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The Othered *'Other'* in Cross-Cultural Encounters: Redefining Homi Bhabha's Theory of Third Space in the Case of Arab American Women's Narratives Before and After September 11, 2001

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Abstract

The narratives produced by Arab American women authors inhabit a unique in-between place within the clash between the West and the East. Binary political, racial, cultural, and gendered elements are at stake when Arab American women negotiate their ethnic, hybrid and gendered identity. This, eventually, leads them to negotiate aspects of their identity in what Homi Bhabha terms the Third Space of encounter between different groups of power, where both groups are offered a space for communication, articulation, and negotiation to articulate their identities, resulting in demolishing binary oppositions and superiority- inferiority relationships.

However, given the complicated historical and contemporary clash between the two worlds, gaps in Bhabha's theory are evident in the case of contemporary Arab American women narratives. The intersectional nature of their experience as Arab, American, woman and writer intensifies their ambivalent space between the two worlds, marking them as the *Othered Other* and placing them at the margin of both centres, the American society, and the Arab American community. Thus, my PhD project argues against the utopian tone of Bhabha's definition of Third Space, reveals the gaps using the narratives of Arab American women and redefines it to cover the intersectionality of Arab American women identities.

This thesis reveals the limitations of Bhabha's theory of Third Space as it oscillates between the genres of fiction and non-fiction while highlighting the different immigration status of the characters in the examined texts. This thesis draws its temporal parameters between the periods before and after September 11, 2001 (i.e., 1990s to the 2010s), as this timeframe witnessed the emergence of a solidified Arab American identity in the face of the dominant discriminatory discourses resulting from the various political and social clashes between the Arab world and America at the time.

Acknowledgment

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Introduction

Overview

> *There was an incredible dust cloud that came through the streets, that came rolling down the streets, our direction where we were at that point, so it covered us completely. And there was a Hasidic man and there were blacks and there were whites - people were all one. Everyone was stripped of their ethnicity, of their clothing, or their status in life. Everyone was helping one another. And it's ... you really see humanity at its best.*[1]

In a documentary released on the twentieth anniversary of the New York 9/11 attacks, the above witness's account of the moments following the collapse of the World Trade Center's Twin Towers reveals the common humanity of all those who responded to the tragedy. However, the events of 9/11 ultimately unified the American people in such a way that Muslims and Arabs in the United States (US) (or anyone exhibiting any physical or cultural resemblance to them) became subject to the 'limited and binary rhetoric (you are either with us or against us, patriotic vs. unpatriotic) that characterised a stricken and angry post-9/11 US public'.[2] In the days following the events of 9/11, after the identification of the hijackers as Muslim Arabs, the overwhelming shock that struck the US was transformed into a call for revenge. Subsequently, the focus of the discourse in the US media and popular culture was on disseminating powerful negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. This tremendous wave of biased representation resulted in racial discrimination against anyone perceived as Arab or Muslim.[3]

Despite the above, it is arguable that the representation of Arabs and Muslims in the US media and popular culture was not always negative, with examples of positive representation, such as the occasions when US media outlets reported on hate crimes against

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[1] Brian Knappenberger, *Turning Point: 9/11 and the War on Terror* (Netflix, 2021).
[2] Carol Fadda-Conrey, 'Writing Arab-American Identity Post 9/11', *Al-Raida Journal*, (2007) <https://doi.org/10.32380/alrj.v0i0.186> [accessed 5 October 2018], pp. 59-64 (p. 59).
[3] Marta Bosch-Vilarrubias, *Post-9/11 Representation of Arab Men by Arab American Women Writers* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016), p. 2.

Arabs and Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, characterising them as victims. Indeed, numerous media outlets and many political and cultural figures differentiated explicitly between *positive* and *negative* Arabs and Muslims, or 'friends' and 'enemies' as when President George W. Bush explained to the US nation, shortly after the attacks, that 'the enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends, it is not our many Arab friends. Our enemy is a radical network of terrorists and every government that supports them'.[4] However, attempts to underline a distinction failed to humanise Arabs and Muslims in the eyes of many US Americans. Critic Evelyn Alsultany states that differentiational representations, or 'sympathetic portrayals of Arabs and Muslims in US television' that 'usually include a "positive" representation of an Arab or Muslim to offset the negative depiction',[5] have created a new kind of racism, 'one that projects antiracism and multiculturalism on the surface but simultaneously produces the logics and affects necessary to legitimise racist policies and practices'.[6]Alsultany further argues that sympathetic portrayals of Arabs and Muslims presented the United States as a benevolent and 'enlightened country that has entered a postrace era',[7] thereby assisting in promoting the government's overt propaganda war against Afghanistan and Iraq, passed off by US officials as a War on Terror.

When locating the Arab and Muslim community in the US within these complicated spheres of representation, it is vital to observe that such representations signify a shift from the dominant pre-9/11 approach of demonising the *Other* to the use of sympathetic portrayals to validate unjust practices or war in its aftermath. The complex representation of Arabs and Muslims in the US further problematises the positioning of Arab Americans in their

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[4] George W. Bush, *Address to a Joint Session of Congress and the American People* (Washington DC: September 20, 2001) <www.whitehouse.gov/news/releases/2001/09/20010920-8.html> [accessed 5 December 2021].

[5] Evelyn Alsultany, 'Arabs and Muslims in the Media after 9/11: Representational Strategies for a "Postrace" Era', *American Quarterly*, 65.1 (2013) <https://doi.org/10.1353/aq.2013.0008> [accessed 16 February 2020], pp. 161-169 (p. 161).

[6] Ibid., p. 162.

[7] Ibid., p. 162.

interactions with the US public, due to the significant historical conflicts between the two spheres. While the ethnic experience of Arabs in the US resembles that of many other ethnic groups with regard to the need to navigate racism, discrimination, and Othering, the ethnic experience of Arabs in the US is far more problematic due to the racial, ethnic and gendered identities of people who trace their origins to the Arab world. There have also been three waves of Arab immigration to the US, each marked by unique acculturation processes and historical and political clashes between the constructed dichotomy of the West and the Middle East.

The experience of Arab American women, in particular, is situated on the margins of encounters between the Arab and Arab American community and American society. On the one hand, Arab American women must navigate Orientalist and neo-Orientalist representations that circumscribe their identities and self-understanding in various ways. On the other, they are governed by the patriarchal and Arab nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist codes of the Arab societies that minimise their voices and challenge their agency. Writings by contemporary Arab American women reflect the dilemma of identity and hybridity negotiation that characterises this clash between the two worlds. Their narratives represent a prominent site for negotiating and reflecting upon the limited understandings and patterns of representation that emerge from the dominant discourses that inform both portions of their hyphenated identity.

To understand these relationships more fully, this thesis examines five literary works written by contemporary Arab American women. The chosen texts are the pre-9/11, Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage* (1999); and the post-9/11, Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003), Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008) and Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence* (2012). Each text features diverse characters with differing migration statuses from different parts of the Arab world, and illuminates issues of

identity and hybridity among the interaction between the Arab and Arab American community and the American society. The thesis aims to contribute to the fields of postcolonial studies and minority literature, using Homi K. Bhabha's theory of Third Space to reveal issues of identity and hybridity present in the writing, as well as using the texts to reveal the limitations and reimagine the utopic ideals of Bhabha's theory through the lenses of Arab American women's narratives.

This thesis defines its temporal parameters before and after 9/11 (i.e., 1990s to the 2010s), as this timeframe witnessed the emergence of a solidified and weaponised Arab American identity in response to the political and social changes that occurred between the West and the Arab world. The increasing anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment in the 1990s was fuelled by the political and social clashes between the two worlds, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, the American hostage crisis and multiple Arab-Israeli conflicts, which prompted damaging legislation, hostile rhetoric, and acts of discrimination and violence against the Arab American community. The terrorist attacks of September 11 increased the challenges faced by the community, including greater levels of discrimination, harassment, surveillance and violence, as well as more nuanced forms of exclusion. Unpacking issues of identity and hybridity in the narratives of Arab American women across this important period in Arab American contemporary history and during the development of discriminatory and hostile discourse between the 1990s and 2010s assists in our quest to examine the impact of the events of 9/11 on the narratives of Arab American women and how their experience is further marginalised in times of atrocities. It also assists in exploring the similarities and differences that affect identity and hybridity negotiation in the writers' narratives, and generates questions concerning the impact of such crucial events on cross-cultural encounters, therefore questioning the static, homogenised and dated nature of

Bhabha's Third Space when applied to the narratives of contemporary Arab American women writers.

Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space

In the domain of post-colonial theory, clashes between opposing nations have long drawn the attention of theorists as they attempt to establish the purpose and character of those interactions typifying colonial or postcolonial encounters. Homi Bhabha is one among many postcolonial scholars who have theorised and offered multiple conceptions to characterise such interactions. Bhabha's prominent theory of Third Space essentially illustrates how any direct communication between two or more opposing groups reveals various levels of racism, discrimination, and binary relations, and proposes a Third Space in which effective encounters, negotiations, and communication can occur.[8] Bhabha's Third Space delivers equal opportunities to the opposing groups to negotiate, rather than negate, their identities beyond notions of otherness and difference and binary relations such as master-slave and superior-inferior positions.[9]

Bhabha's notion of hybridity, which is central to his theorisation of Third Space, was primarily featured in his 1984 essay 'Signs Taken for Wonders', where he advances the dichotomy of 'the East' and 'the West', as set out between in Edward Said's *Orientalism*, by introducing the concept of hybridity, a fused, shaped or unnamed cultural space that encompasses the experience of living between two cultures. Bhabha develops his notion of hybridity in his 1990s book, *Nation and Narration*, arguing that the nation can be understood through the concept of hybridity as a blend of historical, cultural and linguistic dynamics, and multiple, contradictory meanings, which combine to form a new type of cultural identity. He

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[8] Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York: Routledge Classics, 1994), p. 37.
[9] Ibid., p. 37.

argues that rather than seeing the nation as a singular, unified unit, it should be understood as

a site of 'in-betweenness' and hybridity. Bhabha writes:

> The "locality" of national culture is neither unified nor unitary in relation to itself, nor must it be seen simply as "other" in relation to what is outside or beyond it. The boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity, incorporating new "people" in relation to the body politics, generating other sites of meaning and, inevitably, in the political process, producing unmanned sites of political antagonism and unpredictable forces for political representation.[10]

Bhabha's call to view the nation through the concept of hybridity and in-betweenness

was further developed when combined with his notion of Third Space in his 1994 book, *The*

Location of Culture, which combines the conceptualisation of hybridity with the introduction

of the theory of Third Space. Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space developed from an

exploration of the findings of Frantz Fanon and Edward Said with regard to postcolonialism,

and is distinguished by his determination to ground and provide a counterpoint from which to

negotiate identity issues. Bhabha's resolve to negotiate the clash between the two opposing

powers (or mainly the coloniser and the colonised) led to the creation of a space in which

they both acknowledged their deep mutual involvement, in and desire to avoid engaging in a

discourse about, origins and storm paradoxes. Thus, Third Space has been used to define the

hybrid cultural identity that arises from the interweaving, colliding and merging components

from different cultures.

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha defines Third Space as a hybrid space of

enunciation, in which cultural exchange and the intermingling of identities and experiences

arises. He views this space as a site for the negotiation of cultural meanings between cultures,

allowing for a syncretic experience with a unique identity. According to Bhabha, this space

primarily breaks down 'the binary thought and essentialist identities produced by colonial

knowledge'.[11] That is, the binary between self and other, East and the West, colonised and

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[10] Homi K. Bhabha, 'Introduction', in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha, (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 1-7(p. 4).
[11] Ibid., p. 276.

coloniser can be disrupted and re-examined in the Third Space through the subversion of authority through a process of hybridisation that undermines the sole authority of the hegemonic colonial power on the production of meaning.

For Bhabha, the process of hybridisation provides scope for the influence of other marginal cultures and languages to interact in the process formulating meaning. The role of hybridity in colonial discourse, for him, lies in undermining the domination that occurs in a colonial situation, allowing 'other "denied" knowledge [to] enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority'.[12]Accordingly, Third Space is seen as a space of transition and transformation, wherein cultural boundaries and binaries can be undermined and re-negotiated.

Bhabha's Third Space theory posits that different cultural identities can be renegotiated in ambivalent, contradictory spaces, symbolizing the collective use of language, the negotiation and evolution of cultures, and the deconstruction of fixed ideas through processes of meaning-making. In this way, cultural semiotics emerges through a process of fluidity and openness that can be interpreted, revisited, and appropriated to create an entirely new concept. It is a hybrid, transcultural space, which eschews traditional notions of cultural purity and hierarchy, and instead embraces multiplicity, plurality and hybridity.[13]

Bhabha claims a new approach is needed to comprehend Third Space, as it opens up novel possibilities by disregarding the past. He clarifies that 'the transformational value of [third space] 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'.[14] In this sense, Third Space is an innovative space, despite being partially derived from

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[12] Ibid., p. 156.
[13] Ibid., p. 55.
[14] Ibid., p. 28.

two spaces that existed prior. It deviates momentarily from established values and norms, thereby affording a new outlook to support their evaluation.

In this thesis I will demonstrate that when examining the encounter between the Arab community in the US and American society, Bhabha's theory of Third Space is a valuable tool to inform our understanding of how we read the two culturally and politically clashing groups. In a postmodern world, and a country like the US, which has been populated by periodic and significant influxes of immigrants, hybridity and the concept of Third Space become important to the issue of migrancy and identity, which highlight the interplay between the identity of the migrant, their homeland, and the country in which they now live. By recognizing the hybrid and multiple identities of migrants, a more nuanced understanding emerges of both the personal experiences and identities of individuals, as well as how the larger concept of national identity can be shaped to include stories and lived experiences that relate to migrations. It also further highlights the importance of recognizing and respecting the diverse cultures and languages of those who migrate, in order to preserve the richness of the cultures in both their countries of origin and countries of destination.

In the case of this work, I consider the clash characterised by long-lasting conflicts that have historically generated various racist, discriminating, and binary relational practices and attitudes that have led to discourses of both anti-Arabism and anti-Americanism.[15] In addition, Bhabha's theory will prove beneficial when locating and conceptualising the hybridity of Arab American subjectivises as it examines the newly formulated identities and cultural symbols that typify the Third Space encounter.[16] Thus, the theory will assist us in understanding the transformative nature of transnational ideas and subjectivities, that is, the

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[15] A detailed account of the terms and their meanings will be provided in the next chapter, which covers the historical, political, and cultural background to this thesis, examining the narratives of female Arab American writers.

[16] Homi K. Bhabha, 'DissemiNation: Time, Narrative, and the Margins of the Modern Nation',in *Nation and Narration*, ed. by Homi K. Bhabha, (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 291-322(p. 293).

process of construction and reconstruction by which such ideas and subjectivities influence the existence of two or more cultures and places labelled as binaries.

As the thesis explores the notion of hybridity and hybridity construction in the narratives of Arab American women writers in the pre- and post- 9/11 period, it will also reveal certain limitations to Bhabha's definition of Third Space. These notably include its abstract and mythologising tone, which fails to accommodate the pragmatic realities of Arab and Arab American women, whose lives are defined by intersecting indices of social difference. Additionally, while Bhabha's Third Space underscores the role of origin, and serves as a space of liberation from cultural roots and historical genealogy, it negates the various roles of historical experiences and collective cultural memories and values in everyday life as they affect Arab American women. Moreover, I also consider Giorgia Severini's point that it is somewhat overambitious to describe the interaction between the cultures of the white coloniser and the marginalised as hybrid, due to the power white colonisers retain over the colonised.[17]

The theory also overlooks the heterogeneities of suppressed groups or the inhabitants of Third Space in terms of class, occupation, ethnicity, gender, sexuality and emergent nation-state. The inhabitants of Third Space do not necessarily all occupy an equal level of power and opportunity, and may not share a consistent or uniform experience of cultural negotiation. Variations between genders, generations, and emigration nation states have a critical impact on cultural negotiations, and therefore, on cross-cultural encounters, as observed in the literary tradition of Arab American narratives.[18]

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[17] Giorgia Severini, 'You Do Not Understand Me": Hybridity and Third Space in Age of Iron', *Theatre Research in Canada*, 31.2 (2010) <http://tricrtac.ca/en/> [accessed 5 October 2018], pp. 182-192 (p. 190).
[18] A detailed account of Homi Bhabha's theory and its limitations in the context of Arab American women's narratives will be discussed in Chapter Two.

As this thesis limits its examination to literary works written by Arab American women writers in the pre- and post-9/11 period, it aims to prove the hypothesis that Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space overlooks essential elements in the interaction between two opposing powers, such as gender, race and immigration status, therefore presenting a utopian image of such an interaction with no consideration of how the intersectionality of certain ethnic groups might affect the harmony of the encounter. Gaps in Bhabha's theory are revealed, not only because Arab American women's writings are more attentive to practical, lived and embodied experiences of Third Space in comparison to the utopian valence of the theory, but also because the ethnic, cultural, and political clashes between the two worlds affect the intersectionality of their ethnic experiences as described.

In addition, such gaps are more evident in the narratives of Arab American women's writing than in those of their male counterparts, due to their characterisation of Arab American ethnic identity as anchored in certain gendered and patriarchal standards.[19] Some of these standards are directly associated with being an Arab woman, such as the emphasis on preserving women's chastity and the model of the 'good' Arab woman, codes that conflict and clash with the ideals of freedom and individuality promoted in mainstream US society. These divergences between US norms and Arab society's ideals result in Arab American women being caught in between two contradictory sets of expectations with regard to their identities.

Research Rationale: Cross-cultural encounters and contemporary Arab American women's literature

Since the early waves of their immigration in the late nineteenth century, members of the Arab diaspora in the US have portrayed the encounters between the two worlds to which they belong, articulating the hybridity present in their Third Space through the canon of Arab

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[19] A detailed account of Homi Bhabha's theory and its limitations in the context of Arab American women's narratives will be discussed in Chapter Two.

American literature. Adopting diverse genres, including poetry, drama, fiction, and nonfiction, Arab American writers have effectively woven their own strand of literary tradition into the fabric of minority literature that emerged in the aftermath of the Civil Rights Movement of the mid-twentieth century, enriching the vast canon of US literature.

Regardless of whether they arrived in one of the three immigration waves or are their second-generation descendants, Arab American writers have reflected on the impact of the varied circumstances and historical events that surrounded the phase of their writings in representing their cross-cultural encounter with the American society. Undoubtedly, the problematic relations between the West and the Middle East, which came to be highlighted heavily following the tragedy of 9/11, have frequently complicated and informed Arab American writers' articulation of their identity.

As political tensions between the two worlds developed dramatically towards the end of the twentieth century, contemporary Arab American writers in the 1990s and post-9/11 were forced to negotiate the Orientalist-based attitudes and practices adopted by the US public, and in political discourse towards people perceived to be Arabs or Muslims. The dominant narrative characterised them variously as 'perpetual aliens, volatile extremists, and potential or actual terrorists (in the case of men) or oppressed, silenced, and disenfranchised subjects (in the case of women)'.[20]

Arab American women writers, in particular, faced an additional level of complexity relative to their compatriot male Arab writers, throughout the period discussed.[21] When articulating their hybridity between the Orientalist representations of their gender and race on the one hand, and the Arab nationalist and Islamic fundamentalist codes embodied in

[20] Conrey, p. 2.
[21] The position of Arab women in the different phases of Arab immigration to America will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

patriarchal Arab societies on the other, Arab American women writers must conceptualise their ethnic and gender identities while negotiating hybridity in their Third Space.

As Arab American identity solidified and also became weaponised in this period (1990s to the 2010s), Arab American women's literature became a prominent site for working through the lived experiences of cross-cultural encounters. Moreover, the genre blossomed as publishers looked to female Arab American authors to provide such narratives, rather than their male counterparts, as their experiences were deemed more marketable to US audiences. According to Sawires-Maselli, 'most of Arab American literature from the nineties until today is published by women', which is the result of 'a long American tradition favouring Arab women over men because they are seen as harmless victims of their culture, while their brothers and husbands are viewed as the aggressive, terrorist threat'.[22] This has allowed the writings and concerns of Arab American women to be relatively accessible as they reflect their ethnic experiences while negotiating hybrid identities.

Arguably, the publicity and marketability of writings by Arab American women to US audiences in this period was heightened by the sensational topics and themes their writings featured. In her work 'Islamophobia and the "Privileging" of Arab American Women', Nada Elia explicates the ways in which the writings of Arab women are privileged in the Western marketplace:

> Edward Said was told that Arabic is a 'controversial language,' when he suggested to a New York publisher promoting 'third world literature' that Egyptian novelist Naguib Mahfouz's book be translated into English (Said 2001). This was in 1980, at the time when novels by Mahfouz's compatriot, the feminist Nawal Saadawi - who also wrote in Arabic - were lining the shelves of American bookstores. In her case, the language was not considered 'controversial' probably because some of the topics she discussed, clitoridectomy and Arab women's sexuality, were too titillating to pass. Today there is a disproportionate ratio of Arab women to men writers available in libraries and bookstores, and assigned in various book groups and course syllabi.[23]

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[22] Marie-Christin Sawires-Masseli, *Arab American Novels Post-9/11: Classical Storytelling Motifs against Outsidership* (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag C. Winter, 2018), pp. 7-8.

[23] Nada Elia, 'Islamophobia and the "Privileging" Of Arab American Women', *NWSA Journal*, 18.3 (2006), <https://doi.org/10.2979/nws.2006.18.3.155> [accessed 10 July 2019], pp. 155-161 (p. 158).

This tendency among American publishers to favour Arab American women writers does not mean female Arab American authors do not encounter barriers to sharing their experiences. In fact, Arab American women writers had to carry out a dual mission when articulating their hybrid identities in such tense cultural and political climates. On the one hand, they felt the need to humanise their race and condemn US foreign policy in the Middle East, particularly in the aftermath of 9/11 or the so-called War on Terror. On the other hand, they aimed to acknowledge the need to move beyond simplistic representations of Arab American ethnic experiences, which centring on celebrating Arab cultural values and providing an active critique of Arab culture to condemn patriarchal practices over Arab women.

To illustrate how Arab American women's narratives engage with clashing themes when articulating their hybrid identities in the Third Space of encounter, this thesis explores the narratives of five texts: firstly, from pre-9/11, Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage* (1999); and secondly post-9/11, Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003), Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008) and Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence* (2012). The works of these Arab American writers reflect the dilemma of 'in-between-ness' as Arab American women, while negotiating their hybrid identities in their Third Space(s), surrounded by the long historical and contemporary political and cultural contradictions between the two sides of their hyphenated identity. Each of the texts distinguishes itself from the others by reflecting the experience of unique hybridity constructed from the multiple different factors that characterise the Arab American ethnic experiences.

These texts will assist this thesis's quest to critique Bhabha's definition of Third Space by providing various intersectional aspects of the ethnic experience of Arab American women, such as gender, race, and immigration status overlooked in Bhabha's

definition of Third Space. Moreover, the chosen set of texts allows me to trace and explore the writers' representations of their Third Space(s) in the periods prior to and post-9/11. The decision to explore texts authored both before and after the attacks of 9/11 helps us to conceptualise the effect of the disastrous event on the lives of Arab American women and the developing social stigmatisation of them as they transitioned from their pre-9/11 invisibility to a glaring visibility. The attacks also forged the development of stereotypes to be assigned to Arabs and Muslims, characterising them as backward savages, terrorists and enemies. This thesis will explore the genera of fiction and nonfiction interchangeably in the context of the pre- and post-9/11 to provide a more nuanced understanding of how the limitations in Bhabha's theory are manifested across the two genres during both periods.

The texts examined here feature different characters with differing statuses of migration, varying from second generation to exile or refugee, a distinction overlooked in Bhabha's definition of what comprises hybridity. Another area that draws attention is the problem of the hegemonic representation of people who trace their origin to countries in the Middle East, as associated with Bhabha's hegemonic representation of what a Third Space is.

Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Arabian Jazz* reflects on the experience of second-generation Jordanian-Arab American women living in the poor rural area of Euclid America, as the main characters, Melvina and Jemorah, negotiate their hybridity at the intersecting grids of class, ethnicity and gender. In the memoir *Even my Voice is Silence*, second-generation Soha Al-Jurf reworks post-memories of Palestine, while negotiating her position as an Arab American woman located at the intersection between two worlds in the post-9/11 American climate.

In her memoir, *A Border Passage*, Egyptian-Arab American Leila Ahmed narrates her journey of border crossing from Cairo to America as she traverses multiple geographical, national, ideological and occupational border-crossings. The text encompasses both the discourses of Orientalism and the Arab patriarchy unpacking a variety of historical, cultural and political factors that shape the position of Arab women, as she narrates her coming of age story from the final days of the British colonial presence in Egypt to the 1990s when she settles in America. Similarly, Randa Jarrar's novel *A Map of Home* manifests the hurdles facing Nidali, a diasporic Palestinian-Egyptian, fleeing Kuwait to America in the wake of the Second Gulf War of 1991. Jarrar's novel resists taking up a limited position or offering a monolithic representation of Arab women, potentially imposed by the neo-Orientalist and Islamic fundamentalist discourses of the post-9/11period, by creating the humorous trickster character of Nidali.

Finally, the hybrid genre (autofiction and short story cycle) of Leila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* hosts the voices of four Arab women cousins, Hala, Mawal, Soraya and Khadija, featuring different states of emigration, with each character featuring different forms of hybridity and foregrounding a particular aspect of her identity, including ethnicity, gender and sexuality. This further helps to shed light on and question the hegemonic nature of Bhabha's Third Space. The multiplicity of the voices in Halaby's text assist in fostering new knowledge of the heterogenicity of Arab American women's experience, prompting explorations of the position of Arab American women's experience in relation to Bhabha's Third Space.

Although some of the texts examined in this thesis have been heavily studied and critiqued in the domains of minority literary studies and postcolonial research, this thesis will be the first to provide a new approach to the reading of the texts to critique Bhabha's Third

Space, identifying gaps in the theory, and to conceptualise the point of encounter between the Arab American community and the American society. To date, a number of studies in the fields of postcolonialism, minority and ethnic literature have utilised Bhabha's definition of Third Space as a valid theory with which to interrogate the hybridity of the Arab American ethnic experience in their narratives. This thesis reflects upon these, also highlighting the insufficiencies of the theory with regard to its capacity to express the space inhabited by Arab women writers.

Amal Talaat Abdelrazek is among the many scholars who have drawn on Bhabha's theory to answer the question: 'what does it mean to be a hyphenated American or a hyphenated Arab?' referencing texts produced by Arab American women writers. [24] Aseel Taha reads the hybridity of Arab American literary figures, focusing on poetry as a prominent genre in the literary tradition of Arabic literature 'through which [the Arab American community] could express the dilemma of the Arab diaspora'.[25] Cristina Garrigós also employs Bhabha's notions of hybridity and Third Space to demonstrate how Arab American hybridity reflects the hybrid literary techniques used by Arab American writers 'to convey intercultural dislocation' as an aspect of their ethnic experience. [26]

Building on the previous work, this thesis is the first to take Bhabha's theory of Third Space as a theoretical basis from through which to read the selected literary texts relating to Arab women's experiences in the years before and after 9/11, revealing its affordances and limitations. Specifically, the evidence presented here will show that Bhabha's definition overlooks the problematic intersectional nature of ethnic identities in cases such as that of

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[24] Amal Talaat Abdelrazek, *Contemporary Arab American Women Writers* (Youngstown, N.Y.: Cambria Press, 2007), p. 1.

[25] Aseel Abdulateef Taha, "Arab-American Diaspora and the "Third Space": A Study of Selected Poems by Sam Hamod", *English Language and Literature Studies*, 8.2 (2018) <https://doi.org/10.5539/ells.v8n2p29> [accessed 18 October 2021], pp. 29-38 (p. 29).

[26] Cristina Garrigós, "The Dynamics of Intercultural Dislocation: Hybridity in Rabih Alameddine's *I, The Divine*", in *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* (Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2007), pp. 178-201 (p. 188).

Arab American women. The intersecting grids of gender, race, nationality, and immigration status, which characterise the experience of contemporary Arab American women, characterise their displacement in the clash between the two worlds. Thus, this thesis aims to answer the overarching question, of how Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space requires a more nuanced approach to the intersectionality of identity if it is to define the space of encounter of female Arab American narratives before and after the attacks of 9/11.

Significance of September 11 2001 in the construction of Arab American identity

Temporal parameters were defined to group the prominent literary texts by Arab American women writers to depict the relationship between the West and the Arab world, pre- and post the attacks of 11 September 2001. The date marks a 'defining moment' in recent history, [27] and most significantly for the narratives examined here. The date marks a lifting of the cloak of invisibility that had previously shrouded Arab Americans, dramatically transforming the identity narratives attributed to them by other US citizens. Identifying this date as significant assists us in providing a nuanced understanding of the intersectional nature of Arab American women's texts in the two periods. It also highlights the complexities and texture of the experiences examined in relation to the literary tools each genre covers, as well as the period in which they are written.

This thesis uses the term post-9/11 to refer to the period after the attacks of 11 September 2001 to the 2010s, which witnessed major events, including the War on terror and the US invasions of Afghanistan and Iraq, as well as the so-called Arab Spring and the various refugee waves it resulted in. All these events intensified the targeting of Arabs and Arab Americans as racialised threats to the US, thereby contributing further layers to the representations of Arabs and Muslims living there.[28]

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[27] Martin Amis, *The Second Plane* (London: Jonathan Cape, 2008), p. 3.
[28] A detailed account of how these events affected the lives of Arab and Arab Americans will be provided in Chapter One.

While this thesis aims to explore the effects of 9/11 on how Arab American women writers represent their Third Spaces, it also examines the period prior to the attacks using the term pre-9/11. This approach raises the question of how far we should look back in the pre-9/11 era. Although the attacks of 9/11 have had a considerable impact on the ethnic experience of Arab Americans, it is vital to acknowledge that the disastrous events of that day do not mark the starting point of the history of marginalisation of Muslims and Arabs in the US. The negative representations began well before the events of 9/11, particularly in the post-World War II era when there were massive waves of Arab and Muslim migration to the West, highlighting the huge political and ideological clashes between the two worlds,[29] as exemplified in the Israel-Palestine conflict.[30]

Although the negative stereotyping of Arabs and Muslims in the West has been a factor since the crusades in the 1100s,[31] it reached a climax in the 1990s. In his book *The Arab Americans: A History*, Gregory Orfalea states that the most prominent period for the marginalisation of Arabs and Muslims in the US in the pre-9/11 era was the 1990s:

> [There were] alarming spikes in hate crimes against Arab Americans and those who look like them during the 1991 Gulf War and after the Oklahoma City bombing. Stereotyping in the media, film, books, advertisements, and so forth, grew exponentially in this period and is responsible in part for the unleashing of a subliminal hatred or fear of the Arab in US society.[32]

These hate crimes towards Arabs and Muslims in the US, were in part linked to a number of political events that occurred in the 1990s, such as the second Gulf War, the reestablishment of al-Qaeda and its numerous terrorist attacks, including the bombing of the World Trade Center in 1993. In addition, events in the 1960s to the 1980s, such as the

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[29] A detailed historical background of the relationship between the two worlds is provided in Chapter One.

[30] Md Abu Shahid Abdullah, 'Muslims in Pre- and Post-9/11 Contexts', *International Journal of Comparative Literature and Translation Studies*, 3.3 (2015). <https://doi.org/10.7575/aiac.ijclts.v.3n.3p.52> [accessed 6 June 2019] pp. 52-59 (p. 53).

[31] Ibid., p. 53.

[32] Gregory Orfalea, *The Arab Americans* (Northampton, Mass.: Olive Branch Press, 2006), p. x.

multiple Arab-Israeli wars, the US hostage crisis in Iran, and the first and second Gulf Wars, all had major consequences for the problematic position of Arabs in the US. Nevertheless, while US society acknowledged the presence of an Arab American ethnicity before 9/11, they were, in Nadine Naber's words, 'the "invisible" racial/ ethnic group',[33] in terms of the ambiguous space they inhabited in ethnic and racial discourses.[34] The aftermath of 9/11 dramatically lifted the veil of invisibility, and, as Steven Salaita states, 'Arab Americans evolved from invisible to glaringly conspicuous (whether or not the conspicuousness was welcomed)'.[35]

While Arab American writers in the decades prior to the 1990s tended to identify less with their Arab tradition,[36] Arab American texts produced in the 1990s slowly shifted towards adopting an Arabic and American dual identity, a trend that expanded markedly in the post-9/11 period.[37] This growing emphasis on cultural identification was derived from the previously mentioned political events that forced Arab American writers to grapple with their identities. Indeed, Arab American novelists of the 1990s, such as Vance Bourjaily, William Peter Blatty, and Eugene Paul Nassar had positioned their texts as generally American, avoiding engagement with Arab themes.[38] Accordingly, the period from the 1990s to the period of 2010s stands out in the history of the ethnic experience of Arabs in America.

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[33] Nadine Naber, 'Ambiguous Insiders: An Investigation of Arab American Invisibility', *Ethnic and Racial Studies*, 23.1 (2000). <https://doi.org/10.1080/014198700329123> [accessed 10 April 2019], pp. 37-61 (p. 37).

[34] The different Arab immigration waves to the US and their acculturation process will be discussed in detail I the next chapter.

[35] Steven Salaita, 'Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism: Arab Americans before and after 9/11', *College Literature*, 32.2 (2005). <https://doi.org/10.1353/lit.2005.0033> [accessed 22 October 2018], pp. 146-168 (p. 149).

[36] Tanyss Ludescher, "From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature", *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States*, 31.4 (2006) <https://doi.org/10.1093/melus/31.4.93> [accessed 27 January 2018], pp. 93-114 (p. 101).

[37] For more details on the literary waves of the Arab American literary tradition, see Chapter One.

[38] Sawires-Masseli, pp. 7-8.

Hence, this thesis limits its examination of Third Space to noteworthy literary texts produced by Arab American women writers from 1990 onwards.

The decision taken herein to group the selected texts around the incident of 9/11 acknowledges the change 9/11 imposed on the character of the literary narratives produced by Arab American women. While literature by Arab American women before 9/11 focused primarily on exploring identity and addressing considerations self-discovery against the Orientalist stereotypes and Arab patriarchal norms, the literature produced by Arab American women changed in the aftermath of the attacks to reflect a fresh sense of identity and community in the face of adversity. Indeed, it is often highlighted how Arab Americans created various forms of solidarity as a way to resist the discrimination and Islamophobia they experienced. As the incident of 9/11 greatly impacted the lives of Arabs in America, the chosen timeframe assists us in exploring the similarities and differences that inform how the incident impacted the narratives of Arab American women and their negotiation of their hybridity, questioning the scope of Bhabha's notion of Third Space to encompass lived experiences in times of atrocities.

Thesis Structure

This thesis will be divided into three parts; the first will consist of two chapters that aim to provide a context for the Arab American women literary tradition and the conceptual framework this thesis draws on, explaining the groundwork for developing Bhabha's perceived Third Space. The first chapter covers the historical and contemporary backgrounds of the examined cases of Arab American women writers, and provides a context for their problematic positioning in comparison to other ethnic groups in America, through the exploration of the literary traditions espoused by the three waves of Arab immigrants to the US.

The second chapter aims to show the problematic aspects of Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space when applied to the point of encounter in hybrid and immigrant identities in the narratives of contemporary Arab American women. The chapter firstly defines and explains the theory, before discussing its relevance to the case studies. It will then draw attention to its limitations when applied to the narrative of Arab American women, in light of the background and context provided in the first chapter.

The second part of the thesis consists of two chapters sharing the overarching aim of revealing the limitations of Bhabha's Third Space in the literature studied in this section. The third chapter contributes to the thesis by attempting to answer the second research question of how the Third Space(s) of the second generation of Arab American women are represented in the narrative of pre- and post-9/11 period. This will be achieved through a close reading of Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence*. In this chapter I explore how each text uses elements of place and memory to negotiate characters' hybridity as second generation female Arab American authors in pre- and post-9/11 America. Shifting from fiction to nonfiction allows us to produce a more nuanced account of the utopianisms of Bhabha's Third Space, while also unpacking issues of hybridity and identity in second-generation experiences in two different genres, and across the timeframe selected for this thesis.

The fourth chapter aims to answer the third question of how factors of migration and immigration raise the overlooked issue of immigration status in Homi Bhabha's definition of Third Space. Considering Arab women's immigration narratives, this chapter investigates the multiplicity of the characters' experiences as they pass over the borders between the two worlds, by exploring the pre-9/11 text, Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage*, and the post-9/11 text, Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home.* This will be

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done by examining the texts through the notion of cultural translation to explore the transnational position of Arab women immigrant in America.

The third part of this thesis consists of the fifth and final chapter, which draws on the gaps pertaining to gender, race and immigration status in Bhabha's theory, as explored in the third and fourth chapters, to find an alternative, intersectional and inclusive definition of Third Space that encompasses and is theorised by Arab American women's experiences. Leila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* is used here to articulate our alternative definition, that also serves as an example of a post-9/11 Arab American text that uses a hybrid form of writing to present the diversity of Arab American women's ethnic experiences in consideration of the discussed gaps. This chapter's focus is on the study of Halaby's text, as it contributes another layer to our critique of Homi Bhabha's definition of Third Space, pointing out the hegemonic nature of his definition, which causes him to overlook the heterogenous nature of cases, such as that of Arab American women's intersectional and ethnic experience. Chapter five's reading of Halaby's text stresses not only the diversity of the ethnic experience of Arab American women, but also the diversity of their Third Space(s). Accordingly, the focus continues by outlining the literary genre and techniques used in Halaby's text to reflect on what is a unique approach to self-writing that offers an inclusive definition of the diverse patterns of Third Space in the case of Arab American women's narratives.

The Arab American women narratives examined in this thesis increase knowledge about the real experience of Arab American women in the pre- and post-9/11 eras, while negotiating their hybridity and intersectional identity among the political and social factors surrounding their everyday lives. The knowledge presented in this body of Arab American women's writings reveals how Bhabha's Third Space lacks potential when faced with the intersecting nature of Arab American women's experience, and the historical and

contemporary political and social changes that directly affect their location between two worlds. After reelling the gaps in Bhabha's definition using knowledge gathered from literary accounts of Arab American women writers, I anticipate that by the end of this thesis I will be able to find an alternative definition that builds upon and surpasses that of Bhabha's Third Space, to encompass the complexities of Arab American women's experience and accounts for their pragmatic realties.

Part One:

Contextual background and theoretical framework

Chapter One: The Arab American ethnic experience in the United States of America: Historical and contemporary background of the social and political factors shaping the community's ethnic experience

Although Arab American women had been present in the US (albeit in small numbers) since the initial arrival of Arab immigrants in the late nineteenth century, work on and by Arab American women only emerged in the last quarter of the twentieth century and only flourished in the twenty-first century. The burgeoning social, historical and political changes that have occurred since Arabs first came to America have directly or indirectly affected the construction of the Arab American women's identity and are echoed through their literary tradition. Ensuring a thorough understanding of the development of the literature produced by Arab Americans in general and Arab American women in particular is vital to the course of this thesis, as it reflects Arab American women's identity, and provides a context for the political and cultural changes that encourage writers to formulate creative spaces in which to voice their concerns.

When examining the literary tradition as it applies to the three immigration waves of Arabs to the US, this chapter seeks to contextualise the multitude of social and political factors that contribute to the racial, ethnic and gendered identification of US women who trace their origins to the Arab world. Clarifying the diversity of heritage and experience of these women contributes to furthering understanding of why their narratives fail to fit Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

Before beginning the discussion, it is important to clarify here what is meant by the term Arab, since the Orientalist understanding of the term associates it with all people who trace their origins to the Middle East and follow Islam.[1] This definition has resulted in the

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[1] The next chapter will discuss in detail the role of both Orientalism and the counter-orientalist movement of Pan-Arabism contributed to creating the hegemonic representation of Arabs.

labelling of all Middle Easterners as Arabs, all Muslims as Arabs, and all Arabs as Muslims.[2]

Other definitions of value note that the term Arab refers to those who carry an Arab ethnic identity and speak Arabic as their mother tongue. Countries that identify as Arab countries and are affiliated with the Arab League cover much of the Middle East and North Africa. The twenty-two countries of the Arab League states are Algeria, Bahrain, Comoros Island, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen.

Hegemonic representations of Arabs routinely ignore the diversity of each of the Arab countries' cultural differences, spoken dialects, and, more importantly, their different faiths. The Arab peoples vary in their religious alignments, affiliating with multiple different religious groups and subgroups, which include Muslims (Shiites, Sunnis, and minority sects such as Alawites and Zaidis), Christians (Catholics, Greek Orthodox, Protestants, and regional sects such as Copts, Chaldeans, and Maronites), as well as Druze, Jews, and Sufis, among others.

The next section of this chapter discusses the development of the field of Arab American literature in relation to the community's three waves of immigration to the US, so as to contextualise the development of the problematic positions of Arab Americans during the period of the texts examined. It will also serve as a reference point when underlining Bhabha's definition's limited capacity to explain the cross-cultural encounter experiences of Arab American women.

The first wave of Arab immigrants to the US (1880s to 1925)

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[2] Karen Culcasi and Mahmut Gokmen, 'The Face of Danger: Beards in The U.S. Media's Representations of Arabs, Muslims, And Middle Easterners', *82 Aether: The Journal of Media Geography*, viii.b, (2011) <https://mgm.arizona.edu/sites/default/files/articles-pdf/culcasi.pdf> [accessed 2 May 2018], pp. 82-96 (p. 86).

The emergence of Arab American literature dates to the first immigration wave of Arabs to the US in the late 1800s. These Arabs were mostly Christians, and were referred to as either Syrians or Turks as former citizens of the Ottoman Empire, the dominant power in the Middle East during the late nineteenth century.[3] They were mostly illiterate, and were less equipped with nationalist ideologies from their homelands compared to the second and third waves. They typically migrated to the US to seek economic opportunities or escape military service. Muslim Arabs did not participate during this period of emigration, as they feared they would be unable to maintain observance of their faith in a society with a Christian majority. The majority of early Arab immigrants, who were part of the first wave, had few expectations and considered themselves to be sojourners, with the aim of making money and then returning home.[4] For this reason, women only comprised a small proportion of migrants in the earlier immigration waves. In addition, women were relatively fewer in number than men due to 'the traditional attitudes of female modesty and the need for male protection for purposes of personal security [and] also to assure proper conduct'.[5] However, a number of early Arab immigrant women to the US did participate in the production of texts, mostly in Arabic, reflecting the conditions they experienced as women in the early waves of immigration.

Early in their immigration experience, Arab Americans' assimilation process differed from that of other ethnic groups entering US society. In her book *The Arab Americans*, Alixa Naff explains how early Arab Americans followed the model of the old country through identifying themselves with religiously segregated groups found in the villages and towns of

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[3] *Arab American Stories*, Arabamericanstories.Org, *Arab American Stories* <http://www.arabamericanstories.org/> [accessed 6 June 2019].

[4] Ailxa Naff, *The Arab Americans* (Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 1999) <https://archive.org/details/arabamericans00naff_0/page/92> [accessed 1 September 2019], p. 14.

[5] Michael W. Suleiman, 'A Brief History of Arab American Women, 1890s to World War II', in *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal,* ed. by Michael W. Suleiman, Suad Joseph and Louise Cainkar (Syracuse, New York: Syracuse University Press, 2021), pp. 21-52 (p. 25).

their homelands.[6] Such a 'village mindedness' developed factionalism within the community, [7] which later prevented them from developing a solid and single ethnic identity.

The fragmented nature of the community, arising from the diverse origins of the migrants themselves, as described above, is also reflected in the texts published. Each fragmented group within the community championed its own causes and interests, and this was mirrored in its diasporan consciousness and interactions with the host society. The publications that resulted mostly took the form of newspapers focusing on events in the Middle East. These newspapers, which existed for a brief period of time, clearly displayed the sectarian differences that were found within the early Arab American community; each newspaper was a voice to its sect during their 'temporary stay in America'.[8]

Although in small numbers, early Arab immigrant women in the US contributed to the production of newspapers. In his historization of Arab American women in the early part of the twentieth century, Michael Suleiman observes how early Arab women immigrants used newspapers to express 'their views concerning the main issues of concern to women at the time'.[9] This took the form of press articles calling for a freer environment and a better life for Arab women in both the US and in the homelands. Afifa Karam was among one of the early Arab immigrant women who contributed to the early Arab press in America and to women's journals back home. Karam began her publishing journey in the Arabic newspaper *al-Hodā* (Guidance), which was established in 1898 in New York. She dedicated her column to discussing women's issues and articulating feminist politics and women's rights.[10]

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[6] Naff, p. 63.
[7] Ibid., p. 63.
[8] Ibid., p. 40.
[9] Suleiman, *A Brief History of Arab American Women*, p. 22.
[10] Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies, *Moise A. Khayrallah Center for Lebanese Diaspora Studies Archive* <https://lebanesestudies.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu/collections/show/69> [accessed 24 November 2022].

These writings by early Arab immigrant women in the US were condemned by some male community members, who, according to Suleiman, 'feared the bad influence of such free spirits and the threat they posed to the moral standards of the Arab American community'.[11] Some early Arab American male writers also called for assimilation into the US racial structure while maintaining their Arab cultural and social traditions. The issue of the community's women working as peddlers 'struck a sensitive nerve because it affected the very definition of Arab American manhood and a man's sense of identity'.[12] Thus, some early male Arab American writers in the press went on to criticise women working as peddlers, describing them as shameless and calling for a pressure from the community and church to put an end to peddling by women. It was also suggested by some male writers that such practices by women be made illegal, and that women should not be allowed to immigrate to the US alone; i.e., unaccompanied by at least one adult male relative.[13]

Engaged in the different interests and causes each sect and gender prioritised, one of the few things that these publications shared was that none attempted to encourage the construction of an ethnic identity for the early Arab community in the US, partly as they aimed to return home after becoming financially prosperous. However, attitudes towards assimilation into US society changed after World War I, as publications from before this watershed convey a sense of disconnected permanence, evoking the sense that these early Arab Americans 'were in but not part of American society'.[14]

Undoubtedly, World War I marked a turning point in the history of Arabs' assimilation into US society. According to Michael Suleiman, 'Arabs in the United States

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[11] Suleiman, *A Brief History of Arab American Women*, p. 26.
[12] Ibid., p. 45.
[13] Ibid., p. 27.
[14] Michael Suleiman, *Arabs in America: Building A New Future* (Philadelphia: Temple U.P., 1999), p. 4.

become truly an Arab American community' only *after* World War I. [15] The assimilation process of the existing Arab community in the US gathered pace as an enhanced sense of patriotism and belonging emerged. They engaged with the US political process and participated in the US army and the nation's war efforts. Additionally, the community came to recognise that they may well be unable to ever return to their homelands due to the war, which had made their homelands bitterly inhospitable. This recognition compelled them to contemplate their Arab American identity in their pursuit of assimilation into American society.

As part of their assimilation process, and upon becoming citizens, early Arab Americans sought out better living conditions as they moved from old neighbourhoods to the suburbs following and imitating the white middle-class progression.[16] However, early Arab Americans, among other ethnic groups, were threatened to be excluded from obtaining the American citizenship as the Americanisation process of the time granted citizenship to what it termed 'free white persons'.[17]

In the early 1900s, the term White became the subject of intense debate among Arab immigrants, as the naturalisation laws of the time marked their Asiatic identity as ineligible for American citizenship.[18] In a famous series of court cases, 'prerequisite cases',[19] some courts argued to deny Arabs' US citizenship 'on the basis of their dark skin color, origin on the Continent of Asia, distance (literal or metaphorical) from European culture, and cultural

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[15] Michael Suleiman, 'Arab-Americans and The Political Process', in *The Development of Arab-American Identity* (Michigan: University of Michigan Press, 1994) <https://books.google.com.sa/books> [accessed 17 May 2019], pp. 37- 60 (p. 43).
[16] Naff, p. 18.
[17] Migrationpolicy.Org, *Major US Immigration Laws, 1970-Present* (2013) <https://www.migrationpolicy.org/> [accessed 9 August 2019].
[18] Lisa Suhair Majaj, 'Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments', *American Studies Journal*, 2008, <http://www.asjournal.org/52-2008/arab-american-literature-origins-and-developments/> [accessed 21 November 2017], pp. 1-21 (p. 1).
[19] Ibid., p. 1.

and geographical proximity to Islam'.[20] However, by the 1920s, these court cases eventually classified Arab immigrants (who were then mostly Christian Syrians and Palestinians), under the category 'Foreign-born white population'.[21]

As part of the assimilation process, early Arab American women and men writers wrote about different areas of interest reflecting the position of each gender in the social structures of both Arab and Arab American cultural standards. On the one hand, early Arab American women writers engaged themselves in harsh criticism of their Arab tradition and values that restrict their freedom. Mary Arida is an example of a writer who took on such a mission to redefine the position of Arab immigrant women after World War I. In her article criticising the poor treatment Arab immigrant women received from their male relatives and community, she writes:

> Whenever I think of the immigrant Syrian woman, I feel sorry and ashamed, and I despise myself whenever I hear the words "Syrian woman." Who is the immigrant Syrian woman? She is a slave to ignorance and backwardness, a prisoner of customs and fairy tales. She is a wretched servant if she is married and poor. If she is married and rich, she is a golden idol and a phonograph of slander. If she is poor and single, she is enslaved in order to be able to eat and be clothed. If she is rich and single, she is a manipulated toy of fashion, the devil, and hypocrisy. She is poor in knowledge, rich in indolence, whether she is rich or poor. The only information she absorbs in her head is that related to food, and she is most likely an expert at cooking *mujaddara*, kibbe, and stuffed items of all varieties. Of geography, she knows only the location of her house, the houses of her acquaintances, clothing, perfume, confectionary stores, and dance salons. As for the arts, she has perfected the best, such as the arts of absenteeism, hypocrisy, jealousy, slander, imitation, and pride.[22]

When carving out a space for themselves in US society, early Arab American women became more aware of the ways in which the social structure of Arab society degrades and objectifies women. They felt the need to humanise the women in their culture, seeking gender equality before engaging with the broader issue of highlighting their identity as Arab

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[20] Ibid., pp. 1-2.
[21] Naff, p. 117.
[22] Mary Arida, "The Syrian Woman," *Al-Sa'ih newspapers*, (New York: 1918), pp. 27-28. Cited in Suleiman, *A Brief History of Arab American Women*, p. 39.

American women. In their critique of Arab culture, early Arab American women examined the question of marriage, education and the role of women in both their homeland and their adopted land. In a series of articles written for a magazine in the Arab world, *al-Mar'ah al-jadidah* (The New Woman), Afifa Karam established a dialogue with writers in the homeland concerning the condition of immigrant Arab women, seeking to correct misconceptions about Arab immigrants in general when accused of abandoning their homelands, and Arab women immigrants in particular when characterised in derogatory terms. Karam writes:

> The immigrant woman is not a man's toy or the subject of his entertainment, as the Easterner, unfortunately, wanted her to be. She is the man's partner in the full meaning of the word, and she knows the secrets of his work and commerce, so much so that in his absence or after his death she fills his shoes, as they say[…] In this country, one finds that nine out of ten women are capable of doing the work of men, and the Syrian woman is no exception[…]This should show you, my fellow countrywomen, that your emigrant sister is quickly approaching the true status of women under the sun and that her progress is related to her new country. She is not what you have been told about her, that she is wanton and uninhibited and the source of affliction and destruction.[23]

While the few literary examples from early Arab American women's writings show how early Arab immigrant women approached their assimilation process by asserting and redefining their position in relation to the Arab tradition and values that restricted their freedom, early Arab American male writings revealed a different approach. It is important to consider that while this thesis focuses on the writings of Arab American women, a brief mention of writings by Arab male immigrants, who form the majority of the early Arab American literary tradition, not only shows how the factor of gender plays an important role in the characterisation of literature produced by each gender, but also helps to conceptualise the development of the Arab American identity in relation to the ethnic identification of the Arab immigrant.

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[23] Afifa Karam, "Mahjar Talk," *Al-Mar'ah Al-Jadidah (The New Woman)*, (New York: 1923), pp. 199-200. Cited in Suleiman, *A Brief History of Arab American Women*, p. 34.

Male writers, meanwhile, were more engaged with redefining their position in the American social fabric in relation to the East and the West. They attempted to assert their Whiteness by emphasising their Christianity and connection to the Holy Land. They viewed these as bridges between the East and the West, establishing 'philosophical meeting points between Arab and American ideologies and contexts' by innovating Western literary models invoking 'poetic forbears of both east and west-from Al-Mutanabbi, Al-Farid, and al-Maari to Homer, Virgil, Milton, Emerson and Thoreau'. [24] Such innovations circulated through several literary societies and journals founded in the 1910s and 1920s, including al-Rabita al-Qalamiyya (the Pen League) established by Kahlil Gibran, Ameen Rihani and others. These writers were later known for producing the Mahjar (émigré) school of Arab American literature.

In an attempt to emphasise their Whiteness, writings by early Arab American male writers were considerably uneasy concerning how they were classified in light of their ethnicity in a situation where having a non-white skin colour had serious implications.[25] Ash-Shaab's letter entitled "Has the Syrian Become a Negro?" published in *The Syrian World* journal exemplifies this. The writer reacted to the hanging of a Syrian couple after a vehicular accident in Florida:

> [T]he Syrian is not a negro whom Southerners feel they are justified in lynching when he is suspected of an attack on a white woman. The Syrian is a civilized white man who has excellent traditions and a glorious historical background and should be treated as among the best elements of the American nation.[26]

As revealed in the above quotation, in carving out a space for themselves in what was a white supremacist order, these early Arab American male writers adopted racist attitudes,

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[24] Majaj, 'Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments', p. 2.
[25] Lisa Suhair Majaj, 'Arab Americans and The Meaning of Race', in *Postcolonial Theory and The United States: Race, Ethnicity, And Literature* (Mississippi: Mississippi University, 2000) <https://www.google.co.uk/books/> [accessed 9 August 2017], pp. 320-337 (p.325).
[26] Ash-Shaab, 'Has the Syrian Become a Negro?', *The Syrian World* (1929) <https://lebanesestudies.omeka.chass.ncsu.edu> [Accessed 9 August 2017] p. 42.

using discriminatory language to differentiate themselves from other ethnic groups in the US. As in the previous extract, Ash-Shaab's assertion that the Syrian figure is not a 'negro' but rather a civilised white man shows the extent to which early Arab Americans participated in anti-blackness. Such a desperate emphasis on the whiteness of the Arab American figure, and detachment from other groups of colour considered inferior in the American social structure, characterised the publications of early Arab American writers as they attempted to demonstrate their worthiness in the prevailing US environment.

However, these authors were aware of the Orientalist understandings with their race, and the part of the world from which they originated. This awareness was reflected in both their encounters with US society and their writings, as they cautiously approached the Orientalist mindset of their host society. Evelyn Shakir writes:

> The first generation of Arab American writers (as might be expected of immigrants of an age of rampant xenophobia) dressed carefully for their encounter with the American public, putting on the guise of prophet, preacher, or man of letters. They could not hide their foreignness, but they could make it respectable.[27]

A further point to include here is that the foregrounding of their Christian identity echoes a deliberate strategic distancing from Islam. Authors such as Rihbany attempted to underscore the contrast between Christians and Muslims by advocating prejudice against Muslims. This is exemplified in the passage Rihbany wrote while recounting his journey to Beirut: 'I was not to gaze curiously at the Mohammedans, whom I knew by their white turbans. They considered us *Kuffar* (infidels) and enemies of the faith; therefore, they were ready for the slightest provocation to beat or even kill us'.[28] This narrative upholds the stereotypes held by mainstream US citizens with regard to Muslims, and use of 'the

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[27] Evelyn Shakir, 'Arab-American Literature', in *New Immigrant Literatures in The United States: A Sourcebook to Our Multicultural Literary Heritage* (Westport: Greenwood Publishing Group, 1996) <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [Accessed 9 August 2017], pp.3-18 (p. 6).
[28] Abraham Rihbany, *A Far Journey* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin company, 1914), <https://archive.org/details/farjourne00rihb > [accessed 9 August 2017], p. 81.

inaccurate American term "Mohammedan"',[29] further underlines the author's intent to

heighten the resemblance between Christian Syrians and the typical free White American.

Thus, while early Arab American male writers defined their position in the US by

reconceptualising the relationship between the East and the West, emphasising the attributes

they share with the White US male, early Arab American women were less interested in such

notions as they were seeking to redefine the notion of the ideal Arab woman to people in the

homeland and their community in the US. Such courses of persuasion were subsequently

discarded with the introduction of political and social changes, as will be seen in the

following sections.

The second generation of Arab immigrants to America

The flourishing period of publishing activity by small presses and news outlets in both

Arabic and English, driven by early Arab immigrants to the US, rapidly declined following a

number of political and historical incidents. The changing political environment affected the

development of the literary canon produced by the second generation of Arab American

authors. The 1924 Immigration Quota Act and the economic crisis of the Great Depression,

between 1929 and 1939, resulted in immigrant communities experiencing difficulties

communicating with their Arab homelands and prevented further waves of immigrants from

coming to the US.[30] Thus, the Arab community in the US fell back on its resources, thereby

reinforcing their sense of isolation.

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[29] Majaj, 'Arab Americans and The Meaning of Race', p. 328.
[30] The Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson Reed Quota Act) limited the number of immigrants to the US and provided immigration permits to two percent of the total number of people of each nationality in the US. The act completely excluded immigration from Asia. Cited from: *U.S. Department of State*. U.S. Department of State. Available at: https://history.state.gov/milestones/1921-1936/immigration-act (accessed: February 16, 2020).

The situation increased the rapidity of the process of assimilation among the Arab community in America, and this is reflected in the small number of writings published at that time. Assimilation was also fostered by the lack of communication with people in their homelands and the lack of access to Arabic newspapers, which attracted the second-generation members of the community to focus on domestic US news. As a result, the lack of access to Arabic-language media cut off the second generation of Arab Americans from their heritage and home origin.

Regardless of the various attempts by the community to maintain their ancestors' Arabic cultural legacy, this proved impossible due to the political and historical incidents of the period. Naff maintains that attempts to teach Arabic to children either at home or at classes organised by churches and clubs encountered difficulties since the Americanisation process prevailed.[31] Therefore, a new generation came of age with only second-hand knowledge of the traditions of their homelands and limited skill in speaking Arabic. By World War II, the Arab community 'costumed themselves as "regular Americans", and hoped to pass, which may be why they produced so little literature' that reflected their Arab background.[32]

The small number of publications reveals how the second generation of Arab Americans approached their Arab heritage warily and by employing narrative techniques that established a level of disconnection.[33] In terms of women writers, Suleiman states that by the mid-1930s, and as a result of the progressed assimilation process, Arab American women's roles 'were fairly established– at least sufficiently so to obviate the need for much discussion in the Arab media'.[34] Suleiman detects two developments in regard to the publications by

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[31] Naff, p. 19.
[32] Shakir, p. 6.
[33] Majaj, 'Arab American Literature: Origin and Development', p. 3.
[34] Suleiman, *A Brief History of Arab American Women,* p. 47.

Arab American women, which reflect their greater integration in the US. The first was the publication of literary writings, mostly poetry, that hardly showed any references to the writers' Arab background– 'the authors appeared to be thoroughly assimilated'.[35] Lorice S. Fiani was among the very few Arab American women writers who published literary texts emphasising detachment from the Arab ethnic identity, as maintained by the first generation. They also distanced themselves from their ancestors' writings, as they 'perceived themselves as mainstream writers and did not identify as Arab–Americans'.[36]

A further development that Suleiman observed was the release of several publications by Arab American women who appeared to comfortably engage with their Arab background to attract American audiences. Wadeeha Atiyeh was a dancer, singer and a writer who wrote stories relating to the Middle East. She was mostly known for writing Arab cookbooks, and she augmented her recipes with information about the life in the Arab lands.[37] Another such author was Gloria Amoury, who wrote essays and short stories published in US journals in the 1950s, illustrating her Arab background. Suleiman observes that at the beginning of her career, Amoury was hesitant to mention her Arab ethnicity. She was then encouraged by editors to pursue writing in that area. Amoury's stories in major US publications are viewed, according to Suleiman, 'as an indication that Arabs were becoming part of the American mosaic'.[38]

This was subsequently changed with the arrival of the second and third waves of Arab immigrants to the US, who reintroduced the community to the diverse nature of the Arab world. These immigrants originated in other parts of the Arab world than the Levant region, the majority of whom were Muslims. This migration intersected with political and social

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[35] Ibid., p. 47.
[36] Ludescher, p. 101.
[37] Suleiman, *A Brief History of Arab American Women*, p. 47.
[38] Ibid., p. 47.

changes in both the US and the Arab world that impacted the position of Arabs in the US social structure.

The second and third Arab immigration waves to the US: The emergence of an Arab American consciousness

As a consequence of the arrival of two waves of Arabs immigrants between 1945 and 1967, and 1967 and the present Arab ethnic consciousness underwent a massive transformation. Unlike those early Arab immigrants, who were mostly Christian and traced their origin exclusively to the region of Greater Syria, these later waves of Arab immigrants were mainly Muslims who hailed from multiple Arabic countries throughout Asia and North Africa. Forced to flee their homelands, Arabs in these later waves- particularly due to the political chaos in the Middle East caused by the 1948 establishment of the State of Israel, followed by the subsequent Arab-Israeli wars and the civil wars in Lebanon and Yemen- differed from their Arab American predecessors who had migrated for economic reasons.

The discussion regarding the historical background to these two waves of Arab immigration to America is crucial to the course of this thesis, as it locates the lives of contemporary Arab Americans within their encounters with US society. The prominent events that reshaped the relationship between East and the West form the backdrop to the second and third immigration waves of Arab Americans, and will be unpacked below. First, the arrival of the two waves introduced the previously established Arab American communities to a sense of strong Arab national commitment and Islamic identification that resisted assimilation. The new immigrants, who were highly nationalistic and politicised, and brought with them the ideologies and notions of a Pan-Arab movement,[39] which allowed

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[39] Pan-Arabism (also called Arabism or Arab nationalism) is a political movement and belief system that emerged in the mid-to-late nineteenth century. The movement advocated for the cultural, political and socioeconomic unity of the Arab states after the withdrawal of the British and French colonisers from the Middle East and North Africa. Cited from: *The rise and fall of Pan-Arabism*, *Geneva Graduate Institute*. Available at: https://www.graduateinstitute.ch/communications/news/rise-and-fall-pan-arabism (accessed: February 16, 2020).

them, first, to enhance their 'ethnic loyalty among the Americanized generations' and second, to teach them 'what their parents had not - that the label Arab includes both Muslims and Christians'.[40] Such changes not only shifted the community's ethnic consciousness, but also altered the racial, ethnic, and gendered identification of those who traced their origin to the Middle East.

Second, the rise in Arab American ethnic consciousness intersected with the Civil Rights and Black power movements in the US during the 1950s and 1960s. These political and social upheavals facilitated Arabs' capacity to give voice to their identities and revive their Arabic heritage and legacy, imitating ongoing movements led by African Americans, Jewish Americans, Asian Americans, and others.[41] This can be seen as a shift away from capitulating to White supremacy, as per some Arab Americans' racist attempts to differentiate themselves from black people, as seen in the discussion concerning the first wave earlier in this chapter. Arab Americans also started to form organisations intended to reform the social structure of the community, before turning their attention towards politics. Their main aim was to change US foreign policy towards the Arab world after World War II, as well as to reintroduce themselves to the wider American public. According to Naff, these organizations began the raising of awareness in the United States that would further increase following the 1967 Arab-Israeli conflict.[42]

Third, the political events that occurred around the time of the two immigration waves proved to be the second most significant turning point in the community's history. Suleiman states that similarly to how World War I marked a decisive moment for the initial Arab immigrants, the 1967 Arab-Israeli war had the same effect on the overall community.[43]

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[40] Naff, p. 25.
[41] Majaj, 'Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments', p. 3.
[42] Naff, p. 26.
[43] Suleiman, *Arabs in American: Building a New Future*, p. 10.

Following the Six-Day War, or Al-Naksah in Arabic, Arabs, both in their native countries and in exile, experienced an indelible trauma as the Arab military loss allowed Israel to seize additional Arabic territories in Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt.

After this humiliating defeat, Arabs in the US felt the need to revive and preserve their language, heritage, and ethnic identity in response to what they believed to be the anti-Arab sentiment enshrined in US foreign policy. They were disappointed by the US administration's favouring and support of Israel, while condemning Arabs in the media and Congress.[44] As the Arab-Israel conflict intensified, the old Arab newspapers were revived, with the new Arabic–English presses emerging in the late 1960s devoted largely to reporting on the political and economic situation in the Middle East. Along with the attempt to unify the Arab cause through the Pan-Arab movement, Arabs in the US felt the need to unify and to demolish religious differences within their communities in defence of their cause.

Thus, corresponding to the African Americans' decision to call themselves Black, most Arab Americans started identifying themselves as Arab, representing a shift away from how the earlier wave of Arabs identified themselves. Alpana Knippling posited that the choice to concentrate on race and not nationality generated solidarity among all Arab people who faced repeated waves of anti-Arab racism.[45] By the late 1960s and early 1970s, a number of Arab American associations and movements had been established. These included the Association of Arab Americans University Graduates in 1967 and the National Association for Arab American in 1972. These associations were educational and cultural and attempted to foster a better understanding of the Arab people within American society. The various issues under consideration included the Arab-Israeli conflict, Arab and Arab American affairs and US foreign policy.

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[44] Naff, p. 90.
[45] Alpana Sharma Knippling, *New Immigrant Literatures in The United States* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1996), p. 9.

A number of Arab American women participated in these organizations and established complementary committees that took on the mission of studying and exploring the concerns of Arab and Arab American women. These included the Committee to study the problems and status of Arab women in 1976, and the Women's Committee in the 1979. In addition, the period witnessed the emergence of a number of academic and scholarly Arab American women writers, such as Ghada H. Talhami, who wrote a number of essays and non-fiction texts from the mid-1970s to the early twenty-first century focusing on Arab national identity and Muslim women in the Arab world. Another such individual was Ayad al-Qazzaz, who wrote *Women in the Arab World: An Annotated Bibliography,* which was published in 1975. The collection explores the diverse nature of Arab women and considers the different ways in which their lives are affected by religious and cultural codes.

The late 1970s also witnessed the publication of numerous anthologies, some written by Arab American women. The works of Arab American academic and writer Etel Adnan appears in a number of such anthologies, including the 1975 anthology *For Neruda, For Chile*, which hosts the voices of 140 poets from 27 countries and is dedicated to honouring the determination of Chilean people in particular, and to supporting the struggles of all people seeking freedom. Adnan is also a participant, alongside other Arab and Arab American women writers including Mona Sa'udi, Thérese Awwad and Fawziyya Abu Khalid, in the 1978 text, *Women of the Fertile Crescent.* This anthology in particular hosts women writers who are from (or trace their origins to) different parts of the Arab world, and reflects the community's shift towards celebrating a unified Arab identity encompassing all people from the Arab world regardless of faith.

The one-sided, pro-Israeli US media's reporting of Middle East events strengthened this hegemonic representation, portraying Arabs as enemies of the West and Israel. Additionally, this negative representation set the context for the condemnation 'for the

suffering of the Jews'.[46] Media outlets also perpetuated Orientalist stereotypes and

conceptualisations, as Conrey explains:

> … essentialist stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims, replete with lascivious Arab sheiks, villains, harem girls, and belly dancers, became the shared vocabulary used to reify the vast difference between a 'civilized' US culture on the one hand and a 'barbaric' and backward Arab and Muslim landscape on the other hand.[47]

The constructed hegemonic and negative representations of Arabs and Muslims

worldwide also affected the Arab American community. An example of this is the effect of

the hostage crisis in Iran in 1979 on Arab Americans.[48] Said Deep maintains that as a result

of the lumping of Muslims, Arabs, Iranians, and Turks all in one category, 'Muslims and

Arab-American endured harassment, name-calling, beatings, and others had their business

vandalized or looted' following the crisis.[49] This increasing tension marked 'the beginning of

the social, political, and cultural marginalisation' of the Arab community, [50] which reached its

climax by the time America announced its logistic and military support for the 1982 Israeli

invasion of Lebanon.

After the 1980s, Arab American societies and institutions rose to the challenge of

addressing racism against Arabs in all its forms. The American-Arab Anti-Discrimination

Committee was among the institutions that sought to represent diverse elements of the Arab

American community and voice their concerns. The committee turned to literature and made

a signal contribution to the Arab American literary tradition through the publication of

Wrapping the Grape Leaves (later renamed *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American*

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[46] Philip Kayal, 'Arab Christians in The United States', in *Arabs in The New World: Studies on Arab-American Communities* (Detroit: Wayne State University, 1983) <https://iucat.iu.edu/iuk/4046065> [Accessed 17 August 2017], pp. 50- 69 (p. 56).
[47] Conrey, p. 2.
[48] Shortly after the Islamic revolution in Iran, led by Ayatollah Khomeini in 1878, the new regime's anti-Americanism encouraged angry Iranian revolutionaries to take over the US Embassy in Iran. They held fifty-two Americans hostage.
[49] Said Deep, 'Rush to Judgment', *The Quill* (1995)<https://www.thefreelibrary.com/Rush+to+judgment.> [Accessed 16 September 2017], pp. 19-23 (p. 19).
[50] Nadine Naber, 'Arab-American In/visibility', *AAUG Monitor* 13.3 (1998), pp. 1-16 (p. 3).

Poetry),[51] which evolved into a full-scale anthology within six years of its production. The anthology hosts the writings of twenty old and contemporary Arab and Arab American poets, five of whom are women. The anthology presents writings of resistance and self-assertiveness, reflecting the community's attempts to find a voice for itself within the US mainstream.

As Arabs in the US turned to literature, and mainly poetry, as a form of self-expression, they created challenges to directly engaging with their identity, as they were situated as anomalous in the US context. Majaj explains:

> As in the early decades of the century, Arab Americans today confront a cultural, political, and social context that is fraught with tension. Instead of courts excluding Arabs on the basis of race, popular racism now targets Arabs on the basis of skin color, dress, name, accent and other characteristics. This has become institutionalized in the pervasive racial profiling in place at U.S. airports and border crossings. Earlier epithets of nigger, dago and spice have transmuted to labels of sand nigger, towelhead, camel jockey and worse.[52]

However, by the early 1990s, some Arab American writers felt driven towards prose writing, fiction, and nonfiction, out of the realisation that prose writing is more explanatory and expansive than the lyric mode, and is also more accessible to mainstream audiences. As Majaj wrote in 1999:

> Given our history of both exclusion and invisibility, it is no surprise that Arab-American writers have felt the need to celebrate who we are and to mourn what we have lost. But as a genre, poetry has not always provided a forum within which we have been able to probe the full complexity of our experience as Arab-Americans, or to levy a sustained critique of our internal community dynamics.[53]

Thus, the 1990s witnessed the emergence of a burgeoning body of literature by Arab American writers, who, according to Majaj, had become sufficiently established to pursue more meaningful literary undertakings.[54] Their work embodied the community's voice while

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[51] Knippling, p. 9.
[52] Majaj, 'Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments', p. 3.
[53] Lisa Suhair Majaj, 'New Directions: Arab-American Writing at Century's End', in *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1999), <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [accessed 18 July 2018], pp. 123-136 (p. 128).
[54] Ibid., p. 69.

striving to explain Arab American identity in wider contexts 'without apology',[55] representing

a considerable contribution to the field of Arab American literature and minority literature in

the United States when compared to the previous generation.

Moreover, the 1990s mark the community's attempts to foster connections with other

minority communities in an effort to further reinforce its presence and existence within the

United States' multicultural context. Their effort to situate the Arab American community as

a minority group within the social, literary, and cultural US context resulted from the

ambiguous racial position of Arab Americans at the time. Given the political and social

changes, the racial categorisation transformed Arabs in America 'from non-white, to white, to

somewhere outside the limits of racial categories'.[56]

Thus, and in the late twentieth century, Arab Americans existed in an inconstant racial

landscape, as they were confronted with the dual burden of being unrecognized from both the

White majority and other minority ethnic groups.[57] The complex location of the community

in the multicultural US increased its vulnerability to discrimination and racism, since their

confusing classification preventing them from legally articulating their concerns with regard

to discrimination. This had an enormous effect on the community during periods of political

tension between the US and the countries of the Middle East. Tensions such as the First and

Second Gulf Wars in the 1980s and late 1990s, as well as the reestablishment of al-Qaeda and

its numerous terrorist attacks, including the 1993 World Trade Center bombing, all

contributed to further problematising the position of Arabs in the US. Majaj states:

> The hostility towards Arabs, Muslims, and Middle Easterners in the United States that
> peaked during the 1980s and that continues to spiral during period of political tension has

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[55] Majaj, 'Arab Americans and the Meaning of Race', p. 330.

[56] Therese Saliba, 'Resisting Invisibility: Arab Americans in Academia and Activism', in *Arabs in America: Building A New Future* (Philadelphia: Temple UP, 1999) <https://www.jstor.org/stable> [accessed 21 July 2018], pp.304-3019 (p. 311).

[57] Louise Cainkar, 'Thinking Outside the Box: Arabs and Race in The United States', in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008) <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [accessed 19 August 2018], pp. 46-80 (p. 49).

not abated. It appears that Arab Americans are one of the few ethnic groups which is still 'safe to hate'.[58]

Thereby, Arab American writers, since the late 1980s and 1990s, have sought to celebrate their connection with their homelands and with their heritage so as to exercise self-representation, draw on the features of their ethnic identity, and reconstruct interpretations of their race to situate their ethnic experiences within the US multicultural context.

Nevertheless, critics such as Carol Conrey believe the connection Arab Americans share with the Arab world, which 'draws on the memories and realities of an Arab homeland from within the US space', portrays them 'as the "enemy-alien" within' to the broader US public.[59] Thus, in light of the complex political circumstances that exist between both worlds, it has proven difficult for Arab Americans to assert themselves within an American framework while maintaining a transnational connection to their home of origin.

This situation had intensified by the early twenty-first century. The community's attempts and effort to correct such stereotypes and to integrate into US society collapsed when a group of Islamic extremists belonging to al-Qaeda carried out a series of four coordinated suicide terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. [60]A discourse exploded expressing highly Orientalist and hostile tendencies largely and intensively directed towards people perceived to be Arabs or Muslims, such as 'perpetual aliens, volatile extremists, and potential or actual terrorists (in the case of men) or oppressed, silenced, and disenfranchised subjects (in the case of women)'.[61]

The political and cultural atmosphere that endured from the 1990s to the post-9/11 (2010s) proved especially challenging for contemporary Arab American women. Writings by contemporary Arab American women reflect the challenge they experience defining a hybrid

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[58] Majaj, 'New Directions: Arab-American Writing at Century's End', p. 321.
[59] Conrey, pp.3-4.
[60] Al-Qaeda is a multinational Sunni Islamic extremist network mostly composed of Arabs and was led by Osama Bin Laden.
[61] Conrey, p. 2.

identity located in the rather complex tension between the two worlds to which they belong. The next section will therefore explore the development of contemporary Arab American women's writing, and their gendered and racial identification, in order to provide a context when critiquing and elaborating upon Bhabha's definition.

The ethnic experience of Arab American women: Contemporary Arab American women's literature

The previous sections of this chapter have explored the development of Arab American ethnic identity throughout the different immigration waves to the US. It emerged that Arab American identity was highly determined by the political and social circumstances that inform the contemporary racial, ethnic and gendered identification of people who trace their origins to the Middle East. Thus, political and social change in each period contributed to the community's construction of Third Space in its encounters with US society. Used by both the Arab and American political and social structure to define the Self against the Other, this situation was further intensified by the gendered and racial identification that took place among the women of the community.

Located in a tense environment, characterised by political and cultural clashes between the two worlds they belong to, Arab American women writers, in particular, navigated multiple strands associated with their ethnic and gender status when articulating their hybrid identities. Due to Orientalist and Arab nationalist conceptions of what is expected from Arab women, contemporary Arab American women writers fight on several fronts. On the one hand, they fight to humanise the Arab race and erase Orientalist misrepresentations regarding Arabs and Muslims, particularly those that picture Arab women as either 'shadowy nonentities, swathed in black from head to foot' or as 'belly dancers—seductive, provocative, and privy to exotic secrets of lovemaking'.[62] On the other hand, they

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[62] Evelyn Shakir, 'Mother's Milk: Women in Arab-American Autobiography', *MELUS*, 15.4 (1988) <https://doi.org/10.2307/466985> [accessed 7 July 2019], pp. 39-50 (p. 469).

must counter patriarchal norms derived from the Arab nationalist teachings, as exercised over them by their community, celebrating what the community believes to be its own positive cultural values and morals, which focus on preserving family bonds and female chastity. Amal Abdelrazek states this below:

> The tension of the hyphen for these Arab American women's identities is intensified by the conflict between Arab communal values and the individualism and freedom America seems to offer, especially since any struggle to assimilate within American culture involves breaking away from Arab family traditions.[63]

Many contemporary Arab American writers offer a feminist criticism of the Orientalist and Arab fundamental representation associated with their race and gender. However, in doing so, they risk being labelled as betrayers in their struggle with their divided loyalties. For example, they fight to situate themselves as Arab Muslim feminists in relation to the wider context of mainstream Western feminism, yet mainstream Western feminists consider the aspects of their society they consider patriarchal indefensible. Derived from what Barbara Ramusack calls 'Maternal Imperialism',[64] this frame of thought disregards the intersectoral nature of Arab American women's identities, and is also witnessed in the language used by mainstream White feminism to 'save' women of colour. Such language implies various forms of xenophobia, hostility, marginalisation and racism towards Muslim and Arab women, as well as reinforcing the inferiority of women of colour.

On the other hand, they aim to fight the perception of Arab societies towards feminism as a movement. The accusation of 'betrayer' is associated with the common belief in the Arab world that feminism is an anti-religious and anti-nationalist Western mode of thought linked to Western imperialism.[65] Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke state that it has

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[63] Abdelrazek, p. 2.
[64] Barbara N. Ramusack, "Cultural Missionaries, Maternal Imperialists, Feminist Allies: British Women Activists in India, 1865–1945", *Women's Studies International Forum*, 13.4 (1990), <https://doi.org/10.1016/0277-5395(90)90028-v> [accesses 10 May 2019], pp. 309-321 (p. 309).
[65] Susan Muaddi Darraj, "Third World, Third Wave Feminism(S): The Evolution of Arab American Feminism", in *Catching a Wave: Reclaiming Feminism for the 21St Century* (Boston: University

been challenging for Arab women immigrants in the US to escape the accusation of cultural betrayal when criticising their communities in the US and the Arab homelands.[66] Accusations of Arab American feminists reinforcing negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims through the lens of their feminist conceptions have proliferated, as 'the treatment of women is often used as a weapon to attack Arabs'.[67] Moreover, their attempts to raise such issues can be seen as pandering to the commercial marketplace, so as to meet the expectations of the Western reader.[68]

This situation has encouraged women writers to enrich the Arab American literary canon with writings that voice their concerns from a locus of complexity. The early 1990s witnessed the publication of various literary works by Arab American women, including *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*. This anthology contributed to establishing the field of Arab American feminism, bringing together new voices that challenged traditional gender roles and made concessions to fundamentalist regimes, both in the West and the East. According to Majaj, 'The selections, which address issues of identity, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, political activism, race, and immigration status, chart the quest for belonging and the search for a home capable of encompassing the voices of Arab-American women from a variety of backgrounds'.[69]

The influence of writers from other ethnic minorities within the US inspired some contemporary Arab American women's efforts to situate their presence socially, culturally, and through their literary aspirations. Women writers from ethnic groups, such as Native

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Press of New England, 2003), <https://books.google.co.uk/books/> [accessed 21 May 2018], pp. 188 - 207 p. 193.

[66] Margot Badran and Miriam Cooke, *Opening the Gates: A Century of Arab Feminist Writing* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990), p. 145.

[67] Abdalwahid Noman and Shaily Asthana, "Woman Voice in the Arab-American Literature", *Langlit*, 2.1 (2015), 494 <https://www.langlit.org> [accessed 13 March 2019]. Pp. 494-503 (p. 500).

[68] Amal Amireh and Lisa Suheir Majaj, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (New York: Garland Publishing, 2000), p. 6.

[69] Majaj, 'Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments', p. 8.

American, African Americans and Asian Americans, greatly affected Arab women's cultural identification. Nathalie Handal, an Arab American feminist writer, states 'many of these Arab-American women writers have found a cultural and psychological connection with other ethnic groups, since these groups share similar feelings of marginality and alienation'.[70] Additionally, they expressed concerns they shared with other people of colour, including their resistance to ethnic labels that undervalue them and place them in an inferior social position. This encouraged them to unify their aim for solidarity with other people of colour, mainly African Americans, who targeted empowerment and recognition.[71]

However, Arab American women found it difficult to connect with their Arab homes, both in the US and the Arab world, or wider American society, due to the obstacles they encountered unpicking the specific stereotypes and misunderstandings attached to them, in addition to the patriarchal nature of their ethnic community. Given the complexity of their position when attempting to articulate their subjectivities through their writings, some Arab American women writers, who shared feminist aims, adopted a mix of genres to articulate feminist ideas and highlight their intersection, and overlap in multiple spaces. Female writers contribute to Arab American literature by attempting to carve a space in between two worlds to articulate their subjectivity, and question their relative belonging to the various aspects of their identity, from which they experience different levels of detachment.

In addition to navigating the usual themes present in any diasporic or minority writing, such as nostalgia and displacement, Arab American women writers distinguished their literary production from those of Arab men or white Americans by negotiating their female subjectivities within a complex web of race, ethnicity, hybridity, gender, immigration

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[70] Nathalie Handal, "Reflections on Sex, Silence and Feminism", in Gender, Nation and Belonging: Arab and Arab American Feminist Perspectives. *"The MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies*, 5 (2005) <https://atria.nl/ezines/DivTs/MITelectronicJournal/2005/Spring.pdf> [accessed 3 June 2019] pp. 97-107 (p. 103).
[71] Noman and Asthana, p. 495.

status, politics, sexuality, and oppression. This framing by historical and contemporary political events is vital to understanding their ethnic experience.

The attacks of 9/11 intensified the challenge faced by Arab American women. While an Orientalist negative misrepresentation of Arab women existed prior to 9/11, this had never been well-critiqued and challenged. However, in the aftermath of 9/11, discrimination, hostility, and negative stereotypes became more overt. This further increased as the American administration set out a colonialist feminist agenda to partially justify its war in Afghanistan, painting pictures of beaten and oppressed Afghani women 'as the norm for Arab women said to suffer from an oppressive and misogynistic religion and patriarchal social system'.[72]

Several years after 9/11, Arab American texts by women writers emerged responding to what the authors perceived as the limited representations of the Arab American Muslim women's intersectional experience. Their writings reflected their anxiety regarding the urgent need to self-present and redefine themselves in the aftermath of tragedy. This is evident in the various writing modes and strategies employed by Arab American writers, which diverged from their use of associative remembering, to retell their traumatic experience in relation to the traumatic experiences of 9/11, and to the use the direct voice to affirm their position in relation to the tragedy in the form of letters, as seen in Naomi Nye's 'Letter from Naomi Shihab Nye, Arab-American Poet: To Any Would-Be Terrorists'.

This chapter provided an exploration of the development of the racial, ethnic and gendered identification of Arab and Muslim women living in the US relative to the history of their communities. It referenced different waves of immigration and the acculturation process each wave underwent in the context of the broader political and social circumstances of its time. It revisited the point mentioned earlier, with regard to the extent to which the 1990s and the post-9/11 period witnessed an unstable situation for the Arab American community, and

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[72] Abdelrazek, p. 7.

particularly for women writers, as they engaged in Third Space encounters with US society. The contextualisation of the Arab American ethnic and literary tradition provided in this chapter will inform our critique of Bhabha's definition of Third Space in the remainder of this thesis. Specifically, the next chapter elucidates the problematic aspects of Bhabha's theory when applied to the narratives of contemporary Arab American women writers.

Chapter Two: Theorising Homi Bhabha's Third Space and the ethnic experiences of contemporary Arab American women writers

This chapter examines the complexity inherent in the writings of Arab American women as they attempt to define their hyphenated identity in relation to Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space. Arab American women's writings reflect the political and social clashes between the US and Arab countries in the late twentieth and early twenty-first centuries. As established in the previous chapter, political and social changes have proven instrumental in the community's racial and ethnic identification since their early wave of immigration to the US.

In attempting to conceptualise Arab American women's hyphenated identity, Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space becomes relevant as a tool to unpick construction of the point of encounter between two opposing powers. It is also vital in our reading of the hybrid and transnational ideas and subjectivities constructed and reconstructed in the development of multiple cultures. However, building on existing critiques of Bhabha's theory found in the literature, this thesis proposes using Bhabha's theory as a starting point to read the literary works written by Arab American women, and in doing brings into focus some of the limitations of that theory. It highlights the characters' ethnic experience as embedded in political and social conflict, and embodied in fundamentalist Orientalist and Arab representations, thereby signalling the complexity of their Third Space and distinguishing their ethnic experiences relative to other ethnic groups in the US.

This chapter further aims to identify the problematic aspects of Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space when applied to points of encounter in hybrid and immigrant identities in the narratives of contemporary Arab American women writers. It will first define and explain the theory and its relevance to the case study presented in this thesis

before moving on to explore the limitations of the theory when applied to the narratives of Arab American women in light of the discussions in the previous chapter.

Defining Homi Bhabha's Theory of Third Space

Since the early debate on its fixed nature, the concept of identity has been strongly associated with notions of hybridity and plurality. Many scholars, such as Manuel Castells, Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stoke have shifted away from essentialist evaluations of the notion of identity, which characterise identity as a set of fixed, stable and agentive features and experiences, to stress its contingent and discursive construction. Castells believes that identities are constructed, and what matters are the questions of how it is constructed, from what, by whom and for what. For him, identities are constructed using 'building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and religious revelations'.[1] Benwell and Stoke state that the meanings of identity are not located solely within an individual's essential part, but rather within a 'series of representations constituted by semiotic systems'.[2]

This shift from the essentialist view of identity to stress its constructionist nature was encouraged by the emergence and development of social movements such as feminism, queer movements and multiculturalism.[3] Those who espouse a constructivist view of identity uphold the possibility of the construction of multiple intermingling identities rather than having one identity for one individual.[4] Such multiple identities can be classified as personal

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[1] Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 1997), p. 7.

[2] Bethan Benwell and Elizabeth Stoke, *Discourse and Identity*, (Edinburgh University Press: Edinburgh, 2006), p.31.

[3] Roger White, 'Home - Colours of Resistance Archive', *Colours of Resistance Archive* <http://www.coloursofresistance.org/326/identity-politics-and-essentialism/> [Accessed 26 April 2018].

[4] Michael Bamberg, Anna De Fina and Deborah Schiffrin, 'Discourse and Identity Construction', in *Handbook of Identity Theory and Research* (New York: Springer, 2011) <https://link-springer-com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/book/10.1007%2F978-1-4419-7988-9> [Accessed 27 April 2018], pp. 263-282 (p. 178).

(the individual concept of the self), rational (self-concept, derived from relationships to others) or collectivist (self-concept, derived from group membership which can be categorised as social, cultural, or sociocultural).[5] The identification with a group arises as a result of the individual's recognition and attachment to different category memberships, such as race, nationality, gender, ethnicity and age.

In a postcolonial context, many contemporary scholars have attempted to define and theorise the interaction of Arab and Muslim American women's daily cultural expressions with the different notions of authenticity, originality and hybridityto provide a clear understanding of how identities form and reform in response to political and cultural changes.[6] In such a case, Homi Bhabha's theories, in particular, focus on the contradictory strains of the pluralities in such individuals' lives, referring to this hybridised subjectivity as located in a Third Space. The following section of the chapter contributes a clear and detailed account of how Bhabha understands and explains his theory of Third Space, before we attempt to apply it to the case of Arab American women's narratives in the remainder of this thesis.

In his book *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha explains the Third Space as a site of communication, negotiation, and translation, a way to articulate identity and function in the colonial structure, offered to the (militarily or culturally) colonised.[7] In other words, the Third Space, geographically or mentally, arises in response to the obstacles the colonised encounter while trying to articulate their identities between their first place (the native colonised home) and the second place (the imposed colonial power).

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[5] Helen Spencer-Oatey, 'Theories of Identity and The Analysis of Face', *Journal of Pragmatics*, 39.4 (2007) <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2006.12.004> [accessed 13 April 2018], pp. 639-656 (P.629).
[6] Shahnaz Khan, 'Muslim Women: Negotiations in The Third Space', *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 23.2 (1998) <https://doi.org/10.1086/495259> [accessed 17 May 2018], pp. 463-494 (p. 464).
[7] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.55.

The process of articulating their subjectivities is likely to involve encounters with racism, discrimination, and stereotyping, which arise as a consequence of how the coloniser evaluates the colonised based on the latter's perceived native attributes such as religion, language, and race. Thus, according to Bhabha, a Third Space is required to assist with articulation and negotiation rather than negation.[8] That is, the space formulated around matrices goes beyond notions of *other* and *difference*, and beyond binaries such as *master-slave*.[9] Bhabha highlights the significance and articulation of this Third Space, stressing the present creation of meaning, and the construction of identities in this space, rather than merely historizing the two spaces through which the third deviates. Bhabha states that 'it is the problem of how, in signifying the present, something comes to be repeated, relocated and translated'.[10]

Bhabha's theory of Third Space emerges from his introduction to the notion of cultural translation, based on which he argues that no culture is homogeneous, and all cultures are heterogeneous, so identity does not exist as an essence:

> Meaning is constructed across the bar of difference and separation between the signifier and the signified. So it follows that no culture is full unto itself … not only because there are other cultures which contradict its authority, but also because its own symbol-forming activity, its own interpellation in the process of representation, language, signification, and meaning-making, always underscores the claim to an originary, holistic, organic identity.[11]

Then, according to Bhabha's definition of cultural translation, the process of imitating the original takes place in such a way that the simulated priority of the original is more important, thereby reinforcing it. Thus, 'it can be simulated, copied, transferred, transformed, made into a simulacrum and so on'.[12] Bhabha argues that a culture is never complete in itself;

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[8] Ibid., p. 37.
[9] Paula Delbonis-Platt, 'Crossing Boundaries: The Transnational Third Space of Contemporary Chinese-Francophone Writers' (unpublished doctoral thesis, The City University of New York, 2016), p. 28.
[10] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, pp. 51-52.
[11] Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 210.
[12] Ibid., p. 210.

rather, 'it is always open to translation so that it can never be said to have a totalised prior moment of being or meaning – an essence'.[13] He continues, 'What this really means is that cultures are only constituted in relation to that otherness internal to their own symbol-forming activity, which makes them decentred structures'.[14] Bhabha thus concludes that a continuous process of hybridity characterises all forms of culture. However, he emphasises that 'the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity […] is the "third space"'.[15] Thus, hybridity exhibits as a form of *in-betweenness* edged by translation and negotiation, which Bhabha terms the Third Space. Accordingly, hybridity describes the essence of this Third Space, and is what marks the identities formed within the site of negotiation between different groups.

The concept of hybridity refers to a location characterised by its mixed nature, in which subjects do not align with any of its positions. Any place that constitutes a binary opposition and is labelled as stable can be destabilised and deconstructed by applying the concept of hybridity. It is at this point that Bhabha introduces the different perspectives of national identity, national boundaries, and selfhood, rejecting definitions of the self in terms of ethnocentric notions based on sets of beliefs and practices. Instead, he believes that:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself.[16]

Bhabha offers a number of concepts to define his understanding of hybridity. For him, it is 'the name of this displacement of values from symbol to sign that causes the dominant discourse to split along the axis of its power to be representative, authoritative'.[17] He adds

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[13] Ibid., p. 210.
[14] Ibid., p. 210.
[15] Ibid., p. 211.
[16] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 2.
[17] Ibid., p. 162.

that it is 'a problematic of colonial representation and individualisation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other "denied" knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority - its rules of recognition'.[18] He also defines it as 'the 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)'.[19]

Moreover, '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 the sites of discrimination and domination'.[20] In other words, hybridity is the product of cultural interactions between the superior power, i.e., (in the case of the examined texts) the US native white male majority, and the marginalised group, i.e., the Arab American community, that results in a dichotomous construction of identities. Accordingly, interaction between the two binaries creates a space in which the defined objects articulate their identities and refigure their own history.

Bhabha defines this space as an 'ambivalent space',[21]a space of 'enunciation' wherein 'all cultural statements and systems are constructed in this contradictory and ambivalent space of enunciation'. He explains that this 'Third Space, though unprintable in itself, […] constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure the meaning and the symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew'.[22] This space stands between two (or more) binary

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[18] Ibid., p. 162.
[19] Ibid., p. 34.
[20] Ibid., p. 159.
[21] Ibid., p. 55.
[22] Ibid., p. 55.

structures, serving as the place of negotiation and translation between differently encountered social groups labelled by various cultural, ethnic, and political identifications.

Similarly, Ilan Kapoor describes it as a 'non-dialectical space standing in between the binary structures of orientalist representations and imperial power'.[23] Accordingly, identities created in this space are never fixed, but rather are engaged in a continuous process of construction and reconstruction. In other words, this term refers to the liminal space created between opposing cultures, 'which gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation'.[24] Thus, this Third Space allows for the formation and reformation of new cultural identities, with unique understandings of this in-between space.

The Third Space is a means of articulation, a mode of describing a productive space with new forms of cultural meaning. Bhabha elaborates on this as an 'interruptive, interrogative, and enunciative' space that produces new "possibilities" and marked by its "ambivalent" nature where cultural meaning and presentation are characterised by the absence of "primordial unity or fixity"'.[25] The 'Third Space' is the space created because of interactions between the first and second spaces at the borderline. The interaction that occurs is mostly characterised by clashing meanings, resulting from the opposing cultures and identities of the two places; hence the requirement for a Third Space. This Third Space provides both opposing groups with an opportunity to encounter each other, negotiate, clash, merge, and communicate. This eventually leads to the creation and production of innovative diverse possibilities, and the emergence of new dialects, hybrid languages, and cultural practices.

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[23] Ilan Kapoor, *The Postcolonial Politics of Development* (Hoboken: Taylor & Francis, 2008), p. 121.
[24] Rutherford Jonathan, "The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha", in *Identity: Community, Culture, Difference* (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1990), pp.206-221 (p. 211).
[25] Bhabha, *Location of culture*, p. 37.

Mostly stimulated by groups, Third Space encounters take place within specific articulated zones, and introduce new symbolic systems into them. In order to understand this process, we can examine the case of migrants whose norms differ from those of the destination population. Migrants introduce a new symbolic meaning into their new zone, creating a space with a purpose and structure as shown in the narratives of Arab American women. Bhabha explains how such hybridity influences the newcomer and the migrant:

> The migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream, or the racist's nightmare … and toward an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference.[26]

It is in this phase that the migrant embodies Bhabha's mode of cultural translation by merging 'original' and 'new' cultural symbols. The remainder of these symbols might subsequently become lost in this process. In other words, as Jenni Ramone puts it, 'the individual who migrates is translated into a new place and operates through a new language, becoming a translated individual bearing traces of both location and languages.[27] Therefore, unique subjectivities and new hybrid cultures arise from the merging of the 'original' and the 'new'.

An example can be drawn here from the experiences of earlier immigration waves of Arab Americans, as discussed in the previous chapter. Texts by early Arab American male writers depict a successful impression of assimilation within American society. That is to say, the political and social circumstances of their situations, along with their Christian faith, distinguish their encounters from those of women's and later Arab immigration waves. With the political interests shared between early Arab immigrants and Americans, which mainly revolved around weakening the power of the Ottoman Empire, and the community's effort to strongly highlight their Christian faith and detach themselves 'from those elements of Arab

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[26] Ibid., p. 321.
[27] Jenni Ramone, *Postcolonial Theories* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), p. 115.

culture viewed as less readily assimilable',[28] early Arab American writers were able to construct their ethnic identities and locating themselves among successfully assimilated ethnic groups in the US at that time. This image is manifested in writings by early Arab American male writers such as Gibran Kahlil Gibran's influential essays entitled 'To Young Americans of Syrian Origin', where he highlights aspects of identity related to the Christian Syrian immigrant figure that align with the quintessential white US citizen. Gibran foregrounds religious references as he encourages young Syrians to 'be proud of being Americans, but […] also be proud that [their] fathers and mothers came from a land upon which God laid His gracious hand and raised His messengers'.[29]

Early Arab American male writers constructed an identity that reinterpreted the East to the West, drawing connections and building bridges between their Christian faith and their worthiness as American citizens with a valuable historical and spiritual heritage. Accordingly, early Arab Americans' encounters with American society seems to align with Bhabha's definition of Third Space, in which the duality between the two opposing groups complemented each other by 'giv[ing] up any traditional references that might hinder their process of integration in […] the New World',[30] although some of these attempts included racist and discriminatory practices against Muslims and other ethnic groups in the US (mainly Blacks), as seen in Ash-Shaab's letter in the previous chapter.

Successful images of Third Space do not apply to examples of women's narratives pertaining to the same wave as that presented in the previous chapter, since their narratives reflected their efforts to respond to the limited understating imposed on them by the Arab patriarchal social structure that objectifies them placing them in an inferior position relative

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[28] Ibid., Majaj's 'Arab American Literature: Origin and Development', p. 2.
[29] Gibran Kahlil Gibran, 'To Young Americans of Syrian Origin', *The Syrian World*, (1926), cited in Alixa Naff, *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1993), p. 265.
[30] Naff, p. 77.

to their male counterparts. That is to say, in their narratives, early Arab American women attempted to rework their marginalised position in their first space before encountering the Other in a Third Space.

Bhabha's definition of Third Space offers benefits when defining the ethnic experience of Arab American women writers in terms of how it understands and analyses the transformative nature of transnational ideas and the subjectivities present in narratives, as well as the process of constructing and reconstructing these subjectivities as a result of the presence of two (or more) cultures and places labelled as binaries. The hyphenated identities represented and explored in these authors' characters offer opportunities to experience the tension between those binaries that increase complexity in their sense of belonging and identification. It is best to approach these issues through voices and writers who live between two cultures that often have 'contrapuntal perspectives which can make connections between quite discrepant experiences'.[31] These authors occupy, to use Homi Bhabha's words, 'a third space [...] where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates tension peculiar to borderline existence'.[32]

It is then possible to extrapolate Bhabha's definition of Third Space, referring to the processes of cultural reappropriation, and the rehistoricisation of signs from his colonial-postcolonial context, so that it can be applied to the corpus of this study. Bhabha's engagement with the term hybridity is also important for understanding hybrid identity in the case of Arab American women, and is the outcome of the fusion of the multiple aspects of identities at the point of encounter between Arab culture and the American culture.

By taking Bhabha's definition as a starting point with which to read Third Space in the narratives of Arab American women writers, this thesis expands upon it by drawing

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[31] Bill, Ashcroft and D. Pal S. Ahluwalia, *Edward Said* (Milton Park: Routledge, 2008), p. 94.
[32] Bhabha, *Location of culture*, p. 312.

attention to some of the limitations of the theory, finding new ways to reimagine it by reflecting upon the particular cross-cultural experiences reflected therein. This is not to suggest that Bhabha dismisses the experience of women when conceptualising his theory, but rather that limitations in his theory in terms of Arab American women's experience are associated with how the theory abstracts and mythologises such encounters. By contrast, literary texts written by Arab American women writers particularise and demythologise such experiences. The next section will explore how the intersectional factors of race, ethnicity, immigration status and gender, which characterise the ethnic experience of Arab American women, are highly determined by the political and social clashes between the two worlds, and shed light on Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

Limitation in Bhabha's definition of Third Space

Bhabha's theory of Third Space has already been the subject of much scholarly criticism, in relation to various aspects of his definition. The ambiguities of the theory have prompted various debates within postcolonial studies, including the question of its conceptual or spatial nature. While Bhabha defines his concept of Third Space as 'the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity',[33] he does not provide an adequate explanation of the nature of such a space. The understanding of the nature of Third Space, whether conceptual, spatial, or social, is of a particular importance in informing our understanding and application of the concept in diverse fields and practical contexts. Many scholars, such as Robert J. C. Young and Julia Lossau, have doubted the spatial existence of the Third Space, and emphasise its conceptual nature. In 'The Void of Misgiving', Young traces the conceptual construction of the Third Space, stating that the starting point of this phase is marked by the uneasiness that arises when the first connection

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[33] Ibid., p.145.

between two parties occurs. It is in this 'wound', as he describes it, that the starting point, that this Third Space is located:

> The third space becomes a measure of time, of temporalities, the form of subjectivity, a space of intersubjective negotiation, a difficult dialogue conducted in different tongues. It is, above all, a *caesura*, the pause in between, the stop, the cut, *caedere*; the event of the subject, wounded at the moment of the fall (*cadere*) into language.[34]

Hence, Young argues that this place is conceptual and has no geographical roots. This argument is problematic for other scholars who establish discourses that acknowledged the spatial attributes of this space. Adela Licona, for instance, considers the labelling of particular locations and practices as a constituent of Third Space. For Licona, an actual place, or a certain practice, can obtain the characteristics of Third Space by engaging shared symbols of meaning and producing new understandings – that is, 'put[ting the subjects'] perspectives, lived experiences, and rhetorical performances into play' to create this space. [35]

While considering the physical or conceptual attributes of Third Space, other scholars conceptualise Third Space as a social space in which particular groups shape unique identities in reaction to their marginalisation. David Gutierrez and others adopt this approach, stating that this Third Space is one of 'the dynamic social sites where people construct senses of community based both on "recognition of cultural similarities or social contiguity" and in reaction to externally imposed processes of "exclusion and constructions of otherness"'.[36] That is, the hybridity results from encountering and adapting to contradictions that allow for

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[34] Robert J. C. Young, 'The Void of Misgiving', in *Communicating in the Third Space* (New York: Routledge, 2009) <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [accessed 7 September 2019], pp. 81-95 (p. 89).

[35] Adela Licona, "(B)Borderlands' Rhetorics and Representations: The Transformative Potential of Feminist Third-Space Scholarship and Zines", *NWSA Journal*, 17.2 (2005), <https://www.jstor.org/?refreqid=excelsior%3A64c14aacd081d4834539ff908409208d> [accessed 11 October 2018], pp. 104- 129 (p. 105).

[36] David Gutierrez, "Migration, Emergent Ethnicity, and the "Third Space": The Shifting Politics of Nationalism in Greater Mexico", *The Journal of American History*, 86.2 (1999), <https://www.jstor.org/?refreqid=excelsior%3A64c14aacd081d4834539ff908409208d> [accessed 19 November 2018], pp. 481- 517 (p. 488).

the production of new meanings 'in reaction to, and often in opposition to, their marginalisation'.[37]

Gutierrez's conceptualisation of the social nature of Third Space complements Bhabha's definition when using the theory to read the ethnic experience of Arab American women writers. In the case of the examined texts in this thesis and as discussed in the previous chapter regarding the development of exclusion and marginalisation of the community, I consider Third Space as a social space where Arab American women are 'located in the interstices between the dominant national and cultural systems of both the United States' and the Arab world. Thus, this place becomes the site where they attempt 'to meditate the profound sense of displacement and other stresses raised by their daily existence as members of a racialized and marginalized minority' as is shown in the reading of their narratives. [38]

Bhabha's theory can also be problematic on different levels because it often deals with unspecified conflicting perspectives, and its primary focus is on colonial contexts. Further, Bhabha's theory of the Third Space calls for a consideration of how this space 'may open the way to conceptualising an international culture, based not on the exoticism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures but on the inscription and articulation of a culture's hybridity'.[39] Namely, he claims that a culture's hybridity, which is the essence of the Third Space, can help shape an international culture characterised by no boundaries and binaries. However, as mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, it is important to remember that, as Giorgia Severini points out, it is potentially overambitious to describe the interaction between the cultures of the white coloniser and the marginalised as hybrid, as such an

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[37] Ibid., p. 488.
[38] Ibid., p. 488.
[39] Bhabha, *Location of Culture*, p. 38.

approach ignores the power exercised by white colonisers over the colonised.[40] In other words, Bhabha's statements are utopian, since the mere existence of hybridity, whether acknowledged by the colonisers or not, is not enough to shape a Third Space without access to the hierarchies of power and the forms of oppression that secure them.

In fact, Bhabha acknowledges some aspects of the power dynamic between the coloniser and colonised in what he refers to as the 'containment of cultural difference' by the coloniser and the 'creation of cultural diversity' by the colonised.[41] Bhabha argues that colonial powers attempt to contain cultural difference by imposing fixed categories and norms onto colonised subjects. This containment aims to establish control and maintain the dominance of the coloniser over the colonised. He sheds light on the colonial power practices of encouraging such cultural diversity, but simultaneously contends that 'there is always a corresponding containment of it'.[42] Such containment is usually embodied in the process of 'normalisation', in which the superior or dominant culture evokes norms stating that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our grid'.[43]

On the other hand, Bhabha also emphasises the subversive potential of cultural difference by the colonised subjects, which can disrupt and challenge the dominant power structure. The 'creation of cultural diversity' refers to the ways in which the colonised subjects can assert their agency and resist the containment of their culture. Bhabha uses both concepts of 'the containment of cultural difference' and 'the creation of cultural diversity' to reflect different dimensions of power relations and the complex dynamics of colonial societies. Here, he highlights the tension between attempts to control by the coloniser and strategies of resistance and agency employed by the colonised subjects. However, his

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[40] Severini, p. 190.
[41] Bhabha, 'Introduction' in *Nation and Narration*, p. 20.
[42] Ibid., p. 20.
[43] Jonathan, 'The Third Space: Interview with Homi Bhabha', p.208.

concepts risk the potential homogenisation and flattening of cultural diversities within marginalised groups in non-colonial contexts. As his concepts focus on the power dynamics within colonial contexts, his concepts give insufficient attention to issues of power hierarchy, economic exploitation, material inequality and the material condition of postcolonial societies.

This introduces us to what previous critics have identified as another limitation of Bhabha's theory; i.e. the availability of equal opportunities for both the colonised and coloniser to articulate and be heard. In 'Encounters in the Third Space: Links between Intercultural Communication Theories and Postcolonial Approaches', Britta Kalscheur emphasises that Bhabha fails to prove that both groups require equal power when sharing this Third Space. Bhabha fails to define the aspects of power that allow a marginalised group to become as powerful as the superior majority. That is to say, the marginalised tend not to accord sufficient space to articulating their interests because the majority represent power, and wish to retain their power by keeping the marginalised ineffective.[44]

Furthermore, Bhabha tends to focus on the ways in which cultural hybridity can create new forms of identity and resistance, without adequately addressing the material conditions that give rise to these conflicts in the first place. This can lead to a form of postcolonial romanticism that overlooks the actual struggles and injustice faced by those who are oppressed and marginalised. Bhabha suggests a 'break up of binary sense of political antagonism', and therefore substituting the binary oppositions in conflict with the 'in-between' space of cultural negotiation.[45] Benita Parry criticises Bhabha's underestimation of the notions of real conflict and actual material conditions, stating that 'Bhabha's work […]

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[44] Britta Kalscheuer, 'Encounters in The Third Space: Links Between Intercultural Communication Theories and Postcolonial Approaches' in *The Global Intercultural Communication Reader*, 2nd edn (Routledge/Taylor and Francis) <http://portal.sdl.edu.sa/> [accessed 2 October 2018], pp. 147-189 (p.183).
[45] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 295.

preoccupied as it is with the generation of meaning within textual forms and functions […] dispense with the notion of conflict', a matter that Parry finds 'immensely troubling'. [46]

With this in mind, we observe that although Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space claims to offer a site for negotiation and articulation for opposing sides, it does not pay adequate attention to the intersectional nature of the hyphenated identities whose ethnic experience is shaped by remarkable historical and contemporary political and social tensions, which are, accordingly and continuously, affected/defined by acts of marginalisation, exclusion and alienation between the opposing groups. The next section of this chapter first offers some basic theoretical and conceptual frameworks for understanding Arab American women's identities in the 1980s through to the 2010s. Second it seeks to propose a conceptual context to fulfil the thesis's aim of demonstrating that Bhabha's definition of Third Space fails to accommodate Arab American women, specifically the pragmatic realities and experiences of individuals whose lives are defined by intersecting indices of social difference.

Prior to moving to the next section of this chapter, it is important to explain why this thesis posits a unique case for identity construction based on Arab American Women, although Bhabha's conceptualising of hybridity and Third Space has been accepted to abstract other recognisable identities. In a multicultural society such as the US, ethnic identifications are vital for self-identity and to preserve diversity locally. According to Thomas Eriksen, the USA is, in many ways, different from other European countries, in that it offers no understanding of what might be referred to as their semi-mythical history as a nation. The country has been populated due to periodic and significant influxes of immigrants from four continents: Europe, Africa, Asia and South America.[47] Thus, the public identity of

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[46] Benita Parry, *Postcolonial Studies: A Materialist Critique* (London: Routledge, 2004), p. 56.
[47] Thomas Hylland Eriksen, *Ethnicity and Nationalism* (London: Pluto, 1993), p. 3.

the US population rests on a variety of different cultural backgrounds, which comprise the US melting-pot. It is consequently difficult to abstract from, or ignore factors associated with ethnicity when exploring the case under study.

Another important aspect that characterises Arab American women's experiences as Arab American women hold multiple marginalised identities (mainly race and gender) which contribute to overlapping and intersecting systems of oppression. Thus, it is important for this thesis to produce specific racial and gendered identifications for them, in contrast to Bhabha's abstraction of such identifications. The notion of intersectionality is of particular importance to this thesis as it characterises the experiences of Arab American women, since they negotiate their identity relative to the multiple overlapping aspects of their identities including their race, gender, class, immigration status and sexuality.

The term intersectionality is coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw to describe how racism and sexism intersect to create a unique form of discrimination against women of colour in their everyday lives. Crenshaw uses the term to 'denote the various ways in which race and gender interact to shape the multiple dimensions of [women of colour's] experiences'.[48] In her article 'Mapping the Margins", Crenshaw proposes three categories of intersectionality. The first of these is structural intersectionality, which refers to 'the ways in which the location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender makes [their] actual experience of domestic violence, rape, and remedial reform qualitatively different than that of white women'.[49]

The second category is political intersectionality, which explicates how the experience of women of colour is situated within two or more subordinated groups that hold

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[48] Kimberlé Crenshaw, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics, and Violince against Women of color", *Stanford Law Review*, 43 (1991), <http://dx.doi.org/10.2307/1229039> [accessed 4 September 2018], pp. 1241-1299 (p. 1244).
[49] Ibid., p. 1245.

conflicting political agendas. She elaborates that women of colour's experiences thereby differ from those of men of colour and white women. Thus, while 'racism as experienced by people of color who are of a particular gender- male-tends to determine the parameters of antiracist strategies, just as sexism as experienced by women who are of a particular race-white-tends to ground the women's movement'.[50] Crenshaw observes how both discourses fail to adequately acknowledge the additional problems of race and patriarchy, to articulate fully the dimensions of racism and sexism' in women of colours' actual experience. The third category is representational intersectionality, through which Crenshaw illustrates the cultural constructions of women of colour, explaining how the 'controversies over the representation of women of color in popular culture can also elide the particular location of women of color, and thus become yet another source of intersectional disempowerment'.[51]

Crenshaw's framework of intersectionality provides a significant tool with which to unpack and understand identity issues in the narratives of Arab American women. It further assists in conceptualising how the intersecting grids of race, gender and immigration status contribute to marginalisation, and are therefore not adequality acknowledged in Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space.

Gaps in Bhabha's definition of Third Space when applied to the narratives of Arab American women writers

As mentioned earlier, when using Bhabha's definition of Third Space as a starting point to read the narratives of contemporary Arab American women writers, some limitations to the theory emerge. The next section of this chapter discusses how Bhabha's Third Space fails to include the ethnic experiences of Arab American women relative to three aspects: race and ethnicity, gender, and immigration status. Each of the following subsections uncovers issues faced by Arab American women in their everyday lives, which therefore

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[50] Ibid., P. 1252.
[51] Ibid., p. 1254.

shed light on the abstract nature of Bhabha's theory that marks its inability to encompass such experiences.

Race and ethnicity

While Bhabha's definition of Third Space acknowledges that any kind of direct communication between two opposing groups could result in various levels of racism, discrimination, and binary relations, it offers Third Space as a locus in which both groups can commentate equally, assuming the erasure of clashing cultural symbols. The case of contemporary Arab American women's encounter with the American society, as revealed by the writings of contemporary Arab American writers, is evidence of how Bhabha's theory fails to navigate the specificity of the realities of their intersecting experiences. In this section, I begin to unpack the notion of race and ethnicity as it relates to Arab Americans, while referring to notions of Orientalism and Neo-orientalism as a foundation for the gendered identification of Arab American women.

Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and Third Space critique the ways in which colonialism and imperialism have shaped global power relations and the construction of racial and ethnic identities. But his concepts are deeply embedded in broader discussions of power, domination, and identity with little focus on issues of race and ethnicity, which can therefore lead to an oversimplification of identity in his concepts. As his theory tends to emphasise the hybrid nature of identities - suggesting that individuals occupy a Third Space that transcends binary categories - it therefore oversimplifies the experiences of cases such as those of Arab Americans, as it fails to acknowledge the diverse range of racial and ethnic backgrounds within the Arab American community.

As mentioned previously, the later waves of Arab immigrants were mostly Muslims, and their phase of immigration occurred alongside turbulent Arab American relations. With their reception in America characterised by the deeply rooted Orientalist understanding of

Islam as an evil and foreign religion that opposes the respectable values of Christianity, a further lens of negative representation of Arabs was added through the conflict with Israel which 'sees Israel as "little," "brave," "beleaguered," and "heroic," while see[s] Arab nations […] as "backward," "ignorant," and "bloodthirsty"'.[52] Thus, the binaries between the two opposing groups remain in place at the space of encounter.

This deeply rooted hostility towards Arabs and Muslims and representation of it through binary concepts, informed the dichotomy between a supposedly barbaric and evil Islamic Middle East and the sophisticated superior Christian West. It is vital to mention here that this view of the East dates to the time of European colonial presence in the West. In his work *Orientalism*, Edward Said defines Orientalism as 'a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and "The Occident"'.[53] He asserts that Orientalism is a Western supremacist construct, practised to demonstrate superiority over the Orient 'politically, sociologically, ideologically, scientifically and imaginatively during the post-Enlightenment period'.[54]

The antagonism enacted by this narrative reflected traditions of thought derived from histories constructed by and for the West, which laid the groundwork for Western domination.[55] Said explains the process the West undertook to validate their dominance of the East during the European colonial era, in which officials embraced Orientalist narrative frameworks as domestic representations of the Orient. This includes Asians, Africans, Arabs and Muslims, who are presented in light of their presumed inferiority and exoticism.

Countries in the West, adopting the Orientalist view of the East, have been using various Orientalist stereotypes to justify their superiority and presence in the East, and uphold

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[52] Edmund Ghareeb, *Split Vision* (Washington: The American-Arab Affairs Council, 1983), p. ix.
[53] Edward W Said, *Orientalism* (London: Penguin Books, 1978), p. 2.
[54] Ibid., p. 3.
[55] Ibid., p. 5.

their imperialist objectives. In the Western world, several factors have combined to facilitate the inferior and backward imaginary of the East, including Ottoman despotism, Islamic obscurantism, and the supposed racial inferiority of people of the East. These factors underlined an immediate need for Anglo-Saxon tutelage.[56]

Said notes that after the transition of power from Europe to America in the period after World War II, a subconscious shift in the Orientalist abstractions and impressions of American popular attitudes and foreign policies towards Arabs and Muslims occurred.[57] It was the immediate period after World War II that witnessed the emergence of American Orientalism in a manner 'that has been thoroughly racialized, […] [and] when race had cultural, political and legal implications'.[58] This intensified the binary opposition between the Islamic East and the Christian West, while ignoring the social, cultural and religious diversity of the East. Therefore, 'most Americans cannot distinguish between Arabs, Turks and Iranians, lumping them all together as Muslims'.[59]

Thus, race, nationality, gender norms and religion, the main paradigms of identity, have determined the differentiation between Americans and the supposedly inferior races who trace their origins to the Middle East. American society has fomented endless 'potent racial and cultural stereotypes, some imported and some homegrown, that depicted the Muslim world as decadent and inferior'.[60] Many of these stereotypes manifested directly following the assertions of US policymakers 'from Harry Truman through George Bush [as they] tended to dismiss Arab aspirations for self-determination as politically primitive,

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[56] Douglas Little, *American Orientalism: The United States and The Middle East Since 1945* (London: I.B. Tauris & Co. Ltd., 2004) <https://books.google.co.uk/books/about/American_Orientalism.html?id=p71CacOnop0C&redir_esc =y> [accessed 2 May 2018], p. 10.
[57] Said, p. 25.
[58] Hassan, p. 15.
[59] Michael W Suleiman, *The Arabs in The Mind of America* (Brattleboro, Vt.: Amana Books, 1988), p. ix.
[60] Ibid., p. 11.

economically suspect, and ideologically absurd'.[61] Furthermore, these stereotypes were deeply rooted in US popular culture, as Hollywood participated in the American Orientalist style of depicting Arabs and Muslims. Suleiman observes how Disney Studios' 1992 version of *Aladdin* is among many productions that confirmed such stereotypes of Arabs and Muslims as alien, evil, and barbaric. The animated classic 'opens with a Sadam [sic] Hussein look-alike crooning "Arabian Nights." The lyrics evoke long-standing sinister images of the Muslim world punctuated by the orientalist punch line: "It's barbaric, but hey it's home"'.[62]

It is important to note here that Bhabha considers Said's account of orientalism as tending to homogenise the West and the East as Bhabha claims that 'Edward Said proposes a semiotic of "Orientalist" power, examining the varied European discourses which constitute "the Orient" as a unified racial, geographical, political and cultural zone of the world'.[63] Bhabha argues that this binary opposition of the East and the West, as presented in Said's *Orientalism*, is overly simplistic and fails to capture the complexity and diversity of cultural interactions in the colonial and postcolonial world. Bhabha, therefore, offers his concepts of hybridity, Third Space, resistance and mimicry to reshape our understanding of the interaction between cultures and power dynamics while stressing the transcending of binary categories of identity.

However, Bhabha's account of diminishing binary oppositions through the process of hybridisation in the Third Space is utopian. It is detached from the pragmatic realities and lived experiences of cases such as that of Arab Americans. Jonathan Friedman criticises the theories of Bhabha and other postcolonial theorists as having 'little to do with everyday

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[61] Ibid., p. 11.
[62] Ibid., p. 11.
[63] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 101.

problems of identity in the streets, even as it is part of the same world'[64]. Pascal-Yan Sayehg

states that such a lack of connection between the theory and reality in Bhabha's theories can

be attributed to:

> the sources Bhabha uses to describe and conceptualise narrative processes of
> cultural hybridisation. In *The Location of Culture* (1994), he draws on a very
> large array of literary, artistic and theoretical texts. The interweaving of all these
> texts creates a complex and hermetic whole which can indeed give the impression
> to voice an elite condition (albeit marginal) rather than the commonality and daily
> experiences of displacement. The lack of clarity, as mentioned above, helps to
> produce this impression.[65]

This lack of connection between Bhabha's concepts and the everyday life at places of

encounters presents hybridity and the experience of Third Space as a universal experience.

This makes his concepts unable to account for the specificities and realities faced by different

cultural and racial groups. This is evident in how Bhabha's concepts fail to encompass the

developing attitudes of marginalisation and systematic racism, particularly at times of

atrocities in the case of the Arab American community. The start of the twenty-first century

witnessed attitudes of Neo-orientalism and Islamophobia. The attacks of 9/11 invited

widespread and intense hostility towards anyone who looked like a Muslim or Arab. Sam

Keen explains, in an address to the Association of Editorial Cartoonists, that at the turn of the

century 'you can hit an Arab free: they're free enemies, free villains-where you couldn't do it

to a Jew or you can't do it to a black anymore'.[66] A young Arab American man Moustafa

Bayoumi, when writing his book *How Does it Feel to Be a Problem?*, stated 'We're the new

blacks', reflecting the level of marginalisation and discrimination directed towards his

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[64] Jonathan Friedman, 'Global Crises, the Struggle for Cultural Identity and Intellectual Porkbarreling: Cosmopolitans versus Locals, Ethnics and Nationals in an Era of De-Hegemonisation', in *Debating Cultural Hybridity*, ed. by Pnina Werbner and Tariq Modood, (London: Zed Books, 1997), pp. 70-89 (p. 74).

[65] Pascal Yan Sayehg, 'Cultural Hybridity and Modern Binaries: Overcoming the Opposition Between Identity and *Otherness*?', *Journal of Global Cultural Studies*, 4 (2008) <http://journals.openedition.org/transtexts/235> [accessed 5 August 2023], pp. 1-12 (p.4).

[66] Quoted in Jack G Shaheen, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood Vilifies a People* (New York: Olive Branch Press, 2001), p. 6.

contemporaries. In their work *Arab and Arab American Feminism*, Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany and Nadine Naber state that 'backlash against persons perceived to be "Arab or Muslim or both" has become an increasingly widespread consequence of the construction of the "Arab and Muslim" as an 'Other' in the dominate "American" imaginary, revealing how long-term trends of racial exclusion intensify during moments of crisis and war'.[67] Such racist and discriminatory attitudes towards Arabs and Muslims in America leads to the assertion that Bhabha's Third Space awkwardly privileges assimilation, by disabling the everyday lived experience of being an Other in a majority culture.

The celebration of an apparently post-racial and colour-blind America, represented by the election of Barack Obama in 2008 as the first Black President of the United States magnified the problematic racial and ethnic positioning of Arabs and Muslims in America as outsiders and Others. Abdulhadi, Alsultany and Naber comment that 'Arabs and Muslims were welcomed to the ranks of Obama's diverse and broad-based campaign as long as they did not bring along telltale signs of who they were'.[68] The authors believe that the notion of a 'postracial society' is problematic, because the election of a Black president does not automatically erase the gap between whites and people of colour in terms of their lived experiences. Moreover, they argue, the space accorded to each marginalised group to participate in the American imaginary is not equal. For them, Arabs and Muslims are marginalised, and as such are welcome to participate in the American imaginary 'as long as they accept remaining in their marginalized place and do not demand more prominence'.[69]

Abdulhadi, Alsultany and Naber mention a further example of the 'Othering' and the alienating tendency towards Arabs and Muslims by recalling how Obama was hugely

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[67] Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany and Nadine Christine Naber, *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. xx.
[68] Ibid., p. xxi.
[69] Ibid., p. xxi.

discredited during his run for presidency whenever he was labelled as having Arab or Muslim heritage. They write:

> This action demonstrates how Arabness and Muslimness have been seen as irreconcilably different from and opposed to anything remotely resembling normalized Americanness. It speaks to an "America" that might be ready for a president who "happens to be Black" but not for a "Black president" or a president who "might 'happen to be Muslim." McCain's defence of Obama by announcing that the latter was not an Arab but in fact a "decent family man," and Obama's thanks to McCain for defending him against such libel, further indicates the extent of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim consensus in U.S. public discourses today.[70]

Thus, we need to consider, in any attempt to read the ethnic experience of the contemporary Arab American community through the lens of Bhabha's definition of Third Space, that there may be overlooked aspects in any encounter between two opposing powers. The hegemonic demonisation of the Arab race and Islam, both of which comprise the pillars of the community's ethnic identity, reveals the limitations on the utopic ideal of Bhabha's definition of Third Space as it applies to the real and intersecting experiences of Arab American women and their communities.

Gender

Bhabha's discussions on race and ethnicity stem from his aim to continue Edward Said's analysis in regard to deconstructing racist perceptions as the product of colonial dogmas. While Said's work tends to focus on how Western colonial discourse promotes fixed binaries of racial and ethnic differences, Bhabha's work argues that the persistent repetition of racist stereotypes in colonialism is driven by psychological ambivalence that is both foundational and necessary. Said's work has been criticised, by critics such as Gayatri Spivak, for ignoring the female racial Other through his exclusive attention to male writers, male texts, and male subjects.[71] Bhabha attempts to bridge the gap in Said's work by

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[70] Ibid., p. xxii.
[71] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can the Subaltern Speak?", *Die Philosophin*, 14 (2003), <http://dx.doi.org/10.5840/philosophin200314275> [accessed 18 March 2019], pp. 66-111 (p.92).

asserting the 'complexity of the question of gender difference',[72] through arguing for the

reading of stereotypes 'in terms of fetishism, the myth of historical origination-racial purity,

cultural priority-produced in relation to the colonial stereotype functions to "normalise" the

multiple beliefs and split subjects that constitute colonial discourses as a consequence of its

process of disavowal'.[73]

For Bhabha, 'the fetish or stereotypes gives access to an "identity" which is

predicated as much on mastery and pleasure as it is on anxiety and defence'.[74] Bhabha argues

that the intersection of sexual fetishism and racial stereotypes has significant implications for

the dynamics of colonialism and cultural identity. He suggests that colonial powers often

exoticise and eroticise the colonised 'Other' through the deployment of racial stereotypes and

sexual fetishism. This process serves to reinforce the power imbalance between the coloniser

and the colonised, as well as to legitimise the subjugation and exploitation of the colonised.

However, Bhabha's attempt to treat the racial stereotypes and sexual fetish as

equivalent analogous psychic operations makes it difficult and ambiguous for the articulation

of sexual difference with racial difference in the context of colonial stereotypes. Christine

Anne Holmlund points out the difficulty in Bhabha's frame of racial and sexual difference:

> Even when read as metaphors for psychic interactions, the decision to posit
> racial/ethnic difference as analogous to sexual difference invariably makes it hard
> for Bhabha to think the two categories together and against each other, with the
> result that, once again, the voices of women as colonizers and colonized are
> distorted or silenced.[75]

In addition to the fact that Bhabha conflates sex and sexuality in his discussions of

racial and gendered stereotypes, his focus on how racial and sexual stereotypes function

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[72] Homi Bhabha, 'Foreword: Remembering Fanon', in Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*, trans. Charles Markmann (London: Pluto Press, 1986), pp.vii-xxv (p. xxvi).
[73] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, P. 106.
[74] Ibid., P. 107.
[75] Christine Anne Holmlund, 'Displacing Limits of Difference: Gender, Race and Colonialism in Edward Said and Homi Bhabha's Theoretical Models and Marguerite Durras's Experimental Films', in *Otherness and the Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*, ed. by Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel (New York: Routledge, 1993), pp. 1-22 (p.7).

for both the coloniser and the colonised as he emphasises the newly generated identities and meanings resulting from such an interaction marks his theory's excessive focus on cultural hybridity and lack of attention to the intersectional dimensions of identity.

In the case of this thesis, Bhabha's frame of sexual stereotypes is limited when applied to the gendered experience of Arab American women. Arab American women navigate not only the complexities of cultural hybridity but also the intersections of gender, race, religion and nationality. Their experiences are shaped by patriarchal norms, cultural expectations and the intersections of multiple identities. Ignoring these complex dynamics limits the applicability of Bhabha's theory in understanding the experiences of Arab American women. The specific historical, cultural and geopolitical factors at play in the context of Arab American women require a more localised analysis that goes beyond the binary of the coloniser and the colonised as presented in Bhabha's works.

The issue of gender in Arab American women's Third Space is highly determined by race and ethnicity, as discussed in the earlier section. This is significant as stereotypes, in the case of Arab Americans, are mostly gendered with Arab men seen as terrorists and exotic foreigners and women as either heavily veiled oppressed subjects, or sexually available belly dancers.[76] The case of Arab American women, in particular, exemplifies what Michael Pickering refers to as double-otherness, where he relates the aspect of gender to that of race and religion, as in the case of 'black or Jewish women [who] have […] been doubly othered, in racist and sexist terms…'.[77] However, Arab American women encounter a form of marginalisation that extends beyond the confines of racial and gender-based discrimination,

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[76] Amal Abdelrazek, p. 7.
[77] Michael Pickering, *Stereotyping* (Houndmills, Basingstoke, Hampshire: Palgrave, 2005), p. 63.

as they are also subjected to othering within the context of their own Arab cultural tradition and narrative.

While the Saidian meaning of the term Othering, as an Orientalist tendency of Othering the Orient, applies to the racial and gendered classification of Arab American women, the Spivakian sense of the term subaltern is more applicable to the forms of subalternisation practised over Arab American women through the Arab social tradition. In her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?",[78] Gayatri Spivak uses the term subaltern in the context of the colonised people. Women and the lower classes may be oppressed by the forces of either colonialism, patriarchy or the social structure. The term can also then be extended to be used with Arab American women as they are deemed lesser, excluded and ultimately Other in the narratives and practices of their Arabic culture.

Arab American women's experience with Orientalist Othering and patriarchal subalternisation is characterised by the fact that their ethnic experience is highly determined by political racism. Helen Hatab Samhan uses the term political racism in the context of the Arab American ethnic experience to highlight the forms of racism that Arabs in America face, claiming they are structurally different from racism as understood in a classical sense. Samhan states that 'anti-Arab attitudes and behaviour have their roots, not in the traditional motives of structurally excluding a group perceived as inferior, but in politics'.[79] Samhan explains the origins of political racism in the case of Arab Americans 'lie in the Arab-Israeli conflict and, as such, constitute an ideological struggle more than an ethnic one'.[80] This phenomenon continued to develop in the late twentieth century and into the early twenty-first

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[78] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?',78.
[79] Helen Hatab Samhan, "Politics and Exclusion: The Arab American Experience", *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 16.2 (1987), <https://doi.org/10.2307/2537085> [accessed 16 May 2018], pp. 11-28 (p. 11).
[80] Ibid., p. 11.

century, being intensified by further political conflicts arising after and including the 9/11 attacks.

The Orientalist Othering of Arab American women, when wedded to political racism, takes the form of racial and gendered stereotypes that serve the superior-majority's discourse in several respects. First, stereotyping serves to establish various characteristics intended to provide the parties in power with a feeling of security and superiority. Stereotypes employed by social actors create boundaries detaching from the Other to idealise their own group and emphasise their remarkable differences from the Other.[81] Stereotyping provides a sense of security and superiority, and, therefore, establishes power relations. This system then further marginalises and subordinates the objects of stereotyping. As such, stereotypes can be seen as a process of 'judgement about the difference', which implies power, even among the powerless, and reinforces the norms emanating from the structures of social dominance.[82]

Prior to 9/11, the Arab world was often portrayed through gendered and racial stereotypes, depicting it as a dessert and oil-rich region that lacked modernisation and was united in its hatred of Israel. Women in this portrayal were seen as powerless and shapeless objects, oppressed by their religion and/or culture. this depiction of the Arab world was used to present Israel as a modern and benevolent country that was attempting to integrate democratic and Western-inspired values into the presumed barbaric region. This portrayal of the Arab-Israeli relationship also helped to justify the military and logistic support provided by the US to Israel in its conflict with the Arab states. The post-9/11 period witnessed the excessive use of gendered stereotyping regarding Arab and Muslim women in American media and cultural discourse, and mainly focused on the veil and *burqa* as symbols of

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[81] Adrian Holliday, Martin Hyde and John Kullman, *Intercultural Communication: An Advanced Resource Book* (Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon: New York, NY, 2010), p. 23.
[82] Johanne Hansen Kobberstad, "'Some Others Are More Other Than Others' - A Comparison of The Social Dynamics in Two French Course Groups at A Sociocultural Activity Centre for Immigrant Women in Brussels" (unpublished Master's thesis, University of Tromsø, 2008), p. 23.

oppression practised over Arab and Muslim women. The use of such stereotypes at such politically tense times served to justify the Bush administration's invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq to the American Congress and the American public. In her book *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?*, Abu-Lughod lays down the interpretations surrounding *Time* magazine's cover story of Bibi Aisha, a young Afghani woman whose nose had been cut off in punishment by her Taliban husband and in-laws. Abu-Lughod comments on the 'juxtaposition between the photograph and the headline—"What Happens if We Leave Afghanistan?"—' as an implication 'that women would be the first victims. Unremarked was the fact that this act of mutilation had been carried out while U.S. and British troops were still present in Afghanistan'.[83]

Such values as those presenting America as a benevolent and heroic country, and evoked by raising concerns regarding Muslim and Arab women's rights, were considered among the fundamental motives for accelerating the War on Terror in the aftermath of 9/11. Conveyed in Laura Bush's speech in her November 16th, 2001, radio address (a speech that normally would have been expected to be delivered by President Bush), she declares that 'the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women'.[84] The delivery of this speech by the First Lady can be interpreted as an attempt to bring a feminist issue to the centre of American public awareness and foreign policy, underlining the Bush administration's perceptions of maternal womanhood.

Laura Bush's speech, drawn from what Said refers to as the Orientalist frame of Western rescue, or what Spivak describes as the idea of white men saving brown women from brown men,[85] draws attention to the extensive use of gendered stereotypes by

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[83] Leila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women (Still) Need Saving?* (Harvard: Harvard University Press, 2013), p. 27.
[84] Cited in Kim Berry, "The Symbolic Use of Afghan Women in The War on Terror", *Humboldt Journal of Social Relations*, 27.2 (2003), <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23524156> [accessed 2 September 2018], pp. 137-160 (p. 137).
[85] Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', p.92.

mainstream American and Western feminism to represent the experience of Arab and Muslim women. Abdelrazek states that mainstream American and Western feminists 'consider Arab and Arab American women passive victims of patriarchal oppression who need saving'.[86] They attribute the main problems Arab and Arab American women face to 'the veil, the harem, and female circumcision'while ignoring 'more pressing issues with which to conduct,[87] such as the physical survival of Arab women in the occupied territories of Iraq and Palestine and the lack of education and health care in other Arab countries due to poverty'.[88]

Again, this approach, relying on Orientalist gendered stereotypes for the purpose of defining the superior self to detach from the inferior Other, becomes 'a self-consolidating project for Western feminism',[89] as stated by Leela Gandhi. Using this frame of representation creates a contrast between Third-World women and Western feminists, which, according to Chandra Talpade Mohanty, serves the '(implicit) self-representation of Western women as educated, as modern, as having control over their own bodies and sexualities, and the freedom to make their own decisions' by representing Third-World women as the opposite, i.e., 'ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, domesticated, family-oriented [and] victimised'. [90]

In addition to the double-otherness embedded in the gendered-racial stereotypes that are common to political racism, Arab and Arab American women face 'the patriarchal values within the [Arab] nationalist and [Islamic] religious ideologies that limit women's agency'.[91] The subaltern-position within the Arab social structure is controlled by their assigned gender

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[86] Amal Abdelrazek, p. 3.
[87] Ibid., p. 3.
[88] Ibid., p. 3.
[89] Leela Ghandi, *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998), p. 85.
[90] Chandra Talpade Mohanty, "Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses", *Feminist Review* (1988) <https://doi.org/10.2307/1395054> [accessed 20 April 2018] pp. 333-358 (p. 334).
[91] Amal Abdelrazek, p. 4.

roles, which are in turn derived from their Arab cultural values. Jen'nan Ghazal Read and

David Eagle state that many of these cultural values are inspired by interpretations of Islamic

teachings and beliefs that influence both Muslims and Christian Arabs, resulting in an

overlap between cultural values and religious principles.[92]

However, what distinguishes the social structure of Arab societies is what Read and

Eagle refer to as 'patriarchal connectivity',[93] as coined by Suad Joseph. The term refers to the

nature of relationships within the social structure of Arab societies, where women view and

are viewed 'in relation to the larger kinship structure that privileges male authority and

dominance over their own achievements'.[94] Arab women's individual identities are connected

and limited to their position within their families as mothers, sisters, daughters and wives. For

Arab and Muslim women in America, ethnicity serves as an additional factor shaping their

identities, as Read and Eagle write:

> Ethnic and religious identities combine to promote Arab women's obligations to the
> family, which include modesty, premarital virginity, childbearing, and childrearing.
> Consequences for not fulfilling these duties come at an ultimate cost- the loss of family
> honor, which is contingent on whether they fulfill these obligations.[95]

Thus, the ethnic and religious identity of the community, which mostly revolves

around the value of gender roles in Arab societies, becomes 'a primary source of pride in the

community' and is an essential factor shaping the minor community's identity relative to the

majority.[96] This is even emphasised as the community uses cultural values to define itself in

contrast to the Other. Nadine Naber observes how Arab Americans distinguish themselves

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[92] Jen'n Ghazal Read and David Eagle, "Intersectionality and Identity: An Exploration of Arab American Women", in *Religion and Inequality in America: Research and Theory on Religion's Role in Stratification* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2014), <https://www.google.co.uk/books/> [accessed 5 September 2019], pp. 75- 98 (p.80).

[93] Suad Joseph, "Connectivity and Patriarchy Among Urban Working-Class Arab Families in Lebanon", *Ethos*, 21.4 (1993) <https://doi.org/10.1525/eth.1993.21.4.02a00040>, [accessed 20 April 2018] pp. 452-484 (p. 453). Cited in Read and David, p. 80.

[94] Read and David, p. 80.

[95] Ibid., p. 80

[96] Ibid., p. 80.

from mainstream American society by relying on standards of family binds, cultural values and female chastity. This leads them to define Americans 'in derogatory sexualized terms', such that they are labelled as a 'morally bankrupt' culture. Arabs, on the other hand, are defined by positive cultural values and morality, based on their strong family bonds and hospitality.[97]

Values related to female sexuality tend to be utilised as a part of what Naber considers the community's selective assimilation strategy, in which the preservation of Arab cultural identity and assimilation to American norms of "whiteness" [are] simultaneously desired'.[98] Reproducing this cultural identity is characterised by themes of gender and sexuality, which are imposed on women by the community and their families. Any rejection of idealised notions of Arab womanhood by daughters may result in cultural loss and represents a defeat in the process of forging cultural identity. Such a strategy further intensifies the distinction between the Self and the Other as located between Arab and American. Naber explains:

> In policing Arab American femininities, this family strategy deployed a cultural nationalist logic that represented the categories "Arab" and "American" in oppositional terms, such as "good Arab girls" vs. "bad American(ized) girls," or "Arab virgin" vs. "American(ized) whore".[99]

Thus, Arab American women must navigate pressures from their own community and dominant American society's assumptions about the role of women in the Arab and Muslim communities, placing them in a predicament. Susan Darraj argues that Arab American women 'fight two separate battles-one at home against sexism that is personal and one in society against racism that is political'.[100] This distinguishes their ethnic and gendered

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[97] Nadine Naber, "Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/ American(Ized) Whore", *Feminist Studies*, 32.1 (2006) <https://doi.org/10.2307/20459071> [accessed 10 March 2019] pp. 87-111 (p. 87).
[98] Ibid., p. 88.
[99] Ibid., p. 88.
[100] *Arab & Arab American Feminisms:* p. xxxviii.

experience from that of women from other minority groups in the US, and contributes to the multiple forms of Othering they encounter as Arabs, Americans, and women.

Accordingly, their double-otherness embodies racial and gendered Orientalist stereotypes that are located alongside political racism, and their subaltern-position in their own society, which is controlled by cultural values and gender roles, which are emphasised in times of austerity, and which are all fundamental components of Arab American women's experience. These significant factors, along with the complexity and intersectionality of the ethnic experiences of Arab American women, are what characterise their authentic experiences, indicating the utopian tone of Bhabha's equation of Third Space.

Immigration status

In his discussions on nation and hybridity, Bhabha states that the Western or modernist understanding of nationalism, which previously tended to belittle nationalist ideology as primitive or narrow-minded, has transformed in contemporary times. In this new perspective, nationalism is regarded as secondary and less significant in comparison to the hybrid and globalised nature of our world, which prioritises transnational concerns. Bhabha claims that 'in that large and liminal image of the nation with which I began is a particular ambivalence that haunts the idea of the nation, the language of those who write of it and the lives of those who live it'.[101]

Bhabha employs the concept of postcolonialism to challenge nationalism and embraces the notion of writing from a migrant, marginalised and exilic standpoint as 'the Western metropole must confront its postcolonial history, told by its influx of postwar migrants and refugees, as an indigenous or native narrative internal to its national identity'.[102] Bhabha proposes that the national discourse lacks the necessary capacity to fully encompass

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[101] Bhabha, 'Introduction' in *Nation and Narration*, P. 1.
[102] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, P. 9.

and elucidate the experience of what he comes to term 'wandering people [who] are themselves the marks of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation'. He applies the term 'wandering people in reference to 'colonial, postcolonial, migrants [and] minorities'.[103]

The reading of the ethnic experience of Arab American women questions why Bhabha's theory fails to distinguish between different groups when describing the interactions between two opposing powers, and between immigrant and non-immigrant identities. His use of the term 'wandering people' to refer to hybrid subjects not only dismisses the roots put down by immigrants in exile, but also makes little acknowledgement of the hybrid subjectivities of second-generation immigrants. In referring to hybrid subjects as 'wandering peoples', Bhabha remonetises the experience of migrancy and exile to serve his argument about the need to focus on the present moment in cross-cultural encounters, Bhabha writes:

> If, as they say, the past is a foreign country, then what does it mean to encounter a past that is your own country reterritorialized, even terrorized by Others? […] the act of "rememoration" […] turns the present of narrative enunciation into the haunting memorial of what has been excluded excised, evicted, and for that very reason the *unheimlich* space for the negotiation of identity and history.[104]

As Bhabha stresses such an ahistorical approach (i.e., disregarding the past) towards hybridity, he appears to disregard the historical significance of nation and national culture as a tangible existence among diverse communities and cultures. He emphasis on cultural hybridity and how Third Space is an innovative space that deviates momentarily from established values and norms and where subjects are 'being in the beyond'.[105] Such an emphasis overlooks the historical and ongoing power dynamics that shape the lives of Arab American women. These women often navigate multiple layers of oppression, including

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[103] Ibid., P. 236.
[104] Ibid., P. 284.
[105] Ibid., P. 10.

racism, sexism, and Islamophobia, which cannot be adequately addressed without a historical understanding of the social, political, and economic forces at play. Furthermore, Bhabha's ahistorical approach undermines the significance of cultural preservation and the preservation of traditions for Arab American women. It fails to recognise the importance of maintaining cultural roots and resisting assimilation as forms of resistance and resilience.

The issue of history and maintaining cultural roots are of a particular importance when distinguishing between the experience of immigrants and second generations. The commonality between both groups, in their attempts to straddle in-between worlds, is what makes analysis collapse such groups under the umbrella of a single form of cultural hybridity. Given the complexity of the ethnic experience of Arab American women discussed previously, the encounter between the two opposing sides requires a careful distinction between the ethnic experiences of immigrant and US-born Arab American women, or first and second generations.

Yassmeen Elfar defines the first generation of Arab Americans as those who immigrated to America from the Middle East, willingly or unwillingly, and who are the first generation of their families to acquire American citizenship. The second generation of Arab Americans are those born in, or who grew up in the US. Many of this generation benefit from an American education, and are therefore, more aware of popular culture and American norms such as democracy and freedom of speech. Many speak English as their first language, and it is anticipated that their concept of home 'has likely changed to include the United States as home, rather than their parent's country of origin'.[106] This does not suggest a total

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[106] Yassmeen Elfar, "Ethnic Identity in Second-Generation Arab Americans" (unpublished PhD, The Chicago School of Professional Psychology, ProQuest, 2016) <https://www.proquest.com/docview/1762550352/fulltextPDF/7CEC5A3F> [accessed 27 April 2022], pp. 14-15.

abandonment of the traditions of their own ethnic culture; instead, many seek to consciously critique and rectify their ethnic traditions.

In the context of literary criticism, Hassan is one among various critics who believe:

> A distinction needs to be made between the works of immigrants and that of U.S.-[…] born writers, that the biculturalism of immigrants and exiles needs to be distinguished from what may be described, following W. E. B. Du Bois, as the "double consciousness" of U.S.-[…] born Arab writers.[107]

Hassan defines the figure of the immigrant as one who 'stands between the culture of origin and the adoptive country and, equipped with first-hand knowledge of both, assumes the role of meditator, interpreter, or cultural translator'.[108] Hassan further uses the term cultural translation to refer to the translational stances Arab American immigrant writers take to negotiate their identities, while interpreting their hybridity to their readers.[109] He asserts that such a definition does not apply to the case of the non-immigrant Arab minorities, since the descendants of Arab immigrants, similar to any other immigrant children, are only exposed 'to various degrees of their parents' culture and language'.[110] Immigrants, meanwhile, 'bring with them their own cultural background and worldviews, and their transition into the US or Britain involves a kind of negotiation and adjustment that is quite distinct from the cultural predicament of their children'.[111]

Thus, the narrative of immigrant writers differs from that of the non-immigrant writers, as the former group occupy a privileged position that 'affords them a unique insider's perspective not only on the Arab world, but also on their adoptive country'.[112] Their narratives provide two-way translations, as they are of the Orient 'by virtue of their background' and the Occident 'by reason of immigration and acculturation'.[113] Notably,

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[107] Waïl S Hassan, *Immigrant Narratives* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), p. xii.
[108] Ibid., p. 5.
[109] Ibid., p. 28.
[110] Ibid., p. 5.
[111] Ibid., p. 5.
[112] Ibid., p. 29.
[113] Ibid., p. 29.

Hassan's conceptualisation of cultural translation differs from that of Bhabha. While Bhabha's concept of cultural translation refers to an ongoing process that involves the interplay of power, hybridity and negotiation at the locus of encounter, Hassan's theory emphasises the role of cultural texts and symbolic forms of communication, such as literature, film, narrative and metaphor, as a mechanism for conveying cultural ideas.

The argument made in this section proceeds from the key distinction made by Vince P. Marotta regarding 'organic hybridity' and 'intentional hybridity'.[114] Marotta's distinction draws on the work of philosopher and literary critic Mikhail Bakhtin, defining the former term as where 'essentialized identities-white and black or host and immigrant- that come together to form a fixed, unified hybrid self' exist in an overlapping space.[115] In this thesis, the term organic hybridity can be applied to Arab American second-generation women as they negotiate their identities within the overlapping spaces of American society. Their hybridity is unconscious and organic, in that the formation of their identities is essentially determined by their existence in the overlapping space between the Arab/Arab American community and American society. Intentional hybridity, by contrast, refers to the intentional juxtaposition of two essentialised identities that may prove oppositional, but might remain in tension. Intentional hybrids can be distinguished from organic hybrids by the transitional space, or border crossing, via which the two oppositional domains connect. The narratives of Arab American women immigrants, as examined in this thesis, manifest the construction of the characters' intentional hybridity as they traverse the border from their native countries in the Arab world to America. Their hybridity is deliberate and conscious, as they seek to construct meaning from among the different elements and components of their own culture and that of their new home.

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[114] Vince P. Marotta, "The Hybrid Self and The Ambivalence of Boundaries", *Social Identities*, 14.3 (2008) <https://doi.org/10.1080/13504630802088052> [accessed 6 June 2018], pp. 295-312 (p. 296).
[115] Ibid., p. 296.

These two terms will be used to refer to immigrants and US-born second-generation immigrants, while keeping in mind the previously discussed problems in Bhabha's definition of Third Space in relation to the ethnic experience of Arab American women. Accordingly, I use the term organic hybrid to refer to writers/characters who either born or raised in the USA, and whose hybrid identities are not mainly and directly formed by migration. Intentional hybrid refers to writers/characters whose hybridity is constructed around their experiences of immigration and border crossing.

In establishing that the experience of Arab American women is an intersectional experience, as they navigate multiple layers of oppression, including racism, sexism, patriarchy and Islamophobia, this chapter explored how Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and Third Space are neglecting of various aspects of their intersectional experience. A final point to make in this chapter before moving to read the narratives of Arab American women is how Bhabha's concepts of hybridity and Third Space offer a monolithic version and conception of cross-cultural encounters. His romanticising of cross-cultural encounters presents his theorisation of Third Space as utopian and as being in a harmonious state, while failing to account for the developing tensions, ambivalences, and conflicts that arise from cultural encounters. Such a lack of engagement with actual historical and contemporary materials not only presents his concept as monolithic and homogenising, but also renders the theory of hybridity and Third Space to be essentialist. In his criticism of Bhabha's notion of hybridity, Friedman comments on what he terms the 'programme Bhabha envisaged' as he considers it establishing:

> "[...] a world in which the homogenising tendency of all identification are eliminated not via modernist anti-cultural identity, but by a postmodernist total fusion of all cultures into a new heterogeneous homogeneity of the 'third space', which, if it is a space, must have boundaries of its own, and thus be based on oppositions to its own others. [...] It is precisely in the metaphor of border-

crossing that the notion of homogeneous identity is carried and reinforced, since it is a prerequisite of such transgression.[116]

Such a monolithic and essentialist vision of hybridity and Third Space limits the applicability of the theory to the case of Arab American women. The knowledge fostered from their narratives reveals various forms of hybridity and versions of Third Space that vary according to different aspects including occupation, education, country of origin, sexuality and emergent nation-state. As this chapter explored Bhabha's notion of Third Space and highlighted its relevance to the case study in this thesis, it also attempted to shed light on the limitations of the theory when applied to Arab American women's ethnic experience. The complexity of race, ethnicity, gender and immigration status are fundamental keys to understanding the intersectional nature of Arab American women's experience, further intensifying their otherness and marginalisation. The complexity of their racial, ethnic, gendered, and immigration statuses are overlooked elements in Bhabha's definition of Third Space, which, for all its generality, does not accommodate them, or account for the particular challenges they experience in being heard in spaces of encounter.

The next part of this thesis consists of two chapters, which share the overarching aim of revealing the utopianism of Bhabha's definition of Third Space through a reading of two sets of texts that foster knowledge about the specificity and the pragmatic realities of Arab American women's experiences. By considering the events of September 11 as the turning point between the pre- and post-9/11 contexts, the two chapters interchangeably use the genres of fiction and nonfiction. This approach assists in achieving my overarching aim to provide a nuanced understanding of the development of Arab American women's organic hybrid and intentional hybrid experiences across this period, thereby complementing Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

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[116] Friedman, P. 79.

The first chapter will begin by looking at the narrative of organic hybrids in the pre-9/11 novel by Diana Abu-Jaber's, *Arabian Jazz*, and the post-9/11 memoir by Soha Al-Jurf, *Even my Voice is Silence*. The chapter will tackle the use of place and memory in both texts to explore how Arab American women's organic hybridity arises and how their lived experiences shed light on the overambitious nature of Bhabha's Third Space.

The thesis will then move on to explore the narrative of intentional hybrid writers in the pre-9/11 memoir by Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage*, and the post-9/11 novel by Randa Jarrar, *A Map of Home*. As both texts feature the experience of immigration and border-crossing, the chapter aims to contribute a further layer of critique to Bhabha's Third Space, as it aims to reveal how the theory fails to distinguish between the experiences of immigrant and non-immigrant hybrid figures in Third Space.

Part Two:

Literature of Organic and Intentional Hybrids in Contemporary Arab American Women narratives

Chapter Three: Third Space in pre- and post- 9/11 narratives of hybrid identities in Diana Abu-Jaber's Novel *Arabian Jazz* and Soha Al-Jurf's Memoir *Even My Voice Is Silence*.

Introduction:

This chapter is the first of two which share the overarching aim of revealing the obfuscating utopianism of Bhabha's definition of Third Space through two paired texts that inform the reader of the specificity and the pragmatic realities of Arab American women's experiences. Whereas Bhabha's Third Space is free from binary oppositions and hierarchal relationships, and is a place in which new hybrid subjectivities and cultural symbols arise, Arab American women's narratives clarify the persistence of oppressive power structures in spaces of cross-cultural encounter. Having laid the groundwork for understanding Bhabha's theory and its limits in the previous chapter, I aim here to examine the overlapping and intersectional gaps associated with race and ethnicity, and gender and immigration status in Bhabha's Third Space through a close reading of the pre-9/11 text of Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and the post-9/11 text by Soha Al-Jurf, *Even my Voice is Silence*.

Both texts reveal something of the ethnic experience of what this thesis has termed *organic hybrids* when referring to the hybrid identities of US-born Arab American women. The period in which each of the text was produced fits within this thesis' temporal parameters, which highlight the importance of 9/11 as a watershed moment in Arab American experience and representation. As mentioned earlier, this thesis uses the term post-9/11 to refer to texts produced after the attacks of September 11th 2001, and the term pre-9/11 to refer to texts produced in the 1990s. Doing so makes it possible to contrast the relationships between the two worlds in each period, and also reveals how the development of ethnic identity among the Arab community in America was influenced by important political events that took place in both periods.

I examine Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, a prominent text written in the 1990s, to explore and contextualise the gaps in Bhabha's Third Space relative to Arab American women's organic hybrid identities. Abu-Jaber's text is considered a relatively early text in terms of its interest in Arab American identities, as this trend markedly expanded in the post-9/11 period. As mentioned previously, in the 1990s, Arab American writers started to position themselves as both Arab and as American, which represented a shift in self-perception when compared with writers of earlier periods.[1] In *Arab American Novels Post - 9/11: Classical Storytelling Motifs Against Outsidership*, Marie-Christin Sawires-Masseli mentions how identification with an Arab American identity was less present in texts produced prior to 9/11. Arab American novelists, such as Vance Bourjaily, William Peter Blatty, and Eugene Paul Nasser identified their texts as general American literature, and as such they did not engage with Arab themes.[2]

Thus, Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* is an early Arab American text that engages with the themes and notions of ethnicity and doubled identity in depicting the experience of the Arab American community in general, and that of women specifically. In fact, writers such as Alice Evans consider *Arabian Jazz* to be the first novel depicting the actual experience of the Arab American community in America,[3] as the text engages the reader in the female protagonists' journeys to define their gendered and bicultural identities amidst the conflicts between the values of the *old country* and the lifestyle of the New World.

In order to delineate the extent of the influence of 9/11 and its aftermath on the narratives of female Arab American authors, and particularly at the crossroads of the two cultures when examining the hybrid identities inhabited, this chapter also considers the

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[1] Discussion concerning the literary waves of the Arab American literary tradition and Arab American identity and its development throughout the multiple phases of historical and political events affecting the two worlds is detailed in chapter one.
[2] Marie-Christin Sawires-Masseli, pp. 7-8.
[3] Alice Evans, 'Half and Half: A Profile of Diana Abu-Jaber', *Poets & Writers Magazine*, July/ August 1996, p. 43.

narratives of organic hybrid identities in the post 9/11 period. Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence* is used to trace the changes that highlight the previously mentioned overlooked elements in Bhabha's definition, and to explore the differences between how such elements are represented in the selected pre- and post-9/11 texts.

Although Al-Jurf's text has received less debate and discussion than Abu-Jaber's text, *Even My Voice is Silence* contributes to the depiction and reception of what it means to be an Arab, Muslim, woman and American in the tense political period that followed 9/11. The text introduces multiple themes that enable us to investigate how the hybrid identities examined navigate a sense of disorientation and confusion while inhabiting the indeterminate space between the two worlds. Thus, the examination of this text complements the examination of Abu-Jaber's text, assisting in fulfilling this chapter's aim to define the gaps in Bhabha's definition of Third Space by unpacking how the characters in both texts negotiate their intersectional identity with regard to two dominant themes in the texts: place and memory. Through examining these themes, it is apparent that Abu-Jaber's and Al-Jurf's texts reveal the lived experiences of Arab American women as they negotiate their structural, political and representational intersectional identities within the clash between the two worlds, thereby revealing how Bhabha's theories gloss over the complexity of Arab American women's organic hybrid experiences.

Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* tells the story of the ethnic, spatial, and cultural atmosphere in the small poor white area of Euclid, New York, within which an Arab American family struggles. It recounts the story of Melvina and Jemorah Ramoud, the two daughters of their widower jazz musician father, Matussem, who migrated to America from Jordan with his sister and brother-in-law before marrying his wife, an American. Throughout the novel, the experiences of the two American-born daughters as they negotiate their multifaceted identity are presented in an ironic, humorous, and conflicting series of events and thoughts. The

characterisation of each of the female protagonists offers a different example of the struggle to cope with life in a dual space between the two clashing worlds inhered within the differentials of race, gender, and class.

Abu-Jaber acknowledges the unsettling intermediate space in which her female characters are situated, surrounding them with articles that embody extreme representations from each of two groups, i.e. the Arab world and American society. On the one hand, there are their Arab relatives and visitors, who always evoke cultural symbols that delineate the boundaries of their ethnic identities and national pride. Their old-fashioned aunt, Fatima, champions the constraints of the 'old country', constantly encouraging Melvina and Jemorah to act like the 'good girls back in Jordan'.[4] On the other hand, there is the force of the host society's members, who either dehumanise and exclude the Arab race through racist comments and actions, or condescend to the Arab community with a relatively superior attitude characterised by a desire to Americanise them, as is the case with Portia Porschman, Jem's supervisor at work.

Moreover, Abu-Jaber's text is distinguished from other literary works produced by Arab Americans in this period, by its critiques of white American society, the Arab American community, as well as the Arab world. In examining how the text lampoons certain practices associated with Arab characteristics, Tanyss Ludescher discusses how *Arabian Jazz* 'broke an unwritten rule in the Arab American community that members should not criticise Arabs and Arab Americans in public'.[5] Ludescher states that 'some readers were offended by [Abu-Jaber's] grotesque stereotypes of Arabs', such as its criticisms of the patriarchal practices that dominate the social structure that forms the Arab world and the Arab community in America. Engagement with such themes places Abu-Jaber, along with those other writers who adopted

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[4] Diana Abu-Jaber, *Arabian Jazz* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2003), p. 232.
[5] Ludescher, 'From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature', p. 104.

the same tendency, at risk 'of being ostracized and censored by the [Arab American] group'.[6] It should be noted here that I do not view this text as Orientalist, and its discussion of stereotypes of Arabs is not intended to validate these misconceptions. Rather, they are included with the intention of critiquing the patriarchal norms that inform the Arab social structure and limit women's agency and voices.

Abu-Jaber's text is also prepared to criticise certain practices that take place within American society, particularly with regard to 'anti-Arab bigots',[7] depicting the struggle the Arab community experiences when dealing with racism, discrimination and misconceptions that demonise their race and culture, rendering their ethnic experiences at the margin of American society. As such, through *Arabian Jazz*, this chapter explores overlooked elements in Bhabha's definition of Third Space when reading the intersectional nature of the hybrid identities of the female Arab American characters pre- 9/11.

The post-9/11 text of Soha Al-Jurf is a memoir that tells the story of her journey to counsel the clashing sides of her Arab American identity. The memoir tells Soha's story as an American girl whose parents had left Palestine after the dispossession of their land by the state of Israel in 1948. Soha is driven by the memories that her father still holds of Palestine and the trauma he experienced as a result of the dispossession of their land in 1948. The text offers the reader an in-depth insight into the never-ending Palestinian–Israeli conflict through the eyes of an Arab American woman attempting to make sense of the complex factors that surround her and influence her personal, ethnic, national, and gendered identity.

Her parents had initially fled to Egypt, where her father started his medical school education, after which he pursued his studies further in Ohio before the couple settled in Iowa. Soha spent the first year of her life in Nablus, because her mother chose to leave

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[6] Ibid., p. 104.
[7] Ibid., p. 104.

America to give birth to all of her three children in occupied Palestine so they would be eligible for the green ID, or what is known as 'hawiyya'.[8] While she is growing up, Soha develops a desire to validate her meagre memories of Palestine, which have merged with those of her father. Thus, Soha embarks on several journeys to Palestine between the years 2004 and 2009 to define what self and home mean to her.

Although both texts belong to different genres, the first a novel and the second a memoir (or what the author labels it as 'a fictoir: a fictionalized memoir. Its genre lands somewhere between a novel, a memoir, a work of narrative nonfiction, and a prose poem'),[9] they were selected here for the similarities in their approach to negotiating and presenting organic hybrid identities, i.e., their use of elements such as memory and place to contextualise the characters' struggles as they seek to articulate a hybrid identity defined by race, class and gender. Nevertheless, focusing on elements of memory and place while moving from fiction to non-fiction, and considering the events of September 11 as a transitional moment dividing the two periods in which the texts were originally published, provides a nuanced understanding of how the gaps in Bhabha's definition are represented in fiction and non-fiction, while also reflecting the social and political surroundings of these publications.

This chapter's choice of exploring a pre-9/11 fictional text and a post-9/11 non-fictional text is to emblematise wider shifts in genre and form evident across this period. Thus, exploring memory and place while moving from the pre-9/11 fictional text of Abu-Jaber's to the post-9/11 nonfictional text of Al-Jurf's assists this chapter's quest to identify how the limitations of Bhabha's definition of Third Space manifest in both forms of writings. Thus, the differences between the two texts, due to their genera, and the times in which both

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[8] Soha Al-Jurf, *Even My Voice Is Silence* (North Charleston, S.C.: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform, 2012), p. 8.

[9] Al-Jurf, p. v.

texts were written in relation to the significant events of 9/11 help to fulfil this chapter's aim to contextualise the thesis' overall argument, which criticises how Bhabha's definition overlooks the intersectional factors such as race, gender and class, when applying the theory to the case of the hybrid identities of Arab American women writers.

The chapter aims to answer the following: how elements of memory and place help fill the gaps in Bhabha's definition of Third Space in the examined narratives of female Arab Americans, and how such gaps are represented similarly and differently in the pre- and post-9/11 fiction and nonfiction texts under examination. The first section will examine place and memory in *Arabian Jazz* to contextualise the ethnic, racial, and gendered experience of female characters in the 1990s. The second section is dedicated to Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence*, and examines changes in representations of female experience post- 9/11, particularly via place and memory. In doing so, this chapter aims to demonstrate what these texts reveal concerning the intersectional nature of Arab American organic hybrids, to identify elements overlooked in Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space.

Exploring race, gender and class in female Arab American pre-9/11 Third Space: reading the organic hybrid identities in Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Arabian Jazz*'s through place and memory

When examining the existence of a Third Space between the Arab community and American society, as presented in the novel, it is vital that physical places be afforded the same importance as the intangible Third Space as they are explored, to ensure a more pragmatic approach than that provided by Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space. In *Arabian Jazz*, Abu-Jaber uses an omniscient third person to introduce Euclid as a remote, forgotten piece of land marked by poverty, crime, and social exclusion. The narrator describes Euclid thus:

> Without the mall, Euclid remained an amoeba of a town… It took in dirt farmers, onion farmers, and junk dealers and produced poorly clothed and poorly fed children who'd

> wait for driver's licenses then leave in rotting-out Chevies, going as far as a case of
> Black Label would take them. Usually just far enough for them to come back for good.[10]

Exploring the fictional literary elements of how Abu-Jaber constructs the text's setting assists us in conceptualising how the genre of the text strategically demonstrates a complex hybrid experience that complicates Bhabha's utopian and abstract definition. The positioning of the Arab family in a neglected, remote, poor white area of Euclid helps the reader to conceptualise the intangible space inhabited by the characters examined in the pre-9/11 period in several ways.

First, the setting evokes the sense of exclusion experienced by the community, which was present long before the events of 9/11 and its aftermath. The positioning of the Arab American family in remote and excluded Euclid aligns with Joanna Kadi's description of the position of the Arab community in America in the pre-9/11 period, as 'the most invisible of the invisibles'.[11] In this, and as mentioned in the previous chapter, the invisibility of Arab Americans in the 1990s was caused by various factors, including their ambiguous racial identification in the US social structure, which occurred due to several factors relating to the different attributes of each of the multiple waves of Arab immigrants to the USA.[12] Accordingly, the invisibility of the Arab family within the already invisible poor white community of Euclid underlines the level of invisibility and exclusion the Arab American community struggled with prior to the events of 9/11.

Second, the writer's engagement with issues of poverty in America, which depict children as 'barefoot' with 'hair sticking out like a bushy doormat',[13] teenagers who 'looked haggard as old warriors, harrowed by poverty and pregnancy',[14] and adults as 'crazy nuts,

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[10] Abu-Jaber, p. 90.
[11] Joanna Kadi, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writing by Arab American and Arab Canadian Feminists* (Boston, MA: South End Press, 1995), p. viii-xx.
[12] See the section on Arab immigration waves to the USA in the previous chapter.
[13] Abu-Jaber, p. 90.
[14] Ibid., p. 95.

[and] goof-heads', living with the helpless awareness that 'no one ever escapes this place',[15] imitates the narrative and thematic strategies present in early twentieth-century US literature. Remarkable US literary works of the Depression era, which first emerged in 1929, focus on the experiences of poverty-stricken communities. For example, John Steinbeck's *The Grapes of Wrath* (1939) engages with the clash between the rich and the poor, depicting a similar paralytic, stagnant situation among the poor class in rural America to that described in the community of Euclid. While reflecting the failures of the American Dream with regard sustaining equality and demolishing class antagonism between the rich and the poor, Abu-Jaber's setting also allows her to highlight the structural intersectional nature of Arab American women as the ethnic Arab community in America experience an additional level of invisibility.

Third, Abu-Jaber locates the process of the characters' hybrid identity construction in the complicated web of class and race – both in the majority white neighbourhood, and the small ethnic community: thereby suggesting further complication of the process of negotiating hybrid identities in Arab American Third Space. The interaction between race and class in the text, as embodied in the interaction between middle-class Arab families and the poor White community, reflect the hierarchal relations present in the US social fabric that prioritises white supremacy over class solidarity. Abu-Jaber portrays numerous occasions where Jem and Melvina, along with their father, encounter racist attitudes within the poor white community enhancing their sense of exclusion. The narrator portrays one of Jem's childhood flashbacks when her Arab features provoke the hostility of her schoolmates on the school bus:

> Peachy was Jem's only friend on the bus. The other children taunted Jem because of her strange name, her darker skin. They were relentless, running wild, children of the worst poverty, the school bus the only place they had an inkling of power. She remembered the sensation of their hands on her body as they teased her, a rippling hatred running over her arms, legs, through her hair. They asked her obscene questions, searched for her

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[15] Ibid., p. 90.

weakness, the chink that would let them into her strangeness. She never let them. She learned how to close her mind, how to disappear in her seat, how to blur the sound of searing voices chanting her name.[16]

On this occasion, Abu-Jaber illustrates the level of hostility embedded in the young children's conceptions of *other* and *different*. As Euclid is portrayed as isolated and forgotten, the hierarchy of power between race and class installed in these environments is highly functioning in both narrative and organic hybrid Third Space(s). It is worth mentioning that poor whites' sense of assertion is also another prevalent theme characterising US literary texts from the Great Depression era. Tillie Olsen's *Yonnondio* written in the 1930s, depicts the struggle with asserting white identity amidst the destruction and downfall of aristocratic families in Michigan. Similarly, the setting of Abu-Jaber's text encompasses a multi-layered circle of oppression and marginalization practised over and within the neighbourhood. The children's attitudes towards Jem reflect their need to practise their share of power embodied in their 'relentless' behaviours, which have already been instilled in them by their poor and turbulent upbringing. When depicting this environment, Abu-Jaber returns to her criticism of the toxic conditions in which these children are raised, highlighting the effects of poverty and marginalization. The situation suggests acts of marginalization not only create a broad-based centre–margin dichotomy within society, but also many other small centres, which propagate ever smaller margins. The text narrates Jem's experience with rejection on the school bus:

> One day someone tore out a handful of her hair; on another someone pushed her down as she stood to leave; on another someone racked scratches across her face and neck as she stood, her eyes full, the sound of her name ringing in rounds of incantation. Waiting to leave, she could see her name on the mailbox from a half mile away, four inches high in bright red against the black box: RAMOUD. Matussem had been so eager to proclaim their arrival. There was no hiding or disguising it. She would run off the bus, straight to her room, but the voices would follow and circle her bed at night.[17]

Rejection comprises a large portion of Jem's experience when attempting to fit into this environment. She is traumatized by the fact that her name and appearance trigger violent

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[16] Ibid., p. 92.
[17] Ibid., p. 93.

attitudes towards her, to the extent that she is haunted at night. In one situation, although seeing her family name on the mailbox from the bus brings salvation, by marking her proximity to her house, she wishes it could be hidden. In reference to the various invisibility strategies adopted by the Arab community in their reaction to mainstream US society's rejection of them, as discussed in the previous chapter, avoidance or disappearance becomes one among many defence-mechanisms Jem develops to escape her schoolmates' tormenting voices and actions that remind her of her strangeness. When creating her own protective, isolating bubble, she indirectly distances herself from the traits she shares in common with them: 'She knew those children had been right. She didn't fit in even with them, those children that nobody wanted'.[18] Her Americanness then becomes hidden due to her disappearance, and her Arabness unwittingly overtakes her. In this way, Jem acknowledges herself as a foreigner, developing a strategy to make herself invisible on the journey to and from school to escape alienation.

The rejection of the Arab family's race within the poor white Euclid extends beyond racial features. The text offers multiple occasions where the characters' hybridity is challenged by characters who are aware of their multifaceted identity. The characterisation of Portia, Jem's supervisor at work, exemplifies this challenge as she attempts to cordon off Jem's racial 'parts'. In one of the multiple occasions in the text where Portia retells the story of Jem's mother, her voice conveys the extent of exclusion not only towards the migrant figure of the Arab father, but also towards the organic hybrid identity of Jem and Melvina. Portia refuses the organic hybridity and fluidity of Jem's identity as she attempts to 'save whatever of [Jem's] mother's clean blood is left'.[19] Portia says:

> Your mother used to be such a good girl. She was so beautifully white, pale as a flower. And then, I don't know. What happened? The silly girl wanted attention. She met your father in her second year [of college] and she just wanted attention… This *man*, he couldn't speak a word of our language, didn't have a real job. And Nora was so – like a

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[18] Ibid., p. 94.
[19] Ibid., p. 295.

flower, a real flower, I'm telling you. It seemed like three days after she met that man they were getting married. A split second later she was pregnant. I know for a fact her poor mother – your grandmother – had to ask for a picture of the man for her parish priest to show around to prove he wasn't a Negro. Though he might as well have been, really, who could tell the difference, the one lives about the same as the other.[20]

The abstract above is full of images and symbols demonstrating perceptions of the Arab community among mainstream US society. The metaphor of the white pale flower is used to describe Nora's White race Jem's mother's purity and innocence is designated clean and saintly in comparison to her non-white Arab father. Here, Abu-Jaber refers to the wider standards that govern and dominate the US social scene, revolving around skin colour and the use of the English language. Abu-Jaber uses the opportunity to refer to the tendency towards racial misrecognition that dominates white supremacist discourse, downgrading Arabs in the social pyramid of US society. Such misrecognition refers to the ambiguous space occupied by Arab Americans in relation to the excessive emphasis by mainstream white Americans on classifying people based on their skin colour. Andrew Shryock comments on the broader sociological phenomenon that emphasises the colour of Arab Americans, stating that:

> Arabs are not uniformly light or dark in their complexions. Indeed, Arabs 'look like' a wider variety of people... Compare this to the relative ease with which Americans sort each other –or think they can sort each other– into black, white, and Asian categories. Then consider the odd fact that a third-generation American whose ancestors came from Syria might identify (and be identified) as 'white,' a Sudanese immigrant might identify (or be identified) as 'black,' and a Yemeni who migrated to the United States from India, where his family has lived for three generations, might identify (and be identified) as 'Asian,' yet all can simultaneously and credibly self-identify as 'Arab'.[21]

Abu-Jaber uses the character of the White woman, Portia to indicate the racial hierarchy that forms US society and the position of the Arab race in this pyramid. In the previous abstract, Abu-Jaber touches upon the significance of racial caste in the US social consciousness when recognizing the other-of-colour. She thereby sheds light on the dominant white US pyramid-shaped discourse that encompasses various racial groups, forming graduated levels, with the

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[20] Ibid., pp. 293-294.
[21] Andrew Shryock, 'The Moral Analogies of Race - Arab American Identity, Color Politics, And the Limits of Racialized Citizenship', in *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/1: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2008), pp. 92-93 (p. 92).

white majority at its top, proceeded by the other(s)-of-colour, while referring to the ambiguous

and invisible space occupied by Arabs in the social hierarchy in the pre-9/11 period. This is

further clarified in Portia's narrative as she suggests to Jem ways to improve her chance of

fitting in:

> Your mother could have made such beautiful children – they could have been so lovely,
> like she was, like a white rose. Still it could definitely have been worse for you, what
> with his skin. Now, if you were to change your name, make it Italian maybe, or even
> Greek, that may help some. I'm telling you this for love of your mother. I'll feel forever I
> might have saved her when that Arab man took her and you kids back to that horrible
> country of his over there. It's a wonder any of you survived that place, so evil, primitive,
> filled with disease! I should've spoken up twenty years ago, but I didn't. I thought, the
> Lord will provide, blah, blah. She could always have the marriage annulled. I thought I
> should butt out, let Nora make her own mistakes. Well, not anymore, now I'm telling
> you, Jemorah Ramoud and all his kind aren't any better than Negroes.[22]

Here, Abu-Jaber delineates a spectrum of Americanness expressing what it means to

be a US citizen. The anti-black and anti-Arab racist slang Portia uses manifest the dominant

traits of power, not only in relation to lower-class white Americans in the novel, but also the

working classes. Mazen Naous states that the racist slang used by the novel's low- and

middle-class white American characters serve as an attempt 'to compensate for their lower

economic status by exhibiting racial superiority to "niggers" and "sand niggers"'.[23] For

Portia, Jem's identification with an undefined and exotic Arab race could easily be concealed

by altering her name to an Italian or Greek one. In this way her Americanness could be

articulated to some extent. Portia's statement that 'it could definitely have been worse for

[Jem]' and that having an Italian or Greek name 'may help some', indicate her attempt to

obfuscate Jem's Arabness, suggesting she can pass as Italian or Greek. Such an indication in

Abu-Jaber's text resembles what Kadi states regarding the position of Arab American as,

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[22] Ibid., pp. 293-294.
[23] Mazen Naous, '"Arabian Jazz" and the Need for Improvising Arab Identity in the US', MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of the U.S., 34.4 (2009) <http://dx.doi.org/10.1353/mel.0.0049> [accessed 26 November 2020], pp. 61-8-(p. 76).

'Not black. Not white. Never quite fitting in. Always on the Edge',[24] or, as Helen Samhan puts it, 'white, but not quite'.[25]

Portia's insistence that it would be easier for members of the Arab race to pass for another race reflects her acquiescence to the law of white supremacy and racial hierarchy even as she seems to suggest it should be circumvented. This leads to Orientalist depictions of the East in general, and the Middle East in particular when describing 'that place' that Jem and her sister trace their origins to. Abu-Jaber criticises the orientalist and racist mindset that characterises American preconceptions regarding Arabs, and uses orientalist depictions that 'became the shared vocabulary used to reify the vast difference between a "civilized" US culture on the one hand and a "barbaric" and backward Arab and Muslim landscape on the other hand'.[26]

Thus, *Arabian Jazz* highlights how the factors of race and class in Arab American women's experience pre- 9/11 function in their Third Space of encounter as the ethnic community struggles with how Arab Americans' bypassing of their race further intensifies their perceived invisibility within the US social fabric. Accordingly, the highly functioning intersecting elements of race and class exist in an in-between space, which invites practices of racism and discrimination between the Arab community and US society. The existence of such a space supports this thesis' argument countering Bhabha's definition of Third Space regarding the dismantling of racism and discrimination when opposing groups meet in this space, by highlighting the intensification of racial ideology in the cross-cultural encounter, and underlining how those people who serve the status quo become complicit in it.

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[24] Kadi, p. xvi.
[25] Helen Hatab Samhan, 'Not Quite White: Race Classification and The Arab-American Experience', in *Arabs in America: Building A New Future* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), pp. 209-226 (p. 209).
[26] Carol Fadda Conrey, *Contemporary Arab-American Literature: Transnational Reconfiguration of Citizenship and Belonging* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), p. 2.

The setting of Euclid is also used to highlight the gendered invisibility of Arab American women in the social hierarchy of US society by locating them in contrast to the invisible class-based experiences of poor white women. Abu-Jaber references the poor white community to shed light on the invisibility of poor white women, and their difficulties attaining equality and human rights. The reader is introduced to Dolores Otts, Jemorah's schoolmate and Peachy's sister. Dolores' character serves as the lens through which the reader gets to know what it feels like to live in a family that grows 'like a dynasty, spreading and mingling with Brooms, Ellises, and many sundry others'.[27] The character of Dolores conveys the experiences of a helpless poor white woman, whose misery is introduced to the reader with the fact that she became a mother at the age of twelve. Through this lens, Abu-Jaber draws attention to the conditions of women in poor US neighbourhoods and criticises the social attitudes faced by these characters.

One of topics that Abu-Jaber engages with in regard to women's rights and class is abortion. An example of this in the text is when Dolores encounters the ideals of white feminism upon meeting a higher-class woman:

> [Dolores] took a hanger out of the closet ad started to unbend it. Just a week before she had noticed a bumper sticker with a picture of a hanger with a red slash through it and the words Never Again underneath. This was in the parking lot of Bumble Bee Groceries. She'd pointed the sticker out to her mother, and the two of them has stood there trying to unpuzzle it until the car's owner walked up with her groceries. "That is to say that abortions should be kept free and legal in this country," the young woman said "Because before abortion was legal, women sometimes would use coat hangers to try to make themselves miscarry." "Really?" Dolores said, "Does it work?" The young woman laughed and shook her head as she unlocked her car. "Well, if you want to die, it works".[28]

In this instance, the intellectual and social gap between Dolores and the other women exemplifies the clash between the different classes in US society. Dolores dislikes the owner of the car, not only because she is not able to understand what the woman stated, which

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[27] Ibid., p. 90.
[28] Ibid., p. 102.

'sounded like some kind of smart college answer with more than one meaning',[29] but also because Dolores could not form any sense of the way the woman looked, wearing 'so many buttons with things written on them' and owning 'a nice running car and could buy all the abortions she wanted'.[30] Abu-Jaber engages with the topic of abortion to bring attention to the many hurdles that must be negotiated by poor white women in the rural US that differentiate them from women of other classes. She sheds light on how women's rights are based on their unique economic conditions, and how White US feminism does not pragmatically engage with the experiences of poor women.

When engaging with such themes in relation to poor white women, Abu Jaber contextualises the struggle of Arab American women, as their structural invisibility is further intensified and compared to the difficult situation faced by poor white women, and US society's perception of their race. The structural intersectionality of Jem and Melvina, as they are located in the poor White majority area of Euclid, further intensifies their marginalisation, locating their cross-cultural encounter on the margins of Bhabha's Third Space. The problem of gender, intensified by race, is highlighted in Jem's encounter with Portia. When Portia narrates Nora's story and offers Jem help to pass as an American, Portia says:

> She [Nora] never did finish college after that, never got to be the woman she could've been. A husband and a baby at twenty. Look at what I've done with my life. You know, it's not too late for you. Oh, sure, you're tainted, your skin that color. A damn shame. But I've noticed that in certain lights it's worse than in others. And now you can go that way, too, or you can come under my wing and let me educate you, really get you somewhere. We'll try putting some pink lipstick on you, maybe lightening your hair, make you American.[31]

Portia's comments above locate her within the frame of what Barbara Ramusack calls 'Maternal Imperialism' in white Western feminism.[32] This refers to language used by mainstream White feminism to 'save' women of colour. It is a discourse located in various

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29 Ibid., p. 102.
30 Ibid., p. 103.
31 Abu-Jaber, pp. 293-294.
32 Ramusack, p. 309-321.

forms of xenophobia and racism, reinforcing the inferiority of women of colour. White feminists shape their own identities in opposition to non-white women when acting as saviours, 'to assert their own enlightened, philanthropic status and present the West as a veritable paradise of women's liberation',[33] as Ruby Hamad puts it. Portia claims that she follows a feminist approach when seeking to provide better opportunities and economic enhancement for women within the community. She says to Melvina: '"Hey, I'm on your side . . . We're all women here, aren't we? […] I hire women, you see, to help them," […] "You know a lot of people would be saying these women should be home having babies. Not Portia Porschman"'.[34] Yet she is unable to consider Jem and Melvina's skin colour as falling within the frame of empowered women, unless considered to be mirror images of white women.

Thus, the intersectionality of Jem and Melvina as Arab American women marks their disempowerment and inferiority relative to the US social structure, a matter not directly addressed by Bhabha's in his theorisation of Third Space. As established in Chapter Two of this thesis, Bhabha's excessive focus on hybridity and his discussion on racial and sexual stereotypes are centred on the dynamics of power between the East and the West, the coloniser and the colonised. This frame proves inadequate in addressing the nuances of the intersectionality of gender, race and class which are crucial in understanding the experience of Jem and Melvina. Their encounter with the figure of the white woman, Portia, reveals that Arab American women navigate the complexities of Orientalist racial and gendered stereotypes, which influence their perceptions and acceptance within the American society. The unique intersecting struggles of race, gender and class which generate unique forms of marginalisation and othering is not fully captured in Bhabha's frame of hybridity and racial and sexual stereotypes.

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[33] Ruby Hamad, *White Tears/Brown Scars: How White Feminism Betrays Women of Colour* (London: Orion books, 2020), p. 151.
[34] Ibid., p. 314.

Jem and Melvina's intersectional experience is subject to a further challenge due to the characterisation of Fatima, who serves as the embodiment of the Arab mother figure in the text. Fatima is introduced to the reader at the very beginning of the story as a controlling and domineering character. Abu-Jaber presents the figure of the migrant Arab mother, Fatima, as a counterpoint to the absence of an Arab American mother figure for the girls. This absence is due to their mother being a US citizen and distanced from Arab world tradition, By utilising this narrative technique, Abu-Jaber follows in the footsteps of most migration literature in general, and the Arab American literary tradition in particular, by holding up the figure of the mother as the keeper of history and traditions, so as to contextualise the struggle of the second generation's hybrid identities when articulating their Americanness alongside their Arabness. Evelyn Shakir illustrates the importance of the role of the figure of the migrant Arab mother in the Arab American literary tradition. She writes:

> In any case, whether the women emigrated or not, they embody the ethnic legacy that defines both who their sons are and who their sons, as Americans, are not. The mothers serve that function not just because they are story-tellers and culture-bearers, but because they represent the autobiographers' first experience of bonding, that is to say, of community.[35]

Fatima is vital to demonstrating Abu-Jaber's complex invocation of the social codes of Arab culture. Fatima is represented as 'true to the ways of her mother and mothers before her',[36] and like Portia plays an important role in policing Jem and Melvina. While Portia's characterisation imposes control over the two Arab American women through racial ideology, Fatima's characterisation offers a transition into the conventional teachings and principles of the Arab world. Fatima embodies the role of perceiver of culture by playing the role of a matchmaker, whose primary concern is to find suitable Arab husbands for Jem and Melvina, and root their connection to the Arab world. She murmurs: 'you come back to home

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[35] Shakir, 'Mother's Milk: Women in Arab-American Autobiography', p. 41.
[36] Abu-Jaber, p. 41.

soon, come back to Old Country, marry the handsome Arab boys and make for us grandsons'.[37]

The characterisation of Fatima is also important to Abu-Jaber's critique of aspects of the ethnic memory of Arab American identity, which idealises ethnic selfhood over the gendered experience of the past. Fatima's memory of the dispossession in 1948, includes a recollection of having witnessed and participated in the live burial of her four new-born sisters. She tells Jem and Melvina:

> When we are homeless and dying without food, what of the four starving babies I had to bury still alive […]. Babies I buried with my mother watching so this rest could live, so my baby brother [Matussem] can eat, so he can move away and never know about it. […] [H]e was born so fortunate! Born a man, not to know the truth.[38]

In their edited book *Gendered Memory*, John Neubauer and Helga Geyer-Ryan define gendered memory as memory shaped by gender politics and that 'influenced by the particular social, cultural, and historical conditions in which individuals find themselves. And since men and women generally assume different social and cultural roles, their way of remembering should also differ'.[39] Although Fatima acknowledges the afflictions of her gendered memory and its affiliation to the social order of her homeland, she is unable to function outside the patriarchal social order, as her ethnic selfhood overrides her painful memories. This is apparent when she lectures her nieces:

> It's terrible to be a woman in this world. This is first thing to know when the doctor looks at baby's thing and says 'it's a girl.' But I am telling you there are ways of getting around it. […] [F]irst and last is that you must have husband to survive on the planet of earth.[40]

In engaging with the effect of the repressed gendered memory to preserve ethnic unity, Abu-Jaber refers to the control practised by women over women, and transmitted

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[37] Ibid., p. 77.
[38] Ibid., p. 334.
[39] John Neubauer and Helga Geyer-Ryan, 2000. *Gendered Memories*, Proceedings of the XVth Congress of the International Comparative Literature Association "Literature as Cultural Memory" (Leiden, Netherlands: Brill), p. 6.
[40] Ibid., pp. 116-117.

through the generations. Salwa Chérif comments on how Abu-Jaber highlights this private

sphere, as the women's realm of control. She writes:

> Having been traditionally excluded from the public world of politics and power and left
> to act in an exclusively female space, women have become progressively entrusted with
> the task of representing culture and preserving tradition, which means basically
> transmitting from one female generation to another the very values which oppress them.
> […]. [women in Arab societies] continue to bear burden of the male relatives' honor,
> serving as their own agents of oppression.[41]

Abu-Jaber immerses the hybrid identities of Jem and Melvina in the gendered

memories of their aunt, as they work to construct their composite Arab American

female selves. In doing so, she relates that portion of the struggle within hybrid

identities that involves coming to terms with the duality of experience as an in-

betweener, located both in the ethnic memories of their race and the gendered

memories of the women of their homeland, while simultaneously dealing with the

hostility of the host society. Such specificity, as revealed through the narrative of Jem

and Melvina, impacting their hybridity negotiation and cross-cultural encounters are

glossed over in Bhabha's definition of Third Space. As stated earlier in chapter two,

Bhabha disregards the role of historical context in constructing hybrid identities as his

focus on 'being in the beyond' illuminates the theory's failure to account for the effect

of cultural preservation, embodied in the character of Fatima, on the hybrid identities of

Jem and Melvina.

In our discussion of how Abu-Jaber use elements of place and memory to

highlight the experience of her hybrid characters, it is worth looking at how Abu-Jaber

makes use of Euclid to expand the cultural and national boundaries of the US reader as

she believes 'this country can tend to be so isolated and so muffled from what's

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[41] Salwa Essayah Chérif, 'Arab American Literature: Gendered Memory in Abinader and Abu-Jaber',
MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of The United States, 28.4 (2003)
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3595307> [accessed 18 November 2020], pp. 207-228 (p. 216).

happening outside of its borders'.[42] In doing so, the text reveals the complexity of the

multiple aspects of belonging that shape the characters' intersectional experiences as

they interact with the American society, aspects that routinely go unnoticed among the

racist and discriminatory discourses directed towards Arabs and Muslims.

To do so, and on numerous occasions in the text, Abu-Jaber explicitly and

implicitly highlights the centrality of the Palestinian cause in her quest to express the

concerns of the community, and to preserve their ethnic memory. The cause then forms

one of the pillars of Arab American ethnic identity, suggesting itself as 'a terrain to

unite Arabs on one cause and to revive the national identity of Arab Americans, thus

affecting their experience'.[43] Thus, and as Palestine has been referenced by many Arab

American writers across multiple waves, to situate Arab Americans' concerns in a

comprehensible framework for the US reader, Abu-Jaber explains she '…was searching

for a long time for a metaphor for Palestinians that Americans could grasp in a visceral

way'.[44] Accordingly, one can now observe how Euclid is used in the text as a metaphor

for Palestine, as the writer draws the patterns of loss, displacement and memory echoed

by multiple generations, as observed in the following extract.

The text presents Norah's death as the cause of Jem and Melvina's early

experience that brings awareness of displacement, as their father decides to leave

Syracuse, the place they had been living until then. Matussem's decision to move to

Euclid is motivated by a desire to settle somewhere where his sense of loss following

the death of his late wife can be left behind, just as his parents left their homeland:

> And Euclid, lost to the rest of the world, was Matussem's private land, like the country
> his parents tried to leave as they made lives in Jordan, as they let go of their children's
> memories and let them grow up as Jordanian. Matussem was only two when the family

[42] Evans, pp. 47-48.

[43] Gaby Semaan, 'Arab Americans: Stereotypes, Conflicts, History, Cultural Identity and Post 9/11', *International Communication Studies XXIII*, 2 (2014) <https://fdocuments.net/document/> [accessed 5 January 2020], pp. 17-32 (p. 21).

[44] Evans, p. 42.

left Nazareth. Still he knew there had been a Palestine for his parents; its sky formed a ceiling in his sleep. He dreamed of the country that had been, that he was always returning to in his mind.[45]

Abu-Jaber's engagement with the Palestinian cause is reflected in her characterization of the father figure, and his connection to it, which further informs Jem and Melvina's sense of settlement when moving to Euclid. This engagement in the novel also acknowledges the diverse migration experiences of the father figure, Jem and Melvina. The dual loss of their mother and their home in Syracuse echoes their father's loss of Norah and Palestine. Jem and Melvina's displacement, which is akin to their father and grandparents' experiences of dispossession, is portrayed as a form of migration. Their sense of loss and displacement is a common thread that connects their experiences across generations. These relocations include encounters with rejection and hatred, thereby problematising their identification with their hyphenated identity. Dinesh Bhugra comments on the experience of migration stating:

> It must be emphasized that migration is not only a trans-national process, but can also be rural–urban. Any such process involves not only leaving social networks behind (which may or may not be well established) but also includes experiencing at first a sense of loss, dislocation, alienation and isolation, which will lead to processes of acculturation. A series of factors in the environment combined with levels of stress, the ability to deal with stress, and the ability to root oneself according to one's personality traits, will produce either a sense of settling down or a sense of feeling isolated and alienated.[46]

Through a change in location, Abu-Jaber draws a parallel between the set of actions, reactions, and the effects of the two interrelated experiences of immigration: the father's immigration experience from the Arab world to America, and the two female protagonists' journey from Syracuse to Euclid. Although the father's childhood journey from Palestine to Jordan with his parents can be regarded as an example of immigration, it varies from his later migrations in terms of purpose, encounters with the host society, and the associated outcomes of constructed identity. Despite the differing reasons for each of the two migrations, Jem and

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[45] Abu-Jaber, p. 260.
[46] Dinesh Bhugra, 'Migration, Distress and Cultural Identity', *British Medical Bulletin*, 69.1 (2004), 129 <https://doi.org/10.1093/bmb/ldh007> [accessed6 December 2020], pp.129-141 (p. 129).

Melvina pass through the same process of re-recognizing the self in relation to the totally different and new other.

The specificities of the Arab American women organic hybrid experience presented in the text, which vary from their structural, political and representational intersectionality, reveal how Bhabha's Third Space excludes complexities that marginalise the experience of Arab American women, as presented in their narratives. This complexity continues to develop as the tense political climate surrounding Arab American female writers' negotiation of their identities also does. The next section of the chapter will examine how place and memory are used in the post- 9/11 non-fiction text, Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence*, to articulate the similarities and differences between post-9/11 non-fiction texts presents in dealing with the overlooked elements in Bhabha's definition of Third Space. This will be achieved through unpacking and highlighting the intersectional identity presented in Al-Jurf's memoir, so as to foster knowledge of the actual experience of Arab American women in the post-9/11 era in opposition to Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

Post- 9/11 and Arab American women Third Space: memory and place in the narrative of Soha Al-Jurf's memoir *Even my Voice is Silence*

Al-Jurf's memoir *Even my Voice is Silence* takes the reader on board a journey back and forth between Palestine and the USA. It thereby portrays the effective negotiation of hybrid identities across borders and in wider settings, in a manner similar to much Arab American writing in the post- 9/11 period. The requirement to move on from narratives highlighting the metaphorical representation of Arabs' displacement in US society changed once their invisibility transformed into dramatic visibility; as Steven Salaita puts it, 'Arab Americans evolved from invisible to glaringly conspicuous (whether or not the conspicuousness was welcomed)'.[47] This vein of fiction was a reaction to the developing

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[47] Ibid., Salaita, 'Ethnic Identity and Imperative Patriotism', p. 149.

division reflected by US foreign policy and the neo-orientalist discourse that circulated American media outlets in the aftermath of the attacks, and which constructed a wall separating good and the evil, the self and the other, as either with us or against us.

Al-Jurf's nonfictional text exemplifies the shift from metaphorical to actual engagement with the disoriented post-9/11 status of Arabs in the US. This engagement was embodied in Soha's journey to Palestine, and in her first-hand depiction of what it means to be an Arab American woman in the post-9/11 era. This section examines the author's use of Palestine as a signifier in her memoir, a way to articulate the dislocated racial experience of Arabs in America and uncover how the intersectional nature of Arab American women writers is determinative of their experience in their Third Space(s), thereby drawing attention to race, gender and class which are overlooked elements in Bhabha's definition.

Al-Jurf's engagement with the Palestinian cause is evident on various levels in her book. In evaluating the construction of Al-Jurf's text, it is evident how the writer's investment in the paratextual elements of the text broaden understanding and expand its intended meanings. [48] Gerard Genette and Marie Maclean point to the importance of considering the meanings carried in the paratextual elements of a given text:

> One does not always know if one should consider that they belong to the text or not, but in any case they surround it and prolong it, precisely in order to present it, in the usual sense of this verb, but also in its strongest meaning: to make it present, to assure its presence in the world, its "reception" and its consumption, in the form, nowadays at least, of a book. [49]

Al-Jurf opens the book with a quotation from the African American writer and civil rights activist James Baldwin: 'You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was books that taught me that the things that

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[48] In literary interpretation, paratext refers to the visual and textual material that surrounds a published main text, as supplied by the author, editors, printers, publishers, etc. Paratextual elements include notes, front covers, titles, prefaces, and illustrations.
[49] Gerard Genette and Marie Maclean, 'Introduction to The Paratext', *New Literary History*, 22.2 (1991) <https://doi.org/10.2307/469037> [accessed 20 December 2020], pp. 261-272 (p. 261).

tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive…'.[50] Although Baldwin's quotation is linked to the African American civil rights movement, Al-Jurf's use of the quote as an opener for her book evokes a sense of shared familiarity with the US audience, indicating the forms of racism and marginalisation practised over people of colour, particularly African Americans, and Arab Americans intensely in the aftermath of 9/11. It can also be seen to reflect how the Arab American community thought of themselves as "the new Blacks" in the post-9/11 era, characterising their contemporary experience as resembling that of the African American community.

The full quotation is tailed with a black and white photo credited to Lisa Nessan,[51] which pictures the middle of an arid landscape, with a separation-fence in the farthest point of the picture and what appears to be the top of a boy's head as he bends down covering it with both hands in the foreground of the picture. The quotation and the picture contribute to the first impression the reader gleans of the text, as they not only generate expectations about the story, but also reflect aspects of the positioning of the Arab community in America in the post- 9/11 era. After the US government introduced the USA Patriot Act defining terrorism as any act or position believed to be 'anti-American or anti-Semitic',[52] the Arab community in the US was challenged when identified as having any sort of affiliation with the Palestinian cause. The attacks also magnified the Manichean logic of US officials towards Arabs and Muslims as they projected the binaries of 'a homogeneous American "US" [and] an equally homogeneous Arab "Them" and presumes that these two ways of being and belonging can

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[50] James Baldwin, 'The Doom and Glory of Knowing Who You Are', *Life Magazine*, (1963), cited in Al-Jurf's *Even my voice is Silence*, p. iii.

[51] Lisa Nessan is a Jewish American activist and photographer who has been living in the West Bank since 2002.

[52] Abdulhadi, Alsultany and Naber, p. xxvii.

never meet'.[53] This logic is responsible for the exclusion of 'Arabs and Muslims from the memory of the lost and maimed in the attacks' as the US memorialised the victims of 9/11.[54]

It is apparent how the paratextual elements of Al-Jurf's memoir serve as an invitation to the reader to replace the narrow self-involved vision promoted by US officials' logic in the post- 9/11 period, which dismantled not only Arab Americans' sense of belonging to society, but also the suffering they underwent. This invitation responds to the intense curiosity on the part of the US reader to learn about Arabs and Muslims after the 9/11 attacks. Layla Al Maleh writes that 'the irony of Anglophone Arab literature is that it did not gain attention or attain recognition until the world woke up one day to the horror of the infamous 9/11 and asked itself who those 'Arabs' really were'.[55] The response to such a self-involved vison is achieved by mediating a historical and literary perspective which allows for the contextualisation of the problematic position of Arab Americans in general, and Palestinians in particular post-9/11.

The paratextual elements in the text go further than the introductory quote and photo to include both an *Author's Note* and a *Note on Semantics*, each paving the way for the reader to understand the complicated Palestinian- Israeli conflict. It also draws a line between the factual and fictional events in the text, as the author labels it as 'a fictoir'.[56] Al-Jurf's dedication at the end of the book assigns each of the factual stories she has included to their owners, listing the names of the people mentioned in her text. She emphasises the importance

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[53] Sirène Harb, 'Arab American Women's Writing and September 11: Contrapuntality and Associative Remembering', *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of The U.S.*, 37.3 (2012) <https://doi.org/10.1353/mel.2012.0044> [accessed 3 January 2021], pp. 13-41 (p. 16).
[54] Ibid., p. 16.
[55] Layla Al Maleh, 'Anglophone Arab Literature: An Overview' in *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, ed. by L. Al Maleh (Amsterdam, New York: Rodopi B.V., 2009), pp. 1-64 (p.1).
[56] Al-Jurf, p. v.

of doing so, 'because the credibility and validity of the Palestinian voice is so often called into question…'.[57]

The text presents two additional significant paratextual elements before moving on to the text itself. One is a page-sized map of Israel and the Occupied Palestinian territories, which is followed by a dedication to the women of Palestine at home and throughout the world:

> For the young women of Palestine, and, also, their sisters all
> over the world-
>   who hold my hope for what this world could become, if only their voices were
>   heard.[58]

This map serves both as a reference point for Soha's accounts as presented in the text, and to locate the Palestinian cause in the real world, serving as a visual representation of the author's mission to humanise her race. The dedication locates and indicates the invisible and silent figures in the chaotic clash; not only the Palestinian women at home, but also those dispersed across the globe in reference to the silenced diasporic and hybrid identities for whom Palestine is a scaffold. Thus, the paratextual elements of Al-Jurf's book foreshadow the problematic position of Arab American women in the post-9/11 period, as they struggle to articulate the intersectional aspects of their identities as Arab, Palestinian, American and women, and therefore sheds light on how Bhabha's Third Space fails to include their specificities and pragmatic realities.

Moving onto the text, it is evident how the events of 9/11 and its aftermath further problematised the intersectionality of Arab American women, intensifying their sense of dislocation. As elements of gender, race and class are highly operative to Arab American women's Third Space(s) where such intersectional grids of their identity further marginalise

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[57] Ibid., p. v.
[58] Ibid., p. xvii.

their position among the interaction between the two worlds, the dilemma of belonging is

also repeatedly presented in Al-Jurf's text:

> I remember a day on the playground when a blonde, quintessentially American girl
> (whose family *hosted* the Saturday football parties) become angry with me about
> something and said, "Well, I wouldn't say you're exactly American!"
> It was a strange comment to make, strange, even, that was intended to hurt. And it did. I
> remember walking home in the snow that afternoon, wishing I could paint myself white.
> Iowa was cold. It was grey. It was white-the snow and the people. It was lonely and dull.
> I never knew my place in it.[59]

In the extract above, Al-Jurf uses 'the Saturday football parties' to allude to the status

of assimilation of the Arab American family. On a previous occasion in the text, Al-Jurf

mentions that her family is excluded from participating in the block-football-parties: 'But

what people don't know is that my family was the only family on the block that wasn't

invited to the tailgating parties on football Saturdays'.[60] As football represents US culture and

tradition, Al-Jurf uses the allusion of football parties to test the Arab American family's level

of assimilation. The Arab family's exclusion from this culturally valued event within US

society points to the extent of their marginalisation from the mainstream community they

inhabit. The use of football as a US cultural marker is one among many other markers Al-Jurf

uses throughout the text to define her Americanness. In that, Al-Jurf defines her

Americanness relative to her knowledge and participation within various American cultural

activities, values and events as she grew up. She writes:

> Even though my parents seemed determined to raise their children the way their parents
> raised them- as Arab children with Arab values- my Arabness is not always apparent to
> people who were not raised similarly to me. […] Because I grew up in Iowa. Because my
> English lacks a foreign accent. Because my Arabic has a foreign accent. Because I have a
> U.S. passport. Because I grew up surrounded by college football and monster truck
> shows and Cabbage Patch Kids. Because I quote old episodes of *Saturday Night Live* and
> remember the beginnings of MTV and, in the '80's, I wore a fluorescent pink *Wham*!
> Sweatshirt and memorized all the words to Madonna's *Like a Virgin*.[61]

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[59] Ibid., p. 155.
[60] Ibid., p. 154.
[61] Ibid., p. 154.

Soha explains that her Arabness is not as obvious as her Americanness due to her upbringing in the US, which has led to her saturation in American cultural norms. However, her Arab features undermine her Americanness when she encounters those whom she refers to as 'quintessentially American'. Her Americanness, as defined by her citizenship and the various American cultural values she engages with is lessened when contrasted with the quintessential figure of American girl, *blonde* and *white*. This is portrayed in the text on the occasion when she engages with the 'blonde quintessentially American girl (whose family hosted the Saturday football game parties) [who] become angry with [her] about something [she] said, [saying] "Well, I wouldn't say you're exactly American!"'.[62] As Soha's Americanness is questioned, she wishes to 'paint [herself] white' as a way to visually perform her Americanness. Soha implicitly uses the mental imagery of the overwhelmingly white, snowy Iowa when referring to the contrasting colours as she seeks to align her dark Arab features with the quintessential blond white US citizen, thereby marking her dislocation.

In presenting such a detailed account of Al-Jurf's struggle to fit in, Soha contextualises her desire to engage with Palestine as her place of origin, and as a cause to be negotiated. Soha's determination to 'see if [she] can find fragments of [her] soul' in Palestine is derived from the 'stereotypical isolation of being "the foreigner"',[63] and determine whether 'being a "foreigner" in America cast an undercurrent of added freakishness'.[64] This sense of foreignness, as portrayed by Soha, highlights the overambitious frame of cross-cultural encounters designed by Bhabha which fails to acknowledge the complexity and intersectionality of cases, such as that of Arab American women's organic hybrid identity, which is generated by forms of marginalisation and othering in cross-cultural settings. The

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[62] Ibid., p. 155.
[63] Ibid., p. 155.
[64] Ibid., p. 158.

othering of Soha's race in American society places pressure on her to connect with her

Arabness:

> People often ask me why my urge to return to Palestine is so strong. Why I don't just identify as an American and move away from thinking about my origins. That's what Americans do; isn't it? Move away from thinking about their origins. It is inherent in the birth of America itself.[65]

Al-Jurf refers to the failure of American-promoted values such as equality and

acceptance of diversity, including with regard to her Arab race, but not in terms of

assimilation metaphors such as the melting pot. As Arab Americans position transitioned

from invisibility to the visible embodiment of the *Other* in the post- 9/11 period, it became

necessary for the community to redefine their identities by connecting with their national

identity. Manuel Castells explains the need to reconstruct national identity 'is, most often, a

reaction against a threatened autonomous identity [which] becomes the trench of cultural

resistance'.[66] This form of identity is 'produced through the labors of shared history' and the

collective memory of the nation.[67] Thus, and according to Omar Baz Radwan, 'Arab

American [writers] find themselves engaged with elements of Arab-American identity that

have historically been silenced, especially that of race'.[68] This attempt to redefine the self and

the ethnic boundaries imposed by the community is embodied by Al-Jurf's requirement to

embark on a journey to Palestine to connect with her Arabness:

> What, then, prompts my longing for return? Am I carrying my loyalty to Palestine as an idea? As a struggle against oppression? or, am I carrying collective memory itself? Are my ancestors' memories stored somewhere within me, and can I retrace them? There is nothing in my own memory that I am longing for. Nothing that I wish to return to. But I feel a longing for return, nonetheless.[69]

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[65] Ibid., p. 153.
[66] Manuel Castells, *The Power of Identity* (Massachusetts: Blackwell Publisher, 1997), p. 52.
[67] Ibid., p. 52.
[68] Omar Baz Radwan, 'Race and Post-9/11 Arab-American Identity: Contestatory Agency in The Poetic Discourse of Suheir Hammad and Andrea Assaf', in *Spaces of Longing and Belonging: Territoriality, Ideology and Creative Identity in Literature and Film* (Boston: Brill, 2019) <https://ebookcentral.proquest.com> [accessed 7 April 2022], pp. 170- 189 (p.172).
[69] Al-Jurf, p. 9.

By reconciling her own hybrid identity amid the tense political climate post 9/11, Al-Jurf communicates her attempts to connect with Palestine as a place, as an idea, and as a memory to the reader, as well as her quest to redefine the boundaries of both her agency and her ethnic identity. As Lisa Majaj states, 'to return… is not simply to go back: it is also to go forward; to create a new future from the fragments of a reclaimed past'.[70] Radwan observes that contemporary Arab American writing in the post-9/11 period frequently proclaims a general need to redefine boundaries:

> Writing as an Arab-American also means pursuing the definition of boundaries of exclusion and inclusion. Authors interrogate the grounds of their cultural location, their relationship to interconnecting contexts, and the ways in which the process of transiting boundaries yields possibilities for agency and activism.[71]

Moreover, Al-Jurf sheds light on the racial and ethnic problematic position of Arabs in the US, reframing the boundaries of the ethnic community through her father's memories. This phenomenon is referred to as postmemory, a term coined by Marianne Hirsch to refer to:

> the response of the second generation to the trauma of the first, resulting in a destructive relationship between the second generation of the 'survivors of cultural or collective trauma to the experiences of their parents, experiences they "remember" only as narratives of their parents […] but that are so powerful, so monumental, as to constitute memories in their own right.[72]

As expressed in Al-Jurf's text, the hardships and lived experiences of many Palestinians in 1948 and its aftermath were passed on as memories to later generations of Palestinians, particularly to those abroad, whose affiliation to Palestine had never been experienced first-hand, but rather was reliant upon inherited narratives. Through recollecting the memories of Palestine passed on to her through her father, Al-Jurf

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[70] Lisa Suhair Majaj, 'On Writing and Return: Palestinian-American Reflections', *Meridians*, 2.1 (2022) <http://www.jstor.org/stable/40338803> [accessed 11 April 2022], pp.113-126 (p. 116).
[71] Radwan, p. 173.
[72] Marianne Hirsch, 'Surviving Images: Holocaust Photographs and The Work of Postmemory', *The Yale Journal of Criticism*, 14.1 (2001) <https://doi.org/10.1353/yale.2001.0008> [accessed 11 April 2022], pp.5-37 (p. 8-9).

explores the transformative power of her journey to Palestine to break the confining

construct determining perceptions of Arabs in general and Palestinians in particular,

two terms based on a combination of socio-historical factors and contemporary political

clashes. Al-Jurf marks the beginning of her journey to discover the notion of home

through the lens of her father's memories:

> In my parents' dining room, there is a framed, black and white photo of my father and his older brother, standing in front of a stone wall near their home in al Bireh, the West Bank city where they were raised. The photograph was taken around 1953, approximately five years after my father and his family were expelled from al Khayriyya, the village where they were born. […] As far as I know, it is the only image that remains from his life in Palestine. I look at that photograph sometimes and wonder why he enlarged it. It's as if he thought that magnifying the image might allow him to climb into it and reunite with the boy he no longer knows, standing in a city he can still feel around him. Not because he has any desire to go back there, but simply because he longs to reconnect with something that is intimately familiar. I wonder if he is searching for memories of himself that he inadvertently left behind.[73]

The black and white photo described in the extract above serves as a tangible

record encapsulating both the physical, mental, and emotional state associated with

what was a remarkable time in the life of her father figure. It also serves as a narrative

of his life, accentuating the changes in circumstance he navigated. His experiences are

framed by the boundaries associated with displacement, and these both protect and

isolate him as a diasporic figure. In describing her father's perceived wish to enlarge

the framed picture and climb into it, Al-Jurf refers to the concept of *Haq al-Awda'* (the

right of returnand restoration of Palestine) that resides at the heart of Palestinian

identity and existence.[74] Engaging with the concept of 'return' contributes to the

depiction of the racial discrimination against Arabs in general and the Palestinians

specifically, by the US political power and its allies in the 1993 Oslo Accords,[75] which

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[73]Al-Jurf, pp. 1-2.

[74] The right of return is a principle in international law which guarantees everyone's right of voluntary return to, or re-entry to, their country of origin or of citizenship. The right of return is part of the broader human rights concept associated with freedom of movement, and is also related to the legal concept of nationality.

[75] The Oslo Accords is a pair of agreements between Israel and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO): the Oslo I Accord was signed in Washington D.C. in 1993.

were sponsored by the USA and ignored the United Nations' calls for Palestinians'

right to return. This was achieved by portraying the clash as a dispute over land rather

than an occupation.[76]

In *Even my Voice is Silence*, Soha's depiction of the father figure's attachment

to the photo draws attention to the multitude of meanings that inform the concept of

'return' for Palestinians; whether those located in refugee camps or more privileged

circumstances. While the 'return' applies literally for Palestinians in refugee camps,

being a meaning that grows out of their pragmatic urgency to return to their homelands,

the concept of return for Palestinian Americans is associated with the metaphorical

implications of the word. Majaj describes how Palestinian American writers present the

concept of return:

> …Palestinian-American writing is informed by the longing to return to the original
> Palestinian homeland, and by historical, political, and military events that have made
> such return impossible. It is also informed by other layers of displacement and exile,
> whether cultural, personal, or gendered. Because Palestinian-Americans like other
> Palestinians, are forbidden to return (except, at best, as tourists) to their historical
> homeland, and hence to their own history, their literature in many ways charts an attempt
> to "return," as it were through writing.[77]

For the migrant father figure the enlarging of the photo represents his longing to

return to both a homeland and to a sense of self that was lost among the multiple layers

of exile and displacement, it is through this sense of longing to return to that homeland,

both literally and metaphorically, that Soha's hybrid identity and intersectional

experience is negotiated. This requirement to visualise the self in relation to historical,

cultural and personal constraints is conveyed by Soha's urge to 'return':

> He recounts a few memories occasionally- always from the same repertoire, repeated like
> a scripted memoir with the storyline omitted. Yet there it is: a frame filled with black and
> white stillness that evidences a life continuously lived. And I can't help but feel that
> there is something that is mine in his story; something that belongs to me that I have
> never reclaimed. Hidden in a place that even memory has no capacity to hold.[78]

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[76]Majaj, p. 114.
[77] Ibid., p. 115.
[78] Al-Jurf, p. 2.

As a part of the postmemory generation, Al-Jurf delineates between the nostalgic views of her father, and what Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer refer to as the 'rootless nostalgia of the children of exiles and refugees'.[79] In this case, the presentation of the first generation, as embodied in the father figure, offer the audience a reworking of nostalgia derived from tangible experiences in the form of recollected memories of Palestine. By contrast the postmemory-generation, as represented by Soha, experience a rootless nostalgia as they have no tangible experience of a life in Palestine within which to ground their sense of longing and belonging. The rootlessness of their nostalgia challenges their affiliation to Palestine, placing their intangible longing for the homeland at the bottom of the hierarchy of Palestinian-ness. In the section where Al-Jurf writes about people questioning her urge to return to Palestine, she writes:

> Even friends and relatives in Jordan ask me this; as if I need to justify my authenticity as a Palestinian. Because they, too, feel some pressure to justify their own authenticity. As if there is a hierarchy of Palestinian-ness. I've talked to many people who trace their origins to Palestine who seem to experience some form of it- this notion of being "Palestinian enough". As if we somehow earn this right to identity. And, in some ways, I suppose we do. How we hold on to identity and which parts of their identity are passed on to the next generation seems to be a part of the journey of every immigrant I know.[80]

Soha's references to the integration process that every immigrant undergoes, and which requires a reworking of their former identity to shape a new identity that fits into the host society, corresponds to the narrative presented in Homi Bhabha's definition of Third Space. However, the text makes it evident that Bhabha's definition fails to account for the intersectional elements of Arab American women's experience as located between the two worlds, rendering them a minority within the minority. This is done as the text highlights the specificities of Al-Jurf's intersectional experience as an Arab diasporic Palestinian woman in

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[79] Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer, ""We Would Not Have Come Without You": Generations of Nostalgia", *American Imago*, 59.3 (2002), <https://doi.org/10.1353/aim.2002.0018>, [accessed 6 May 2022], pp. 253-276 (p. 263).
[80] Al-Jurf, p. 153.

America struggling to negotiate the multiple aspects of her identity. Lisa Majaj points out that in the Palestinian community in America: 'reification of memory implicit in the recreation of Palestinian culture in the Diaspora makes possible a bridging of past and present, it also leaves little space for women to define their own futures'.[81] The effect of the recreation of Palestine in the US is evidenced in Al-Jurf's text, as she observes how this diasporic coping strategy dismisses the intersectionality of her identity. Soha portrays one encounter with her father upon arriving home after spending the weekend in the countryside:

> He said I came home acting like "an American." He didn't like the way I talked. He said this was not the daughter he was raising. As if he could raise me here but keep me there. Or maybe the reverse.[82]

Located in a place where they are neither *Palestinian/Arab enough* nor *American enough*, the concept of return in the writings of Soha and other Palestinian American women writers, such as Suhair Hammad and Susan Abulhawa, emerges in response to the problematic position of Palestinian American women writers, whose writing is wedged within a nationalist and feminist dichotomy. Majaj states:

> As Palestinian-American women writers make evident, to write as a Palestinian woman is to write not only from an understanding of the personal as political (the tried-and-true dictum of feminism) but also from an understanding of the political as personal. It is to write out of a recognition of the ways in which the multiple layers of history and politics, exile and displacement situate and shape individual lives. And it is to write from an awareness of the ways in which personal and gendered issues are integrally related to, rather separate from, the struggle for freedom, justice and peace.[83]

The reading of the concept of *al-Awda* through the lens of postmemory helps not only to shed light on the overlooked elements of race and class in Bhabha's definition of Third Space, but also that of gender. Arab American women writers in the post- 9/11 period face challenges on multiple fronts. On the one hand, and like many other Arab American women, Palestinian American women struggle to express their hybrid identity among the clash

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[81] Majaj, p. 120.
[82] Al-Jurf, p. 158.
[83] Majaj, p. 116.

between both worlds. However, the concept of *al-Awda* further intensifies the struggle for

Palestinian American women compared to other American women from different Arab

backgrounds. The concept of return has forced the Palestinian American community to

grapple with their cultural codes, particularly expectations of the dominance of men over

women in the patriarchal social system upheld in Arab culture. Fawaz Turki also explains

how the idea of returning to Palestine is viewed as central to the Palestinian identity:

> A Palestinian cannot say, for example, that he does not believe in the return. To reject the return is to rip up the tree on which his history and *raison d'etre* grow. The return is the rock on which our nation in exile is founded and the social homeostasis that had cemented our people together in their encapsulated world. The passion for return is an expression of our identity, an ecstatic embodiment of its inward movement and preoccupations. It is as if the ultimate Palestinian question were; I want to return, therefore I am.[84]

This multi-layered feminist struggle is portrayed in Al-Jurf's text on multiple

occasions when negotiating her intersectional identity amidst the assumptions, expectations

and stereotypes that dominate the discourse of both worlds with regard to Arab American

women. Al-Jurf depicts the clash of her hybrid identity with the model of the good Arab girl,

as imposed on her by her father. When Soha visits her parents after spending three months

practising meditation in a Buddhist monastery, Soha conveys her father's disappointment and

rage as 'he perceived that [she] had shamed him. By being unmarried, by sleeping in a

monastery with Buddhists, by manoeuvring [her] body out of his sight'.[85] Al-Jurf

acknowledges that her own self-actualisation threatens her father's desire to control her, in

particular her mind and her body. Soha's violation of the model of the good Arab girl also

threatens those social Arab codes through which Arab American ethnic identity is framed.

She writes:

> Although I had great difficulty following his reasoning–knowing what, exactly, he was saying or why he way saying it– the best I could come up with (once I go over feeling

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[84] Fawaz Turki, 'The Future of a Past: Fragments from The Palestinian Dream', *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 6.3 (1977) <https://doi.org/10.1525/jps.1977.6.3.00p0497e> [accessed 10 May 2021], pp. 66-76 (p. 68).
[85] Al-Jurf, p. 135.

threatened by his rage), was that he felt threatened by me, by my exertion of my own self-actualization. That I was breaking some sort of code. A code of Arab honor; reverberations of old tribal echoes. A code of immigrants clinging desperately to their tradition to combat the infiltrations of unknown cultural norms encountered in foreign lands. […]
My body is not my own. It belongs to my father, to his father, to the peasants of my father's village. My body is not mine. It is the possession of the men, of the masculinity of the ages, of the overpowering entity of the divine male order. It is not mine to use or to display or to give away.
I am expected to await my turn. For the transfer of possession. For the transaction that will make me no longer the possession of my father but of another man's son.[86]

Elsewhere, Al-Jurf conveys the struggle of Muslim women against stereotypes generated by both the patriarchal nature of Arab culture and political events that intensify the preconception of Muslim women as either submissive, passive or mere extensions of their familial relationships with potential male terrorists. In her visit to Jerusalem, Al-Jurf portrays her attempts to pass through the 'boundaries and walls' Israel constructs 'to maintain them – by creating myths of "Arab" terror and barbarism'.[87] Al-Jurf's privilege of choice and citizenship as a woman from the US means she is perceived as a non-threat to the Israeli soldiers when crossing through the checkpoint into Jerusalem. She writes:

Although it is "illegal" for me to go outside of the West Bank using my green ID without a permit, into the land they call Israel, […] I was willing to take the risk […] to visit my father's village; because I am a woman. And here is one place where my gender clearly finds its power in Palestine: the punishments for "illegal" entrance into Jerusalem are far less severe for a woman than for a Palestinian man, particularly a woman with a U.S. passport…
[…] a young woman costumed in a tank-top could never threaten the security of Israel, especially if the young woman in question is dangling a cigarette and a bare foot out the window of a rental car. The soldiers, apparently, often do not stop confident-looking Western women to check their IDs.[88]

In this extract, Al-Jurf refers to the experience of Muslim women as perceived as a result of their religious costume, observing that reactions to the veil and headscarf have changed in the aftermath of 9/11. Muslim women's clothing has become broadly associated with notions of oppression, control, and terrorism. Sahar Aziz states:

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[86] Ibid., p. 136.
[87] Ibid., p. 39.
[88] Ibid., p. 44.

> The September 11 terrorist attacks transformed the meaning of the Muslim headscarf. No longer is the crux of the debate whether the "veil" is used to oppress women by controlling their sexuality and, by extension, their personal freedoms and life choices. Rather, a Muslim headscarf "marks" the wearer as a representative of the suspicious, inherently violent, and forever foreign "terrorist other" in our midst.[89]

Although the previous scene is located at a checkpoint in Jerusalem, Al-Jurf draws attention to women's clothing as a signifier of threat and safety, terrorism and innocence, in many locations across the globe, including in the US. This binary opposition creates a struggle for Arab American Muslim women as they their attempt to claim their Americanness and pass as US citizens while continuing to honour their religious beliefs and practices. In the post-9/11 era, the headscarf and the veil, as cultural and religious symbols, are characterised in American national security debates as conflicting with notions of Americanness. As the cultural and religious symbol of the 'headscarf "marks" Muslim women as sympathetic to the enemy, presumptively disloyal to this country, and forever foreign',[90] the intersectional nature of Arab American Muslim women is, therefore dismissed by the dominant discourse that circulates within US culture and which is propagated by US media outlets.

The scenario above also draws attention to critiques of mainstream Western feminism, particularly in terms of its failure to recognise and advocate to preserve the different aspects of women's experiences, particularly those of Muslim women in the post-9/11 era. Western feminism generally offers one version of what comprises an empowered woman versus an oppressed woman, suggesting that oppression is associated with being veiled, thereby dismissing the diversity of meanings of cultural symbols by applying a hegemonic understanding of agency and solidarity.

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[89] Sahar F. Aziz, 'Terror(izing) The "Veil": American Muslim Women Caught in The Crosshairs of Intersectionality', in *The Rule of Law and The Rule of God* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 2014) <https://link.springer.com/> [accessed 14 April 2022] pp. 207-232 (p. 207).
[90] Ibid., p. 208.

This consideration is further contextualised in Al-Jurf's text, as she questions the position of Muslim women in occupied Palestine in relation to Eve Ensler's two monologues, 'My Short Skirt' and 'Under the Burqa',[91] the latter written in 2003 to include the plight of Afghani women under the Taliban regime. This is presented in the text, as Al-Jurf narrates her experience of creating an acting class for a small group of teenage girls in Jerusalem. She aims to help them write and perform autobiographical monologues reflecting the 'insidious insignia of young women living under military occupation–themes of trauma, of struggle, of hope. [she] wanted to start a dialogue about freedom'.[92] Al-Jurf's engagement with Ensler's two monologues in her classes, particularly that pertaining to the dilemma of Afghani women, is significant in the context of Arab American Muslim women in general, and that of Palestinian women under occupation specifically.

On the one hand, it draws attention to how the cultural symbols of the veil and Burqa are used by the American political powers post-9/11 period to justify the 'War on Terror'. The notion of "saving" Muslim women is further evoked by the American media and political authorities, and co-opted into the social values of American society to link the cultural symbol of the veil with notions of oppression or terrorism. Lila Abu-Lughod explains that, despite the horrendous practices of the Taliban regime, the veil was not invented by the Taliban, and has existed in many cultures in different forms and has been utilised for different cultural and religious meanings.[93] Associating and hegemonizing the veil, with all its different forms and cultural meanings, with

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[91] Both monologues are part of Eve Ensler's episodic play *The Vagina Monologues.*
[92] Al-Jurf, p. 27.
[93] Leila Abu-Lughod, 'Do Muslim Women Really Need Saving? Anthropological Reflections on Cultural Relativism and Its Others', *American Anthropologist*, 104.3 (2002) <https://doi.org/10.1525/aa.2002.104.3.783> [accessed 7 May 2021], pp. 783-790 (p. 785).

oppression or terrorism in the Western feminist and political discourse offers no opportunity for Muslim women to assert their beliefs and practices.

On the other hand, 'reducing the diverse situations and attitudes of millions of Muslim women to a single item of clothing' then dismisses the diversity of their experiences,[94] further contributing to their invisibility in regard to the social and political clash between the two worlds. Al-Jurf refers to the struggle of Muslim Arab American women when negotiating their intersectional experiences as Muslims, women, Arabs and Americans within what is a discourse of victimisation and violence. Thus, and as Muslim Arab American women are erased from the multicultural landscape of US society, one can observe how the narratives of Arab American women in the post- 9/11 era consider elements of race, nationality, class and gender that are overlooked in Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

Conclusion

Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence* reveal the intersecting functions of race, gender, and class as they pertain to the ethnic experiences of Arab American women who must negotiate their hybrid identities between the norms of US society and the expectations of the Arab American community. Framed within the historical and contemporary political and cultural clashes between the Arab world and the West, Arab American women's narratives of Third Space draw attention to the intersectional elements of ethnic experience as gaps and overlooked factors inform Homi Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

As this thesis cites the disastrous events of 9/11 as the temporal division in our examination of Third Space in female Arab American narratives, the first section of this chapter explored the problematic positioning of Arab American women in the interactions

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[94] Ibid., p. 786.

that took place between the two worlds presented in the pre- 9/11 fictional text *Arabian Jazz*. Through the lens of place and memory, this chapter explored the invisibility of the Arab community in the US in general, and the Arab American women in particular during the 1990s, as well as how the author makes use of fiction as the medium through which to illustrate this dilemma.

Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* interrogates manifestations of unresolved ambivalence in her hybrid characters, emphasising their problematic position as Arab American women pre-9/11, also using the literary elements of setting to situate her organic hybrid characters in a complicated web of class and race, as embodied in the interaction between the invisible White poor neighbourhood of Euclid and the even more invisible Arab family. The gendered identity of the organic hybrid characters is also challenged by saviour complexes. This is depicted through the characterisation of Portia, who embodies the maternal imperialist attitudes of the white American woman. The characterisation of Fatima also serves as both a challenge for organic hybrid gendered identity, and as a vehicle to deliver the repressed gendered memory and the generational transition of the migrant Arab mother figure.

In the post-9/11 era, in which, as Shryock puts it, 'Arab Americans are likely to say that things are the same as before, only worse',[95] Al-Jurf's memoir *Even My Voice Is Silence* describes the intensification of the challenges Arab American women encountered in the aftermath of 9/11, as the racial ethnic community of Arabs in America expanded from invisible to visibly stigmatised subjects. Al-Jurf's choice of the genre of memoir allows her to reflect on the newly visible position of Arabs in America, while also considering elements of place and memory. What distinguishes Al-Jurf's use of these elements in comparison to Abu-Jaber is the capacity afforded by memoir to convey the textual and paratextual elements of the text, and to represent and reflect on the ambivalent position of Arab American women

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[95] Ibid., Shryock, p. 81.

post-9/11, as her narrative shifts between Palestine and the US highlighting the struggle Arab American women face when negotiating their hybridity.

The postmemory narrative of Al-Jurf's text allows for the exploration of how race and gender in Arab American women's Third Space negates the harmony portrayed in Bhabha's definition of the term. The hybrid nature of their identities is challenged by both Palestinian diasporic memory and the concept of *return*, which obstructs their articulation of their Americanness. The gendering of Palestinian national narratives, as well as the preserved ethnic Arab identity that revolves around gender rules derived from the patriarchal nature of Arab societies, further intensifies the ambivalence of Arab American women, particularly those of Palestinian origin.

What both texts lay bare is the extent to which the intersectional aspects of Arab American women's experience in pre- and post- 9/11 periods, as informed by (but not limited to) their gender, race, ethnicity and class, are reduced to only one component – the Arab portion– of their identity. The community's invisibility in the 1990s, which is fed by the ambiguous position of the Arab race within the social hierarchy of the American social structure, magnifies the marginalisation of Arab American women. The invisibility of their race informs their effort to map their gendered and hybrid identity, as the texts shift between negotiating the patriarchal social system underpinned by their Arab culture, and an orientalist American mindset that renders them unseen and unheard.

The dominant American political discourse, which demonizes Arabs and Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11, confines the representation of Arab and Muslim American women to a binary of victimisation and violence. This is achieved not only through limiting and reframing the meaning of their cultural symbols, such as the veil, within a binary discourse, but also by reducing the diversity of their cultural symbols to develop a single representation of Muslim and Arab women. This points to a critical glossed over element of Bhabha's

definition of Third Space; i.e., the intersectionality of their experience, which invites practices of discrimination and marginalisation, increasingly so in times of austerity, as both texts suggest.

Moving on from the experience of the *organic hybrid*s, the next chapter will explore the experience of *intentional hybrids* as they arise the immigration narratives of Leila Ahmad's *A Border Passage* and Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home.* This will allow us to contextualise the overlooked intersectional elements of race, gender, class and sexuality in Bhabha's definition as they apply to the immigration narratives of Arab American women writers in the pre- and post-9/11 period.

Chapter Four: Border Crossing Narratives Before and After 9/11: Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage* and Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*

Introduction

The first part of this thesis laid the groundwork for an understanding of Bhabha's theory of Third Space, including highlighting how the structure of the theory does not provide an adequate space for the consideration of Arab American women's experiences. Bhabha's definition proposes the existence of a 'Third Space', allowing for encounters between two opposing powers, so enabling them to communicate equally while removing some hierarchal relationships and binary oppositions. However, the literature examined in this current thesis demonstrates that this definition fails to accommodate the particular challenges faced by Arab American women within their spaces of encounter. The second part of this thesis therefore aims to reveal the utopic ideal of Bhabha's definition as being far removed from the everyday lives of Arab American women, including the consequent political and social power structures.

The first chapter of the second part of this thesis examined how elements of place and memory are used in the narratives of organic hybrid identities (i.e. US-born/raised citizens) to reflect the complexity of Arab American women's intersectional experience amidst the political and cultural clash of the two sides of their hyphenated identities. I employed Abu-Jaber's (1993) pre-9/11 novel *Arabian Jazz,* alongside Al-Jurf's (2012) post- 9/11 memoir *Even my Voice is Silence* to explore how each of the two genera reflects the community's status, in particular as its members were forced to move from invisibility to a glaringly visibility in the period between the 1990s and 9/11 and its aftermath. The chapter therefore focused on the intersectional elements of race, class and gender, which are overlooked in Bhabha's definition of Third Space, in particular in relation to the Arab community and American society. In addition, it looked at how these elements, which are particularly

relevant to the ethnic experience of Arab American women, can invite practices of marginalisation and discrimination.

This chapter thus complements the previous discussion by seeking to further critique Bhabha's definition of Third Space. The chapter therefore argues that Bhabha's definition overlooks the intersectional elements of race, class and gender, while at the same time failing to make a distinction between the experience of immigrant and non-immigrant hybrid figures within the Third Space. In doing so, it fails to account for the differences between immigrants (i.e. intentional hybrids) and those born as part of the second generation (i.e. organic hybrids).

This current chapter explores the literary works arising from experiences of immigration, focusing on Leila Ahmed's pre-9/11 memoir *A Border Passage* (1999) and Randa Jarrar's post-9/11 novel *A Map of Home* (2008). As the two chapters use the genera of fiction and nonfiction interchangeably/inversely in the pre- and post-9/11 context, this offers a more nuanced understanding of how the gaps in Bhabha's definition are presented in both genera, as well as during both periods covered by this thesis. As noted in earlier chapters, the use of this timeframe does not suggest that this study proposes a systematic literary history of the writing of Arab American women both prior to, and following, 9/11. Instead, it seeks to highlight the continuities and differences in the examined texts, both across their different genera and in relation to the context of 9/11.

The texts in this chapter differ from those previously discussed, as they examine how the various aspects of immigration add up to the complexity of the intersectional experience of the intentional hybridity of Arab American women immigrants. In addition, the simultaneous consideration of both texts in this chapter reveals the complex experience of Arab women before, during and after crossing the borders from the Arab world to America. The previously examined organic hybrids were found to generally negotiate their hybridity in

an overlapping space between their Arabness and Americanness, one characterised by their double consciousness of being both Arabs and Americans. However, the hybridity of the examined subjects in this current chapter is negotiated in a transnational space between their homeland and their adoptive country. This presents them as cultural translators between the two worlds to which they belong.

Ahmed's pre-9/11 memoir narrates her coming-of-age story, having been born and raised in Egypt during the final days of British colonial rule. Ahmed engages the reader in her memories of childhood in a multicultural, multilingual and multireligious setting. Little Leila is fond of her father's views of the world, including his education and the knowledge he shares with her about the West. By contrast, Leila's relationship with her mother is somewhat conflicted. The child sees her mother as an embodiment of failure and disgrace, since she is uneducated, powerless, and does not speak English. Such an intellectual gap allows Leila to observe the life of the 'harem' that surround her,[1] and to form her early understanding of the status of women in her world. Ahmed then narrates her story of her journey to the UK for her studies, followed by travelling to the UAE to take up a teaching position and eventually to the US, where she ultimately settles.

Randa Jarrar's novel *A Map of Home* narrates the coming-of-age story of a young girl called Nidali, along with her journey to define herself and establish her identity amid various political upheavals. It also examines Nidali's exposure to multiple cultures in her unsettled situation as a refugee and migrant. The story is set against a backdrop of multiple cultures and political conditions, as well as warfare, ethnic discrimination, and the question of home.

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[1] In her article 'Western Ethnocentrism and perception of the Harem', Leila Ahmed defines the term Harem as 'a system whereby the female relatives of a man- wives, sisters, mother, aunts, daughters- share much of their time and their living space, and further, which enables women to have frequent and easy access to other women in their community, vertically, across class lines, as well as horizontally'. Leila Ahmed, 'Western Ethnocentrism and Perceptions of The Harem', *Feminist Studies*, 8.3 (1982), <https://doi.org/10.2307/3177710>, [accessed 10 October 2020], pp. 521-534 (p. 524).

First published in 2008 (i.e. seven years after the tragedy of 9/11), the novel looks back over the journey of displacement resulting from the Palestinian origin of Nidali's family. The protagonist's voice depicts the experience of reliving constant border crossings, while observing the social and political changes related to the construction of her national, gender and sexual identity as an Arab refugee and migrant in America. The novel starts with the story of Nidali's birth in the US, followed by her journey to Kuwait and Egypt, before finally returning to America after escaping the Gulf War of 1990.

Despite their differences (i.e. one being an autobiography, the other a work of fiction), these texts are both written by female immigrants to the US, who have chosen to write in English. Furthermore, they both demonstrate an understanding that their reception and position in their adoptive country is dominated by Orientalist and neo-Orientalist discourses determining the mindset of their American readers. Although this position has the potential to impose limits on how they express their identity, it also affords both opportunities to function as cultural translators.

On the other hand, the two texts differ in how the writers individually negotiate their historical, gendered, and racial conditions, across two different genera, and in ways that vary according to their national origin, education, religious background, class, and the political situation surrounding the publication of their works (i.e., pre-and post- 9/11). Therefore, in order to emblematise wider shifts in genre and form evident across this period, I have combined my consideration of Ahmed's non-fiction memoir of the pre-9/11 period with that of Jarrar's novel, set post-9/11.

Just as the political contretemps between the West and the Arab world of the 1990s, and in the aftermath of 9/11, were found to shape the ethnic experience of the organic hybrids in the previous chapter, they are seen to exert an equal impact on the narratives of the intentional hybrids explored in this chapter. Thus, the works of Arab women immigrants

from the 1990s and post-9/11 are distinguished from those of the early twentieth century in terms of the political nature of their subject matter. In response to the political tensions of the 1990s, Waïl Hassan argues that the Arab immigrant literature from that period and onwards tends to become more politicised than that of earlier US Arab immigrants.[2]

Events surrounding the era in which both texts were published (i.e. the Arab - Israeli conflict, followed by the two Gulf Wars and the terrorist attacks of 9/11) all exacerbated attitudes of racism, discrimination and marginalisation in the shape of Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism and Orientalist stereotypes towards Arabs and Muslims. Thus, although the majority of events in both texts take place primarily in the Arab world, and feature stories of the writers' coming of age (i.e. during the last days of British colonial presence in Egypt for Ahmed's pre-9/11 text, and the Gulf Wars for Jarrar's post-9/11 text), both use language and literary genera reflecting the politicised, discursive, ideological and historical conditions in which both texts were produced (i.e., pre-and post- 9/11).

I consider Hassan's use of the term 'cultural translation' beneficial for examining how female Arab immigrant writers construct their intentional hybridity in a manner that differs from the organic hybridity created by second generation Arab American women, particularly within such a problematic frame of racial and gendered identification. His conceptualisation of the term assists in the understanding of the dynamics at work in the immigrant literature of Arab women examined in this thesis, including how they represent the intentional hybridity constructed as they cross the borders from their place of origin to their adoptive county.

As explored in Chapter Two, Hassan assigns the role of the translator, meditator and interpreter to the immigrant figure, due to these being equipped with first-hand knowledge of both the culture of origin and the adoptive country. This indicates that the bicultural attribute of immigrant writers grants them the role of cultural translators, while simultaneously

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[2] Hassan, pp. 4-5.

negotiating and interpretating their intentional hybrid identities. Hassan's study traces

responses to Orientalism among both early Arab American male writers and contemporary

Arab women immigrants living in the UK. He considers these can claim the role of

Orientalist translator, as they are more prepared to interpret the Orient than European

Orientalists. This approach therefore affords them a way of 'claiming cultural space and

voice, countering the negativity associated with the Orient, and meditating between it and the

West for the sake of greater cross-cultural understanding'.[3] It is important to remind the

reader here that Hassan's understanding of the term cultural translation differs from that

provided by Bhabha. That is to say, as mentioned in Chapter two, while Bhabha's concept of

cultural translation revolves around the newly negotiated cultural identity that emerges in the

Third Space, Hassan's use of the term relies on the role of cultural texts in conveying cultural

ideas, with a particular focus on contexts of migration and displacement.

However, Hassan limited his examination of the term to the study of early male Arab

immigrants in the US and contemporary Arab women immigrants in the UK. My own aim is

therefore to expand the use of his term to include the experience of contemporary female

Arab immigrants in the US. In addition, I wish to use his conception of cultural translation

firstly to read their translational stances in responding to the Orientalist discourse

constructing their reception in the US and, secondly, widen his conception to also include

how their writings can be seen as forms of resistance to the patriarchal discourse dominating

their position in their Arab culture.

Through my reading of the intentional hybrid experience in both texts through the

lens of cultural translation, I argue that Bhabha's definition of the Third Space neglects not

only the intersectionality of Arab women's immigrant experience, but also obscures the

forms of knowledge they exhibit in their writings relating to the complexity of gender, race,

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[3] Ibid., p. 250.

nationality and class in the social structure of their societies, and which determine their narratives. The examination of both texts in this chapter sheds light on how Bhabha's Third Space fails to interrogate the ways in which the multiple identities in the examined narratives can inform the character's resistance to oppressive forces, or the ways in which they can create different possibilities within existing power structures.

This chapter aims to contribute to this central argument by answering the following questions: (1) What are the cultural translational stances used in the immigration narratives of Ahmed and Jarrar to represent their double-sided struggle with Western Orientalist and Arab patriarchal limited understandings of their intentional hybridity? (2) What do their immigration writings reveal about Bhabha's Third Space? (3) How have the disastrous events of 9/11 affected the representation of their intentional hybridity in their Third Space between the two worlds?

Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage: A Woman's Journey from Cairo to America*

In her memoir, Leila Ahmed examines one of the politically and culturally critical periods of Arab American history. As explored in Chapter One, the period of the 1990s witnessed rapid spikes of hate crimes and discriminative attitudes towards Arabs in the US. In addition, negative representations and stereotypes of Arabs flooded media outlets, as well as films, books and advertisements. Arabs were defined through the shared vocabulary of the uncivilised Middle East being inhabited by Arab sheiks and harem girls. Such Orientalist representations were wedded to the portrayal of Arabs as violent and barbaric creatures, sabotaging the civilising mission undertaken by Israel and its allies in Europe and America.

In addition, prominent American and Western media outlets have portrayed Arabs as backward savages, evoking a sense of frightfulness, as noted by Said, particularly through

images of: 'hostile rock-throwing people of violence' with 'neither history nor humanity',[4] rejecting 'the introduction of social, political, and scientific "progress" and economic development to [their] "backward" peoples and places'.[5] This representation of Arabs was fraught with tension in the 1990s, fed by the series of military actions between Israel and its Western allies and Arab forces (most notably in 1948–49, 1956, 1967, 1973 and 1982), as well as the Iran hostage crisis taking place in 1979. This placed Arabs living within the US as backward outsiders, whose cultural symbols are considered indefensible and need to be urgently demolished to fit within the American social narrative.

When using Bhabha's theory of Third Space as a starting point from which to read Ahmed's memoir, the lived experiences of the female Arab immigrant women depicted in this text reveal some limitations of the theory. As Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space focuses mainly on the hybridisation and the marginalisation of the other, it offers no space for the experience of the othered 'other'. This is apparent when Ahmed attempts to locate and highlight the concerns of feminists of colour in the West, amidst the dominant discourses of antiracism and anti-sexism; the former being predominantly articulated from the perspective of a male of colour, and the latter largely by White feminists. Both discourses fail to adequately acknowledge the intersectional attributes of women of colour, rendering them the othered other. Ahmed states the necessity of voicing the concerns of feminists of colour in regard to racism. She writes:

> My first year in America, 1979, was also the year of the Iran hostage crisis, and I am sure now that the hostility toward Islam, by which I felt myself besieged, was more pronounced than usual because of that situation. But, as I would learn soon enough, the task of addressing racism for feminists of colour in the West is, and has to be, an ongoing and central part of the work and the thinking that we ordinarily do, no less so than the work addressing male dominance.[6]

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[4] Edward W Said, *Covering Islam: How the Media and The Experts Determine How We See the Rest of The World* (London: Vintage Books, 1981), p. 16.
[5] Frances S. Hasso, 'Modernity and Gender in Arab Accounts of the 1948 and 1967 Defeats', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, 32.4 (2000) <https://doi.org/10.1017/s0020743800021188> [accessed 15 October 2020], pp. 491-510 (p. 491).
[6] Ibid., p. 293.

The hostage crisis formed the first US encounter with radical Islam and marked a shift in how the West perceived a Middle Eastern struggle against Western influences in the name of Arabism transforming to a fight in the name of Islam. This incident is considered one of the factors shaping the unstable relationship between the two worlds, and which Elaine Kamarck notes created a 'powerful strain of public opinion that continues to play a role in American life and politics'.[7] Given the complex situation of the Arab American community, Ahmed stresses the need to understand the intersectional oppression facing Muslim Arab women immigrants in America, while trying to escape the multiple stigmas attached to their identity as Arabs, Muslims and women.

When criticising Bhabha's mythologising of the spaces of encounter, Ahmed's everyday contact with White feminism evidences the utopian nature of this theory in regard to its failure to acknowledge the gap between theory and practice in cross-cultural settings. In fact, Bhabha distinguishes between what he terms pedagogical and performative discourses in his dissuasion on nation and hybridity. According to Bhabha, 'the split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical discourse and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative discourse generates an intermediate space in narratives.[8] That is to say, the concept of the 'continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical' establishes authority by relying on a constructed historical narrative, positioning the colonised as passive recipients of knowledge. On the other hand, the 'repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative' seeks to depict the colonised as active agents, engaging in actions that generate new meanings. This approach empowers the colonised and

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[7] Elaine Kamarck, 'The Iranian Hostage Crisis and Its Effect on American Politics', *Brookings*, 2019 <https://www.brookings.edu/blog/order-from-chaos/2019/11/04/the-iranian-hostage-crisis-and-its-effect-on-american-politics/> [accessed 8 December 2020].
[8] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p.145.

positions them as the central focus of the discourse. It is in the division between these

discourses where 'conceptual ambivalence becomes the site of writing the nation'.[9]

However, when addressing the pedagogical narratives expressed in official

discourse, and the performative narratives in which official discourses are manifested in daily

life, his distinction focuses principally on national discourses and on the binary relationship

between the coloniser and the colonised. It does not account for the struggle facing Arab

American women attempting to assert their hybridity within the dominant discourses of anti-

racism and anti-sexism. This is evident in the text as Ahmed observes when transitioning to

women's studies that 'live American feminism was not anything like [she] had imagined'.[10]

The notion of feminism she had formed when reading 'its thoughtful texts in the quiet of the

desert' presented it as 'tranquil, lucid, meditative—whereas, of course, the living feminism

[she] encountered once on these shores [America] was anything but a lucid, tranquil,

meditative affair'.[11]

Ahmed's confrontation with American feminism forms one of her early shocks, and

leads her to highlight the racist and Islamophobic attitudes of American feminist scholars

towards Arab and Muslim women. This is exemplified in Ahmed's narration of her

participation in Muslim women's sessions as part of a women's studies conference. She notes

that such sessions, which 'were overwhelmingly attended by white women', were

characterised by 'hostility and sheer ignorance' towards Muslim panellists, including herself:

> The implication was that, in trying to examine and rethink our traditions, rather than
> dismissing them out of hand, we were implicitly defending whatever our audience
> considered to be indefensible. And the further implication and presumption was that,
> whereas they - white women, Christian women, Jewish women - could rethink their
> heritage and religions and traditions, we had to abandon our because they were just
> intrinsically, essentially, and irredeemably misogynist and patriarchal in a way that theirs
> (apparently) were not. In contrast to their situation, our salvation entailed not arguing

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[9] Ibid., P. 146.
[10] Leila Ahmed, *A Border Passage: From Cairo to America- A Woman's Journey* (New York: Penguin Books, 1999), p. 291.
[11] Ibid., p. 291.

with and working to change our traditions, but giving up our cultures, religions, and traditions and adopting theirs.[12]

In the above extract, Ahmed observes how those who, in the context of feminism, belong to the different labels of Whiteness, Christianity and Judaism, can communicate their differences in a Third Space, where each can rethink and negotiate their identities with no superior-inferior binaries. However, this space is not inclusive of Arab and Muslim women. Mary Waters demonstrates that white ethnics are granted a complexity of identities, and acquire a considerable degree of choice when highlighting specific aspects. By contrast, she notes that members of other racial and ethnic groups tend to lack such a degree of choice, as they are required to be transparent. This is more frequently observed in members of certain racial and ethnic groups, whose physical complexions, and further details of their ethnicity (i.e. accents or surnames), serve as 'markers' determining their position within society.[13]

Following her encounter with live American feminism, Ahmed observes that Arab American Muslim women experience a lack of choice, along with a total dismissal of their intersectional identity, particularly when attempting to root the three visible pillars of their identity: firstly, their race as Arabs; secondly, their gender as women; and thirdly, their religion as Muslims. This is particularly relevant in a society that preconceives such aspects as alien, foreign and in urgent need of saving. Ahmed writes:

> We could not pursue the investigation of our heritage, traditions, and religion in the way that white women were investigating and rethinking theirs. Whatever aspect of our history or religion each of us had been trying to reflect on, at the end of our presentations, we would be besieged with furious questions and declarations openly dismissive of Islam. People quite commonly did not even seem to know that there was some connection between the patriarchal version to be found in Islam and that in Judaism and Christianity. Regularly we would be asked belligerently, "well, what about the veil" or "what about clitoridectomy?" when none of us had mentioned either subject, for the simple reason that it was completely irrelevant to the topic of our papers.[14]

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[12] Ibid., p. 292.

[13] Mary C Waters, *Ethnic Choice: Choosing Identities in America* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1990), p. 52.

[14] Ahmed, p. 292.

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Such a dilemma is also acknowledged by Chandra Mohanty, as she criticises Western feminism for oversimplifying and reducing third world women into a collective and single category, viewing them through the lens of victimisation, violence and oppression. Mohanty writes:

> Universal images of "'the third-world woman'" (the veiled woman, chaste virgin, etc.), images constructed from adding the "'third-world difference'" to "'sexual difference'", are predicated on (and hence obviously bring into sharper focus) assumptions about western women as secular, liberated and having control over their own lives. This is not to suggest that western women are secular and liberated and have control over their own lives. I am referring to a discursive self-presentation, not necessarily to material reality.[15]

Ahmed's encounter with the realities of American feminism reveals issues with Bhabha's notion of Third Space, in which the intersectional nature of race and gender in the case of Arab American women serves as a barrier to achieving the coherent and harmonious forms of encounter portrayed in Bhabha's definition. The difficulty with Bhabha's definition of Third Space, which makes it inadequate to the task of providing for the experience of Arab American woman immigrants, as narrated in Ahmed's text, is what Ania Loomba describes as Bhabha trying to jump from 'a particular act of enunciation to a theory of all utterances',[16] having extracted one example from a colonial setting to account for all forms of colonial encounters. His theory is limited when examining cases such as that outlined in Ahmed's text, which reveals a world where Manichean dichotomies between black and white, oppressed and oppressor and superior and inferior remain active within the spaces of encounter.

It is only through her position, as a result of her act of immigration, at the borderline between the two worlds, that Ahmed is able to culturally translate the two worlds to each other and highlight the intersectionality of her identity. In writing her memoir in such a critical period of the 1990s, Ahmed's text serves as an act of resistance and a counter-

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[15] Mohanty, pp. 81-82.
[16] Ania Loomba, 'Overworlding the 'Third World', *Neocolonialism*, 13. 1/2 (1991) < https://www.jstor.org/stable/43973715> [accessed 7 March 2023], pp.164-191 (p.173).

hegemonic critique to the Orientalist representations of Arabs dominating the political and social discourses in the US during the pre-9/11 period of the 1990s, and which provided the ground for the marginalisation of the Arab race. The text is also a form of resistance to the patriarchal principles of Arab societies that render Arab women subaltern position within their communities.

Furthermore, the text is also an act of resistance to the notions of Arabness constructed by both the Western Orientalist hegemonic representations of Arabs, and the Arab socialist and nationalist movements, i.e. Arab Nationalism and Ba'athism.[17] Many of their differences are ideological (the former is anti-Arabism/Muslimness, and the latter is anti-Westernism), but share an attitude that disregards the diversity of peoples, cultures and the identities of subjects tracing their origin to the Arab world, or (in the case of the former) the Middle East. Both notions were active in the 1990s, at the onset of the second Gulf War between Iraq (led by the Iraqi President and the leading member of the Ba'ath Party, in the form of Saddam Hussein), and the US and its allies. The necessity of engaging with acts of resistance narratively is another area in which it becomes apparent that Bhabha's harmonic representation of Third Space does not account for the struggles faced by Arab women immigrants when negotiating their hybridity. Bhabha's immersive focus on hybridity in a colonial setting renders his theorisation of Third Space unequal to addressing the issues that oscillate around the specific nationalist complexities presented in Ahmed's text.

It is important to mention here that Bhabha's theorisation of hybridity acknowledges the shapeshifting nature of minority identity. This concerns how a colonial subject can effectively resist and decolonise the dominant discourses of colonialism and imperialism that render them the other. Bhabha introduces his notion of mimicry to refer to the use of the

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[17] Arab Nationalism and Ba'athism are nationalist and socialist movements and ideologies that sprang up in Egypt, Iraq, Syria and Libya during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. Both movements called for Arab unity against Western influence in the Arab world.

ambivalence of being 'almost the same but not quite' by the colonial subject as a way to disrupt the social control of the coloniser and mock the coloniser's logic.[18] Bhabha writes: 'colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around ambivalence'.[19]

However, Bhabha's theorisation of different forms of resistance to the colonial logic are limited when applied to those featured in Ahmed's text. Bhabha's theorisation of forms of resistance against colonial ideologies functions mainly in the colonial setting, making it difficult to exploit it within the various spaces of encounter portrayed in Ahmed's text. Additionally, although Bhabha recognises the position of the colonial subject as the 'other', his masculinist conception of forms of resistance ignores the existence of the othered 'other' who inhabits the margin of the interaction between the two powers, i.e., third world women. His conception offers no practical framework for enacting strategies of resistance and forging connections between the more marginalised individuals within the marginalized groups. In this regard, Spivak criticises the exiling of such groups, including 'subsistence farmers, unorganized peasant labour, tribes and communities of zero workers on the street or in the countryside',[20] with a particular focus on those 'disenfranchised woman' who are 'most consistently exiled from episteme'.[21] Ahmed's text not only aims to menace a disrupted image of the colonial and orientalist discourses, as described in Bhabha's notion of mimicry, but also seeks to unpack and criticise the power structure within which Arab women immigrant characters are located, and which push them to the margins of the margin; i.e., the orientalist and Arab fundamentalist structures.

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[18] Bhabha, P. 86.
[19] Ibid., p. 122.
[20] Spivak, p.288.
[21] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Poststructuralism, Marginality, Postcoloniality and Value", in *Literary Theory Today, ed.* P. Collier & H. Greyer- Ryan (New York: Polity press, 1990), pp. 219–244, pp. 102-103.

In responding to these ideologies and conceptions, Ahmed uses her memoir to locate her story within contemporary history. In addition, she not only attempts to undermine Orientalist conceptions, but also to foster new knowledge concerning the influence of certain cultural, social and historical variables on individual identity and agency. In her recollection of her past, Ahmed aims to both deconstruct and reconstruct meanings relating to her race, culture, religion and gender, as well as connect these to her life in the US. Ahmed dedicates a significant portion of her text to retelling the history of Egypt from the pre-British colonialisation of Egypt to modern times, encompassing various ideological, political and cultural changes specifically to shed light on their impact on the identity construction of the post-colonial and fundamentalist Arabised female subjects. It also assists in referring to the inadequate representation of Arab women in the history of both colonial and Arab fundamentalist discourses.

This act of resistance, through locating the hybridity of her experience in contemporary history, comes to oppose Bhabha's call for a sense of identity that is ahistorical and presentist. As discussed earlier in chapter Two, Bhabha undermines the role of history, past and remembering in constructing hybridity and linking it to the nation's narrative. Bhabha asserts that 'it is this forgetting–the signification of a minus in the origin– that constitutes the *beginning* of the nation's narrative. it is the syntactical and rhetorical arrangement of this argument that is more illuminating than any frankly historical or ideological reading'.[22] Further, Bhabha claims that hybridity can disrupt historical narratives, as it brings into existence 'a space of translation: a place of hybridity, […] where the construction of […] [an] object that is new, *neither the one nor the other*, […]'.[23] By contrast, Ahmed's narrative reveals that the real life experience of intentional hybridity always takes

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[22] Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, p. 230.
[23] Ibid., P. 37.

place in relation to the past. As such, I use the term 'ahistorical' throughout the chapter to refer to aspects of Bhabha's theory of Third Spacy and hybridity that neglects the role of the past, history and remembering in constructing hybridity.

As noted earlier, this chapter aims to examine how Ahmed's text serves as a form of resistance in light of the notion of cultural translation. In addition, it considers what this reveals about Bhabha's Third Space, as disassociated from the material realties of the political and social complexities associated with the figure of the Arab immigrant woman. While Bhabha's theory stresses the necessity of the Third Space to allow for an equal encounter between the first and second spaces, it does not address the complexity of Arab women's existence in their first spaces, which thus influences (implicitly or explicitly) their encounter in the Third Space. Ahmed's text provides a closer look at the first space of her origin and to the hurdles facing Arab women, through both the Arab social and political structure and the consequences of Western colonialism. The text assists in criticising how Bhabha's theory overlooks the importance of the first space prior to the encounter, and which adds further complexities to the experience of Arab immigrant women in the US.

Ahmed's first space is explored in this chapter through the three dominant themes present in her narrative: firstly, the colonialist gaze of the British colonial presence in Egypt; secondly, the construction of the Arab national identity; and thirdly, the gender roles experienced in both worlds. The attempt to read Ahmed's intentional hybridity in her text, through the lens of cultural translation, reveals how her employment of certain plot devices, stylistic features and discursive strategies reflect and translate the complexity of the immigrant figure in relation to their race, gender, nationality and class, particularly during the pre-9/11 period, in contrast to Bhabha's representations of Third Space.

As explored in the previous chapter, the pre-9/11 narrative of Abu-Jaber uses the notions of memory and place to negotiate the organic hybridity of her characters against the

ambiguous racial position of the Arab race within the American social fabric of the 1990s. On the other hand, the pre-9/11 narratives such as Ahmed's immigration text, while also negotiating their hybridity amidst the racial ambiguity of being Arabs in America, are obliged to deal with more effective literary tools to depict the complexity of their intentional hybridity, which is mostly concrete in the social conditions of their Arab societies. Accordingly, the reading of Ahmed's text provides a nuanced understanding of how Bhabha's theory of Third Space overlooks the intersectionality of Arab women immigrants' intentional hybrids when negotiating their hybridity in their in-between space.

The chief limitation of Bhabha's Third Space highlighted by Ahmed's text is its inability to provide a holistic understanding of identity formation. Bhabha's concept suggests identities are formed by assembling and negotiating conflicting cultural, social, and/or political forces and should be negotiated at 'the borderlines of the "present"',[24] 'the moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity'.[25] However, Ahmed's book is also more focused on the impact and the ongoing role of history and the various political, cultural and socioeconomic factors contributing to her hybridity construction in cross-cultural encounters, a feature not explicitly addressed by Bhabha. As such, Bhabha's Third Space does not encompass the full spectrum of how identities are constructed in Ahmed's work. One of the storytelling features dominating Ahmed's memoir, and which reflects such a limitation, concerns the various familial, political, cultural, ideological and religious border-crossing experiences as highlighted in her narrative, and through which her multi-faceted identity is formed. This is manifested in various levels of the text, including the title (*A Border Passage: From Cairo to America*) and the chapter headings (i.e. "From Colonial to Postcolonial", "On Becoming an Arab" and

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[24] Ibid., p. 7.
[25] Ibid., pp.1-2

"From Abu Dhabi to America"), which exhibit a sense of constant movement, either physically or abstractly. The negotiation of her intentional hybridity among these border-crossing experiences in the text also assists in breaking down the complexity and multiple identifications associated with the immigrant experience of Arab women in opposition to Bhabha's single representation of active subjects in his conceptualised Third Space.

At the narration level, the limitations of Bhabha's Third Space are also reflected as Ahmed's text depicts her experience of border crossings, commencing in her homeland of Egypt while she was still a child, living amidst the co-constructed oppositions of Englishness and Arabness, Arabness and Egyptian-ness, British-colonised Egypt and Arabised Egypt, East and the West and *harem* and men. Such a narrative strategy not only allows Ahmed to narrate her coming of age while uncovering the various complex aspects of her story, but to also translate and locate the position of Arab women among the dominant discourses of Western Orientalism and Arab fundamentalist and patriarchal attitudes also clearly.

The complexity of the experiences and identities of Arab American women immigrants, and the necessity of acknowledging the importance of how the past influences the present are both glossed over in Bhabha's Third Space, but manifested in Ahmed's text through her demonstration of the multiple oppositions that shape her identity in the first space. One of the main oppositions highlighted in Ahmed's narrative (and between which she moves), is her Egyptian-ness and her 'colonized consciousness' imposed by the British colonial force.[26] Ahmed observes how colonialism has shaped her sense of otherness within the borders of her homelands, i.e. the condition Paul Ilie terms nonterritorial exile, or the 'condition of otherness'.[27] For Ilie, territorial exile takes place when individuals physically depart their native lands, while nonterritorial exile is experienced by those who remain, but

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[26] Ahmed, p. 25.
[27] Paul Ilie, *Literature and Inner Exile: Authoritarian Spain* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins UP, 1988), p. 11.

fail to conform with the majority of their compatriots. Ahmed opens her memoir with a

portrayal of how 'colonialist perspectives and racism were inscribed in [her] own childhood

and the very roots of [her] consciousness',[28] contributing to her sense of alienation, which she

also experienced within the borders of her home. She writes:

> I grew up in the last days of the British Empire. My childhood fell in that era when the words "imperialism" and "the West" had not yet acquired the connotations they have today - they had not yet become, that is, mere synonyms for "racism," "oppression," and "exploitation". Or, at any rate they had not yet become so among the intellectual, professional, and growing classes of Egypt.[29]

> There seemed to be no contradiction for them between pursuing independence from the European powers and deeply admiring European institutions, particularly democracy, and Europe's tremendous scientific breakthroughs.[30]

   Nevertheless, Ahmed's position as a Muslim Arab woman living in British-colonised

Egypt offers multiple experiences of border-crossing. This can be seen as another area in

which Bhabha's Third Space fails to acknowledge how restrictive laws and certain

oppressive forces perpetuate inequalities and identity-based prejudice. This power imbalance

is not directly addressed in Bhabha's Third Space, which leaves it lacking in this context.

Although Bhabha does not directly gloss over the power differences, his introduction of the

notion of hybridity and ambivalence is derived from his assumption of the unity of the

colonial subject, both the coloniser and the colonised. Such an assumption is not a

demonstration; it not only ignores the profound Manichean conflict and struggle between the

colonised and the coloniser, but also the power imbalance as it affects the more marginalised

of the marginalised groups within this power structure. Ahmed uses the narrative strategy of

conceptualising the multiple aspects of her identity through border-crossing experiences to

translate the forms of racism and discrimination she encounters within the colonial structure.

Further interconnected oppositions are created when Ahmed confronts racism and

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[28] Ahmed, p. 25.
[29] Ibid., p. 5.
[30] Ibid., p. 6.

discrimination based on religion and nationality in the English School. This is exemplified by her teacher Mr. Price, who expresses to Leila's schoolmate Jean how 'sorry he was to see [Leila] ahead of [Jean] in anything; after all, he said, [Jean] was a Christian and [Leila] only a Muslim'.[31] Ahmed continues to employ the views of Mr. Price as enforcing her sense of discrimination, with his racist attitudes encompassing both her religion and her nationality when he discourages her from studying the sciences, 'because [she] was Egyptian'.[32]

Ahmed's utilises the school context to unpack further opposition placed on the inferior side of such binaries. Ahmed narrates how her teacher, Miss Minty, discourages her after learning that Ahmed aspires to be an astronomer, solely because she is a girl and 'science was what boys did and that if [she] did it [,] it would make [her] boyish'.[33] Ahmed realises that her gender (not only as a woman, but as an Arab Muslim woman) complicates her negotiation of her hybrid identity amidst the multiple interconnected dualities through which she feels she 'occupy[ies] some marginal space, that [she] didn't belong quite at the centre'.[34]

This engagement with her earlier colonial perspective, along with the consequences of colonialism, reveals the complexity of her identity construction against the praxis of colonialism, racism and sexism. Thus, her negotiation of her intentional hybridity against such a complexity appears necessary to allow her to historicise the Western discourse eclipsing the immigration experience of Arab American women. Thus, Bhabha's theory overlooks the impact of colonial presence in Ahmed's text, failing to address the unequal power dynamics that arise in her work as a consequence of colonialism. While Bhabha's concept provides a notion of identity formation by assembling conflicting cultural and social

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[31] Ibid., p. 145.
[32] Ibid., p. 145.
[33] Ibid., p. 145.
[34] Ibid., p. 57.

forces, it fails to address the oppressive structures imposed on marginalized individuals in the context of colonialism. Ahmed's book also reveals the complicated legacy of colonialism, and its implications for borders, religion, gender, and identity. Bhabha's Third Space is limited in this sense, as it does not provide a holistic understanding of the impact that colonial power has had on identity formation and resistance.

This complexity clearly impacts Arab American women in the Third Space, but is glossed over in Bhabha's definition, particularly as his theory fails to account for the intersectional experience of Arab women prior to immigrating, along with the impact of this complex package on the construction of their intentional hybridity in the Third Space. This is revealed in Ahmed's text as it addresses a further element contributing to the complexity of her identity, i.e. the construction of Arab national identity. Due to the political situation having changed in the Arab world in general, and Egypt in particular (following the British loss of colonial power over the Suez Canal in 1956), Ahmed uses her narrative to manifest how her consciousness shifts in accordance with her country, from colonialism to postcolonialism. Thus, Ahmed's identity, like that of postcolonial Egypt, goes through several phases of identifying itself to the world. Such shifting back and forth between identifying with the notion of Arabness, or an Egyptian nationality, have had major implications for the construction of the hegemonic representations of Arabs and Muslims as one entity. Ahmed writes:

> Eventually, I began to see the constructed nature of our Arab identity as it was formed and re-formed to serve the political interests of the day. For example, during the years of my adolescence and early adulthood, Egypt underwent several changes in name, reflecting the shifting definition of our identity. Under Nasser, when the idea that we were Arab was incessantly hammered home in the media, the word "Egypt" was removed altogether from the country's name – and we became the United Arab Republic as we united, briefly, with Syria. […] Eventually, in a sign of shifting political winds, Sadat brought back the word "Egypt" and we became the Arab Republic of Egypt. Of course, the issue of identity, a profoundly ambiguous matter for Egypt, was inescapably and deeply political. Sadat, who published his autobiography during his presidency, actually called his book *In Search of Identity*.[35]

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[35] Ibid., p. 10.

It is during the regime of President Abdel-Nasser that Ahmed experiences confusion concerning the shift in the general atmosphere of the country, which immediately adopts socialist and anti-imperialist attitudes 'and also […] something new to Egypt at the time, Arab nationalism'.[36] While Ahmed is observed by her British teachers at school as being *too Arab* to be treated equally under British colonialism, she is simultaneously viewed as *not Arab enough* to fit within postcolonial Egypt. Ahmed writes:

> When Arab nationalism and socialism were the going dogmas, fluency in European languages and Western education became discredited, things that one tried to hide, markers of belonging to the wrong class… In those days…it became quite acceptable to discriminate against, and be openly hostile towards, people who betrayed (by their fluency in a European language, say) that they belonged to these classes.[37]

In serving as a mediator between the two worlds, Ahmed's cultural translational stance in questioning aspects of the hegemonic representation of Arabs accords with Hassan's reference to 'a merger of the two classic stances of the native informant and the foreign expert'.[38] Ahmed employs her insider's perspective on both the Arab and Western worlds to disentangle, and reconstruct, new meanings of the preconceptions with which she struggles. Ahmed writes:

> Imagine that it would be like if, say, the British or French were incessantly told, with nobody allowed to contest, question, or protest, that they were now European, and only European. European! European! European! And endless songs about it. But for us it was worse and certainly more complicated. Its equivalent would be if the British or French were being told that they were White! White! White! Because the new definition of who we were unsettled and undercut the old understanding of who we were and silently excluded people who had been included in the old definition of Egyptian.[39]

In the above passage, and also as she sets down the difficulties of the imposed notions of Arab nationalism on her identity in the chapter entitled "On Becoming an Arab", Ahmed's voice shifts from first-person to a second-person narrator, as she invites the reader to

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[36] Ibid., p. 10.
[37] Ibid., p. 152.
[38] Hassan, p. 29.
[39] Ahmed, p. 244.

empathise with her personal experience. This rapport with the reader becomes even more crucial when Ahmed creates an imagined situation (i.e. a mental image similar to her existing one) to invite her readers to critically reconsider the hegemonic representation of Arabs generated by Arab nationalist movements. The epizeuxis of the repeated words 'European' and 'White' not only serves to create the intended impact of rousing the readers, but also to encourage and motivate them to sense the burden evoked by the persistence of such identifications.

Ahmed states that the imposed hegemonic representation of Arabs not only dismisses the diversity of people tracing their origins to the Arab world, but also generates forms of marginalisation and exclusion towards those from other religions, i.e. the Copts and the Jews of Egypt. This hegemonic representation with which Ahmed struggles reveals the gaps in Bhabha's definition. This is particularly evident when he mythologises the ideal of social equality in the Third Space, without any consideration for the intermingling and complexity of identity construction in the first space, and which continues at the point of encounter in the Third Space. Ahmed paints a complex and personal narrative as an Egyptian woman migrating to America, highlighting how the process of identity formation is unique to every individual, as their lived experiences play a significant role in a manner that is different from the other texts examined in this thesis. This highlights the importance of perspective on identity formation, something not captured in Bhabha's conceptualised Third Space.

The problem of hegemonic representation continues to be revealed throughout the text. This not only highlights Bhabha's monolithic representation of the intentional hybrid experiences, but also indicates how the theory fails to acknowledge how the power structure that relates the US and the Arab domains preserves the hegemonic representation of Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners, thereby impacting the process of identity formation and cross-cultural encounters. As Ahmed continues her border-crossing journey across the text,

along with the multiple oppositional aspects of her identity and geographical places, she uses the historical account of Egypt within the context of Arab nationalism as an intratextual reference to support her criticism. In addition, this highlights the impact of the hegemonic representation of Arabs, by both the Arab nationalist and Western Orientalist discourse.

This is manifested in Ahmed's feelings, when moving to UK to pursue her studies, of being entangled with the 'mute, complicated confusions of [her] exilic Arab identity, [her] identity as an Arab in the West'.[40] In addition, once she is in the UK, Ahmed witnesses the impact of the hegemonic Orientalist representations of Arabs wedded to the Nasserist propaganda of Arabness. She asserts that 'racism, […] was far more insistently and inescapably in the air now that it had been just a few years back'.[41]

As the Arab-Israeli War breaks in 1967, Ahmed becomes the target 'of frenetic, ignorant, biased, and outright racist views of Arabs' unleashed in the Western press.[42] Thus, for Ahmed, being an Arab is implicated not only on the collective and political levels, but also the personal and mundane. This is exemplified in her experience of direct racism when she recalls the behaviour of a stranger on a bus in Cambridge, in the UK, who, after asking if she is from Israel, spits on her when he learns she is an Arab. Inhabiting her exilic Arab identity – imposed on her by Nasser's Pan-Arabism, on the one hand, and the Western hegemonic categorisation of people from the Middle East, on the other – Ahmed finds herself between 'two notions of Arab that [she is] trapped in – both false, both heavily weighted and cargoed with another silent freight. Both imputing to me feelings and beliefs that aren't mine'.[43] Such specificities, as revealed through Ahmed's text regarding the complexity of national identity and belonging in the lives of Arab women, is a key limitation of Bhabha's

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[40] Ibid., p. 238.
[41] Ibid., p.238.
[42] Ibid., p.238.
[43] Ibid., p.256.

Third Space. The impact of a notion such as that of Pan-Arabism on identity formation and cross-cultural encounter is absent from Bhabha's theory.

Ahmed's criticism of the constructed notions of Arabness is also contextualised by being employed in a separate location. When she moves to work in the UAE, she recognises that, despite being an Arab among Arabs, the local Emirate Arabs refer to all non-Emirate Arabs as foreigners. This indicates the presence of gap between local Arabs, who are primarily illiterate and uneducated and form a small percentage of the population, and foreign Arabs, including Syrians, Palestinians, Egyptians, and Jordanians. Furthermore, the modernity of a country has been designed and developed by these foreign Arabs.

Such observations of the foreignness between local and non-local Arabs in many aspects (including language, culture and education), lead Ahmed to note that the life-long, celebrated notion of Arabism is a mirage. At this point, Ahmed reflects on the vast diversity of Arabs, particularly with regards to the meaning of mother tongue and mother culture. She realises the vast gap between the local language (which has been derived from the Bedu culture) and standard Arabic and 'the Arabic culture of literacy, so was also the language and culture in which [she] gr[e]w up'.[44] Through her discussion of her life in the UAE, Ahmed is able to conceptualise the multiple versions of Arabness through which she crosses, i.e. the Western notion, the Nasserist's version and the version of Arabness she encounters in the Gulf. Ahmed's unpacking of what the term Arab means in the context of her personal experience as an Egyptian woman immigrant is crucial in the 1990s. It serves as counter-hegemonic response to existing Orientalist discourse, that disregarded the variable meanings of the term, generating racist and discriminatory attitudes towards Arabs, Muslims and Middle Easterners that dominated the 1990s. Brian Edward observes how negativity towards

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[44] Ibid., p. 282.

Arabs and Muslims replaced that towards Soviet Communism at the end of the Cold War in the early 1990s. He writes:

> [With the end of the Cold War,] a new foe quickly took the place of Soviet communism in the imagination of many Americans, much of the same energy that animated American fear of the "red" menace (allegedly the Soviets) shifted during the 1990s to panic in response to the "green" terror (which is the use of terrorism by militant Islamic fundamentalism).[45]

Ahmed's text reveals the complexity of locating her intersectional identity and the variable factors shaping that identity against the backdrop of the complex representational and political clash between the two worlds. As an Egyptian woman immigrant, Ahmed's intersectional identity is undermined and pushed to the margins of interactions between the East and the West, a matter not directly addressed in Bhabha's Third Space. This is manifest in how Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space fails to address the impact of socio-cultural and political specificities on identity and hybridity construction in the Third space encounter. In fact, the lack of such specificities contributes to what Bhabha believes to be the essence of his notions of hybridity and ambivalence, which many of his critics find disturbing.

Another aspect demonstrated in the text, and which points to limitations in Bhabha's Third Space, including the lived experience of Arab women immigrants, is the complexity of gendered identity. Ahmed illustrates how inherited systems of patriarchy have resulted in various forms of exploitation and control over Arab women. Ahmed's use of border-crossing to translate the complexity of her identity moves from criticising the different notions of Arabness adopted by the West and Arab nationalist movements, to her location amidst the patriarchal, and socially constructed, concept of gender roles, along with the sexuality of her Arab society. Ahmed recalls how she crossed the border between childhood to womanhood

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[45] Brian Edward, 'Yankee Pashas and Buried Women: Containing Abundance in 1950s Hollywood Orientalism', *Centre for the Study of Film and History*, 31 (2001), <http://dx.doi.org/http://abc.cardiff.ac.uk/login?url=https://www.proquest.com/scholarly-journals/yankee-pashas-buried-women-containing-abundance/docview/2149114/se-2?accountid=9883>, [accessed 7 January 2022], pp. 13–24 (p. 13).

as she narrates her mother's reaction to when, as an eight year old, Ahmed is sexually

harassed by one of the boys in her neighbourhood. Ahmed criticises what she perceives to be

the 'stupid and unjust […] meaningless beliefs' of her society,[46] embodied in her mother's

reaction to the incident, which consisted of emotional and physical violence towards her

daughter, despite the little girl being the victim. Ahmed portrays how her childhood is

violated by the mother's aggressive rebuke, when she was unable to 'understand what it was

she was asking [her], what it was that she kept wanting to know or had or had not

happened'as, at the age of eight, she did not 'know what she knew or thought she knew about

sex or those parts of one's body'.[47]

Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space offers no practical framework for enacting

strategies of resistance and forging connections amongst marginalized groups. In *A Border

Passage*, Ahmed explores the strategies used by marginalized individuals to challenge

oppressive forces, both Orientalist Arab and Islamic fundamentalist, as they connect with one

another. Bhabha's concept fails to provide a robust understanding of how such strategies are

formed in this context. This is evident in the text from the manner in which Ahmed uses the

notion of the *Harem* to redefine and resist limited and derogatory representations of women

in the Arab world in both Orientalist and Arab and Islamic fundamentalist discourses. In this

crossing of the border to womanhood, Ahmed's narrative also crosses from the chapter titled

Transition to that entitled *Harem*, where she narrates how she is introduced to the new

duality of man as opposed to woman, characterised by the gender boundaries and social

barriers featured by the patriarchal nature of the Arab culture. Ahmed writes:

> Men and women certainly did live essentially separate, almost unconnected, lives. Men
> spent almost all their time with other men, and women with other women. It is entirely
> likely that women and men had completely different views of their society and of the
> system in which they lived and of themselves and of the natures of men and women. Living
> differently and separately, and coming together only momentarily, the two sexes inhabited

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[46] Ibid., p. 80.
[47] Ibid., p. 78.

different, if sometimes overlapping, cultures; a men's and a women's culture, each sex seeing and understanding and representing the world to itself quite differently.[48]

Through the context of the Harem, Ahmed adapts interrelated cultural translational stances to criticise the limited and degrading understanding of women's spaces as adopted by both the Western Orientalist and Arab patriarchal conceptions of women's private spaces in Arab societies. Ahmed's redefinition of the Harem can be seen through what Hassan proposes as the translational stance of 'foreignizing [which means] challenging reader's expectations, undermining stereotypes and idealised self-images, and proposing […] reformed models of cultural identity'.[49]

Ahmed realises that the conception of the Harem falls between the dominant Western Orientalist understanding which, on the one hand, is based on the 'ethos on which women were regarded as inferior creatures, essentially sex objects and breeders, to be bought and disposed of for a man's pleasure' and, on the other, how the men of her society preserve the women in the Harem as inferior.[50] To oppose such conceptualisations, Ahmed redefines the harem zone as a place for 'women's time, women's space, and in women's culture'.[51] This foreignising translational stance challenges the reader's expectation and conceptualisation of both the Orientalist and patriarchal understandings of the harem.

In her attempt to challenge such double-sided understandings, Ahmed's narrative concerning the Harem engages with a discussion on Islam. She proposes that the Harem is a place where women produce their own understandings of Islam and therefore participate in producing other versions of Islam capable of competing with those of men. Thus, Ahmed uses Islam, as a symbol of power used by the men of her society to define women's gender and social position, to elevate her narrative regarding women's role in interpretating Islam,

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[48] Ibid., p. 100.
[49] Hassan, p. 37.
[50] Ahmed, p. 100.
[51] Ibid., p. 120.

This forms 'an essential part of how [women of the Harem] made sense of and understood their own lives'.[52] This engagement with how the women of the Harem interpret Islam (a position primarily occupied by male sheiks, ayatollahs, mullahs, and clerics,) empowers Ahmed's narrative with an assertion of women's 'right to their own understanding of Islam'.[53]

In addition, Ahmed introduces two versions of Islam within the context of the Harem. Firstly, women's 'own understanding of Islam, an understanding that was different from men's Islam, "official Islam"'.[54] Ahmed differentiates between the oral Islam of the Harem that tends to be 'gentle, pacifist, inclusive and somewhat mystical',[55] which women of her society use to make sense of their existence, and a textual Islam that is only accessible to men, who interpretate the Islamic sources and pass beliefs and values to women, and which feeds the patriarchal system of their society. Ahmed redefines women's Islam as a version emphasising the inner signs of religion, in contrast to a men's version that stresses outward performances, such as prayers and fasting. Ahmed writes that in the Harem:

> Being Muslim was about believing in a world in which life was meaningful, and in which all events and happenings were permeated (although not always transparently to us) with meaning. Religion was above all about inner things. The outward signs of religiousness, such as prayer and fasting, might be signs of a true religiousness but equally well might not. They were certainly not what was important about being Muslim. What was important was how you conduct yourself and how you were in yourself and in you attitudes towards others and in your heart.[56]

Ahmed's redefinition of Islam in the space of the harem counters stereotypical images of this women's space in various Western Orientalist and Arab patriarchal discourses. The harem zone is portrayed as empowering for women from differing

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[52] Ibid., p. 121.
[53] Ibid., p. 125.
[54] Ibid., pp. 120-121.
[55] Ibid., p. 121.
[56] Ibid., p. 121.

classes and backgrounds (including maids), allowing them to communicate equally and sustain their lives and ideas away from the dominating other.

Later in the text, Ahmed's uses her redefinition as an intratextual reference when dismantling the Western Orientalist conception of the Harem. She attempts to draw similarities between the harem of her society and what she calls the 'Harem perfected' in the segregated all-women college at Girton she experiences when an undergraduate at Cambridge University in the UK.[57] It was, she writes:

> A deeply familiar world to me. In some ways, indeed, Girton represented the harem perfected. Not the harem of Western male sexual fantasy, or even the harem of Muslim men, fantasy or reality, but the harem as I had lived it, the harem of older women presiding over the young. Even the servers here… were women, and from those grounds… the absence of male authority was permanent.[58]

Ahmed's unique position as a cultural translator between the two worlds allows her to deconstruct, and reconstruct, new meanings of preconceptions, including that of the Harem. She draws attention to the similar atmosphere between the two places, with women engaged in reinterpreting works dominated by men. In the Harem in Cairo, this is the reinterpretation of Islam, while in Girton it is the academic world. In highlighting the structural similarities between the two, Ahmed places the stereotype of the Harem within the Western context, in an attempt to undermine and demolish its exoticness.

In her comparison between these Islamic and Western institutions, Ahmed observes that, despite their similarities, there is a hierarchy in the importance of works produced by the 'two harem communities, [the] Turco-Egyptian one and [the] British one'.[59] She notes how the work produced by the women of Girton is regarded as 'honourable, serious, important' in their analysis and discussion of primarily 'fictional people, people in books and novels and plays, whose words and actions and motives

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[57] Ibid., p. 179.
[58] Ibid., p. 183.
[59] Ibid., p. 183.

and moral characters [...are] analysed endlessly'.[60] On the other hand, although the women of the Harem also discuss and analyse 'meanings, motives, characters, consequences, responsibilities [...] and reflect[ions] on where the moral heart of an issue lay and what it might all mean',[61] through stories of real people and real words, their work is considered idle gossip by men of the official Arabic culture, along with Western men and women.

Ahmed maintains that this view of Arab women's activity as 'empty and even sometimes evil, malicious talk' is derived from the tradition marking the superiority of written texts over oral texts.[62] Ahmed criticises the women of Girton for adopting the male approach to written text, and looking down on oral interpretation, which itself was a 'traditional manner that women in their culture, too, once did–orally and to sustain life'.[63] In addition, she points out how their adoption of such an understanding constructs their view towards the Harem talk of women from the Third World as worthless and mindless.

The reading of Ahmed's memoir through the lens of cultural translation, focusing mainly on the multiple border-crossing experiences offered by her text, highlights her negotiation and interrogation of the multiple aspects of her identity as an Egyptian woman immigrant, who, upon becoming a US citizen, has a right to difference. Reading Ahmed's text against the backdrop of the social and political situation of Arabs in the US during the period prior to 9/11 sheds light on the main argument of this current thesis. Reading the narratives of Arab American women writers thus highlights the gaps between race, culture, gender and immigration status in

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[60] Ibid., p. 191.
[61] Ibid., p. 191.
[62] Ibid., p. 192.
[63] Ibid., p. 192.

Bhabha's theory of Third Space. Moreover, Ahmed's historization of her experience in the context of her immigration to the US, not only opposes Bhabha's claim that hybridity is ahistorical negotiation of difference, but also fosters knowledge relating to the complexity of identity construction for Arab women in their places of origin.

Ahmed's text reveals the complexity of her personal experience as an Arab Egyptian woman in the US, as one that differs from the experiences of the other characters examined in this thesis. Her text draws attention to the diversity of the cross-cultural experiences of Arab American women relative to their immigration status, individual perspective and the complex political and cultural situation surrounding the part of the world they come from, a matter not directly addressed in Bhabha's Third Space. The acts of resistance in Ahmed's text serve to point out how Bhabha's Third Space does not provide a practical framework for enacting strategies of resistance against the misconceptions and representation that burden their everyday lives.

The following section of this chapter examines the post-9/11 text of Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*, in order to examine a different image of immigration and trace the impact of the eventful year of 2001 in the writer's representation of the character's intersectional identity. In doing so, this study will indicate how the incidents of 9/11 further highlight the gaps in Bhabha's definition of Third Space in the case of immigrant Arab Muslim women.

Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*

In a timeline placed on her website, Randa Jarrar writes that she started writing *A Map of Home*, in 2000, i.e. one year before the incidents of 9/11. In 2001, Jarrar wrote that, due to the new and intensified levels of hatred and hostility toward the Arab community in the US immediately following the terrorist attack on the World Trade Center, 'no one will

read a novel about an Arab-American Muslim girl'.[64] However, Jarrar subsequently decided to continue writing her novel, regardless of its reception, and it was eventually published in 2008. In acknowledging her commitment to writing, it is evident that Jarrar is among the many Arab American writers who have adapted the new 9/11 literary tendency of 'write or be written imperative: Define yourself or others will define you'.[65]

While Ahmed wrote her text against the backdrop of the Orientalist stereotypes flourishing in the 1990s, which represented Arab men as 'bearded Mullahs, billionaire sheiks, […] black Bedouins, and noisy bargainers' and women as either 'bumbling subservients, or as belly dancers',[66] Jarrar's novel was written in the period when such representations were wedded to the neo-Orientalist representations of Muslims and Arabs of the post-9/11 period. Represented as both violent and as terrorists (in the case of men) and 'meek, powerless, oppressed, or […] sympathetic to terrorism' (in the case of women),[67] the cultural dualism between Islam and the West has been further intensified in the aftermath of 9/11. Such representations reflect how the perception of Arabs and Muslims has evolved from a mere representation of backwardness and inferiority to, as noted by Maha El Said, 'bear[ing] the face of the enemy'.[68]

Like the work of Ahmed, Jarrar's novel encompasses a negotiation of the character's intentional hybridity through the historization of her past experience in the Arab world. This emerges in the text as a significant component of Nidali's narrative as she narrates her past experiences before migrating to America, shedding light on the various socio-cultural and

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[64] 'About', *Randa Jarrar* <https://randajarrar.com/about/> [accessed 11 December 2020].
[65] Ibid., Majaj, 'New Direction', p. 125.
[66] Jack G. Shaheen, 'Hollywood's Muslim Arabs', *The Muslim World*, 90.1-2 (2000), <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1478-1913.2000.tb03680.x> [accessed 19 October 2020], pp. 22-42 (p. 23).
[67] Sahar F. Aziz, 'The Muslim 'Veil' Post-9/11: Rethinking Women's Rights and Leadership', *Institute for Social Policy and Understanding, Policy Brief*, 2012, <https://doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2184973>. [accessed 6 December 2020], pp. 1-44 (p.1).
[68] Maha El Said, 'The Face of The Enemy: Arab-American Writing Post 9/11', *Studies in The Humanities*, 2003, <https://library.udel.edu/databases/expanded/> [accessed 1 May 2021], pp. 1-22 (p. 2).

political factors that informed the construction of her identity. This includes negotiating her gendered and national identity while living as a diasporic Palestinian in Kuwait, and when fleeing Kuwait during the Second Gulf War. This also comes to oppose Bhabha's theorisation of the notion of hybridity in the Third Space as being ahistorical. He overlooks the importance of the affiliation with the cultural roots and historical genealogy in the construction of hybridity, viewing Third Space as a space of liberation 'being in the beyond' where subjects are freed from their prior cultural roots.[69]

What distinguishes Jarrar's text from that of Ahmed's is that Jarrar's textual negotiation of her character's intentional hybridity, undertaken through the historization of her past, is placed against the background of the neo-orientalist discourse dominating the US public atmosphere in the aftermath of 9/11. Jarrar's text also differs from that of Ahmed in the use of specific literary devices, including Nidali's tricksy humour and the intertextual references within the writing. This translates the complexity of the figure of the Arab American woman post 9/11, therefore revealing how Bhabha's theorisation of the Third Space fails to acknowledge its development and shifting meanings in response to political and social upheavals.

Jarrar's novel presents the experience of an Arab Muslim woman fleeing to the US following the second Gulf War of 1991. The immigration of her protagonist, Nidali, to the US during the 1990s is portrayed within the discourse of the neo-Orientalist perceptions towards those able to trace their origin to the Middle East. This is exemplified in the scene when Nidali and her family arrive. Nidali says:

> The passport officer greeted me with a "welcome back," even though I didn't have any recollection of my brief stint as a newborn resident of America. He then went over Mama and Gamal's [her younger brother] passports very briefly, asking them a few questions, none of which included "Do you currently possess a weapon of mass destruction?" or "Are you a collaborator with the enemy?" and we were promptly sent off without a full cavity examination.[70]

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[69] Ibid., Bhabha, P. 10.

[70] Randa Jarrar, *A Map of Home* (New York: Penguin Books, 2008), p. 214.

Although the exodus of Nidali's family (along with many Palestinians) from Kuwait, took place after the end of the Gulf war in 1991,[71] the questions Nidali anticipates from the immigration officer refer to the existing discourse relating to 2001, when phrases such as 'weapon of mass destruction', 'collaborator with the enemy', and 'full cavity examination' were associated with the racial profiling of Arabs in airport security procedures after the attacks on the World Trade Center and the American invasion of Afghanistan and Iraq. Jarrar's hyperbolic tone echoes 'the darkly humorous phrase "Flying while Arab" summarise[ing] the waves of mainstream suspicion and hostility that confronted Arab American communities in the wake of the 9/11 attacks'.[72] Such a discourse that circulated American media and public reveals how Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space abstracts the encounter between two opposing powers, without any consideration for the developing social stigmatisation discourse relating to cases such as that of Arab and Muslims in the aftermath of 9/11.

Nidali's narrative reflects a similar hesitation in facing such an encounter, in consideration of the tainted position of Arabs in the US. She acknowledges and articulates the level of anxiety of cultural transition and participation in the US social landscape as an immigrant. As with any experience of immigration, Nidali's consciousness is occupied by issues of language and appearance, including the need to maintain existing sartorial and intellectual expectations. Nidali is more concerned with the sense of strangeness she anticipates receiving from people learning that she is half and half. She writes:

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[71] Sadam Hussain's invasion of Kuwait in 1990 was widely supported by Palestinians and the Palestinian Liberation Organization, which led to the Kuwaiti government expelling thousands of Palestinians from Kuwait after it was restored. The Palestinian exodus from Kuwait is considered to be 'one of the worst setbacks for the Palestinians in modern times', as it generated a large wave of refugees fleeing the country. Referenced from Philip Mattar, 'The PLO And the Gulf Crisis', *Middle East Journal*, 48.1 (1994) <https://www.jstor.org> [accessed 27 January 2021], pp. 31-46(p. 33).
[72] Akram Fouad Khater, '"Flying While Arab": The Experiences of Arab Americans in The Wake of 9/11', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 31.4 (2012) <https://doi.org/10.5406/jamerethnhist.31.4.0074> [accessed 25 November 2020], pp. 75-79 (p. 75).

When our white neighbours came to visit, I told their daughters, who were ten and eleven, that I was half-Egyptian, half Palestinian. "We are half-German, half Irish," they said, not batting an eye. It turned out everyone here was half one thing, half another. […] I was unsure of myself, of my appearance, of my accent, of my intelligence. I was unsure if I could really, fluidly, transition again, and I was scared. At least when I went to school in Egypt there was a uniform and I couldn't wear the wrong thing. And I could speak the language with the right accent, albeit an imperfect one. But here all that was gone and I felt as though I was expected to know what to expect. And that seemed really unfair.[73]

However, Nidali's narrative portrays how her immigration experience in the US differs from that of other immigrants, as she confronts negative racial and gendered preconceptions determined by the neo-Orientalist tendency which perpetuates pre-9/11 Orientalist attitudes that categorises all Arabs and Muslims as 'a homogenous "Other"'.[74] Nidali's narrative reflects how her immigration experience differs from that of the other immigrants she encounters in the US as her experience is framed with negative racial and gendered preconceptions. The level of othering suffered by Arab women immigrants in the aftermath of 9/11 is reflected in the structural elements of the text. Thus, in the third and final section of the novel (where the narrative is based in the US after she flees Kuwait), Nidali's narration shifts back and forth between different forms of dialogue and multiple points of view. This section is narrated in the forms of letters, along with diary entries and compositions, in which Nidali's voice shifts interchangeably from using the pronoun 'I' when referring to her own story, to those of 'you' and 'she'. Nidali writes: 'I felt splintered, like the end of a snapped-off tree branch. I had even taken to talking to myself, keeping me company, narrating my own movements. In this way, *me* became *her*, *I* became *Nidali*, *you*, *she*'.[75]

Chapter Fourteen (entitled "You are a fourteen-year-old Arab chick who just moved to Texas") marks the change in her narrative point of view, with various effects arising from

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[73] Jarrar, pp. 218-219.
[74] Eiman A. Eissa, Hala A. Guta and Rana S. Hassan, 'Representations of Arab Women in Hollywood Pre- and Post- 9/11', *Journal of International Women's Studies*, 24.5 (2022) <https://vc.bridgew.edu/jiws/vol24/iss5/21> [accessed 30 September 2022], pp. 1-20 (p. 3).
[75] Jarrar, p. 231.

the use of the second and third voice as Nidali narrates her story of encountering and assimilating in America. These shifts act to create an intimacy between the narrator and the reader, who both becomes part of the narrative and is awarded an aerial view of Nidali's story. Furthermore, this serves to distance the narrator from the text, while drawing the reader closer to the narrative. In doing so, Jarrar provides a space in which readers can freely observe Nidali's life. More importantly, they can experience how she reworks the intersectional aspects of her identity, as she encounters the host society and assimilates into the US as a refugee. This complexity portrayed through the use of such a narrative strategy sheds light on the overlooked position of the figure of the Arab immigrant woman in relation to Bhabha's Third Space.

This inter-subjectivity generated between the reader and the narrator/protagonist suggests an exchange of roles. Darlene Hantzis argues that such inter-subjectivity 'generate[s] an alternating pattern of identification and displacement',[76] which creates distance from the first and third-person narration. Such accessibility to the subjects builds the reader's constant and concurrent sense of engagement and expulsion from the text. Hantzis states that 'the reader of a second person text continually places her/himself in, and displaces her/himself from, the "you" while simultaneously placing and displacing others in, and from, the "you"'.[77]

More importantly, the shift to second and third-person point of view during the narration of Nidali's story transfers the focus from the act of narration to the produced meanings. This can be observed through those aspects Erving Goffman terms 'Footing', i.e. 'the alignment we take up to ourselves and the others present as expressed in the way we

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[76] Darlene Marie Hantzis, '"You Are About to Begin Reading": The Nature and Function of Second Person Point of View in Narrative' (unpublished PhD, Louisiana State University, 1988), LSU Historical Dissertations and Theses. 4572. <https://digitalcommons.Isu.edu/gradschool_disstheses/4572> [accessed 10 May 2020], P. iv.
[77] Ibid., p. 69.

manage the production or reception of an utterance'.[78] Therefore, as Nidali positions herself

as apart from the narrator, she creates different alignments to, and boundaries between, her

individual identity and its constructed version. In doing so, Nidali distances her hybrid

identity from the monolithic version assigned to her by stereotypical and hegemonic

representations, which are rooted partially in the long-standing Orientalist tradition, and

partially in the Islamophobic climate of the post-9/11. Such a narrative strategy and its

implications reflect the complexity of cross-cultural encounters of the Arab woman

immigrant figure in the US. This is a complexity that is glossed over in Bhabha's definition

of Third Space, which focuses on the negotiation of conflicting cultural, social and political

forces but pays limited attention to the subjects who inhabit the margin of such clashes.

This impact of the second and third-person point of view is also evident when it

comes to how such a linguistic strategy assists in conveying the dismissive and derogatory

view of Nidali as merely an 'Arab chick'. Furthermore, this can be seen in relation to the neo-

Orientalist race-based and gendered stereotype that places Arab or Muslim women as either

demonised subjects covered from head to toe, or eroticized sexual objects.[79] The narrative

also employs the second and third point of view to highlight racial-based serotypes of Arabs

as barbaric and uncivilised. This is seen when Nidali interacts with one of her schoolmates,

while using the pronoun 'you' to refer to herself: '"Hey, I read about you in the newspaper,"

he says, and you blush. "Did you used to live in a tent and stuff?" You lose your breath, then

say, "No actually, a glass pyramid." "No kidding? Right on…" and he walks away'.[80] Jarrar's

stylistic approach assists in exposing the limits of Bhabha's Third Space, where the tricksy

humorous tone of Nidali fosters knowledge of the survival strategies developed by Arab

American women immigrants to combat the US discriminating discourse, therefore revealing

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[78] Erving Goffman, *Forms of Talk* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981), p. 128.
[79] Eissa, Guta and Hassan, p. 5.
[80] Jarrar, p. 234.

how far their intersectional experience is situated in Bhabha's abstract and masculinist Third Space.

The humorous and tricksy tone of Nidali offers a creative form of disrupting the dominant racial and gendered neo-Orientalist stereotypes, as an alternative to the long-standing tragic and victimising tone narrating the intersectional experience of female Arab and Muslim immigrants. This need to employ creative forms of writing in Jarrar's text can be seen as a way of reimagining the experience of Arab American women immigrants in the post-9/11 period, and a theoretical supplement to Bhabha's Third Space, through reflecting this particularised experience of cross-cultural encounter. As a tricksy character, Nidali substantiates Gerald Vizenor and Lee's evaluation of this being 'never a [normal] narrator, in stories, the trickster must tease the tragic out of piety and victimry'.[81]

The humorous tone of Nidali, evoked through certain stylistic choices in the text, resembles the shift from Khaled Mattawa's 'survival mode of writing'.[82] This is defined as enabling writers to present their experiences through nostalgic themes, so simultaneously mourning their old-world heritage while evoking a victimised image of their race, to counteract the marginalization they experience due to their race, ethnicity, and political stances. Mattawa asserts that a shift from such an attitude is needed in the post-9/11 period, so as to achieve the intellectual and thematic expansion required to present the Arab American experience. Mattawa thus invites writers to both expand on themes, as well as genres and literary styles, as 'changes in form […] are important signifiers of changes in subject matter and in tactics',[83] allowing for the construction of a space in which one can move beyond asserting his/her humanity, to an exploration of the self.

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[81] Gerald Vizenor and A. Robert Lee, *Postindian Conversations* (Lincoln, Neb.: University of Nebraska Press, 2003), p. 20.
[82] Khalid Mattawa, 'Arab American Writing and the Challenge of Reinventing Tradition', *Flyway: A Literary Review* 7.2-7.3 ('Arab American Writing', Guest Editor Joe Geha, 2003), pp. 43-50 (p. 46).
[83] Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash, (eds.): *Post-Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (New York: Syracuse UP, 1999), p. xiii.

Thus, Jarrar's text forms an act of resistance to the neo-Orientalist stereotypes of the post-9/11 period. In addition, it highlights the protagonist's negotiation of the intersectional aspects of her identity, against both neo-Orientalist stereotypes and the patriarchal practices of her society. This is reflected in the text through the multiple literary, stylistic and discursive tools, including the humorous tricksy tone of Nidali's narrative, and the shift in the textual style that moves from first-person narration to different literary forms, including diary entries and letters.

Thus, Ahmed's pre-9/11 text engages in relocating her national, gendered and religious identity amidst the misrepresentations of Western Orientalism and Arab nationalism and patriarchy limiting the intersectionality of her identity. By contrast, Jarrar's post-9/11 novel sets out on the journey of not only humanising the figure of the Palestinian woman immigrant figure (whose existence and voice is degraded in the dominant discourse of the aftermath of 9/11 by associating it with terrorism and alienation), but also an exploration of the self. Jarrar's text is further distinguished from the post-9/11 text of Al-Jurf (discussed in the previous chapter) in relation to negotiating the Palestinian diaspora. While Al-Jurf consolidates the memory of Palestine within the US sphere to negotiate her organic identity, Jarrar's text locates the developments of Nidali's Palestinian consciousness in multiple geographical settings within the Arab world before settling in America.

In doing so, the text reflects the complexity of the Palestinian woman's diasporic/immigration experience, in particular when negotiating her intentional hybridity, as she crosses the border from the Arab world to the US. Thus, the examination of Jarrar's text assists in contextualising the overlooked element of intersectionality marking the experience of Arab American Muslim immigrants during the post-9/11 period. Moreover, it sheds light on the failure of Bhabha's definition of Third Space to consider their intersectional racial, gendered, religious and sexual identity as exiles or refugees.

Ahmed relies heavily on the structural element of border-crossing to historise and culturally translate her position between the two worlds. However, reading Jarrar's text through the lens of cultural translation also reveals how it oscillates between multiple cultural translational stances to translate her hybridity to the two worlds. In addition, she uses stylistic and literary choices (i.e. intertextual references and interplays between narratives) to translate and historise her experience across the Arab world before migrating to the US. Furthermore, her text is dominated by the tricksy humorous tone of Nidali when highlighting the interaction with the rigid neo-Orientalist presumptions and Arab patriarchal standards.

As noted earlier, the historization of the previous experience of the Arab American immigrant figure examined in this chapter disrupts Bhabha's notion of hybridity where he claims it to be ahistorical. The immigrants' desire to historise their past experience while negotiating their hybridity stems from a need to respond to the derogatory representation of their race and gender. This adds further complexities to their cross-culture encounter, and therefore marks Bhabha's Third Space as overambitious. The examination of Nidali's first space is here explored through the three dominant themes in her narrative: firstly, the negotiation of her gender identity; secondly, the multi-ethnic aspect of her identity; and thirdly, her negotiation of her sexuality.

The cultural translational stances are manifested across the text where intertextual and discursive themes are applied to Nidali's narrative, in order to challenge the neo-Orientalist representations of Arab and Muslim women, as well as the patriarchal standards of her Arab society. Such stances reveal the gendered struggle of Arab women immigrants prior to their immigration, and how the complexity of being an Arab woman is intensified when encountering the Other, a consideration barely focused on in Bhabha's discussion of Third Space. This is exemplified early in the text, as the novel commences with Nidali narrating how her father's presumption that she was a boy when filling her birth certificate led to him

giving her the masculine Arabic name Nidal. Nidali narrates how he later rushed to the

registration office after he was informed that the baby was a girl and 'added at the end of

[her] name a heavy, reflexive, femininizing, possessive, cursive, cursing "I"'.[84]

The story of Nidali's name exabits an interplay between the two translational stances

of domesticating and exoticising. In that, the name Nidal (which translates into the Arabic

word *Jihad*) is used as a foreignizing technique, to counter the hegemonic understanding of

its meaning, as well as its discursive importance in the US context due to its relation to

terrorism in the aftermaths of 9/11. The name Nidal has also been associated with prominent

terrorists and terrorist institutions (i.e. the Abu Nidal Organisation and Nidal Malik Hassan),

currently flooding American media and popular culture. Naming the protagonist Nidali

(drawing the reader's attention to such negative connotation of the name) is an act of

resistance and an attempt to reform certain models of cultural identity when connecting it to

the experience of a Palestinian woman immigrant.

The story of Nidali's name is framed with a humorous tone, including narrating her

mother's fury with the father at his choice, in language that is bold, obscene and bawdy. On

this occasion, and throughout the text, Nidali and her mother employ obscenities (mostly

referencing female body parts) that, in Arab societies, are widely used in derogatory male

discourse, but rarely by females. This serves to not only demolish the representation of Arab

women as submissive and weak, but to also represent characters claiming full ownership over

their bodies. As Nidali translates the curse words from English to Arabic, she culturally

translates the heaviness of the translated cursing words when cloaking the literal translation

with phrases like 'this in a whispered hush, and in Arabic [means] [...]'.[85] Such a focus on

presenting Nidali's bilingual and cultural knowledge of the two societies serves as a strong

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[84] Jarrar, p. 5.
[85] Ibid., p. 5.

expressive marker of her cross-cultural experience and her role as a mediator between the two worlds. The employment of what Nidali's name means in the US context and the use of obscenities refer to the various resistance strategies Arab American women immigrants employed in the narratives to locate their position and claim their agency in the clash between two worlds.

The representational intersectionality of fighting the limiting portrayals of marginalised groups and the various and unique forms of resistance and claiming agency presented in Jarrar's text are not fully captured in Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space and hybridity. As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Bhabha suggests that mimicry can be a form of agency and resistance against dominant power structures. However, it may overlook the specific ways in which Arab American women challenge and resist intersecting marginalisation and racism. Like Ahmed's text, Jarrar's text actively engage in advocacy, activism, and cultural production to challenge misrepresentations and reclaim Arab American women narratives. Bhabha's theory may not fully capture these alternative forms of agency and resistance, particularly because Arab American women narratives continue to form and reform unique ways of resistance in response to the developing and contemporary clash between the Arab world and the US.

The limitations of Bhabha's theory continue to be revealed in the text, as the character unpacks the complexity of her gendered identity in Arab patriarchal society prior to the act of immigration. This story of the protagonist's name can also be seen as a criticism of the preponderance of the patriarchal values of her culture. The possessive feminising 'I' added to Nidali's name reflects the status of women in Arab societies as being the property of men. In the case of Nidali's father, her naming is not only made to claim her as his property and a fulfilment of his long-lived patriarchal desire for a son, but also can be seen within the long

tradition of referring to 'Palestine as a woman and women as Palestine'.[86] Thus, the possessive and feminising effect of the suffix in Nidali's name (which translates as the father's Nidal, i.e. the father's fight/ Jihad) is used to serve as a symbol of remembrance of the father's struggle and is a constant reminder of his belonging to the Palestinian diaspora that shapes his position in the world.

This gendering of the Palestinian national narratives that 'represent(s) the land of Palestine as a beloved geo-female body, [and which] portrays Palestine as a country that was raped by Israeli invaders in 1948' plays an important role in enhancing such patriarchal rules over Palestinian women.[87] Joseph Massad points out that, in portraying the conquest of Palestine as a rape, '[the Palestinian nationalist movement] disqualify(ies) women and subordinate(s) them to young male Palestinian nationalist liberators'.[88] Nadia Dabbagh confirms this point by elaborating on the gendering of the Palestinian national narrative. Moreover, in poetry and art, a link is sometimes made between land (al-ard) and honor (alird), since Palestine is often represented as a woman while the Arabic word for land (al-ard), is feminine. The symbolism is that, with the loss of the land of Palestine (ard filisteen), the Palestinian man has lost his honour, in this case 'ird'', because the honor is lost through a woman, i.e. the land. This forms a powerful symbolism, particularly in its association with the rape of a woman, the phrase for crimes of rape being *hatk ird*.[89]

Palestinian American women struggle with the resulting stereotypes in their fight to free themselves from such a patriarchal and male-dominated discourse. This is particularly so

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[86] Laura Khoury, Seif Dana and Ghazi Walid Falah, '"Palestine as A Woman": Feminizing Resistance and Popular Literature', *The Arab World Geographer*, 16.2 (2013), <http://arabworldgeographer.metapress.com> [accessed 30 September 2022], pp. 147-176 (p. 150).

[87] Fatma Kassem, *Palestinian Women: Narrative Histories and Gendered Memory* (London: Zed books, 2013), p. 98.

[88] Joseph Massad, 'Conceiving the Masculine: Gender and Palestinian Nationalism', *Middle East Journal*, 49.3 (1995) <https://www.jstor.org/stable/4328835> [accessed 12 April 2022], pp. 467-483 (p. 469).

[89] Nadia Taysir Dabbagh, *Suicide in Palestine* (Northampton, Mass.: Interlink, 2005), p. 181.

as these dismiss their role in the struggle to liberate their homelands, while burdening them with being the preservers of the Arab cultural models of 'good' Arab girls and obedient housewives for the sake of the Palestinian cause.[90] Furthermore, this discourse encourages 'the assumption that Arab women must reject their own culture to improve their lot, instead taking succour in a flight to Western feminism'.[91]

The extent to which the complexities that relate to diasporic Arab immigrant women reflect the specificities of their experience and affect their cross-cultural encounters is not considered in Bhabha's Third Space. That is to say, the figure of the Palestinian father in Nidali's narrative plays an important role in her struggles, including his attempts to highlight her identity in simplistic terms as a Palestinian woman. This is particularly so as she attempts to bridge the multiple oppositions created from her position as a Palestinian Egyptian (her 'half-and-half self'), who considers Kuwait her home, but is acquiring knowledge of the world through the English education system, within a Kuwait newly independent from British colonialism. Jarrar uses the symbol of the Russian doll to illustrate how Nidali's identity is made up of fragmented parts. Nidali says:

> In Egypt, I played with a set of Russian dolls my dead… [grandmother] gave my mama. I pretended to be the smallest Russian doll, the empty-bellied one that goes in her mama, the mama that gets cradled in her mama and so on. I knew that the biggest doll, the biggest mama on the outside, was a Greek but that I was not a Greek. I noticed that all the dolls were split in half expect me, even though I was split in half: I was Egyptian and Palestinian. I was Greek and American. My little blue passport, the one that looked nothing like Mama's medium green one or Baba's big brown one, said I was American. I didn't have to stand in a different line at the airports yet, but soon I would. And Mama would stand in a different line, and Baba would stand in yet another line. It would make me feel alone and different.[92]

Nidali reflects on her understanding of the diversity of belonging to different places, using Russian dolls to convey an understanding of the hybridity of her identity. Nidali's early

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[90] Juliane Hammer and Helena Lindholm Schulz, *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland*. (London: Routledge, 2005), p. 212.
[91] Majaj, 'On Writing and Return', p. 116.
[92] Jarrar, p. 9.

understanding of hyphenated identity is vertical, like Russian dolls, whose separate

compartments take the shape of a single whole, all fitting in harmony, hosting stories,

experiences and all the different versions of oneself. The symbol of the Russian doll serves to

invoke an image of the embeddedness of multiple identities, as well as the displacement

Nidali confronts throughout the text. This is a clear demonstration of the complexity of her

experience and the influence of history, which eventually contributes to her identification as a

whole. While Bhabha's theory chiefly concentrates on the interaction between binaries, such

as the East and the West, it provides no space for subjects with multiple belongings and

identities, such as Nidali. It does not account for the struggle such individuals go through

when attempting to highlight the multiple and intersectional nature of their identities as they

negotiate the monolithic identifications imposed upon them by the members of both worlds.

This is manifested in the text when such an understanding of multiple identities and

belonging is challenged by her father's constant placement of Nidali in the category of the

good Palestinian girl. In acknowledging that this is 'such a heavy thing to carry' Nidali

expresses the burden of carrying around the memory of Palestine, along with her consequent

confusion.[93] At the same time, she attempts to acknowledge her multiple belonging and that

her position differs from that of her family. Nidali portrays the array of national and ethnic

standards her father attempts to instil in her and her family. When learning of the upcoming

arrival of her new baby brother, the child's voice delivers Nidali's concern about the burden

of carrying the homeland to her mother and new-born brother. Nidali writes:

> …He said, "Your mama has a baby the size of an olive in her tummy!" This really worried
> me because now Baba had Mama putting olives and homelands inside her too. I wondered
> how this would change our lives.[94]

Jarrar's integration of the symbol of olive and homelands into the text is significant in

referring to the diasporic experience of Palestinian refugees and how it is transformed into the

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[93] Ibid., p. 9.
[94] Ibid., p. 16.

second generation of Palestinian refugees worldwide. The symbol of the olive can be seen within the cultural translational stances Jarrar applies in her narrative to portray the diasporic experience of the father. It also assists in demonstrating Nidali's concern for rooting herself in a homeland with which, through the memories of her father, she partly identifies. The symbol of the olive and in the context of rottenness is powerful in the Palestinian narrative. It is widely used in Palestinian diaspora writing (i.e. the famous Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish's 1964 collection *Olive Leaf*) to reflect on attachment to the homeland. The rooting and uprooting of olive trees form weapons for both Palestinians and Israelis in their longstanding conflict over the land. For Palestinians, the symbolism of olive trees carries more importance than any economic and ecological necessities, which Israel has thus attempted to demolish by uprooting over one million trees. Sonja Karrkar notes how 'their wilful destruction has so threatened Palestinian culture, heritage, and identity that the olive tree has now become the symbol of Palestinian steadfastness because of its rootedness and ability to survive in a land where water is perennially scarce'.[95]

Palestinians in the diaspora, being displaced from their lands, associate forms of resilience and resistance to the metaphoric planting and instilling of olive trees in their children, which is thus passed on through the generations. Similarly, Nidali's sense of attachment and longing for Palestine forms the background of her story, while simultaneously being frequently adapted throughout her journey to its various geographical, cultural and personal relocations. This is present in the lived experience of the Palestinian immigrant woman, and has an ongoing impact on the formation and reformation of their identities as

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[95] Sonja Karakar, 'The Olive Trees of Palestine Weep', in *The Plight of The Palestinians: A Long History of Destruction* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2007), <https://link.springer.com/book/10.1057/9780230107922> [accessed 12 December 2020], pp.51-53 (p.51).

they traverse borders, and therefore impacts their hybridity and cross-cultural encounters, in a manner not considered in Bhabha's framing of Third Space.

Bhabha's theory also fails to acknowledge the generational and identity-based differentiation between Nidali's multi-ethnic identity and the father's Palestinian diasporic identity. This aspect is portrayed in the text as Nidali narrates the multiple passages conveying her father's burning desire for her 'to write essays, every day, preferably in both English and Arabic, about something purely Arab, or relating to [her] Arabness, or to a famous Arab'.[96] For Nidali's father, his reflection on Arab nationalism through Nidali's position as a mediator between the two worlds assists in reconstructing a sense of solidarity to escape the solitary experience of exile. Edward Said evaluates such engagement with Arab nationalism as an outcome of the experience of being in exile, i.e. an interplay relationship between nationalism and exile. In *Reflections on Exile*, Said writes:

> Exiles are cut off from their roots, their land, their past. They generally do not have armies or states, although they are often in search of them. Exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their broken lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of triumphant ideology or restored people.[97]

In engaging with her sense of the Palestinian diaspora, Nidali conveys her father's wish for her to write about her Arabness through 'compositions, which he pronounced 'combozishans'.[98] Although Nidali voices her indifference towards this task, saying that she spends 'every weekend morning trying to come up with some bullshit so he'd leave me alone for a night',[99] she plays the role of the cultural translator to reflect her parents' state of non-belonging and foreignness in the American context. This is highlighted through Jarrar's use of the eye dialect linguistic strategy, as she transcripts the dialect of Nidali's parents when using English. The parents' misspelt words (such as 'combozishans' and 'borch' to mean

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[96] Jarrar, p. 260.
[97] Edward Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (London: Granta Books, 2000), pp. 140 -141.
[98] Jarrar, p. 260.
[99] Ibid., p. 260.

porch) are only employed by Nidali during their time in America. Their English dialect is not foreignized in the remainder of the text, so reflecting the shift in the Arab American position from invisibility to an exotic foreign and visible community in the post-9/11 period.

The compositions that are integrated within the text can also be seen through the translational stance of the deterritorialization of the English language. Thus, as Hassan notes in the context of Arab American immigration narrative, such a stance 'may "Arabise" […] English, sometimes by transliterating words and expressions for which there is no English equivalent, then explaining them within the text or in a glossary, or not at all'.[100] Jarrar provides neither any translation or a context for Nidali's compositions, which are full of Arabised English words and Arab cultural expressions capable of disorienting the English reader. This can be seen as the author's attempt to mirror the isolating immigration experience of Arabs when trying to assimilate into US society.

The differences between the language of the child and her parents also highlights how Jarrar intends to foreground and distinguish Nidali's hybrid identity from her surroundings. Such a generational and identity-based differentiation between Nidali's multi-ethnic identity and the father's Palestinian diasporic identity shows how Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space overlooks the particularised experience, such as the clash between Nidali and her father. This is reflected in the text when Nidali's hybrid identity conflicts with her father's diasporic identity, rooted in the patriarchal standards of Arab social norms. This is particularly evident in the passage when seven-year-old Nidali is attending the New English School in Kuwait and her father's reaction when she accidentally refers to a schoolmate as her 'boyfriend':

> … "Nidali," he said, his face changing a bit, "we don't have boyfriends." "We?" I asked. "What do you mean?" "I mean," he said, "boyfriends are fiancés, and then you marry them" …My stomach sank. This rule sounded stupid. Of course, I couldn't get married

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[100] Hassan, p. 33.

now, but why couldn't I have a boyfriend? […] I felt as though I was not truly his daughter, that I must have come from elsewhere if I disagree with his rules.[101]

Just as in Ahmed's text, the clash between the English school circle and the household in Nidali's narrative depicts several dualities through which she crosses. The collective 'we' her father employs to draw the lines of the Arab social codes conflicts with Nidali's conceptions gained from her English school and her relatively liberal life in Kuwait, which: in the seventies,[102] 'was heaven for Arab intellectuals'.[103] The father's collective 'we' reflects the image of the good Arab girl, who follows assigned traditional female role of belonging and acceptance. As a diasporic Palestinian figure, the father's narrative resembles the diasporic narrative of Arab Americans post- 9/11, particularly in their reaction to the new Orientalist discourses concerning the American perception of Arabs and Muslims. This therefore stresses how, over time, Third Space becomes a developing phenomenon in terms of meaning. Nadine Naber discusses how the new American Orientalist discourses construct the image of all Arabs and Muslims as terrorists, oppressive to women, and belonging to backward, regressive homophobic communities, which lack the democratic ideals of the "civilized" and "liberal" West.[104] Naber explains how the response of Arab Americans to such representations takes the shape of a cultural validity, as they 'articulate Arab cultural identity and community through the triangulated ideal of the good Arab family, good Arab girls, and compulsory heterosexuality, all in opposition to an imagined America and its apparent sexual promiscuity, broken families, and bad women'.[105]

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[101] Jarrar. p. 16.

[102] The country of Kuwait in the seventies distinguished itself from the other countries in the Arab world by its rapid attainment of prosperity and its liberal atmosphere driven by oil. Found in Desi Gonzalez, 'Acquiring Modernity: Kuwait at the 14th International Architecture Exhibition', *Art Papers*, 2014 <https://web.archive.org/web/ > [accessed 7 June 2022].

[103] Jarrar, p. 9.

[104] Nadine Naber, *Arab American: Gender, Cultural Politics, And Activism* (New York: New York University Press, 2012), p. 4.

[105] Ibid., p. 65.

Thus, Arab American women immigrants find themselves trapped between the Orientalist representations of Arab women and the 'masculinist Arab nationalism [who] have used patriarchal and heteronormative notions of national cultural identity, notions that mark the difference between "us" and "them" through the figure of the "woman" and European concepts of sexual respectability'.[106] Nidali is seen to resist this monolithic and constructed mould of identification and belonging, constructed by the Arab fundamentalist and patriarchal standards embodied in both the characterisation of the father and the stereotypical and homogeneous representations of the supressed powerless Muslim Arab woman in the Western context. This takes the shape of varied modes of resistance through which she negotiates and normalises female sexuality against the manufacture, by both discourses, of the Arab and Muslim female body.

As Ahmed's text reveals how Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space fails to provide a practical framework for enacting strategies of resistance to respond to limited understandings of Arab women, Jarrar's text similarly engages in acts of resistance that effectively redefine the figure of the Arab immigrant woman. This mode of resistance is evident on the various occasions in the text in which Nidali's exploration of her sexuality is exhibited in an interplay between different powerful and sacred cultural references. Thus, when Nidali narrates her participation in the Quran competition, her narrative hosts her early exploration of her sexuality. She says:

> I crossed my arms over my chest and recited the verses, keeping the "Comfort" verse last. I didn't make a single mistake; in fact, I felt almost as though I was singing:
> *Have We not lifted up your heart and relieved you of the burden which weighed down your back? Have We not Given you high renown? For with every hardship there is ease. With every hardship there is ease. When your prayers are ended resume your toil, and seek your lord with all fervour.*[107]

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[106] Ibid., p.64.
[107] Jarrar, p. 51.

When Nidali is questioned by her schoolmates about winning the competition, she responds: "All I know is…" I said, and stopped for a moment. I wanted to say I was proud of myself, that I was good. […] and instead I said, "the boys in that school are way cuter than the boys at NES!".[108] In the interplay between the context of her sexuality and the Quran, Nidali not only attempts to undermine the Islamophobic sense evoked by quoting verses from the Quran, but also challenges the long-held assumptions about gender and Arab and Muslim women's expression of sexuality. Such an interplay between two contrasting contexts (i.e. the Quran and female sexuality) challenges the common assumptions in both Western Orientalist and Arab patriarchal discourses, which perceive Muslim and Arab women as concealing their sexuality and sexual desires.

The interplay between Nidali's expression of her sexuality and other cultural symbols continues across her narrative, challenging the simplistic assumption of her intersectional identity. This is exemplified when she writes a letter to the former Iraqi president, Saddam Hussein, as she and her family join the Palestinian exodus from Kuwait, in the aftermath of the Gulf War. Nidali's sarcastic voice, and her exploration and articulation of her sexuality and displacement, assist her in drawing away from the conventional victim image of the Palestinian diasporic figure. Thus, unlike Al-Jurf's sense of exile expressed through the concept of return, Jarrar's reworks Nidali's homelessness through the missed opportunities for further sexual exploration. Nidali writes:

> *Dear Mr. Saddam Hussein,*
> *I am in my parents' falling-apart car, and we are crossing your beautiful country, fleeing from your ugly army. My father has thus far distributed four bottles of Johnny Walker and three silk ties to checkpoint personnel; my mother has pinched my leg approximately thirteen times in the past forty kilometres alone, and my cousin, who is now riding in my uncle's van after my aunt's Firebird caught on fire and was abandoned in Karbala, has giving me the arm roughly every forty-five seconds. And I, you might wonder, what am I doing while these boring goings-on surround me? I am bleeding in my panties and too embarrassed to make the caravan pull over, and I am writing you this letter to humbly inform you that, although I admire your sense of fashion, green is so last season. Also, when you decided to invade the country where I grew up (and when you decided this, sir,*

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[108] Ibid., p. 52.

were you on some seriously strong hashish?) did you, at any point, stop and consider the teenage population? [...] For your information, I was anxiously awaiting to see a certain Fakhr el-Dain, a very handsome, sarcastic, 9th year student. I had kissed him a couple of times [...] and I've since been making out with my left hand, but it's not the same. He was supposed to be my boyfriend this year, but that's scrapped now, thanks to you.
I hate your [...] guts [...] and I hope that you too will be expelled from your home and forever cut off from your crush and sentenced by almighty Allah to eternity in the final circle of hell where you will forever make out with your left hand, the skin of which will burn off and re-grow for all of eternity.
Yours sincerely,
N.A.[109]

Jarrar's use of the form of letters to highlight Nidali's experience resembles the open letter 'To Any Would-Be Terrorist' written shortly after September 11th, 2001, by the Arab American poet Naomi Shihab Nye, which raises the issue of the connection between terrorism and the Arab American identity. Shihab Nye recalls the sufferings and horror experienced by many of those with a physical resemblance to Arabs and Muslims, drawing from the experience of her immigrant father, as well as her own as an Arab Muslim woman in post-9/11 America. Jarrar's text also provides a space for a similar trend, as she addresses and criticises political and social actors, not only because they fuel the hegemonic representation of Arabs and Muslims by their violent and irresponsible actions, but also for causing Nidali and her family (along with several thousands of Palestinians) one of the gravest setbacks in their diasporic journey. Nevertheless, Nidali's sarcastic and humorous tone, as well as her engagement with the topic of her sexuality, distinguishes the narrative of her letter to Saddam Hussein from the bleak tone of Shihab Nye's letter to any would-be terrorist.

As a tricksy figure, Nidali interweaves the exploration and articulation of her sexuality with issues of war and immigration, as well as with Islamic references. Her narrative moves from one sexual category to another in her journey of liberating the figure of the female Muslim Arab body. The tricksy humour in Jarrar's narrative resembles that found

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[109] Ibid., pp. 155-156.

in many other ethnic groups in the US, particularly the literary tradition of Native Americans. In her novel *Love Medicine* (1984), Louise Erdich (a significant writer of the second wave of the Native American Renaissance) depicts the sexual inclusiveness of her tricksy character Lulu Lamartinein, thus reflecting her survival ideologies. While Lulu's narrative reflects how her sexuality and her erotic relationships assist her to uncover and negotiate societal norms of sexuality and body boundaries, the character of Nidali proposes a similar approach to deconstructing the cultural constructions of her body's boundaries. Such an inspiration by the figure of the trickster and openly sexual Native American figure can be seen through the lens of how contemporary Arab American women writers imitate the literary tradition of other ethnic minorities within the US, not only to situate their hybridity and presence culturally and socially, but also to redefine and reveal their space, as well as breaking free from the neo-Orientalist and Arab patriarchal norms of womanhood.

When she and her family are in Egypt, taking refuge in the aftermath of the Gulf War, Nidali narrates her exploration of her homosexuality through her sexual experience with her friend Jiji. On this occasion, Nidali is conflicted about her queer orientation, highlighting the internalised Arab and Islamic sense of guilt towards homosexuality. She writes:

> At home, Mama and Baba didn't fight because there was no money to fight over, […]. Instead, they picked fight with Gamal and me. […]. I kept away from the scene, let Baba yell at me, and didn't talk back. I thought, I'm already going to hell for having lesbian thoughts and I might as well bide my time here on earth.[110]

> […] I replayed that kiss over and over in my mind, tried to figure out what it meant, that I liked both girls and boys. It was bad enough to like boys! It was bad, bad, bad, and I was bad, and Baba told me so as his hands slapped and his feet kicked and his house slipper struck my skin over and over again. […] Yes, I deserve to be punished, I thought to myself. Punish me. And it didn't hurt because the memory of the kiss, of the way it transplanted me back home, made the pain loosen and drift away from me, like a plucked eyebrow hair, or a clump of dirt worried free of the earth and away from the buffalo's hunger.[111]

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[110] Ibid., p. 171.
[111] Ibid., p.176.

The interplay between the narratives of the displacement, the abusive Arab father figure and Nidali's sense of guilt towards homosexuality rooted in the Islamic and Arabic social codes can be seen as a form of resistance and rebellion. Nidali refuses to be reduced to an oppressed, diasporic and tragic figure, as she interweaves the scene of domestic violence and her father's sense of displacement with her memory of her sexual experience with Jiji. Her humorous tone in unfolding her queer sexuality as an Arab Muslim girl is framed by her sense of displacement from her home in Kuwait, accompanied by the abusive atmosphere created in the home by her father. Such an approach to presenting the character's sexuality creates a new path for voicing Arab American feminist and queer concerns at risk (due to the problematic position of female Muslim Arab American queers) of being silenced. Majaj states:

> When Arab and Arab American women give voice to feminist concerns, they are too often assumed, both by their communities and by outside observers, to be rejecting their cultural traditions in favour of a more "liberated" Western culture. Depending on the stance of the observer, this is viewed either as an escape or as a betrayal. The result of such over-determined discourse has often been a pressure toward silence, with accompanying community censure of those writers who do attempt to publicly explore more problematic aspects of Arab and Arab American culture.[112]

The reading of Jarrar's text through the lens of cultural translation assists in highlighting the multiple stylistic and structural choices presenting the text as, on the one hand an act of resistance to the post-9/11 neo-Orientalist and Islamophobic climate and, on the other, the patriarchal norms of Arab culture.

Jarrar's text distinguishes itself by treating sensitive themes resisting the institutionalised Islamist, Arab nationalist and Western orientalist discourses, i.e. the character's bisexuality. She achieves this through multiple literary and stylistic tools, including the humorous tricksy tone of her narrative, and the shift in the textual style moving between first-person narration and a variety of literary forms.

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[112] Majaj, pp. 131-132.

Jarrar's treatment of her protagonist's sexuality challenges the traditional concept of Arab womanhood, which reduces their identities to simplistic and stereotypical identifications. However, it also fosters new knowledge and literary forms for the character's self-assertion and exploration. Jarrar employs the literary tool of humour when exploring Nidali's burgeoning sexuality to portray the protagonist's sexual displacement and normalise the discourse of female Muslim Arab American sexuality. This unique treatment of themes that are sensitive and forbidden in the Arabic and Islamic context of is seen by Salaita as an initial step through which 'Jarrar luckily found a gap in the Arab American literary tradition and filled it. The novel with which she filled it is indeed unlike anything that has been published before it by Arab American writers'.[113]

The aim of this chapter has been to examine how Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space proposes a simplistic and overambitious resolution, as articulated in a Third Space of encounter between two opposing powers. This has been demonstrated by Jarrar's exploration of Nidali's hybridity through the historization of her past experience against the backdrop of the neo-Orientalist assumptions of the aftermath of 9/11. This is particularly evident in how the text reveals the complex experience of Arab immigrant women engulfed within the discriminatory discourse against Arabs and Muslims following 9/11.

However, Bhabha's theory, in stressing the ahistorical nature of intentional hybridity, glosses over an experience such as that of Nidali's, whose own negotiation remains wedded to her previous experience. In addition, Jarrar's text, in reflecting the developing stigmatisation towards Arabs and Muslims in the post-9/11 period, sheds light on the failure of Bhabha's theory to accommodate the developing shape and meaning of encounters during periods of political and social change. More importantly, this reading of Jarrar's text

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[113] Steven Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction* (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 130.

showcases how the experience of Arab American women immigrants inhabits the margins of Bhabha's mythologised and masculinist definition of Third Space.

Conclusion

The two texts examined in this chapter contribute to the overarching argument of this part of the thesis, which examines the failure of Bhabha's definition of Third Space to include the intersectional experience of Arab American women in the Third Space between US society and the Arab (and Arab American) community. This examination of the two texts also adds a further layer of critique to the theory, highlighting that it makes no distinction between the immigrant and non-immigrant experience within the Third Space.

The examination through the lens of cultural translation of Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage* and Randa Jarrar's *A Map* of *Home* allows for a nuanced understanding of the different experience of each intentional hybrid within these texts, so marking their differences to the organic hybrid experiences explored in the previous chapter. Their divergent experiences are derived from their different cultural histories, country of origin, class, education, immigration status and their surrounding political atmosphere.

Firstly, Ahmed's memoir relies heavily on the notion of border-crossing to unpack the complexity of her immigration experience in moving from Egypt to America. The notion is also applied as a stylistic and structural choice in the text, in order to culturally translate Ahmed's position in relation to the different categories of Arab as opposed to Egyptian, West as opposed to East, and man as opposed to woman. In doing so, Ahmed's text serves as an act of resistance to the Western Orientalist, as well as Arab nationalist and patriarchal conceptions, which overshadow Arab women immigrant's voice and agency. This stresses both the complexity of the female experience and the importance of history, both of which are ignored in Bhabha's Third Space.

Secondly, Jarrar's text explores a contrasting experience of immigration, in which the protagonist, Nidali, serves as a counter-hegemonic voice to the increasing neo-Orientalist representations of Arabs and Muslims following the terrorist attacks of 9/11. It is also an act of resistance to the otherwise limited representations of Arab and Muslim women in the Arab nationalist patriarchal discourse. Jarrar uses the tricksy humorous tone of Nidali, and the selection of different stylistic and structural literary choices, to undermine essentialist representations of the experience of the Palestinian female diaspora.

As shown in this chapter, these two texts foster new knowledge concerning the experience of Arab immigrant women, primarily based in the social conditions of their Arab societies and moments of encounter with US society. In this way, they both offer a nuanced understating of the complexity of their intentional hybrid identities. It is notable that this approach is in contrast to Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space, which overlooks this aspect of the female experience, instead conflating all minorities as a homogenous group.

The diversity of Arab American women, as either US born-citizen or migrant-citizen, will be examined in the next chapter's critique of the hegemonic nature of Bhabha's definition, particularly in relation to its dismissal of the individuality of the examined subjectivities as the chapter reads the hybrid literary genre of Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan*.

Part Three:

Redefining Homi Bhabha's Third Space in the Case of Contemporary Arab American Women Narratives

Chapter Five: Redefining Homi Bhabha's Third Space in the case of female Arab American narratives through the hybrid genre of Leila Halaby's *West of the Jordan*

The previous two chapters explored how the racial and gendered identification of Arab American women plays a vital role in inviting practices of marginalisation and discrimination towards them in the Third Space of encounter between the Arab and Arab American community, and US society. These two chapters employed the genres of fiction and nonfiction inversely in the pre- and post-9/11 context to explore the experience of migrant and non-migrant narratives, and highlighted the complexities and the texture of the ethnic experiences examined, in relation to the literary tools each genre offers, as well as the period in which they were written.

This chapter utilises the gaps in gender, race, and immigration status explored in the fourth and fifth chapters to identify an alternative definition of Third Space that encompasses, and is theorised from the perspective of the female Arab American intersectional ethnic experience. It employs Leila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* to articulate this alternative definition, because it serves as an example of a post-9/11 Arab American text that employs a hybrid form of writing to present the diverse range of female Arab American ethnic experience, in relation to intersecting forms of social difference. While many previous studies, such as those by Suhair Majaj and Sawires Maselli, classified Halaby's *West of the Jordan* as a novel, I find that Halaby's text matches the defining aspects of two other genres, namely autofiction and the short story cycle. Thus, I chose to label the text a *hybrid* form of writing, and discuss how it falls between the two categories of autofiction and the short story cycle in the next section of this chapter.

Halaby's *West of the Jordan* offers the narratives of four fictional maternal cousins of Palestinian origin, Hala, Mawal, Soraya, and Khadija, each narrating their own story. Each character's individualised narration incorporates their evaluation of the experiences of the

other characters, four constellated points-of-view that ultimately contribute to the reader's perception of every character. We learn about each character through the stories they tell about themselves, as well as through how the other characters view each other's stories. This writing strategy helps to offer more than one perspective on a character, a method that allows each story to complement the others, and accordingly helps us to examine the range of their experiences in their spaces of encounter.

The first section opens with Hala relating the story of her journey from America back to Jordan for her grandmother's funeral, where she confronts her father and his wishes to control her life choices after her mother's death. The reader is then introduced to Mawal, the Palestinian cousin who remains in Palestine throughout the story. Mawal engages with her cousins' stories while communicating her own sense of displacement, triggered by the colonisation of her land by the state of Israel. Meanwhile, Soraya, the daughter of Arab immigrant parents, takes the lead in the third chapter, recounting her independent life in Los Angeles, presenting herself as a frank, determined, and rebellious girl who is very aware of her sexuality. The reader then meets Khadija, who has a fear-based relationship with her emotionally- and physically-abusive Arab immigrant father, and a passive relationship with her controlling Arab mother. Khadija shares her experience of an in-between existence, in which she attempts to explore her hybrid identity and to make sense of her position between two worlds.

What distinguishes Halaby's text from those examined previously in this thesis is the hybrid literary genre through which the multi-faceted narrative is constructed. On the one hand, the large number of similarities between the story of the character of Hala and that of the author, Leila Halaby, is a characteristic that matches that of the genre of autofiction. On the other, Halaby's accommodation of the other characters' stories in the form of a short story cycle enables the consideration of the variety of experiences of other Arab American

women. The genre of short story cycle compels us to acknowledge the various patterns of the narrators' Third Space as they negotiate their identities in the same period of time.

The use of multiple narratives also provides an opportunity for the examination of both hybrid and immigrant identities within one text, which serves as a counter-hegemonic critique to the neo-Orientalist hegemonic discourse that dismisses the diverse ethnic experiences of Arab American women immigrants and non-immigrants. Thus, the text offers an alternative understanding of the diversity of Arab American women's experiences in their spaces of encounter. This chapter is dedicated to the study of Halaby's text, as it adds another layer to the critique of Bhabha's definition of Third Space, highlighting the fact that his hegemonic definition overlooks the heterogenous nature of Arab American women's intersectional and ethnic experiences. This chapter's reading of Halaby's text stresses not only the diversity of the ethnic experience of female Arab Americans, but also the diversity of their Third Space(s), which differ from Bhabha's monolithic conception of Third Space. Accordingly, this chapter focuses on the literary genre and techniques used in Halaby's text to reflect on a unique approach to self-writing that offers an inclusive definition of the diverse patterns of Third Space in the case of female Arab American narratives.

This chapter aims to contribute to this thesis by addressing the question, How do we redefine Third Space in the case of female Arab American narratives, considering the gaps explored in the previous chapters? The examination of Halaby's *West of the Jordan* seeks to generate answers to the following chapter questions, and thus to address the overarching inquiry of the chapter: 1. What are the structural elements of the text that define it as a hybrid form of writing? 2. What are the forms of diversity that the text's hybrid genre offers to conceptualise an alternative definition of Third Space in the case of female Arab Americans? The first section of this chapter defines the hybrid genre of the text in terms of its structure, starting by distinguishing the autofictional aspects of the text, and proceeding to identify its

short story cycle elements. The chapter then explores the different functions of the hybrid genre, in order to uncover the diversity of the characters' experiences, and to seek an alternative definition of Third Space that complements that of Bhabha.

Defining the genre of Leila Halaby's *West of the Jordan*

Halaby's *West of the Jordan* adopts a hybrid form of self-writing that combines the two genres of autofiction and the short story cycle. The form of combined fictional and non-fictional genres was discussed by Fischer in 'Ethnicity and the Post-Modern Arts of Memory', and he observed that 'ethnic autobiography and autobiographical fiction can perhaps serve as a key form for exploration of pluralist, post industrialist, late-twentieth-century society'.[1] He justified this statement by stressing the continuous reconstruction of the notion of ethnicity by each generation. In other words, ethnicity is not static; it 'is not something that is simply passed on from generation to generation, taught and learned; it is something dynamic'. Therefore, each generation of ethnic autobiographer tends to choose the appropriate language, voice, and style 'that does not violate one's several components of identity' to express and reflect upon the complexities of their ethnic experience.[2] Although it concerns a post-World-War-II context, Fischer's claim can be extended to understand Halaby's use of hybrid writing, in order to present the texture and complexities of the ethnic experience of the Arab American community in the eventful year of 2001. Arab American literature is not original in terms of the use of hybrid writing forms. However, Halaby's text contributes to the ethnic literary tradition of Arab Americans by utilising a form of writing that embodies a multiplicity of voices and perspectives to express the community's response to the hegemonic discursive conceptions towards them, particularly after 9/11.

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[1] Michael M. J. Fischer, 'Ethnicity and The Post-Modern Arts of Memory', in *Writing Culture* (California: University of California Press, 1986), <http://anthropology.mit.edu/sites/default/files/documents/fischer_Ethnicity_Postmodern_Arts.pdf> [accessed 14 July 2021], pp. 194-233 (p. 195).
[2] Ibid., pp. 195-196.

West of the Jordan also enriches the ethnic American literary tradition through its innovative form of writing that chronicles the conception of ethnic recognition at a given point in history, since as Bergland explained, 'autobiographies of ethnic groups within the United States provide a key and meaningful site for examining the politics of culture and identity past and present'.[3] Through the use of autofiction and short story cycles in a single text, the text presents a blend of two genres, with each of the forms popular with a different community of colour; while autofiction is used widely by White writers,[4] the genre of the short story cycle is popular among ethnic writers and writers of colour.[5] In his article, 'Can A Black Novelist Write Autofiction?', Folarin discusses the tendency in Western scholarship to label autofiction texts by writers of colour as merely autobiographies or immigrant novels, noting to following:

> At the most basic level, this is an inevitable consequence of a Western literary landscape dominated by white editors, white critics, and white readers. Writers of color are rarely perceived as innovators who might establish trends that permanently shift literary culture writ large. Their books might achieve great commercial and critical success and be celebrated for providing invaluable insights about the moment we inhabit, but in the end, they are usually regarded as books by and about people outside the mainstream of life.[6]

Moreover, mainstream Western scholarship frequently downplays the autobiografictional aspects of texts written by women, regarding women as being more reliant on autobiographical elements when writing fiction, and thus dismissing the aesthetic strategies of their craft. In her article, 'How We Read Autofiction', Rebecca Van Laer explained how 'autofiction written by women is more likely to be read as memoir, or even

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[3] Betty Ann Bergland, 'Representing Ethnicity in Autobiography: Narratives of Opposition', *The Yearbook of English Studies, Ethnicity and Representation in American Literature*, 24 (1994) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3507883> [accessed 10 December 2021], pp. 67-93 (p. 70).

[4] Tope Folarin, 'Can A Black Novelist Write Autofiction?', *The New Republic*, 2020. <https://newrepublic.com/article/159951/can-black-novelist-write-autofiction> [accessed 3 January 2022]. P.1.

[5] Rocío G Davis, 'Identity in Community in Ethnic Short Story Cycles', in *Ethnicity and The American Short Story* (New York: Garland, 1997) <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [accessed 11 January 2022] p. 3.

[6] Folarin, p.1.

self-help literature'.[7] More often than their male counterparts, female writers are assumed to be writing of their experiences, rather than their work being informed by those experiences.[8] Given the racialised and gendered dimensions of these discourses concerning autofiction and the short story cycle, Halaby's blending of the two in *West of the Jordan* not only constitutes a hybrid form of writing that responds to the diversity and commonalities of Arab American women's experiences, but also serves to emphasise the artistry of her work, itself a way of highlighting the complexity of a female Arab American individual's experience, insofar as the narrative of Hala emerges from Halaby's own experiences.

This section will discuss how Halaby's *West of the Jordan* fulfils the defining aspects of both the genre of autofiction and of the short story cycle, and therefore constitutes a hybrid form of writing that provides a space for the consideration of the heterogeneity and multiplicity of the female ethnic experiences provoked via the multiple narratives in the text. This discussion seeks to assist in redefining the notion of Bhabha's Third Space in the case of female Arab Americans, utilising the overlooked elements in the original definition explored in the previous chapters.

I pose two key arguments in attempting to define the generic properties of the text. First, since there are several similarities between Hala, one of the text's characters, and the author, Leila Halaby, the text can be categorised as an example of autofiction. This portmanteau word, first invented by Stephen Reynolds in his 1906 essay 'Autobiografiction', and then described in depth by Saunders,[9] is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* as an ambiguous location in the borderlands between different forms of life-writing

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[7] Rebecca Van Laer, 'How We Read Autofiction', *Blog.Pshares.org*, 2018 <https://blog.pshares.org/how-we-read-autofiction/> [accessed 3 February 2022], p.1.

[8] Pearl Andrews-Horrigan, 'Why Are Women's Novels Always Mistaken for Autobiography? - Rife Magazine', *Rife Magazine*, 2020 <https://www.rifemagazine.co.uk/> [accessed 3 February 2022], p.1.

[9] Max Saunders, *Self Impression: Life-Writing, Autobiografication, and the Forms of Modern Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), p. 166.

that includes biography, autobiography, memoir, diary, and different forms of fiction.[10] Among the various kinds of autofiction is the standard form of an autobiographical novel, in which a fictional protagonist embodies the author's personal experience, in the form of either first-person or third-person narration.[11]

When considering *West of the Jordan* as a work of autofiction, it is relevant to note that, while Halaby was born in Beirut, Lebanon, to an American mother and a Jordanian father, Hala's first connection and encounter with America was encouraged and supported by her late Palestinian mother, who married Hala's Jordanian father after she returned from her educational journey to America. Also, Halaby locates the character of Hala in the same city where Halaby herself is based, namely Tucson, Arizona, where, as Trembath wrote, 'Middle Eastern immigrants might see a slice of home […] [in the] intersection of Arab and American deserts'.[12] Moreover, Hala is the only character in the text who shares with Halaby the experience of crossing the borders and moving back and forth between two worlds. When asked about her favourite character in the work in an interview with the Beacon Press, Halaby stated that although she did not '"favor one character over the others", there was a time in the development of the manuscript that it was more focused on Hala's experience'.[13] Thus, one can sense the presence of Halaby in the sections that Hala narrates, and can consequently view these sections as falling within the autobiografiction category.

Identifying the narrative of Hala as an autofictional account within a composite novel or short story cycle provides insights into the wider understanding of the text. This is

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[10] Chris Baldick, 'Autobiografiction', *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015) <https://www-oxfordreference-com.abc.cardiff.ac.uk/view/10.1093/acref/9780198715443.001.0001/acref-9780198715443-e-1241> [accessed 14 July 2021], pp. 29-30.

[11] *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, p 29-30.

[12] Brian K. Trembath, 'Arabs in the (Arizona) Desert', *Denver Public Library Monthly Newsletter*, 2014 <https://history.denverlibrary.org/news/arabs-arizona-desert> [accessed 5 March 2021], p.1.

[13] 'Beacon Press: Reading Guide: West of The Jordan', *Beacon.org*. <http://www.beacon.org/Assets/ClientPages/WestOfTheJordanrg.aspx> [accessed 5 March 2021], p.1.

because, as the text presents the stories of several fictional characters, the autofictional inspiration of Halaby's ethnic experience woven into the story of Hala adds degrees of factuality to the text as a whole. Also, the degree of factuality in the similarities between the experiences of both Hala and Halaby welcomes the reader to construct a rapport with the rest of the characters and events. Accordingly, such rapport serves to acknowledge the experiences of the fictional characters and their journey, in order to straddle their hyphenated identities in their in-between spaces. The autobiografictional aspects woven into Hala's story, located in a text that structurally emphasises the diverse experiences of several fictional characters, also allow the author to work her own hybrid identity into the story through various imagined possibilities. In doing so, the author explores the frame of her Third Space of encounter in contrast to those of the other characters, which serves to stress the diversity of each character's ethnic experience and place of encounter between two opposing cultural entities.

It is important to establish the justification to give the author's use of the autofiction genre in the context of Arab American narratives in the post-9/11 period, and to determine how the genre might assist in delivering an alternative definition of Third Space that is inclusive of the intersectional nature of the ethnic experience of Arab American women. First, the genre enables the writer to navigate freely between different topics that address problematic and clashing themes, such as decrying the patriarchal and homophobic nature of Arab society, whilst also condemning US imperialist practices in the Middle East. The author's direct approach to addressing these themes during such a politically-charged period (post-9/11) might stigmatise the author's national affiliation to both groups to which they belong. Moreover, the conflicting perceptions of factuality and fictionality evoked by the genre reflect the blurred atmosphere after the 9/11 incident, in regard to America's perception of Arabs and Arab Americans, significantly. Although Arab American culture and literature

reached a wider audience in the US and elsewhere after the September 2001 attacks for various reasons, including what the Arab American scholar Metres described as the average US citizen's desire 'to understand "why they (meaning Arabs and Muslims) hate us", or to make sense of a place where thousands of Americans would now be stationed and fighting wars',[14] conflicting representations of Arabs and Arab Americans dominated the States' social scene, disturbing the community's position, in terms of US unity and national security.

The second key argument that defines the genre of *West of the Jordan* is that this work also adopts the characteristics of the composite novel or short story cycle. The text is a vehicle that delivers a collection of short stories, with different experiences presented in each story, developing the reader's understanding of the text as a whole.[15] This type of literary genre inhabits a liminal space on the borderline between the genre of short story and novel. In 'Nomadic Genres: The Case of the Short Story Cycle', Driss argued that this genre of literature that is 'often relegated to the margin of literary studies, offers a pertinent example of a nomadic genre. Because it resists definition, it inhabits a liminal space straddling the short story and the novel'.[16] Therefore, it is unsurprising that such genres of literature are used widely in nomadic and minority ethnic literary accounts, as they serve as a tool for exploring and negotiating the authors' liminal positions between multiple and different encounters. In his book, *The Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle,* Nagel explained the genre's influential role in delivering the multiplicity of aspects in a given culture as being due to the fact that

> the cycle lends itself to diegetical discontinuities, to the resolution of a series of conflicts, to the exploration of a variety of characters, to the use of a family or even a community as a

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[14] Philip Metres, 'Introduction to Focus: Arab-American Literature After 9/11', *American Book Review*, 34.1 (2012) <https://doi.org/10.1353/abr.2012.0178> [accessed 6 November 2021],pp.3-4 (p. 4).

[15] Michelle Pacht, *The Subversive Storyteller* (Newcastle upon Tyne [England]: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009), pp. 2-3.

[16] Hager Ben Driss, 'Nomadic Genres: The Case of The Short Story Cycle', *Mosaic: A Journal for The Interdisciplinary Study of Literature*, 51.2 (2018) <https://search.proquest.com/> [accessed 10 March 2021], pp. 59-74 (p. 60).

protagonist, to the exploration of the mores of a region or religion or ethnic group, each story revealing another aspect of the local culture.[17]

By utilising Nagel's point as a lens through which to analyse the text at hand, it becomes apparent that Halaby utilises the short store cycle genre as a means of constructing a pathway for the reader to traverse between the Us and the Arab world, the place of origin of the main characters.. Through Hala's back-and-forth crossing of borders, the genre grants the reader access to the places with which the characters affiliate themselves. In doing so, the genre extends the national boundaries of the Western reader in general, and the US reader in particular, and challenges the conventional temporal and particular expectations of what it means to be an Arab or Muslim in the post-9/11 era.

The genre of composite novel or short story cycle provides a detailed context for the case of female Arab Americans in the post-9/11 period that is widely framed with social, political, economic, and cultural networks, and might disorient the reader if not mapped appropriately. Thus, the use of such a genre is justified in the context of the text in question. In addition, the use of the genre of short story cycle in the context of female Arab American narratives in the post-9/11 period frees the author's voice from the burden of representing a particular form of hybridity amidst the political tension between the writer's two cultural groups. That is to say, the genre enables the writer to create more than one model of hybridity in the aftermath of 9/11 that is not necessarily sensible to any of the groups of the opposing powers. Thus, the genre accentuates the cautious stance of the text by detaching it from the reactions of both opposing sides to the events of 9/11. This strategy renders the text a global text that allows the reader to establish a direct relationship with the characters, and to comprehend their experiences as female Arab Americans living in the post-9/11 period.

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[17] James Nagel, *The Contemporary American Short-Story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2001), p. 15.

Another justification for using the genre in the narrative of female Arab Americans in the post-9/11 period is the appeal of shifting from politicising Arab culture, giving more space to artistic expression, and adding complexity to the narrative with a multiplicity of experiences. This tendency has flourished in the aftermath of 9/11, in order to spare 'the danger of the commodification of culture, of reducing Arab culture to familiar and safe American tropes of food and family'.[18] Furthermore, the multiplicity of narratorial voices, whose stories are linked to form the composition as a whole, suggests the multiplicity of voices and perspectives in the community's response to the hegemonic discursive conceptions towards them. This is not to suggest that the genre of composite novel or short story cycle is the only way in which the heterogeneity of the multiple voices can emerge, since some of the other texts examined in this thesis carry multiple voices, other than those of the main characters, but the genre employed by *West of the Jordan* provides a suitable medium for more than one main character to voice their experience. More importantly, the genre helps to highlight and explain the intersectional experience of female Arab Americans as they negotiate their hybrid identity within the network of gender, sexuality, and national belonging. Indeed, Nagel observed the role that the genre plays in enabling the 'exploration and depiction of the complex interactions of gender, ethnicity, and individual identity'.[19] Although the text marks the individuality of each character's experience by giving them separate stages from which to voice their different experiences, the outcome of using the short story cycle genre suggests the centrality of female Arab Americans' intersectional experience. In Davis's words, such a shift in focus from an individual story to the multiplicity of voices and stories that comprise the cycle as a whole 'marks the shift from the individual to community', and thus, the 'collective protagonists, the community' becomes the 'central

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[18] Metres, p. 4.
[19] Nagel, p. 10.

character of the cycle'.[20] Therefore, the text suggests the centrality of the female characters' intersectionality as a community, making their experiences the story's protagonist. Although the genre of the text encourages the reader to focus on the intersectionality of the characters' experiences, it does not dismiss the centrality of the other characters and events of the text, since their existence is not only vital for comprehending the intersectionality of the characters' experiences, but also, in Nagel's words, for providing the genre's 'most persistent continuity'.[21]

With the text treated as a hybrid form of writing that combines the genres of autofiction and short story cycle, the structure of the text foreshadows the sense of hybridity and ambivalence that marks the experiences of the female Arab American characters under examination. The next section of this chapter addresses the following questions: 1. What are the forms of diversity that the text offers, delivered through the hybrid genre of Halaby's *West of the Jordan* defined previously that can help to conceptualise and highlight the diversity of Third Spaces(s) in the ethnic experience of female Arab American narratives, and therefore complement Bhabha's theory of Third Space? 2. What is the alternative definition of Third Space that is inclusive of all aspects of the ethnic experiences of female Arab Americans?

The autobiografictional elements of Hala's narrative: the role of autofiction in highlighting the diversity of female Arab Americans' Third Space(s)

When examining the genre of autofiction, Dix writes that it can be seen as 'a project of self-exploration and self-experimentation […] of the author [and that] many works of autofiction have been written in the aftermath of some kind of traumatic experience - real or imagined - so that the process of writing in response to trauma can be seen as a means of

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[20] R. G. Davis, 'Oral Narrative as Short Story Cycle: Forging Community in Edwidge Danticat's "Krik? Krak!"', *MELUS: Multi-Ethnic Literature of The United States*, 26.2 (2001) <https://doi.org/10.2307/3185518> [accessed 6 October 2021], pp. 65-81(p. 65).
[21] Nagel, pp. 16-17.

situating the self in a new context when other relational constructs have been removed or jeopardized'.[22] This section highlights such autobiografictional elements that appear throughout Hala's narrative, in order to articulate the individuality of Hala's Third Space, among the other characters' ethnic experiences, whose stories are delivered via the genre of the short story cycle.

This section of the chapter reveals the individuality of Hala's Third Space by reading her narrative via two autofictional elements. One element is the author's act of creating imaginary possibilities that are the outcome of the fusion of fictionality and factuality into the storytelling of the self. Through this element, the author constructs a space between what is invented and what is experienced, in which an examination of notions such as *identity* and *otherness* can occur. The second autobiografictional element is the reworking of trauma and memory, a practice that enables the author to approach aspects of their ethnic and hybrid identity formation. This exploration of the diversity of the examined characters' Third Space(s) will support the contemplation of Bhabha's theory of Third Space, and the identification of an alternative definition that fits the ethnic experience of female Arab Americans, whilst also considering the gaps of race, gender, class, and sexuality discussed previously. This section approaches aspects of individuality in Hala's narrative by assessing how the genre of autofiction reveals the author's attempts at self-exploration through the autobiografictional elements mentioned previously.

The narrative of Hala relates the story of her journey to make sense of her dual belonging to both America and the Arab world. Hala's desire for a better life leads her to make the decision to study in the US. Despite her father's disapproval, her mother, Huda,

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[22] Hywel Dix, 'Introduction: Autofiction in English: The Story So Far', in *Autofiction in English* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2018) <https://books.google.co.uk/books> [accessed 26 February 2022], pp. 1-23 (p. 4).

persuades him to allow Hala to pursue her dreams, and she finally makes it to the US. Huda encourages her daughter's goals, as she herself left home for the US to pursue her studies, but ultimately found herself mired in controversy. Gossip and rumours regarding Huda's chastity spread in the community and travelled all the way to her family home in Palestine when a relative of hers claimed to witness her spending a 'night at her boyfriend's house'.[23] This incident forces Huda's father to recall her to her family home, and to marry her off to Hala's Jordanian father.

Hala had the opportunity to travel to Jordan twice when living with her uncle Hamdi and aunt Fay in Arizona, the first occasion being for her mother's death and the second for her grandmother's demise. In her first visit, Hala confronts her father and his determination to control her life, because 'not even two days into [her] mourning her [mother's] death, he made it clear that he was going to be the one to make the decisions about [her] life from then on'.[24] Hala's father insists that she must 'plan to put [her] roots here as a woman',[25] which makes Hala realise her father's plan for her to get married. Hala refuses to diminish her dreams and the chances she has taken to pursue them by fulfilling the role of the biddable daughter. At this moment in the confrontation with her father, she finally understands that she is more than an Arab girl, recognising that she has 'learned how to move [her] tongue like an American' and to express her refusal to fit his model of the good daughter. Hala leaves once more to return to the US after falling out with her father, feeling that 'in one week [she] lost both [her] parents'.[26]

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[23] Laila Halaby, *West of The Jordan* (Boston, Mass.: Beacon, 2004), p. 21.
[24] Ibid., p. 45.
[25] Ibid., p. 45.
[26] Ibid., p. 46.

After deciding to leave Jordan for good, Hala returns to the country three years later for her paternal grandmother's death. This time, her sense of alienation intensifies as her reflections magnify her differences from her people:

> I know they see me with curious eyes. I left before marrying age. I have finished high school and I should be coming back for marriage, not for death. I should have longer hair, I should wear makeup. I should not wear blue jeans and "extremely unfeminine dresses," as Aunt Suha says. I should stop using English words. Nila, one of my classmates at the American school just married and is pregnant. I am unconnected.[27]

During her time in Jordan, Hala reunites with her cousin Sharif, who adopts the role of tour guide, in order to connect Hala with the land and traditions of her country. Sharif helps Hala to reconstruct a complex and alternative notion of home, 'making [her] see [her] country in a way [she] never [has]'.[28] Subsequently, Hala forges a new connection to her land, and undergoes identity negotiation in the process. Her experience of feeling torn between two worlds is reflected in her return to Arizona, where she finally becomes aware of her multi-layered identity. The image that she describes at the end of her narrative of her white walls, decorated with pictures of her memories from back home, exemplifies the Third Space that she inhabits. While the white walls indicate her roots in America, the photos reference her heritage, and therefore define her connection to her Arabness. Towards the end of her narrative, Hala is able to find the formula that defines her Third Space, a location that lies between her two worlds. Various autofictional elements in the narrative reveal Hala's negotiation of her Third Space. First, the element of fusing reality with the imaginary is present in the characterisation of the figure of Huda, Hala's mother. Halaby reworks the establishment of her own Americanness, inherited from her American mother, by creating the imaginary figure of Hala's Arab mother, who also helps to establish Hala's early connection to her Americanness.

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[27] Ibid., p. 77.
[28] Ibid., p. 134.

As seen in the texts discussed in the second and third chapters of this thesis, the figure of the Arab mother is mostly represented as either voiceless and helpless or domineering and dominated by the patriarchal social order, or is entirely absent. However, Hala's narrative introduces an uncommon Arab mother figure, one that casts off the gendered chains imposed by her Arab culture by encouraging her daughter's ambitions, instead of playing the role of the preserver of the patriarchal social norms. In her narrative, Hala vividly portrays her mother's desire for her to live Huda's unfinished dream of living in America:

> My mother was excited, perhaps because she thought I'd have a chance to finish what she barely started, or perhaps because she thought I'd have a freer education. Regardless, I was terrified at the thought of being away from my family, even though the idea of going to America - the America my mother had only tasted - was exciting. I was tired of being made fun of for reading, for being too headstrong, for speaking my mind.[29]

The autofictional element of the fusion of what is experienced and what is imagined, embodied in the figure of Hala's mother, also raises opportunities for Halaby to fuse other contrasting elements in the text, such as the figure of the Arab mother and the notion of the US American Dream. In her article, 'Arab Mothers, American Sons: Women in Arab-American Autobiographies', Shakir evaluated the figure of the Arab mother in most Arab American literary writings as 'the embodiment of [the] ethnic heritage'.[30] As discussed in Chapter Three of this thesis, regarding the construction of the ethnic identity of Arab Americans, the figure of the Arab mother has conventionally been the guardian of the culture. Forming an association between the ethnic standards of such a figure and the notion of the American Dream, an ideal that calls for freedom and seeking opportunities for prosperity, creates conflict.

However, reading Hala's narrative through the lens of autofiction invites us to see the possibilities of fusing these conflicting conceptions. It engenders a modified version of the

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[29] Ibid., p. 9.
[30] Evelyn Shakir, 'Arab Mothers, American Sons: Women in Arab-American Autobiographies', *MELUS*, 17.3 (1991) <https://doi.org/10.2307/467236> [accessed 10 October 2021], pp. 30-50 (p. 35).

figure of the Arab mother that is compatible with the notion of the American Dream. This merging of clashing conceptions reflects Hala's process of negotiating the clashing components of her identity, her Arabness, and her Americanness, producing a modified version of her that is reflected in her unique Third Space between both cultures.

Another autofictional element through which we can observe the negotiation of Hala's Third Space is the reworking of traumatic events and memoirs throughout her narrative. Halaby braids Hala's narrative with the collective trauma and memories of the Palestinian diaspora. In an interview, Halaby explained how:

> Palestine has always been central to [her] writing. Love of land, loss, exile, forcible removal, the physical beauty of land being bittersweet because it is so often seen through memory rather than today's life [...] these themes have always intrigued [her], especially as they relate to identity.[31]

Halaby's text is not a pioneer in dealing with the Palestinian diaspora. In fact, and as mentioned earlier in this thesis, for most Arab American writers, the Palestinian cause forms one of the prominent pillars in negotiating Arab American ethnic identity in their writing. However, the revival of the Palestinian diaspora in Halaby's text is distinguishable, as it uses powerful images that take the post-9/11 reader on board in revisiting the Palestinian trauma. One of the episodes that recalls the Palestinian diaspora is when Hala summons a childhood memory of the summer she spent with her family in Aqaba, paddling with her cousin Sharif in the water of the Gulf of Aqaba on the Red Sea:

> I see a small shell under the water but when I go to grab it, the water moves and it vanishes.
> "Let's swim home," he says with his face still in the sun.
> "Home? This beach won't reach to Amman. How can we swim there if there is no water?"
> I try to stay still so my shell will come back.
> "I mean to Palestine." He turns to look at me.
> "We can't swim to Palestine."
> "Why not? She's right there." He points to the right, below the sun. We are so close that we can see the houses on the shore.
> "That's Palestine?"
> He nods, still looking.
> I feel funny inside. "We're not allowed to go there. It's not our home anymore." The water is very blurry now.

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[31] Steven Salaita, interview with Laila Halaby, RAWI Newsletter (summer 2008) <https://arabamericanwriters.org/newsletter/> [accessed 10 October 2021], pp. 1-13 (p. 4).

"Says who?" He stares at me with his hands in fists at his waist.
I feel scared. My cousin seems very big. I look back down to see the pretty shell under the water, but all I see is swirling.[32]

Halaby portrays a distanced, yet always present connection to Palestine when Sharif and Hala remember paddling away from the shore at Aqaba and reaching the border of Palestine, only to have a Jordanian military motorboat tell them that the Israelis will not let them cross. Halaby uses the symbols of the water and the boat to depict the Palestinian nomadic diaspora experience. While the image of a sailing boat might evoke ideals of liberty and exploration, the same image may also evoke a sense of loss and dislocation. In her use of this image, Halaby demonstrates the pain and suffering many Palestinians experienced when they were dispossessed and pushed into the sea in the aftermath of the 1948 Palestinian exodus, and on the numerous occasions that followed. The boat represents the floating homes that many Palestinians inhabited, islands where they sought a sense of grounding and safety. Moreover, the boat also represents the final destination of the many people who could not return to the land and were left vulnerable, stateless, and exposed to nature's mercy, to die and be buried at sea. Halaby depicts the magnificent hope of Palestinians through the symbol of the shell under the water. Here, Hala indicates the glimmer of hope in reclaiming the land of her heritage, whilst using the symbolism of flowing water to highlight the water's destructive meaning, its power in distancing them further from their lands.

The significance of reviving the Palestinian diaspora in a post-9/11 text aligns with Harb's definition of 'associative remembering',[33] which she defines as a strategy of dealing with the 'configuration of inside-outside and self-other, […] [which] does not purport to eliminate such boundaries as much as it aims to question their nature and denounce the omissions that went into their formation'.[34] Reading Halaby's recollection of the Palestinian

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[32] Halaby, pp. 124-125.
[33] Harb, "Arab American Women's Writing and September 11", p.16.
[34] Ibid., p. 16.

exodus of 1948 in a post-9/11 text through the lens of associative remembering serves 'to bring together traumatic experiences bridging the US and Arab world',[35] and therefore to reconcile traumatic moments with both of the inhabitants of her hyphenated identity. However, as the 'US memorialization of 9/11 victims […] exclude[s] Arabs and Muslims from the memory of the lost and maimed in the attacks',[36] it highlights the presence of ethnic discrimination in the place of encounter between America and the Arab American community. Thus, the factor of race plays an undeniable role in characterising the Third Space in the case of Arab Americans, an observation that negates Bhabha's claim of the dismantling of discrimination and racism in his definition of Third Space.

Another autofictional element through which we can witness Hala negotiating the concept of her Third Space is her reclamation of the idea of home through memory. The genre facilitates the author's reworking of different notions in the journey of self-exploration, so memory plays a vital role in Hala's understanding of her connection to her Arabness, and of to her dual position between the two worlds. Hala must come to terms with crossing the border back and forth between the two worlds, as well as finding ways to accept her new connection to the landscapes of her land of origin, nurtured by the memories she claimed in her tour with her cousin. Back in America, Hala realises that she now sees everything with new eyes. This realisation enlightens Hala regarding how her relative, Hamdi, who is married to his American wife, Fay, and with whom Hala lives in America, roots himself in the US differently from her:

> Inside, however, the white walls are bare because that is classier than having photos and posters scattered all over the place.
> The house is decorated in high-class American style… High-class American blah, no soul, no colors, only outside walls that wandered in and stayed. Show-off house with no heart or fancy bracelets.
> Funny how this never bothered me before, how I almost didn't notice it.

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[35] Ibid., p. 16.
[36] Ibid., p. 16.

Maybe Hamdi is trying to fit in, have a house sturdy and plain like everyone's moods. Maybe they both like this look. Maybe they see it best not to imagine as you gaze at the walls, that it's best to sit in silence.[37]

In this excerpt, Hala refers to the lack of memories about, and attachment to, the origin of her relative's assimilation process in America. The white walls, photos, and posters are again symbolic in this context; whereas elsewhere white walls signify America, here they represent the outcome of a long process of erasing signs of the past that might evoke a sense of strangeness and interfere with someone's assimilation process into a society. The absence of posters and photos in Hamdi's home implies the absence of celebration of ethnic heritage and place of origin. Hala notices that she does not make this observation until she is loaded with memories and attachments to her homeland. On this occasion, Halaby refers to the assimilation process many Arabs undergo when establishing their lives in America. The emptiness of the white walls alludes to the community's phases of silence and disappearance amidst the political and cultural conflicts surrounding their journey of migration and immigration.

The role of memory and remembrance in perceiving one's ethnic background reveals itself in Hala's narrative when she eventually achieves a stable sense of belonging, and the space for negotiating her bicultural identity. Thus, Halaby's construction of Hala's narrative is a construction of Hala's Third Space, through a journey back and forth between the two worlds. The difference between Hala and her uncle's assimilation process is evident in her interaction with her uncle:

"How do you expect to make it in this country if you don't work harder than everyone else?" he says.
What I want to know is how you expect to make it in this country if you're wandering around with a knot the size of yesterday on your stomach.
We see it all differently. He needs a routine and starkness to make it, and I need clutter and memories.[38]

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[37] Halaby, pp. 216-217.
[38] Ibid., p. 218.

Unlike her uncle, Hala's way of negotiating her identity is to find patterns of differentiation that distinguish her experience as an individual from the collective homogenic representation of her ethnic groups, and instead revolve around memories and attachments to her heritage, helping make 'the white walls… [look] softer'.[39]

One can use the autobiografictional function of self-exploration embodied in the two elements discussed, namely creating imaginary possibilities through fusing fictionality and factuality, and rewriting trauma and memory, to read Hala's negotiation of her in-between place between the two worlds. The two elements illuminate the roles of race and socially-constructed gender standards in marking the uniqueness of Hala's Third Space between the two worlds, and thereby the diversity of female Arab American ethnic experiences.

The uniqueness of Hala's experience is evident only when read alongside the other voices in the text, and that is why the text serves the purpose of this chapter, and of the thesis as a whole. Halaby uses the genre of short-story cycle to portray the experiences of the other voices in *West of the Jordan*. The multiplicity of voices in the text offers various effects that contribute to the understanding of how each character reacts in an individualised manner to the wider spatial and temporal frame in which they are situated, a factor that is vital to the examination of the diversity of the ethnic experience of female Arab Americans. In 'Multiple Voices, Multiple Genres', Gillis wrote that, in works of literature that are focalised through a single narrator,

> the reader is drawn closer to those people - we identify, sympathize, perhaps empathize, and even agonize as we experience events through their eyes. Where more than one character tells the story (or stories), the effect is somewhat different. Our loyalties are not to one but the whole. And while we become aware of how each character sees and responds to events, we are also aware of how the events affect the character's relationships. We acquire a kind of intimate omniscience by viewing the world through multiple lenses. We are able to map the territory in a way no one single traveller can.[40]

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[39] Ibid., p. 219.
[40] Candida Gillis, 'Multiple Voices, Multiple Genres: Fiction for Young Adults', *The English Journal*, 92.2 (2002) <https://doi.org/10.2307/822226> [accessed 20 October 2021], pp. 52-59 (p. 52).

By applying Gillis's discussion of the effect of the multiplicity of voices in a literary work to Halaby's *West of the Jordan*, one can view how, first, the genre of short story cycle enables us to observe each character's interaction with the text's recurrent and developing internal structure, namely its symbols, themes, characterisation, and motifs. Second, the genre urges the reader to examine the uniqueness of each character's experience when negotiating their in-between-ness, and therefore stresses the diversity of Arab American women's ethnic experiences. Finally, the genre shuttles us between the settings where some of the characters are based; in the case of *West of the Jordan*, Mawal is based in Palestine, while the other characters are based in the US. While the experiences of Soraya and Khadija can be viewed and read within an ethnic Arab American frame, in the same way as that of Hala, Mawal's voice inhabits an entirely different environment. Her voice never addresses the question of hybridity and assimilation, as she remains in Palestine over the course of the story. However, the existence of Mawal's narrative in a diasporic Arab American text provides a key for understanding the other characters' experiences. The next section of this chapter explores the narrative of Mawal, and the effect of its placement in a diasporic Arab American text.

The exploration of the narrative of Mawal, a Palestinian voice in a diasporic Arab American text

After Hala's section, the second voice *West of the Jordan* introduces the reader to is that of Mawal. Within the multi-voiced text, Mawal conveys details of daily life in the small village called Nawara in Palestine, where she lives. Mawal and her mother achieve access to the tales of the village and its people through their career as seamstresses. In her narrative, Mawal offers accounts of life in the village under Israeli occupation, and of women whose spouses or children have left them behind in Palestine to seek better lives in the US, or elsewhere. More importantly, Mawal's narrative provides another perspective on the stories of the cousins, Hala, Soraya, and Khadija.

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Although this thesis focuses on the ethnic experience of the hybrid and migrant

identities of female Arab American subjectivities, and although the character of Mawal

cannot be defined as hybrid or migrant in terms of this thesis, I argue that the characterisation

of Mawal in the context of an Arab American text that presents the experience of hybridity

and migration is important for the understanding of the hybrid characters' multiple Third

Space(s). This section of the chapter explores and contextualises the functions of the short

story cycle in question, specifically the importance of Mawal's narrative in a diasporic Arab

American text. The narrative of Mawal has more than one function. First, basing the

character in the family's ancestral village of Nawara in Palestine allows the reader to share

Mawal's experience of what it means to live in modern-day colonialism under the Israeli

occupation of Palestinian lands. This choice helps to achieve one of the short-story cycle

genre's purposes in an diasporic text, namely coming to terms with the community's history.

This point was elaborated upon by Davis in her work, 'Sigrid Nunez's "A Feather on The

Breath of God": Visions of The Ethnic Self in A Chinese American Short Story Cycle'. She

explained that

> … ethnic short story cycles may project a desire to come to terms with a past that is both
> personal and collective: this type of fiction often explores the ethnic character and history
> of a community as a reflection of a personal odyssey of displacement, and search for self
> and community. More specifically, the two principal thematic constituents of the ethnic
> story cycle are the presentation of identity and community as separate entities and the
> notion of an identity within a community, again, a common theme of ethnic fiction.[41]

The inclusion of Mawal's narrative among the stories of the other Arab American

characters who share their journey of straddling both worlds enables the reader to closely

evaluate the origins of the US-based characters, and the impact of these origins on those

characters and their Third Space(s) between two cultures. The function of this storytelling

method is apparent in Mawal's narrative from its very early sections. She opens by

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[41] Rocío G. Davis, 'Sigrid Nunez's "A Feather on The Breath of God": Visions of The Ethnic Self in
A Chinese American Short Story Cycle', *REDEN: Revista Española De Estudios Norteamericanos*,
13.1131-9674 (1997) <https://ebuah.uah.es> [accessed 17 November 2021], pp. 41-54 (p. 45).

introducing the reader to her village, familiarising the non-Arabic reader with the village's

name by employing various images:

> Our village is called Nawara, which means flowers or blossoms. When you say it, Naw-waar-a, a hillside of small white wildflowers comes to mind, or the fragrant new blossoms on an orange or almond tree.
> Everywhere is famous for something: political activism, delicious vegetables, ugly women. Our village is an island famous for beautiful embroidered dresses that we call *rozas* while most everyone else calls them thobes, and yet surrounded by villages that do not embroider at all.[42]

Moreover, Mawal's references to why her village is famous challenges the Western

reader's preconceptions of Palestine and the Arab world, places that have often been

portrayed in a negative frame. As mentioned earlier in the discussion of the genre of short

story cycles, Arab American writers of the post-9/11 period can use the genre to move

beyond the politicisation of Arab heritage in general, specifically that of Palestinian culture,

and to cover other aspects of Arabic people's daily lives, in order to showcase common

human patterns. These aspects assist the writer's mission to humanise the Arab race to the

American public after the 9/11 attacks.

This intention is reflected in the dominant symbolism of *rozas* in Mawal's narrative.

She proudly presents the image of the traditional embroidered dress as the symbol of her

village, Nawara, and thus as a reference to Palestine's heritage and cultural tradition. The

stitching also serves as a continuous articulation of the Palestinian collective memory, the

resilience and resistance transferred down the generations and to the Palestine diaspora

worldwide. As an embroiderer herself, Mawal is active in maintaining and reclaiming

Palestine's memory, and the text presents her as the keeper of memories. She explains that

'so many women come to spill their secrets and their joys and their agonies because they

know my mother - and I - will keep them safe and do no more than stitch them into the fabric

of our rozas'.[43] This connection between stitching and preserving the stories and memories of

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[42] Halaby, p. 15.
[43] Ibid., p. 17.

Palestine renders Mawal, as Salaita described her, a metaphorical anchor and the culturally competent preserver of tales through her involvement in the act of stitching and safeguarding the stories and remembrances of Palestine.[44] On multiple occasions in her narrative, she conveys this connection:

> Stitch in red for life.
> Stitch in green to remember.
> Stitch, stitch to never forget.[45]

Here, Mawal demonstrates the integration of Palestinian national identity with the stories of village women, signified by the allusions to the Palestinian national flag in its colours of red and green. Through the art of embroidery, Halaby is able to illustrate the integral role of women in safeguarding Palestinian culture and preserving its national identity. The importance of this role was explained by Saca as follows:

> …Despite the political and economic difficulties, however, women in the refugee camps, mainly in Jordan and Lebanon, continued to embroider in the style of their original villages in an attempt to maintain their displaced identity. By continuing the tradition of embroidery and wearing traditional dresses, women felt that in their own way they were keeping part of their heritage and village alive.[46]

The act of stitching has become one of the many gestures of political activism in which women take part, prioritising activities that honour their culture and reproduce their national heritage.

The second function of Mawal's narrative and characterisation is to provide context for the text's recurrent and developing internal structure. The recurrent and developing themes, such as the notion of home and socially-constructed gender standards, and symbols such as *rozas* that occur in the narratives of the other characters in the text can be understood further when read within the narrative of Mawal. Stories,[47] such as the gossip that destroyed

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[44] Salaita, *Modern Arab American Fiction*, p. 80.
[45] Halaby, p. 103.
[46] Iman Saca, *Embroidering Identities: A Century of Palestinian Clothing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006) <https://oi.uchicago.edu/research/publications/> [accessed 12 May 2021], p. 15.
[47] Traditional Palestinian embroidered dress.

Hala's mother's chances for a better future, as explored in the previous section of this chapter, are retold in Mawal's narrative; however, this time, they address the social implications, revealing how gender standards function highly in the community. Mawal relates the story of Huda's mother, 'who is Bedouin, was - and is - conservative like a gridle', and Huda's father, who was 'open to new ideas' and who 'let [Huda] go to America and live with her brother [Hamdi] while she studied',[48] although this decision was 'against the advice of the entire village'.[49] As the story is told from Mawal's point-of-view, the reader is provided with a context for the social structure of the Palestinian village, and the degree of its collective power when imposed on individuals; in this case, the collective power that the village imposed on her father when they challenged his decision to support Huda's dream.

One of the many other forms of the village's collective power is what Mawal calls 'Big-mouth village',[50] a scenario in which men perform the role of the guardians of the village's women, either in the village or abroad, and the women facilitate the role by spreading gossip and stories. Huda's story is an example of how these roles operate within the village.: In the course of Huda befriending and falling in love with a boy while studying in the US, one of her brother's acquaintances from Nawara called his mother back in the village:

> …He told her something like: *I am fine and I see Hamdi Salaama a fair amount, and his sister, of course. Yes, she's studying. Well, she's really not so good. If you'll keep this to yourself, I'll tell you. Promise, Yama? Well, she's not so proper and last night she didn't come home at all. Why indeed? She was spending the night at her boyfriend's house.* Within hours the entire village knew what had happened. My grandmother [Huda's mother] was hysterical, tearing her clothes and weeping as if Huda had died.[51]

Mawal's depiction of the reaction to Huda's story illuminates the society's codes imposed on women, whether they reside in the village or abroad, and confirms the cost of

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[48] Halaby, p. 20.
[49] Ibid., p. 20.
[50] Ibid., p. 19.
[51] Ibid., p. 21.

challenging the system. In Huda's case, her dreams were reduced to ash by the people of the village, and 'it was no surprise that shortly after her return she was married to an older Jordanian man and left Nawara forever'.[52] Although Hala provides a brief account of the story of her mother, a detailed view of the situation would not be possible without the existence of the additional narrative of Mawal. If a detailed version of Huda's story was provided in Hala's narrative, in which Hala explores her position between the two worlds, it might shift the focus to a direct criticism of her culture, and therefore might disorient the reader who follows Hala's negotiation of her Third Space.

Another element through which Mawal's narrative contributes to the understanding of the other internal structures of the text is the elaborate symbol of the *roza*. Through Mawal's narrative, we understand the symbolic meaning of the *roza* and its connection to the notion of home and the Palestinian cause. Once this connection is made clear in Mawal's narrative, the reader can then comprehend why, towards the end of Hala's narrative, Hala chooses to wear a *roza* on her flight back to America, after she reconciles with her Arabness:

> My father argued with me… "Why must you wear this? You know it is not appropriate. You are flying to America! Miss Modern Lady Who Had Almost No Interest In Dresses Until Today, why can't you wear your beloved jeans like you do all the time?"
> It was endless, but no argument worked. I am wearing a *roza* that my grandmother made for mother as part of her trousseau. My mother wore mostly western clothes - skirts and shirts or western dresses - but at home she liked dishdashes and this roza.
> … I am not at all nervous on this flight. There is no mystery and no worrying. No one is expecting a face I cannot offer. […] People do walk by and look at me strangely. Too young a girl with too short hair for that roza (a thobe, in their minds). I wonder if they think I am a foreigner.[53]

As explored in the previous section of this chapter, Hala is eventually able to connect with her Arabness through her country's land and heritage, whilst maintaining her roots in America. The way she is dressed on her outbound flight to America, wearing a *roza* and a

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[52] Ibid., p. 21.
[53] Ibid., pp. 203-204.

short haircut, reflects her contentment with such a conflicting dynamic, and therefore her comfort in settling between the two worlds in her Third Space.

Again, one can understand the recurrent symbol of the *roza* properly through the narrative of Mawal, as she contextualises the symbol within the daily life of Palestinians and the Palestinian cause. With so many stories and secrets kept 'soft… and… stitch[ed]… into the fabric of [their] *rozas*',[54] the reader understands how *rozas* become a symbol of connection to the land and the Palestinian cause for Hala, along with the other memories of her connection to the land before leaving for the US. The depth of this understanding would only be possible through Mawal's voice, an embroiderer who never leaves Palestine and has close access to the culture.

Finally, the existence of the narrative of Mawal in an Arab American text contributes to what I call the 'third space-ing' of the text of *West of the Jordan*. Mawal's narrative deterritorializes not only the English language, but also both Arab American and American literary traditions. In other words, the flawless English voice given to Mawal, the character who never leaves Palestine, highlights the daily life of a Palestinian teenager, and therefore familiarises the Western reader with her environment. As Awad writes, 'Language functions as a mode of transformation, subversion and resistance that Arab women employ to express their cultural difference in the language of the dominant culture and to challenge assumptions that literature is an elite Western discourse',[55] Awad cited Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin regarding the 'strategies of appropriation' that

> are numerous and vary widely in post-colonial literatures, but they are the most powerful and ubiquitous way in which English is transformed by formerly colonized writers. Such strategies

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[54] Ibid., p. 17.

[55] Yousef Awad, 'Cartographies of Identities: Resistance, Diaspora, And Trans-Cultural Dialogue in The Works of Arab British and Arab American Women Writers' ((un)published doctoral thesis, University of Manchester, 2011) <https://www.proquest.com/docview/> [accessed 1 June 2021], p. 15.

enable the writer to gain world audience and yet produce a culturally distinct, culturally appropriate idiom that announces itself as different even though it is 'English'.[56]

The deterritorialization of the English language is also accomplished by estranging the Western reader from English. While some words, such as *rozas* and *Nawara,* are given an adequate translation and context to ensure the Western reader's understanding, other words that occur throughout the narrative, such as *Thobes*, *Muezzin,* and *Bowls of Fool*, are never translated or embedded in contexts that might give hints to their meanings. The combination of familiarising and estranging the language from its reader presents the text as a reflection of the complexity of the hybridity of its characters. That is, the text reflects the different components of the characters, who consist of the hybridity between two or more cultures.

Although the narrative of Mawal does not deal with the elements of migration and ethnic encounter, her selection of storytelling vehicle is vital for enabling the understanding of the other voices in the text. Mawal's narrative functions at various levels, contributing to both the text's internal structure, namely the symbols, themes, characterisation, and motifs, and the composition of the text as a whole with its voices and language use. The next section of this chapter examines the other multiple functions of short story cycle, assessing the narrative voices of Soraya and Khadija as hybrid identities negotiating their diverse Third Space(s) between two worlds.

The range of Third Space(s) of the hybrid identities of Soraya and Khadija; the role of the short story cycle in highlighting the diversity of the characters' ethnic experiences

The other two voices in *West of the Jordan* are Soraya and Khadija, second-generation female Arab Americans descended from migrated Arab parents. Their narratives convey their journey of negotiating their hybrid identities between US society and the Arab community in the US. Both characters share almost the same circumstances, yet each

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[56] Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back*, 2 ed. (London & New York: Routledge, 2002), p. 76, cited in Awad, p. 15.

presents a different version of their position between the two opposing components of their hybrid identity. From the outset, Soraya's narrative reveals the passionate and rebellious qualities of her personality. The confidence and strength of her tone dominates her narrative and distinguishes her from the rest of the voices in the text. Throughout Soraya's narrative, we observe how she negotiates her in-between position as she defies the expectations of her Arab parents regarding the cultural norms they have projected onto her. She prefers to choose for herself the cultural symbols that help her to shape her ethnic identity while she attempts to assimilate into US society among her American peers.

In contrast, the narrative of Khadija illustrates the ongoing development of her voice and character. From the outset of Khadija's narrative, the reader hears the weak and oppressed voice relating her relationship with her abusive father and her passive relationship with her voiceless mother. Khadija's voice also betrays her confusion as she struggles to fit into either of the two opposing worlds in which she is situated, and therefore to understand her hybrid identity. In order to reach an understanding of how each character negotiates their hybrid identity uniquely, while sharing similar circumstances, this section of the chapter explores the function of the genre of short story cycle in foregrounding diversity. This exploration serves as part of the chapter's hypothesis that the genre of the short story cycle helps to highlight the individuality of the ethnic experience of the characters examined, and to reveal the diversity of their Third Space(s) in between two cultures.

As the genre, in the context of the text examined, elucidates how the characters negotiate similar themes, yet also demonstrates unique understandings of their individual position between two cultures, it not only allows the text to present an anti-hegemonic set of themes, but also assists in emphasising diversity and celebrating difference. Thus, the diversity of female Arab Americans' Third Space(s) is evident in the hybrid genre of Halaby's text, *West of the Jordan*, with the use of the genre of short

story cycle supplying a medium for delivering and understanding the characters' ethnic experiences.

In *West of the Jordan*, two of the most important themes portrayed, through which we can observe the short story cycle genre's function of foregrounding diversity, are assimilation and identity-formation in the narratives of Soraya and Khadija. The multiple voices that the genre delivers give space for the consideration of the differences and diversity in how each character engages with such essential themes. When examining the characters of Soraya and Khadija, one must note that their differences are derived from how each of them functions differently in their Third Space. Both women adopt different roles in negotiating their affiliation to both worlds.

The different stances that Soraya and Khadija embrace help to conceptualise their engagement with the different themes highlighted through the use of the genre of short story cycle, and therefore stress the diversity of their Third Space(s). Soraya's stance reflects both her process of assimilation and that of her identity formation. Her stance is evident from the start of her narrative:

> I have fire.
> Everyone knows it. They see it in my beautiful brown exotic eyes that I paint full of Maybelline kohl to turn my tears black.
> "She's Arabian," they say at my high school as I pass by them. "In her country they don't have furniture or dishwashers, only oil."
> I tell them what they want to hear, which is nasty stories about young men sticking their things into goats and some twelve-year-old girl being carried off on a camel to be third wife to old shaykh So-an-So and the five oil wells my father owns.[57]

Soraya's identity formation and acculturation between these two worlds is articulated within her narrative's very first lines. She appears exotic and strange, not only to the US society in which she lives, but also to her Arab side, as she is seen by her mother to 'have a weak spirit' and have been 'taken in by the lie that is America:

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[57] Halaby, p. 24.

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freedom, freedom, freedom'.[58] Soraya refuses the role of ambassador of her culture and

ethnic group when her mother reproves the stories that she tells: '"You have to show

the best of us, not the ugly lies". But I let my ambassador sister and cousins do that

while I talk ghetto slang',[59] thereby adopting a conflicted stance in representing her

culture. She is reluctant to correct the misconceptions of her race and refuses the

burden of the collective representation of her ethnic group, effectively contributing to

the reinforcement of offensive stereotypes of her race.

One could interpret this behaviour as Soraya's way of appearing familiar to

Americans, and hence gaining their acceptance when merging with mainstream society.

However, she is aware that her Arab facial features contribute to her failure to be cast

as an American. In one of the episodes in her narrative, she relates the story of when

she and her male Arab friend, Walid, got into a fight with a group of White men in a

bar, who made racist comments about Soraya and Walid's appearance and language:

> [I] Sneak back home, heart pounding hours later, with rage, with hate. What loser morons and, squeezing tears out, wishing that it was one of those American movies where Walid would knock those guys to the floor and we would walk off without a scratch, my heroic prince defending my honor [...] but that's not what the American movie would show, would it? Instead it would show the super American guy knocking the scummy Arab flat on the ground like what happened. Still wishing [...] that I were a superhero like in those cartoons where she comes in and wipes out the bad guys and still looks great. But there aren't any Arab ones, are there? My hair is too dark, too thick; my skin is too far away from white to let me even pretend to be an American superhero.[60]

As Soraya realises her foreignness in her attempts to claim her Americanness, she

identifies with her Arab features, as she does in the first extract of her narrative in order to

articulate her detachment from mainstream society. However, her celebration of her body and

sexuality detaches her from her Arab side. She indicates this on two separate occasions:

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[58] Ibid., p. 25.
[59] Ibid., p. 24.
[60] Ibid., p. 60.

I have a skinny girl's waist with woman hips and large breasts. I know my body is sexy; I can tell by the way men look at me, by the way men have always looked at me. I try to hide it in front of my family, and most days I go to school early so I can change out of my loose pants and elbow-length shirts into tighter clothes that make my body show more.[61]

It always happens like this: when it comes for the women to dance, I put them to shame. Even when I was little it happened like that. I don't know where it comes from, but they know it - it's fire. They talk about how bad I am, especially at weddings in the States, because I dance shamelessly where men can see me and not just in front of women and a camera.[62]

The way in which Soraya embraces her body is a sign of rebellion and a source of trouble. She is judged by her family and community for challenging the Arab standards of what constitutes a good Arab girl. She criticises the Arabic cultural restrictions imposed on women's bodies, using her body and sexuality to detach herself from her Arab side. Thus, she articulates her position between the two worlds by defining herself as a unique breed of hybrid identity, estranging herself from both cultures. One the one hand, Soraya celebrates the exotic Orientalist stereotypes engraved in the mind of US citizens about the Arab race when among her US peers, which renders her an *Other*. Concurrently, she *Other*s herself from her Arab side, as she challenges her own belonging by embracing notions of freedom and sexuality, the two notions that conflict with the celebration of women's chastity and the image of the good Arab girl, and that form one of the pillars of ethnic identity for Arab Americans.

Soraya not only detaches herself from both sides of her hyphenated identities, but also stresses the uniqueness of her hybrid identity, as she withdraws from the other voices in the text who, apart from Mawal, share almost the same situation. She says:

My sister and cousins are the way my mother wishes I were and she is always comparing us and telling me what good girls they are and how I am just a headache. […] She can't accept that my way of being different is just as good as everyone else's way of being the same. I like to enjoy myself, unlike my sister Pauline who, despite her American name, is very conservative […] My cousin Khadija is conservative too, but I like her, except when her parents are around and she acts stupid like she can't think for herself.
Mawal, who lives in Nawara, would be my mother's version of perfect […]

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[61] Ibid., P. 30.
[62] Ibid., p. 29.

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> My cousin Hala […] is my mother's favourite because she is "such a good Arab girl," but I say she is boring with a capital B […].[63]

Because the genre of the text allows access to the subjective voices of the other characters, we can measure the difference between the elements of Soraya's hybrid identity, and therefore the uniqueness of her Third Space, against the identity and spaces of Hala and Khadija. Soraya's Third Space, and her negotiation between the two worlds in question, is shaped around notions of exotism, freedom, and sexuality that challenge her affiliation to either culture, and help her to stand out as an *Other* to both cultures, as well as to the other hybrid identities within the text. She inhabits a space in which she appears to be too American for her Arab side, and too Arab for her American side, and therefore adopts a unique breed of hybridity, compared with her two cousins in the text.

Soraya's difference and unique Third Space is underscored by the text's short-story-cycle genre inclusion of another version of a character meditating between the two worlds, in the narrative of Khadija. Just like Soraya, Khadija's role as a meditator appears early on in her narrative, which like that of Soraya reflects upon her process of assimilation and identity formation in her position at the crossroads between the two worlds. Khadija's need to translate her name within the context of Arabic tradition, in order to inform the non-Arabic reader, reveals the shape of her Third Space. This need evokes a sense of estrangement from mainstream US society, as she provides an account of the historical background of her name:

> Khadija. In Islam, Khadija was the Prophet Muhammed's wife. She was much older than he was and had a lot of money.
> He was said to have loved her very much.
> In America my name sounds like someone throwing up or falling off a bicycle.
> It's not like I'm dying to have an American name. I'd just like a different Arabic one. There are so many pretty names: Amani, Hala, Rawda, Mawal, and they all mean such pretty things - wishes, halo, garden, melody - not just the name of a rich old woman. My father would slap me if he heard me say that. I'm sure the original Khadija was very nice

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[63] Ibid., p. 25.

and that's why the Prophet Muhammed married her and why my father gave me her name, but I'm also sure that if the original Khadija went to school in America that she would hate her name just as much as I do.[64]

In the opening line of Khadija's narration, Halaby foreshadows the experience of Khadija's double Arab-American identity in several ways. First, she reflects the girl's difficulties with the *Other* at basic levels, including her name. Khadija's narrative opens with her trying to emphasise the positive aspects of her name that causes her embarrassment and discomfort when pronounced by non-Arab speakers. The detailed explanation of the meaning of her name, and the historical connection to the tradition of Islam at the beginning of her narrative, convey her struggle with these fundamental elements of her double identity. Khadija's name also serves as a barrier, preventing her from creating a harmonious space within US society. She wishes to celebrate the tradition of her Arab heritage, whilst embracing her belonging to America in the same way as her peers at school.

Khadija's attempt to build a connection between her name and her religious heritage, in her case Islam, is similar to the approach of Arab American writers in earlier waves of Arab immigration to America. As Shakir explained,

> The first generation of Arab-American writers (as might be expected of immigrants in an age of rampant xenophobia) dressed carefully for their encounter with the American public, putting on the guise of prophet, preacher, or man of letters. They could not hide their foreignness, but they could make it respectable.[65]

In the post-9/11 period, Arab American foreignness and alienation are as noticeable as they were in the earlier periods of Arab immigration to America. Thus, it is understandable that post-9/11 writers use methods similar to those employed by early Arab American writers to re-establish their position and assimilation process within the US social fabric. However, the early Arab American encounter space was different from that of Arab Americans post-9/11. Khadija's voice affirms the location's politics implicitly when attempting to connect the

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[64] Ibid., p. 36.
[65] Shakir, "Arab-American Literature", p. 6.

religious significance of her name to her location in America. In other words, Khadija's narrative voice employs a version of Third Space that is different from the spaces of her cousins in the text.

In Khadija's case, her name also reveals her position within her ethnic community. Her wish to have another Arabic name, such as that of her cousins, Hala and Mawal, reflects her position regarding the other two characters. Thus, her name adds another layer of complexity to her intersectional experience as an Arab American Muslim teenager in America. Her name is a reminder of the oppression she suffers, as her father rejects her right to express her hatred towards her name, epitomising the experience of Arab women in a social structure determined by a patriarchy.

Notably, the name dilemma is a recurrent theme found in many narratives by female Arab American authors, particularly those examined in this thesis. Representing the struggle that female Arab Americans experience when articulating their hybrid identities is essential for capturing the extent of dislocation and estrangement these individuals experience when stepping into such a space. In their notion of the Third-Space encounter, Bhabha claimed that hierarchical relationships between clashing powers hardly exist if each group surrenders cultural symbols that seem to spoil the harmony of the space. However, such evidence, embodied in the experience of female characters in female Arab American authors' narratives, suggests that fundamental aspects of an individual's identity, such as a name, build barriers that eventually prevent the assimilation process, and thus mark the individual's inferiority in such an encounter space.

The name dilemma covers various aspects of Khadija's experience of a hybrid identity as an Arab girl in America. Perceiving her Arab name to be a barrier to both her Western and Arab sides, Khadija decides to look to other cultures to construct her identity, and borrows a name to assist her in her integration process. Her choice of the name 'Diana'

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symbolises her desire to depart from the estrangement that marks her experience when she tries to fit in. It might also be an attempt to highlight her hybridity, as she combines the Western name 'Diana' with the physical complexion that articulates her race. 'Diana' also refers to a global citizenship state, as the name occurs in many cultures and languages. This state of global citizenship marks Khadija's hybrid identity, because she wishes to create a space in which the way her hybrid identity is accepted. The chosen name, 'Diana', helps her to attain this desire, as the name in Latin and Persian means 'goddess' or 'messenger', a role that Khadija wishes to adopt. She wants to be a messenger and ambassador between the two sides of her hyphenated identity.

Halaby portrays Khadija's journey of alienation when reporting her schoolmate's reaction to Khadija's decision to change her name:

> "But you don't look like a Diana," Robert told me.
> "What do I look like then?"
> "I don't know. Like a Kadeeja, I guess".[66]

Khadija's attempt to pass as a US citizen, in order that her peers will see her as an equal, is met by rejection, contributing to her growing sense of alienation. Her narrative demonstrates the presence of estrangement and othering at very basic levels, including the pronunciation shown in the spelling of her name when quoting her schoolmate's way of pronouncing it. In her Third Space, she is neither 'Diana', nor 'Khadija', but 'Kadeeja'. In reference to the systematic 'othering' of her and her race practised in institutions such as her school, Khadija uses this occasion to tell the story of her teacher who 'expects me to know more than the other kids because my parents aren't American themselves. I want to scream at him that I am just as American as anyone here'.[67] Her sense of ethnocultural identity is shaped by the two inhabitants of her hyphenated identity, which categorise and label her ethnicity and overlook her hybridity. Halaby creates this atmosphere for Khadija's voice in

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[66] Halaby, p. 37.
[67] Ibid., p. 74.

order to explore and trace the creation of her Third Space, whilst seeking the appropriate components of each culture that will fit harmoniously together, eventually shaping her hybridity.

As is the case in many Arab American literary traditions, Khadija's connection to her first place is embodied in her relationship with her mother. However, her narrative is distinguishable from the other Arab American literary texts that represent the figure of the Arabic mother since it is located in a text with three other narrators. Each of these women's narratives stresses the heterogeneous nature of the situations forging their hybrid identity and in-between space. Thus, one can examine these heterogeneous representations of the Arab mother figure closely in the scope of one text, witnessing the forging of different hybrid identities that function differently in their encounter space between the two worlds in question. The mother figure in Khadija's narrative monitors Khadija's behaviour to ensure she understands the ethnic traditions of family and community. In her work 'Family and Ethnic Identity in an Arab-American Community', Ajrouch claimed that Arab American women

> […] come to bear almost the entire weight of maintaining an Arab identity for their families and community […] An Arab ethnic identity is being created as a dialectic emerges that includes a disdain for the American culture but includes a desire to acquire those attributes deemed desirable. I propose that these immigrant families hold onto their Arab ethnicity through their daughters and strive to attain the American dream through their sons.[68]

Thus, an opportunity is created for Halaby to use her text's hybrid genre to criticise how such conceptions and practices of the ethnic community, represented by the mother figure, might overlook the intersectionality of female hybrid identity. It is an opportunity to disrupt the monolithic image of Arab and Arab American women.

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[68] Kristine Ajrouch, 'Family and Ethnic Identity in an Arab-American Community', in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. by Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1999), pp. 129- 139 (p. 138).

Through the interaction with her mother, the keeper of tradition, and the 'whiteness' norms of the US public, Khadija's in-between space can be conceptualised by the following extracts:

> "You are Palestinian," she [Khadija's mother] says in Arabic. "You are Palestinian," I tell her in English. "I am American." […] "Ma, I can't speak Arabic right, I've never even been there, and I don't like all of those dancing parties. I like stories and movies. I can be American and still be your daughter".[69]

> "How are you ever going to have sex with a boy if you always have to sleep at home?" I felt funny, like she [Patsy, Khadija's White friend] was laughing at me. I had never thought about sex with a boy before I got married. I know that American girls do that, and probably even my cousin Soraya, but that's different.[70]

The fact that Khadija asserts her Americanness in the first extract, and then detaches herself from it in the second, can be understood by what Naber called 'Arab cultural re-authenticity' in her article, 'Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/ American(ized) Whore', in which she used the term to refer to the strategy of simultaneously preserving an Arab cultural identity whilst assimilating with US norms of whiteness. She explained:

> Arab cultural re-authenticity […] is the localized, spoken, and unspoken figure of an imagined 'true' Arab culture that emerges as a reaction or an alternative to the universalizing tendencies of hegemonic U.S. nationalism, the pressures of assimilation, and the gendered racialization of Arab women and men.[71]

The interaction between Arab cultural re-authenticital discourse and US hegemonic nationalism causes dislocation and alienation. Therefore, a hybrid identity like that of Khadija cannot affiliate with either side of her identity or other hybrid identities with common patterns. She has neither memories like those of Hala that attach her to her Arabness, nor methods like those employed by Soraya to reconcile the two worlds. Thus, Khadija occupies an indeterminate place, in which she denies her Arabness and struggles to attain her Americanness.

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[69] Halaby, p. 74.
[70] Ibid., p. 173.
[71] Naber, "Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/American(ized) Whore", p. 88.

As discussed in this chapter, the hybrid genre of *West of the Jordan*, which merges the two genres of autofiction and short story cycle, provides a space for the consideration of not only the diverse range of female Arab American ethnic experiences, but also the differences in the shapes of these women's Third Spaces, in which they function as hybrid identities between two worlds. The autofictional elements in Hala's narrative, along with the multiple functions of the genre of short story cycle for portraying the narratives of Mawal, Soraya, and Khadija, all contribute to revealing elements of diversity in the characters' negotiation of their in-between spaces of encounter. Accordingly, the text aids this chapter's main purpose of criticising the hegemonic nature of Bhabha's definition of Third Space, which does not give sufficient consideration to the intersectional nature of the ethnic experience of certain cases, such as that in this thesis of female Arab American ethnic experience. Thus, Bhabha's definition requires redefinition, in order to encompass the intersectional aspects of cases such as female Arab American ethnic experience.

An alternative definition of Third Space theory in the case of female Arab American ethnic experience

As discussed previously in this thesis, Bhabha's Third Space can be defined as the place of encounter between two opposing powers, in which those powers can communicate equally, as the practices of racism, discrimination, stereotyping, and inferiority-superiority relationships are dismantled. This thesis established that this definition possesses gaps that are revealed when seeking to apply it to certain cases, such as that of female Arab American narratives in the pre- and post-9/11 periods. The need to find an alternative definition of Bhabha's theory of Third Space does not suggest that we dismiss his definition, as the theory is essential for the understanding and conceptualisation of the transformative nature of transnational ideas and subjectivities, through which individuals negotiate their existence between two or more conflicting cultures and places. However, in its examination of five

texts written by Arab American women writers, the gaps present in the original definition of Bhabha's theory are evident.

Hence, one of the main aims of this thesis was to highlight and foreground the knowledge offered in the texts examined regarding the complexity and intersectional experiences of Arab American women in the two remarkable periods of the 1990s and post-9/11. The understanding of the texts examined can be used to modify Bhabha's definition of Third Space, so it becomes capable of accounting for the complexities of Arab American women's actual experiences as they are lived, according to intersectional forms of social difference.

The focus of this thesis on the remarkable literary works produced in the important period of the 1990s to the post-9/11 era highlighted how the texts examined contextualised the Orientalist and neo-Orientalist discourse that intensifies the gap between the supposedly evil and backward Islamic Middle East and the virtuous and sophisticated Christian West. As this discourse generates double-sided racial and gendered stereotypes, wedded to political clashes that ultimately place Arab American women as the *Other* in their interaction with US society, it is evident that Bhabha's definition of Third Space overlooks the complexity of the socio-political factors that make practices of othering and discrimination inevitable.

As the texts examined also illuminate, the patriarchal practices of Arab societies in which women are deemed lesser and *Other*, they assist in highlighting how Bhabha's definition fails to account for the gendered relations in the social constructions of societies in their native, or first space, before encountering the other in a Third Space. The subaltern position of Arab women in their societies, which are determined by patriarchal norms and practices, places them in the margin of the Third Space between the Arab and Arab American community and US society.

As each of the five texts examined conveys a unique form of hybridity that differs from the forms of hybridity in the other texts, they provide a nuanced understanding of the diversity of Arab American women's experiences in their spaces of encounter, as opposed to Bhabha's single, hegemonic and static form of hybridity and Third Space. This is evident in how the texts offer various tools for presenting hybridity that are derived from the unique situation of each of the hybrid subjects. Arab American women's forms of hybridity are as diverse as the multicultural, multilingual, and multireligious diversity of Arab countries, a diversity that is widely reduced to a single, simplistic definition by the Western Orientalist and Arab nationalist ideologies. The diversity of these Third Space(s) is also attributed to the immigration status of the hybrid identities examined, a factor that is overlooked in Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

The major problem with Bhabha's theory, when using it to read the narratives of Arab American women writers, is that his theorisation of Third Space overlooks the intersecting specificity and the pragmatic realties of the marginal subjects, and therefore marginalises and isolates their experience further, rather than bringing it into closer contact with the centre. Also, and as his theorisation of Third Space only functions between essentialist binaries, namely the Western and non-Western, and only exists in the momentary point of encounter, it does not accommodate the multiple binaries that Arab American women face, and how the negotiation of their past is essential for the negotiation of their hybridity. This point was also noted by Lauder in her article on *The Calcutta Chromosome*, in which she criticised Bhabha's theory, as it only 'exists in motion between only two things: the Western and the non-Western, the now and the beyond'.[72]

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[72] Maureen Lauder, 'Postcolonial Epistemologies: Transcending Boundaries and Re-Inscribing Difference in *The Calcutta Chromosome*,' in *Detective Fiction in a Postcolonial and Transnational World*, ed. by Marc Singer and Nels Pearson and (Farnham, England: Ashgate, 2016), pp. 47-62 (p. 53).

Moreover, Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space aimed to interpret forms of hybridity and cross-cultural encounters in the 1970s and 1980s prior to globalisation, multicultural belongings, the emergence of and social movements in the post-Cold War era of the 1990s. As the world has shrunk further with the introduction of the world wide web and social media in the early twenty-first century, Bhabha's theory has become dated in its approach to the impact of such factors on identity and hybridity formation. Thus, notions of identity and hybridity have expanded requiring new articulations.

Accordingly, Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space in the case of Arab American women's narratives is limited in its ability to elucidate the full range and complexity of the gendered experiences of these women. The experience of being an Arab American woman as a hybrid identity is not captured fully by Bhabha's theory in that sense. The theory does not recognise the particular place and importance of culture, language, and religious practices in the lives and experiences of Arab American women. It also fails to account for the unique struggles and difficulties that these women experience as a result of their double minority identities, such as racism, gender-roles, and discrimination.

The theory also fails to take into consideration the material effects of imperialism and colonialism on Arab American women, such as political oppression, economic exploitation, and cultural marginalization. It also does not adequately explore the ways in which Arab American women use their multiple identities to negotiate the complexities of their life experience, nor does it consider how the interplay of their hybrid identities can create spaces for political action and voice. Moreover, it fails to interrogate the ways in which their multiple identities can inform their resistance to oppressive forces, or the ways in which they can create different possibilities within existing power structures.

Bhabha's theory of Third Space also overlooks the power dynamics between Arab American women, particularly how these women support and challenge each other in their

attempts to negotiate their various identities. Additionally, Bhabha's notion of Third Space does not consider how Arab American women's identities are shaped by the larger social and cultural context, both in the Arab world and in the United States. The theory also neglects the emotional impact of belonging to multiple and often conflicting cultural communities, and the psychological implications that this has on their sense of identity.

Proposing A Fourth Space

Thus, and as Arab American women's identities overlap the margins of race, gender, and class, this thesis proposes a widening of Bhabha's Third Space, and demands the recognition of a *Fourth Space* that offers a more comprehensive and nuanced interpretation of Arab American Muslim women's hybrid identities by inscribing gender, race, and immigration status as elements of analysis. That is not to suggest that Bhabha's Third Space excludes the experience of Arab American women per say, but rather to suggest that the centrality of the theory in colonial setting and the binary relation between the coloniser and the colonised overlooks the intersecting nature of Arab American women when negotiating their hybridity. This thesis introduces Arab American women's Fourth Space(s) as the space(s) Arab American women inhabit in the margin of Bhabha's masculinist conception of Third Space. It is the position in which Arab American women negotiate their hybridity among the inevitable aspects of the Orientalist and neo-Orientalist discourses, as well as the discourses of the indigenous patriarchy. Such aspects remain highly operative in their position, and as active as the political and cultural clash between the Arab world and the West. This place is also radically heterogonous, with each hybrid subject's experience differing from one individual to another, as the ethnic experiences of Arab American Muslim women involve various forms of negotiating their hybridity that vary according to their immigration status, national origin, education, religious background, sexuality, class, and the political situation surrounding their process of negotiating their hybridity. The fourth space

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that this thesis proposes gives the marginalised subjects in Arab American women's writing the attention their intersectional identity deserves, in order that they do not remain isolated.

The Fourth Space also distinguishes the experience of the second generation from that of the first generation, the immigrant and US born citizens, or what this thesis terms 'organic hybrid' and 'intentional hybrid'. Their experiences are fundamentally different from each other, and each of their narratives therefore fosters different knowledge that reflects their position between the two worlds. This differentiation between the experience of the immigrant and the non-immigrant stresses the heterogeneity of Arab American women's experience through their writing further, a matter that is overlooked by Bhabha's conceptualisation of Third Space.

The Fourth Space proposed allows the narratives of Arab American women to negotiate their hybridity from a vantage point from which they find it necessary to historicise their past experience to construct a counter-discourse that help to situate their experience between the multiple binaries surrounding their intersectional identity. This is particularly vital for the experience of intentional hybrid subjects, as explored in Chapter Four of this thesis, since they face the need to include the historization of their first space, namely in the Arab World, in order to contextualise how their identity was initially constructed before migrating. Thus, their past is always related to the negotiation of their hybridity, as seen in the texts explored in this thesis.

Thus, Arab American Muslim women can negotiate their in-between-ness in their Fourth Space(s) where the specificities of their experiences are visible, and the intersectionality of their identities is celebrated. In their Fourth Space(s), Arab American women can reconcile their identities between the two incompatible cultures, and translate the two worlds culturally to each other, whilst locating themselves away from the collision of cultures that reduce their agency and voice. As Arab American women rework their hybridity

in their Fourth Space, they forge new paths of self-exploration and self-assertion that go beyond the Orientalist and patriarchal identifications assigned to them by both the discourses of the White mainstream and Arab social norms.

Conclusion

In the context of this thesis, Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space has been demonstrated to be immensely useful for conceptualising the encounter between two opposing powers in a space in which both groups can negotiate their identities and escape forms of marginalisation, discrimination, and binary relations. It has moreover been observed that employing Bhabha's theory to interrogate notions of hybridity in cases such as that of the encounter between the Arab community in the US and the US society assists us in understanding the transformative nature of the transnational ideas and subjectivities. However, this thesis utilised Bhabha's Third Space in a manner that is distinct from other contributions in the fields of Arab American literature and Postcolonialism that use Bhabha's definition as a tool to read the hybridity in Arab American narratives. That is, it used the definition merely as a theoretical starting point; i.e. a basis from which to read our chosen selection of five literary works written by Arab American women writers.

By using Bhabha's Third Space in this way, the limitations of the theory became apparent as we sought to fully reveal and examine the intersectional nature of different generations of Arab American women's ethnic identities. Thus, this research has focused on contextualising the gaps in Bhabha's definition of Third Space in relation to the ethnic experiences of Arab American women writers. To achieve this, selected literary works by contemporary Arab American women writers were consulted to reveal the lived, practical, and embodied experiences of hybridity and encounter. This process of revelation and theorising of the everyday indicated some gaps in Bhabha's definition.

This thesis limited its examination to the ethnic experiences of Arab American women, as the limitations of Bhabha's definition are especially evident in this case. Arab American women experience an overlap between US society and the Arab and Arab American communities at the margins of race, gender and class in the interaction. Thus, this

thesis has been able to highlight the manner in which Bhabha's definition overlooks the intersecting grids of gender, race and immigration status, that otherwise characterise the ethnic experience of Arab American women, noting how the masculinist, hegemonic and utopian tone of Bhabha's Third Space overshadows their position in the context of the clash between the two worlds.

This thesis also delineated the temporal parameters to study literary works by Arab American women produced in the periods before and after a defining moment in contemporary history; the attacks of 11 September 2001. This period from the 1990s to post-9/11 is significant in the literary tradition of Arab American women, as it witnessed a flourishing period of active publication and literary emergence on the part of Arab American women writers. More importantly, it also witnessed the Arab American community's shift towards identifying themselves variously as Arabs and US citizens, a tendency less prevalent in texts from earlier periods.

The focus on literary works produced in the period from the 1990s to the post-9/11 showcases Arab American women's double-sided struggle with Western Orientalist and neo-Orientalist representations on the one hand, and Arab nationalist and patriarchal norms on the other. Both discourses, which thrived significantly during this period, in reaction to the political and cultural clashes between the two worlds, misrepresented and reduced women's agency, voice, and existence. Therefore, Arab women were rendered as the alien and exotic Other in mainstream Western discourse, and as the inferior subaltern in the patriarchal discourses that dominated Arab societies. Both Western Orientalist and Arab nationalist discourses also contributed to constructing a hegemonic representation of individuals who trace their origins to the Middle East and the Arab world.

Thus, the five texts examined in this thesis, Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993), Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice is Silence* (2012), Leila Ahmed's *A Border Passage* (1999),

Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home* (2008) and Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003), provided a nuanced understanding of the intersectional nature of Arab American women's ethnic experiences. The choice of the five texts supported a comprehensive exploration of Arab American women's negotiation of their in-between-ness across fiction and nonfiction genera, which were used variously in pre- and post-9/11 contexts.

In order to provide an adequate understanding of the ethnic situation with regard to contemporary Arab American women's narratives, this researcher engaged with the historical and contemporary background to the community's presence in the US by exploring the literary tradition that informs the three waves of Arab immigration to the US. In chapter one we traced the development of the racial, ethnic, and gendered identifications of Arabs in the US against the backdrop of the changing political and socio historical and contemporary relationship between the West and the Arab world. This chapter assisted in providing an adequate context and reference point to the examined texts and to the problematic positioning of Arab American women.

The second chapter in what comprised the first part of the thesis, attempted to answer the first question posed: What are the problematic aspects of Homi Bhabha's theory of Third Space when applied to the point of encounter in hybrid and immigrant identities in the narratives of contemporary Arab American women? This question was answered by first defining and explaining Bhabha's notions of Third Space and hybridity and their relevance to the examined case. The chapter then moved on to discuss the general gaps explored in the postcolonial studies literature, which mainly points to the ambiguities and overambitious tone of the theory as it navigates unspecified and conflicting perspectives.

When considering Arab American women's narratives, the problematic aspects of Bhabha's definition cover three grids: race and ethnicity, gender, and immigration status. Firstly, and as the chapter theorised the elements of Arab race and ethnicity against the

backdrop of the Orientalist and neo-Orientalist representations of Arabs on the one hand, and the anti-imperialist Arab nationalist movement on the other, it became apparent how the hegemonic racial identification of Arabs in both discourses complicates the harmonious nature of Bhabha's Third Space.

Secondly, and as the Orientalist-based racial representations of Arabs are mostly gendered, Arab American women are doubly-othered in racist and sexist terms. Moreover, they are also othered and deemed lesser in the patriarchal discourses of Arab societies, which places them as the subaltern. While such a situation involving a multiplicity of othering is common in other ethnic experiences, such as those of South Asian, black, and Jewish women, the multi-layered othering of Arab American women is additionally wedded to a discourse of political racism. The problematic place inhabited by Arab American women and located between the degrading discourses of the two worlds is glossed over in Bhabha's definition of Third Space.

Thirdly, Bhabha's definition overlooks the distinction between immigrant and non-immigrant identities when negotiating the hybridity present between the two worlds. As the chapter theorised distinctions between immigrant and non-immigrant experiences and narratives, it proposed the use of the two terms, *organic hybrids* and *intentional hybrids* to refer to non-immigrants and immigrants respectively. The use of both these terms allowed for a distinction between the narratives of the two groups as providing insights into the different shapes of their hybridity.

The second part of this thesis aimed to explore the overarching aim of the limitations of Bhabha's theorisation of Third Space as revealed by the literature studied in this thesis. The first chapter in the second part drew on the gaps discussed in chapter two to contextualise Bhabha's definition of the organic hybrid experience in the pre-9/11 novel of Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz,* and the post-9/11 memoir of Soha Al-Jurf's *Even my Voice*

is Silence. This chapter answered the thesis's second question concerning how the experience of the second generation of Arab American women with negotiating identity is represented in the narrative of pre- and post-9/11 period, by exploring both writers' use of elements of place and memory.

As both texts address different genre-specific literary tools, they utilise elements of memory and place to locate and unpack the organic hybrid identities that emerge from the situations encountered by Arabs in the US. An examination of both texts offers a comprehensive understanding of the intersectional experience of second generation Arab American women in the pre-9/11 and post-9/11 periods, as they transitioned from being members of an invisible community to glaringly visible.

The second set of texts examined in the second chapter of the second part is also chronologically divided by the events of 9/11, and introduces notions of immigration and border crossing, along with factors linked to race and gender, as it examines intentional hybrid identities in the narrative of Leila Ahmad's memoir *A Border Passage* and Randa Jarrar's novel *A Map of Home*. The chapter employed the notion of cultural translation to conceptualise the border-crossing journey and intentional hybrids in both texts. This also made it possible to view both texts as acts of resistance to the Orientalist and neo-Orientalist perceptions encountered by intentional hybrid subjectivities when crossing the border to America. Moreover, exploration of the texts through the lens of cultural translation portrayed the texts as forms of resistance to the patriarchal discourse that dominates the social structure of Arab societies in which the majority of their narratives take place.

Examination of Ahmed's and Jarrar's texts afforded new knowledge about the immigration experience that is neglected by Bhabha's definition of Third Space, and thus answered the thesis' third question: How do factors of immigration raise the overlooked issue of immigration status in Homi Bhabha's definition of Third Space? The time frame arranged

into pre- and post-9/11 allowed nuanced interpretations of the qualities associated with each of the intentional hybrids as they negotiate hybridity against the backdrop of political and social events.

The reading of Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* in the Third part of this thesis aimed to articulate an alternative definition of Bhabha's Third Space, offering a further opportunity to critique the hegemonic nature of Bhabha's definition in its dismissal of the individuality of examined subjectivities, as each addresses a different set of intersectional factors in their interactions with the different entities with which they are affiliated. As the chapter defined Halaby's text as a hybrid genre by theorising the different attributes of the text that fit the categories of autofiction and the short-story-cycle, it assisted in highlighting the diversity of Arab American women's ethnic experiences. The reading of Halaby's text presented the text as an example of a hybrid form of writing that not only stresses the hybridity of Arab American women's ethnic experiences, but also points to the hegemonic nature of Bhabha's Third Space.

The examination in Halaby's text helped to answer the thesis' final question: How do we redefine Third Space in the case of female Arab American narratives, considering the gaps explored in previous chapters? As the hybrid genre of Halaby's text recounts the diversity of experiences of Arab American women, it incorporates an examination of the other texts in this thesis, so as to articulate an alternative definition that is more inclusive of the problematic nature of the ethnic experiences of Arab American women.

This thesis finally proposed the concept of *Fourth Space* as a definition derived from Bhabha's conception of Third Space. This definition fills in the gaps in Bhabha's definition, offering a space that is more inclusive of the complexity and heterogenicity of Arab American ethnic experiences. Arab American women's organic and intentional hybrid

identities can be negotiated and relocated in this space, while acknowledging the inevitable incompatibility of the collision between the two cultures.

The basic conceptualisation of Fourth Space in this thesis concludes with what could be expanded upon when reading the ethnic experience of Arab American women today where identity formation is based not only on the innately personal nature of identity, but also on the role that social media, computer networks and international platforms have in transforming identities and bridging gaps between different cultures and nations. Since the disastrous events of 9/11, major political and cultural changes have affected the reception of the Arab community's in America. Meanwhile, a series of anti-governmental protests, named The Arab Spring have altered the geographical, social, and political situation in the Arab world, generating waves of Arab immigration into Europe and America. This period also witnessed the ascendence of Political Islam, a political ideology that aims to reconstruct the social and political system to deliver a return to authentic Islamic practice, further complicating women's status in the Arab world. Among the chaotic situation in the Middle East, the aftermath of the Arab Spring has also witnessed the (re)emergence of terrorist groups, such as ISIS in Iraq and Syria, Taliban in Afghanistan and Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran.

Moreover, American President Trump issued an executive order in 2017 banning people from seven Muslim-majority countries (six of which are Arab countries) from entering the US, implicitly reinforcing the perceived connection between Islam and terrorism. Arab American women's literary tradition continues to locate their hybridity amidst these negative representations, as their narratives forge new paths of self-exploration and assertion. As the political and social environment inhabited by Arab American women continues to develop, Arab American women writers today are continuing to seek racial and gender justice, while also giving voice to other communities that seldom entered into the dialogue of social justice, including Arab and Arab American women, the LGBT+ community, and

Jewish Arabs who have been mired in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The notion of Fourth Space this thesis proposes becomes significant when reading texts produced in the current period by Arab American women writers as the negotiation of their hybridity intensifies their position. For example, Susan Abdulhawa's *Against the Loveless World* (2020) and Randa Jarrar's *Love is an Ex-Country* (2021) negotiate Arab American women's hybridity while also boldly challenging topics such domestic violence and women's status in the Arab world, and focusing on homosexual aspects of identity within an unravelling and hostile US in the aftermath of the Arab Spring and Trumpism.

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