daily life there, her ability to belong, and distort and fragment her life narrative.

Trauma and hybridity in Rawi Hage's *Cockroach* are represented and read differently. They are linked to the different forms of oppression the immigrant faces in the host country, which I read as an insidious trauma that affects the process of border crossing and demonstrates that the boundaries are not permeable for the poor, non-white Arab immigrant. While the protagonist literally has a scar on his face that symbolizes his past traumas, which are transferred with him to Canada in the form of psychopathological defense mechanism, my Balaevian reading of the novel focuses on his present living conditions and the social injustices he faces in Canada, which traumatize him and trigger his mental illness. Whenever the protagonist is met with unlivable situations, such as hunger or racism, he resorts to a pathological splitting of the self into a hybrid half-human-half-cockroach creature to face them, which is the same defense strategy he uses in his homeland to escape war, the abuse of his father and mother, and to steal food to survive.

Hage's protagonist comes from a poor Lebanese background and immigrates to Canada escaping the trauma of his sister's death at the hand of her husband, the militia man, and his guilt for his failure to avenge her. In Canada, a multicultural space, he finds himself experiencing a different kind of inhumanity and trauma, that of racism, discrimination, poverty and hunger. He eventually embraces the identity of a cockroach and chooses to inhabit a different kind of Third Space, an imaginary underground space contrasted to the cold, inhumane and xenophobic aboveground city.

Hage's novel debunks the myth of Canadian multiculturalism and attacks it for accepting and integrating only those immigrants who are successful and grateful or those who conform to the image of the exotic (but not too exotic, dangerous and violent) Other. Through his unsuccessful, ungrateful, and impoverished protagonist, Hage challenges this self-serving narrative of immigrant success and examines the exclusion, discrimination, racism, and violence the immigrants experience at the hand of the state and its white inhabitants. The novel explores the complexity of the notions of borders in a 21st globalized, multicultural, cosmopolitan, colour-blind, raceless setting. Hage presents a world in which the borders are not fading away, and the binarism of the West and East, white and non-white is still functioning, unlike what Bhabha's hybridity theory claims.

Despite Canada's self-image and international reputation as a successful multicultural country where the boundaries are porous and flexible and cultural mixing is encouraged, its space is compartmentalized based on ethnicity and whiteness, proving the existence of neo-colonial and neo-orientalist logic that characterizes the system of inclusion and exclusion in the West. The protagonist is rejected from the privileged spaces of the rich white inhabitants of the city due to his visibly different skin colour and immigrant background. Hage, thus, demonstrates the failure of hybridity in the destruction of the primordial racist binary system. Only the elite immigrants, the "residue of colonial power" (112) are well-integrated into

Canadian society and get to enjoy its multiculturalism while all the other immigrants are haunted by their past traumas, under-employed, underprivileged and marginalized.

Marginalization, alienation and the racist attacks Hage's protagonist faces are experienced as an insidious trauma that disturbs his self-view, dehumanizes him, and triggers his psychological metamorphosis into a cockroach. His mental illness permits him to transgress social, cultural and economic boundaries, gain access into the denied privileged spaces, and return the dehumanizing gaze of the West. Not only this, but the novel sheds light on Canada's dark history of colonialism and genocide of its aboriginal inhabitant, as well as on its recent political and military interventions in Middle Eastern countries. All these revelations are too traumatic to the already-fragile protagonist and cause his eventual descent into madness when he realizes that the world of the humans is too cruel and too hypocritical to belong to. He ultimately rejects both of his hybrid identities, his Arab-Canadian as well as his human-cockroach identities, and chooses to embrace only the more morally-superior cockroach identity in a final statement of madness.

Both *I, the Divine* and *Cockroach* steer away from the idealization of hybridity and from Bhabha's emphasis on the productivity of cultural hybridity through the creation of new trans-cultural forms. Instead, they portray the psychological turmoil that hybrid subjects experience within the Third Space. They demonstrate that the clash between the contradictory elements of identity destabilizes the security and certainty of home. This leads to tension, restlessness, unbelonging and homelessness, and rootlessness. While these states are romanticized according to the nomadic thinking of hybridity theorists, they are not experienced as positive and liberating by the protagonists of both novels because of the influence traumatic experiences.

Instead of being a liberating space, the Third Space both protagonists inhabit is fraught with the pain of traumatic memories and unbelonging. Sarah describes the pain of

unbelonging, homelessness and rootlessness as the tormenting chopping of part of herself wherever in the world she is. "[H]er heart remains there. To survive here, she must hack off a part of herself, chop, chop, chop," she narrates (69). Similarly, the unnamed protagonist of *Cockroach* expresses his sense of split subjectivity, "I was split between two planes and aware of two existences, and they were both mine. I belong to two spaces, I thought, and I am wrapped in one sheet" (84). He expresses how painful this is when he ponders, "But how, how to exist and not to belong?" (114). Analyzing these two works, I, therefore, have sought to confirm that identity is not a mask or a piece of clothing to be worn and discarded at will, and that one cannot easily slip in and out of belonging.

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