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Arab-American Identity Doubleness in Post 9/11 America

Case of: Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*

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Requirements for the Master Degree in Anglophone Language, Literature and
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Dedication

To my dear mother Nadia and my dear father Abd-El Karim

Acknowledgment

Bismi Allahi arrahmani arraheem, all Praise be to Almighty Allah, Lord of all the worlds, most Beneficent, ever-Merciful. Peace and prayers be upon His Prophet and Messenger Mohammad. First and foremost, I thank initially and always Allah for His guidance and blessings throughout my life and for giving me strength and patience to complete this humble work.

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Abstract

The thesis is about discussing the negative impact of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the Arab identity ; how the Arab-Americans struggle to maintain their identity and to find their space in the American society. The paper is divided onto three chapters, and on the light of Laila Halaby's work 2007, *Once in a Promised Land*, the thesis will analyse the theme of Identity Doubleness through the experience of Halaby's protagonists Jassim and Salwa who find themselves obliged to choose between to stick to their Arab identity or to obtain the American one.

ملخص

تدور المذكرة حول مناقشة التأثيرات السلبية للهجمات الإرهابية للحادي عشر من سبتمبر على الهوية العربية، وكذا صراع العرب الامريكيين للحفاظ على هويتهم وايجاد مساحة لهم في المجتمع الأمريكي. على ضوء العمل الأدبي لليلي حلبي لعام 2007 " ذات مرة في أرض الميعاد"، الأطروحة تهدف إلى تحليل موضوع ازدواجية الهوية من خلال تجربة بطلي رواية حلبي، جاسم و سلوى اللذان يجدان نفسيهما مجبران على الإختيار بين التمسك بالهوية العربية أو إكتساب الهوية الأمريكية.

Resumé

Dans ce mémoire on a choisi de discuter l'impact négatif des attentats terroristes du 11/9 sur l'identité arabe mais aussi examiner comment les Arabe- Américains luttent / résistent pour maintenir leurs identité et trouver leurs place dans la société américaine. A la lumière de l'oeuvre de Laila Halaby *Il était une Fois à la Terre Promise*, la mémoire analyse le dédoublement identitaire à travers l'expérience des héros Jassim and Salwa qui sont obligé de choisir entre le maintien de leurs identité d'origine ou l'assimilation d'une identité américaine.

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Introduction

Fifteen years since the terrorist attacks on the Twin Tower, and it is still one of the most historical and dreadful event happened for many peoples across the United States. The Arab-Americans and any one who looks like an Arab or has a name sounded Arab, were directly effected by the horrible events of 9/11 in which this latter has shifted the Arab community from an invisible group into a visible one. In fact the terrorist attacks brought the Arab-Americans to public attention, put them in danger of prejudice, discrimination, and racism, and even obliged them to choose between the Arab identity or the American identity.

Because 9/11 has totally changed the meaning of the Arab identity, the Arab-American writers feel the need to justify and to erase the Arab's image within the American society. Consequently, several Arab-American literary works have been published to depict how this experience obliges the Arab-American characters to live in alienation from both their home and host country and how they struggle to maintain their identity. Laila Halaby is one of the Arab-American authors who has responded to the impact of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 through her second novel 2007, *Once in a Promised Land*. Halaby's novel represents, on the one hand, the American stereotypical image toward the Arabs, particularly, after the horrible event of 9/11, on the other hand, the difficulty of preserving and maintaining their place in the American society.

Halaby is a Jordanian-American writer who directly confronts with the Arab-Americans the experience of 9/11 and it's impact. Through her novel *Once in a Promised Land*, Halaby put the light on the issue of having two different identities i.e the Arab identity which represents the Arab's origins, belonging, traditions, and culture, and on the other hand, the American identity which represents the freedom and opportunity.

Because the paper seeks to provide a better vision and explanation of the Arab-Americans identity through the analysis of one of the post 9/11 literary works, Halaby's second novel *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) deals with the theme of identity doubleness. The paper is divided into three chapters. Throughout the chapters, there is a shift from discussing the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and its impact on the Arab-American's life, to the role of the Arab-American literature after the horrible event in defending the Arab identity. Finally, it focuses on the theme of identity doubleness in Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*.

Chapter One will highlight the negative effect of the terrorist attacks of 9/11 on the Arab's image. Specifically, it will focus on how the Americans negatively stereotype the Arab-Americans, how they mistreat them through discrimination in media, education, and workplace as well as how they confuse between who is a Muslim and who is an Arab and even how they look to the veil or el hijeb as a means of oppression and persecution. At first, the chapter provides an explanation about how the American society stereotypes the Arabs before the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Chapter Two will discuss how the Arab-American writers react to define and justify the Arab's position. Some writers devote their literary works to dedicate the Arab identity through reviving the Arab traditions like Scheherazadian's folktale, and others focus on the issue of veil as a symbol of the Arab-Muslim identity. It highlights the experience of the Arabs immigration toward the United States as well as the traces of the Arab-American literature.

Chapter Three will emphasize on the work of Laila Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) in which the writer tells a story of Arab-American couple who struggle to find their space in the American society. Particularly, this chapter will concentrate on applying the post colonial-approach to analyse the theme of identity doubleness in post

9/11 through the experience of Halaby's protagonists Salwa and Jassim who left their homes to reach the American dream.

Chapter One : The Impact of the Terror Attack 9/11 on the Arabs, Particularly, the Arab-Americans.

Throughout history, there have occurred many tragic events. 9/11 is a tragic day which will be remembered in the United States history. Thousands of lives were suddenly ended, people asked for help and to be saved, and some died trying to save them. This day has affected every American, and likely affected every person in the world in some way because the United States as a superpower was injured by despicable acts of terror. Unfortunately, the attitudes of many Americans have changed toward the Arabs, particularly, the Arab-Americans who are accused to be terrorists. 9/11 attacks, as Talaat Masud explained, is :

four coordinated terrorist attacks carried out by al-Qaeda, an Islamist extremist group, that occurred on the morning of September 11, 2001. Two of the planes were flown into the towers of the World Trade Center in New York City, a third plane hit the Pentagon just outside Washington, D.C., and the fourth plane crashed in a field in Pennsylvania. The attacks killed individuals from 93 nations, 2,753 people were killed in New York, 184 people were killed at the Pentagon, and 40 people were killed on flight. (5)

The unexpected attacks contributed to the raise of the Arab-American's fear about Bush's government reaction as well as the American citizen's reaction. In other words, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have a negative effect on the relations between Americans and Arab-Americans. It made the American society very suspicious of everyone of the Arab culture and ethnicity. Consequently, this dreadful day, not only brought the Arabs to public attention, but also put them at risk and in danger through tarnishing their image in media, and making them suffer from racism, discrimination, mistreatment, and feeling of identity loss (Elliot 9).

The present chapter will attempt to discuss the negative impact of 9/11 on the Arabs, particularly, the Arab-Americans and how they struggle to face the American society that considered them as terrorists. However, it is important first to highlight how the Americans have stereotyped the Arab-Americans before 9/11. This chapter will further examine the experiences of the Arab-Americans after the terrorist attacks as well as tackling the issue of Islam and its relation to the horrible event.

1.1. Arab Stereotyping and Media before 9/11

Arabs in the United States have a long history with negative stereotype, but 9/11 attacks added more burden to them. Before the tragic event, Americans believed that the Arabs are dangerous people. They presented them as bad guys in their movies, advertisement, and cartoons. Much of the research about Arab-Americans had examined the stereotyped image of Arabs in the American and Western media. Jack Shaheen showed how the American media used ugly and negative stereotypes and images about the Arabs in different programs even for the children from their early years till graduation, through “editorial cartoons, television shows, comic strips, comic books, college and school textbooks, novels, magazines, newspapers and in novelty merchandise” (qtd. in Semaan 17).

Many researchers had studied the stereotyped image in editorial cartoons and comic strips. Lendenman studied a series of political cartoons and he tried to show how they depicted the Arabs in a negative way as “rodents, cockroaches and other detestable animals” (Lendenman 12). In addition, Allen Palmer also dealt with the political cartoons which were published during and following the 1956, 1967, and 1973 wars and following the 1988 Palestinian “Intifada.” He confirmed that all the political cartoons that he studied depicted Arabs negatively (Semaan 18).

On the same topic, Stockton argued that the Arabs had been in hundreds of cartoons from editorial pages and comic strips but what is interesting is that all the cartoons presented them in a dehumanizing image. Such sample of cartoons published by the Western media for the purpose of creating false image about the Arabs which is similar trait of archetype stereotyping that was previously employed to create a false image of African American, Jews, and Japanese (Stockton 20).

In order to highlight the image of Arabs in the American entertainment such as radio, television, and movies. Sari Nasir studied the portrayal of Arabs in American movies in the first half of the 20th century. She found that the majority of the movies presented the Arab male as criminals, killers, and terrorists (Seeman 21). Terry addressed how contemporary American fiction viewed Arabs and Muslims as “backward, greedy, lustful, evil, or inhumane” (Terry 35). Edward Said also described how the Americans stereotyped the Arabs in media :

In films and television, the Arab is associated either with Lechery or bloodthirsty dishonesty. He appears as oversexed degenerate capable of cleverly devious intrigues, essentially sadistic, low, slave trader, camel driver, money changer, these are some traditional Arab roles in the cinema. (qtd. In Seeman 22)

Shaheen addressed the Arab stereotyped image in the entertainment industry and movies. In his book, *The TV Arabs*, He examined about 300 programs and documentary episodes during the 1975-1976 and 1983-1984. Shaheen summerized that the image of Arabs in TV is presented as “baddies, billionaires, bombers, and belly dancers”(Shaheen 10). He also stated that all the different shows and episodes he examined perpetuated “four basic myths about Arabs: they are all fabulously wealthy; they are barbaric and uncultured; they are sex maniacs with a penchant for white slavery; they revel in acts of terrorism” (Shaheen 14).

Moreover, Jack Shaheen made a research about the Arab stereotyping in more than 900 Hollywood movie between 1896 and 2001. He confirmed that the American entertainment manufactured a prejudiced image against the Arabs i.e out of the 900 films, only 63 did not present Arabs with a negative stereotyped image (Seeman 25). In harmony with Shaheen, Kamalipour focused on studying the negative portrayal of Arabs in radio, television, and movies. He named 50 movies that showed Arabs individuals committing attacks against Americans. He also said that it is a mistaken belief that, “terrorism is essentially a Middle East problem, and most victims of terrorism are American” (Kamalipour 42).

Additionally, the stereotyped image of Arabs in scholarly work and academic textbooks was also studied. As an example, Ayish conducted a research about scholarly works published from 1954 to 1994. Ayish concluded that all the published and unpublished academic works agree that Western media portrayed the Arab world in a negative way (Ayish 27). Another scholar, Al-Qazzaz also argued that “the social science textbooks in elementary school, junior high, or high school, contributed to, carried on, repeated, and perpetuated negative stereotyped images and myths about Arabs” (Al-Qazzaz 55).

This negative image was presented even in games. Jack Shaheen mentioned one example of a teens’ game called “Oil Sheik”:

Which is, like in Monopoly, players attempt to acquire real estate and the players are encouraged to gain control over the oil producing nations. Moreover, the game instructs the players to create a more “life like” game by wrapping pillowcases around their heads or if the player is ugly to cover his/her head with the pillowcase, (...) One of the game card instructions that said, “impress Arabs with your patriotism by dating a camel .” (qtd. In Seeman 40)

Focusing on this stereotyped image of Arabs in American media, Michael Suleiman emphasized on studying different aspects of this stereotype in the American press coverage between the 1956, 1967, and 1973 Arab Israeli conflicts and showed how the negatively stereotyped Arab was used as a weapon in the American media in favor of Israel (Suleiman 22). Then, Mahboub Hashem analysed news articles published in *Newsweek* and *Time magazines* between January 1990 and December 1993. Hashem's analysis showed that "most of the time Arabs were portrayed as lacking democracy, unity, and modernity in addition to having a heritage of defeat and fundamentalism. However, some coverage to reflect certain realities and fewer stereotypes when portraying Arabs" (qtd. in Seeman 37).

Kamalipour mentioned that the relation between the Arabs and the Americans is not easy to determine due to many circumstances. He stated :

American authorities and media accused Arabs and Middle Easterners of responsibility for attacks against American targets. For example, the accusation of Arabs in the Oklahoma City bombing in 1995, the crash of a TWA Boeing 747 in 1996, and the 1996 bombing at the Olympic Games in Atlanta. Arabs had no connection to any of these events, but the media did not bother to report the lack of connection nor tried to undo the harm they had already done to the image of Arabs in the American citizens' minds.(Kamalipour 61)

Finally, Stockton recognized that stereotyped image extended the gap between the Arabs and the Americans and even created the inferiority of the "other" and promoted the superiority of the westerners. In addition, he said that "such stereotyping can justify key policy decisions taken by the political power in addition to justifying injustices committed by individuals or nations against the stereotyped "other"(Stocken 31). In summarizing, Suleiman addressed the impact of the negative stereotyping of Arabs on Arab Americans, asserting that

the Arab American community “has suffered and continues to suffer in many ways as the negative stereotyped image of Arabs was internalized in the mind of America ” (Suleiman 50).

1.2. Arabs Black or White ?

How to classify the Arabs as an ethnic group in the American society is in itself an important question needs to be answered. Arabs in the United States are not easily defined and fit into the racial scheme that identifies individuals and groups as either “Blacks” or “White”. Several studies on Arab American ethnicity and racial formation show that historically Arabs were first considered “ not white” then “not quite white” and later on “became white” (Silke 36). In the same stream, Joanna Kadi, editor of *Food for Our Grandmothers*, argued that “Arab’s position in the West is ambiguous, they moved from Not Black. Not White. Never quite fitting in. Always in the edge” (qtd. in Kaid 65). In addition, the Arab-American position according to Andrew Rodrigue :

Challenge the U.S. system of racial classification because they do not fit neatly into the given categories. They are neither a race nor a racial homogeneous ethnic group. Rather, they are a diverse array of multiracial ethnic groups bound together by language, culture, and discrimination in the United States. (qtd. in Silke 38)

1.3. Arab’s shifting from Invisibility to Visibility

Since 9/11, Arab- Americans have evolved from what Nadine Naber describes as “ an invisible group in the United States into a highly visible community that either directly or indirectly affects the United States” (37). In other words, the terrorist attacks brought the Arabs to public attention, risk, and danger. About the effects of 9/11 on Arab-Americans, Carol Khawly of the American-Arab Anti Discrimination Committee [ADC] wrote :

The horrific terrorist attacks of September 11 have had a several impact on our nation's traditional openness to immigrants and non immigrants. Immediately, after the attacks ,the Arab-American community and those immigrants from the Arab or Muslim worlds experienced the backlash in the form of hate crimes, discrimination and various civil liberties violations... The American government also instituted a series of discriminatory policies and administrative measures, which targeted specific immigrant communities in the United States, mainly the Arab-American and South Asian Communities. (qtd. in Daraiseh 12)

As it is mentioned above, many things have clearly changed since the horrifying attack which have deeply effected the Arabs in the United States on a myriad of ways. The American government passed quickly the enforcement of the racial profiling laws in which those decisions put the Arab-Americans into questioning, interrogating, and more deporting position because of the suspicion as terrorists (Elliot 11).

1.4. U.S government and Discrimination

George W. Bush as the President of the U.S, after the attack, delivered a televised address from the Oval Office, to calmdown his people and to declare a Terrorist attack against America. Bush's speech addressed directly to the terrorists who stormed America. In this context, Masud wrote :

George W. Bush delivered a speech specifically addressed to the enemy, confirming that the Terrorist attacks can shake the foundations of the biggest buildings , but they cannot touch the foundation of America. In addition, he declared that America will make no distinction between the terrorists who committed these acts and those who harbor them. And those terrorists who are responsible for the September 11 attacks will hear from America soon. (10)

The U.S. government's retaliation had a negative impact on the Arabs, especially those who live in America. There have been more than twenty rule changes, executive orders and laws which affected immigrants and non-immigrant visitors, and the majority are Arabs (Cainkar 4). In this context, Cainkar discussed the reaction of the U.S. toward the Arabs and she wrote:

In 2002, an initiative was launched to track down and deport 6,000 Non citizen males from Middle Eastern countries who had been ordered deported by an immigration judge, but had never left the U.S. Congress has enacted the Enhanced Border Security and Visa Entry Reform Act. It calls for the integration of INS databases, the development of machine-readable visas, the requirement that all airlines submit to the US the list of passengers who have boarded a plane bound for the U.S. and stricter monitoring of foreign students, also a restriction on non-immigrant visas for individuals from countries identified as state sponsors of terrorism. (5)

Moreover, some studies have addressed the Arab American's life and their experiences following the attacks. As an example, Angela Zogby presented the results of a poll of Arab Americans which conducted by the Arab American Institute Foundation (AAIF). He mentioned that :

60% of the 508 surveyed were worried about the "longterm effects of discrimination" against them because of the September 11 attacks. In addition, it showed that only 20% of those surveyed said that they had personally experienced discrimination because of their Arab American background, but 45% said that they personally knew someone who suffered discrimination since the attacks because of his/her Arab American cultural background. However, almost half of the young Arab Americans

reported that they had experienced discrimination since September 11. (qtd. in Daraiseh 25)

In 2002, Angela Zogby again conducted a second poll for the AAIF. He noticed that the results of this 2002 poll indicated an increase of 10% in those reporting personal experience of discrimination because of their ethnic background after September comparing to 2001. Then, the percentage of those surveyed who said that they personally knew someone who suffered discrimination since the attacks because of his/her Arab American ethnic background was 45% in the 2001 survey and 40% in May 2002. In addition, this survey results showed that perceived discrimination toward Arab American students decreased at schools to 21% from a reported 49% in 2001. However, perceived discrimination remained the same among neighbors and friends (25%) (Daraiseh 28).

In addition, many researches have been done in order to study how the Arab-American reacted against the mistreatment and the discrimination of the Americans. Hassan and Moradi made a research about such issue and they reported that :

Across the various specific experiences, 9% forced to take drastic steps to deal with some racist thing done to you to 70% wanted to tell someone off for being racist of the sample reported experiencing the event at least once in a while. The prevalence of some events was particularly disturbing. For instance, 53% of the sample reported being treated unfairly by strangers because they were of Arab descent, 47% reported that they had been in an argument about something Racist done to them, and 46% reported that they had been called racist names at least once in a while within the past year. (qtd. in Kaid 17)

1.5. Media and Discrimination

The American government used social media and press to tarnish the image of the Arabs even more and to show how they are brutal and even to gain support from the whole world in order to destroy this group. In the mass media, Arabs have been portrayed as “barbaric, violent, corrupt, dishonest, religious fanatics, ignorant, abusers of women, and fanatic terrorists. Additionally, Arabs are typically displayed with a black beard, headdress, and dark sunglasses”(qtn. in Daraiseh 32). No doubt, media could make the audience believe the false reality in which this later resulted in mistreatment and discrimination against the Arab-Americans in education, workplace, and religion. Consequently, it is difficult for young Arab-Americans to openly express pride in their heritage when the majority of Americans believe the images they see in the various forms of media (Samhan 24).

1.6. The Arab-American Discrimination in Education and Workplace

The effect of the Arab-American discrimination in the context of education is one example which showed how the Arab-American students suffered in their schools . The stress of the negative stereotype can have an impact on the Arab-American students performance in the school. Generally, the American students refused to accept them as colleagues or friends because they thought that they are either illegal in the country or do not deserve to be living in America. Many American teachers also intended to refer to the Arabs as criminal, unhuman in order to provoke the Arab students to react in irrational behavior (Samhan 27).

In addition, the language which is a part from the culture of any ethnic group can may be one of the contributing factors because it explains why some people automatically discriminate against others. Marvin Wingfield & Bushra Karaman provided a better explanation about such factor and they argued that :

People may discriminate stems from the culture shock some Arab students encounter; their cultural behavior may be seen as a threat, or “foreign” to other American students. Differences between American and Arab culture could make problems for students. For example, many Arabs and Muslims dress differently than do other Americans; their cuisine is drastically different and their traditions are different. This can lead the Americans to be afraid of the unknown or unfamiliar.(qtd. in Samhan 29)

Alienation, inferiority, marginalization, and shame are feelings experienced by those students who suffered from being viewed as an enemy. These emotions created weak personality, lower self-esteem, lack of confidence, and loss of identity which is “the essential part of human because identity is a self-image which is derived from the social categories or group a person perceives himself or herself as belonging to” (qtd. in Daraiseh 14). In some cases, some students tried to assimilate with the others identity in order to satisfy them and to avoid their annoying. However, others became more violent against the Americans due to pressures (Daraiseh 14).

Finding a job became something impossible for millions of Arab-Americans. They were suffering from racial discriminations in their workplace, working double hours compared to their American followers, and prevented from their health rights. 9/11 affected the earning of the Arab-Americans and even the integral migration declined after this horrible event (Daraiseh 18). Faisal Rabby and Marie Rodgers conducted research about the impact of September 11th attacks on the U.S. labor market and its effect on individuals. They found that the young Arab American men between age 16 to 25 suffered from the raise of the hours of work after the attacks compared to the white Americans and even other ethnic groups (Daraiseh 19).

1.7. Arab and/or Muslim

Who is an Arab ?and who is a Muslim ? became a confusion for the Americans. After the tragic event, the Americans believe that all the Arabs are Muslims and even they are there to make Islam America's religion and to continue "El jhed" of their Prophet. In other words, many Americans believe that the terms "Arabs" and "Muslims" are used interchangeably. However not all Arabs are Muslims and not all Muslims are Arabs. Additionally, the majority of Americans are unaware of Arabs' numerous contributions to society throughout history (Suleiman 73).

The distinction between the terms "Arab" and "Muslim" is clearly elaborated by Pia Rebello Britto in the following passage:

The word Arab usually connotes people who are either from one of the 22 Arab States spanning from north Africa to the Middle East (Algeria, Bahrain, Comoro Islands, Djibouti, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Mauritania, Morocco, Oman, Palestine, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Tunisia, United Arab Emirates, and Yemen) or whose ancestors come from this region, even though not everybody who comes from these countries is necessarily an Arab. It often entails having Arabic as a first or familial language. Muslims are followers of Islam, irrespective of ethnicity, or language. (qtd. in Suleiman 75)

Both Arabs and Muslims have shared the experience of being accused as terrorists, especially Muslims who suffered from double oppression in terms of who they are ?And which religion they follow ? A "majority (53%) of all Muslim Americans say that, since the 9/11 attacks, it has become more difficult to be a Muslim in the United States." (Kohut 35) And "Muslims are more likely than Christians to report that their religion is not respected by

mainstream society. Muslims feel more vulnerable than Christians do as a result of the September 11 terrorist attacks” (Kohut 37).

1.8. Religion

In few words, discrimination, violence, and racism are the major characteristics of Muslim’s experience more than any other immigrant group. After 9/11, hate crimes, workplace discrimination, bias incidents, and airline discrimination targeting Arab and Muslim Americans increased exponentially. According to the FBI, hate crimes against Arabs and Muslims multiplied by 1,600 percent from 2000 to 2001 (Alsultany 12). In a *New York Times* article appearing a week after the horror of America on September 11, a Muslim woman described her dilemma this way:

I am so used to thinking about myself as a New Yorker that it took me a few days to begin to see myself as a stranger might: a Muslim woman, an outsider, perhaps an enemy of the city. Before last week, I had thought of myself as a lawyer, a feminist, a wife, a sister, a friend, a woman on the street. Now I begin to see myself as a brown woman who bears a vague resemblance to the images of terrorists we see on television and in the newspapers. I can only imagine how much more difficult it is for men who look like Mohamed Atta or Osama bin Laden” (qtd. in Alsultany 13)

Many Muslims feel isolated and afraid of being suspected of terrorism. According to Kaid, “many Arab Muslims say their community is turning in on itself – shying away from a society increasingly inclined to equate Islam with terrorism” (12). Hoping that things would become normal after 9/11 but the war overseas and biased media coverage only made it more difficult to cope. Some people went as far as changing their names so they would not be compared to the terrorists in any way (Parker 37). Jawad also confirmed that Arab-Americans and Muslim-Americans take their own steps to anglicize their names i.e Mohammed becomes

“Mo” Samiah and Sameer become “Sam” (Jawad 105). Additionally, Islam became the enemy of the world and it was perceived to be a religion of evil and anyone who resembles the enemy is a potential threat. This portrayal of an entire people affected much of the issues concerning U.S. national security, especially racial profiling (Parker 52).

Cainkar writes that, in Chicago, more than 100 hate crimes against Arabs, Muslims and people who are not Arab but “looked” like the Arabs. The day following the terrorist attacks, Arab mosques in Chicago were surrounded by hundreds of angry whites, some shouting “kill the Arabs,” and some handling weapons. It became apparent that the terrorists responsible for the 9/11 attacks were connected to an Arab Islamic extremist group (22).

The fear of Islam and Muslims became a trauma that threatened the Americans who believed that Islam unlike the other religions, encourages violence. The reason behind the American misunderstanding of Islam is due to media stereotypes toward Muslims i.e media provide wrong information about the difference between a terrorist and a Muslim. In this context, Moore argued that :

In most media, Muslim men are portrayed in traditional Arab dress indicating fundamentalism. Almost all Muslims are portrayed as Arabs, despite the fact that only about 20 percent of the worldwide Muslim population identify themselves as Arabs. Muslim women are most often portrayed wearing the veil, burqa, or niqab. These images conjure ideas that Islam subjugates and oppresses women. (91)

1.9. The Veil as a Symbol of Difference

From what is mentioned above, an important point should be highlighted which is, to what extent could the terrible event influence the Muslim women’s identity. The impact of 9/11 put the Muslim women as the essential segment of the Muslim Arab society into the centre of the debate, “Muslim women are placed at the center of these oppositions”

(Abdurraqib 56). Inside the American society, Muslim women can be noticed easily because of the appearance which is totally different from other women in term of EL HIJAB or VEIL. “ The image of the veil as the most visible marker of [difference] between veiled Muslim women and the Western world” (Ahmed 152). Moreover, as Ahmed claimed that el hijeb becomes a very sensitive issue for the Americans who look to it as tool of oppression and even preventing women from their freedom or in other words “ Veiling- to Western eyes became the symbol now of both the oppression of women and the backwardness of Islam” (157).

Because el hijeb is a symbol of Islamic identity, many Muslim women faced the oppression, violence, persecution, and exploitation. Abdurraqib mentioned that the issue of identity is a matter of loyalty, allegiance and sameness especially after the tragic event (57). This is why the American government asked its immigrants to be either a friend to the U.S. or an enemy against it. The Muslim woman believed that el hijeb is also a matter of allegiance, identity and belonging and it is not easy to change it.

The veil became the difference between “ us” and “ them” and its practice changed to be a negative stereotype against the Muslim woman (Aburraqib 61). This complex situation resulted in trauma for those women who lost their jobs, their homes, their neighbors and their friends. In other words, the refusal to assimilate make them pay the price through losing their rank, their respect, their role, and most importantly their identity. Maryam Aseel, an Afghan American woman, wrote about her experience in the U.S. in her memoir, *Torn Between Two Cultures*. She says : “ When I wore the Muslim woman's dress, people automatically assumed that I was some sort of a terrorist fundamentalist, or a zealot preaching the religion” (qtd. in Aburraqib 63). Aseel's experience with wearing hijab confirms the idea that el hijeb is a barrier against the Muslim women.

1.10. War on Terror: Afghanistan and Iraq War

Indeed, the significant impact of 9/11 did not only threaten the Arabs who live in America, but also it overstepped the United State's borders to threat all the Arabs who live in their homeland. There are many cases that prove the negative global impact of the War on Terror. War in Afghanistan and Iraq are considered as the best vivid cases of 9/11's negative impact. America will punish the responsible of the attack the double price, and this is the promise of the President Bush toward the victim's families. " Every one of the victim's who died on September 11th was the most important person on earth to somebody"(qtd. in Masud 68). Additionally, he declared a War against terrorism everywhere, " The attack took place on American soil, but it was an attack on the heart and soul of the civilized world. And the world has come together to fight a new and different war, a war against all those who seek to export terror, and a war against those governments that support or shelter them" (qtd. in Masud 69).

Directly after the tragic event, Bush's government starts to look for the offender. Bush accused Ben Laden for committing such horrible thing and even adressed him and his organisation in his speech. He said :

I said to the Taliban, turn them over, destroy the camps, free people you're Unjustly holding. I said, you've got time to do it. But they didn't listen. They didn't respond, and now they're paying a price. They are learning that anyone who strikes America will hear from our military, and they're not going to like what they hear. In choosing their enemy, the evil doers and those who harbor them have chosen their fate. (qtd. in Masud 71)

Suspicion for the attack quickly fell on al-Qaeda. The United States responded to the attacks by launching the War on Terror and invading Afghanistan to depose the Taliban, which had harbored al-Qaeda. The aim of the invasion was to find Osama bin Laden and other

high-ranking Al-Qaeda members to be put on trial, to destroy the organization of Al-Qaeda, and to remove the Taliban regime which supported and gave safe harbor to it. The George W. Bush administration stated that, as policy, it would not distinguish between terrorist organizations and nations or governments that harbored them (Masud 72). To catch the offender, many of the innocent souls of children, woman, olders, men were killed as well as million of people immigrated searching for safety and peace.

In 2003, the U.S. invaded Iraq because Bush had claimed that Saddam Hussein was linked to al-Qaida and was actively developing weapons of mass destruction which he might turn over to terrorists or use on their behalf, and hence that Iraq represented an imminent threat to the US. The most important is that the invasion of Iraq is the grand strategy of the US under Bush to undertake a coercive assertion of global hegemony and to show its strenght and even to threat the Arab Muslim countries (Musad 75).

As Nadine Naber explained, the difficult situation of the Arabs in the United States is due to a number of reasons. First, the diverse Arab American community is lumped together as generally, Arab-Middle, Eastern-Muslims. When the USA is involved in military action against any Arab country, any one who identified as an Arab/Muslim living in America may be targeted as terrorist. Second, Naber argued that Islam is used as a means of racializing Arab-Americans. And the third factor that enhances the invisibility of the Arabs in the United States is the intersection of religion and race (37).

Arabs in America have been negatively represented in the United States. Pre-9/11, the Arab-Americans were badly represented and stereotyped in the American media i.e in cartoons, movies, and advertisement. Such chracterization increased and heightned after the horrifing events on the Twin Towers. Post 9/11, the Arab-American shifted from an invisible

group into a visible one. This shift brought the Arab-Americans to public attention as well as to be in danger and risk.

The Arab-Americans lived in a very difficult period due to the fear of Bush's government reaction and the American society as well. Many laws have been changed which affected directly the Arab-Americans and even any one who looks like them, in addition to the executive laws that prohibited the Arab-Americans to live in peace, discrimination also took place. The Arab-Americans suffered from discrimination in context of education where the Arab students faced a lot of barriers to involve in the American school because of their Arabic identity. The racial discrimination in workplace is also another example in which the Arab-American's earning decreased as well as the integral migration declined.

The Americans believed that the Islam is the religion of violence and its followers are supposed to fight under the name of El Jihad and to make America belong to them. The misunderstanding of Islam is due to the negative representation of it in media. Additionally, Veiling became to Western eyes a symbol of women's oppression and the backwardness of Islam as well as a marker of difference between veiled Muslim women and the Western world.

War on Terror is the negative global impact of 9/11. Bush's government declared war against those who tried to destroy America and to overstep its sovereignty. War in Afghanistan and Iraq are considered as the best vivid example of 9/11's negative effect. The sense of loss of life, loss of safety, loss of families and lovers were collectively experienced by the Arabs. They found themselves the victims of hate crimes and acts of discrimination, prejudice and marginalization by the American society. The innocent Arab-Americans are targeted, because the terrorist attacks prompted the society to fear and to accuse those innocent people to be terrorists.

Chapter Two: 9/11 as a Turning Point in Arab-American Literature

The impact of 9/11 not only touched the field of the Arab-American citizenship but also effected the Arab-American writing as well. The Arab-American use their works to defend the Arabs and to erase their negative image for the entire world i.e “ the Arab-Americans become at once visible and in need to define and defend themselves because the majority have the perception that the Arab-Americans as collectively are guilty for the actions of a small number of radical fundamentalists and the uncertainty about their allegience to the nation” (Kaid 7).

In this context, Leila Shereen writes about how the Arab-American literature gained more interesting position in the U.S. literary studies in post 9/11 :

One effect of the US War on Terror has been a growing interest in Arabs in the US.

This interest has been expressed on an academic level by the impulse to include writing by Arab Americans in US ethnic literature courses, incorporate panels on Arab American culture into national conferences, and to publish edited volumes on the histories of Arab Americans. But prior to 9/11 Arab American writing received scant critical treatment and remained on the outer margins of US literary studies.

Despite the increased interest resulting from US domestic and foreign policies, Arab American cultural production continues to sit largely beyond the scope of cultural criticism. (qtd. in Luiza 8)

9/11 attacks resulted in the growing interest in Arab communities in US. The majority believed that the Arab-American literature did not gain attention until the 9/11 attacks, in which the world started to ask who really are the Arabs ? The sudden shift from the invisibility to widespread of the Arab culture becomes a heavy burden on Arab-American writers who have to absorb these changes. The Arab-American writers display solidarity and

struggle to present the positive image of the Arabs and even answer the questions about who really are the Arabs ?

The Arab-American literature is not a new literature but it has its origin and its developments. In this context Lisa Suhair Majaj argues that

Although Arab-American literature has been in existence in the U.S. for over a century, it has only recently begun to be recognized as part of the America Literary studies. However, the last two decades have seen a dramatic increase in publication by Arab-American writers. This literary studies reflects the shifting of the historical, social, and political contexts that have pushed Arab-Americans to the foreground, creating both new spaces for their voices and new urgencies of expression as well as the flourishing creativity of these writers. (qtd. in Luiza 12)

The next chapter will focus on discussing the reaction of the Arab-American writers and their role in justifying the Arab's image within the American society through their different literary works. But at first, the chapter will provide the history of the Arabs in the United States as well as the overview of the Arab-American literature.

2.1. Arab Immigration to the United States

The traces of the Arab-American literature are related to the immigration of the Arabs to the U.S. According to Ludescher, the Arab immigration dates back to the end of the 19th century, and, as she states, Arab-American literature “ mirrors the patterns of Arab American history, which scholars have traditionally divided into three phases, based on the three distinct waves of Arab immigrants who came to the US” (93). In the same stream, Moradi and Hassan argued that the immigration of Arab Americans to the United States is typically divided into three waves. The Arab- Americans as an ethnic group trace their roots to the Arabic-speaking countries of the Middle East and North Africa (Daraiesh 7).

The first wave of Arab immigrants can be situated between 1880 and 1945 and included mainly Christian Arabs who were drawn to the U.S. by economic opportunities i.e the first group consisted of Christian merchants and farmers trying to find jobs and therefore motivated by economic factors (Daraiseh 8). Generally, those immigrants were Lebanese, Syrians and Palestinians, who were documented as Turks, because of the domination of the Ottoman Empire. As a result, the U.S. government at first classified these immigrants as Turks. However, the Arab immigrants identified themselves according to other categories, such as family, kinship, village affiliation and religion. The literary production of this group of immigrants was restricted to the publication, in the U.S. of Arabic-language newspapers (Luiza 5).

The second wave of immigrants arrived between 1945 and 1965 and included a larger number of Muslim immigrants, particularly, Palestinians who became homeless and stateless after the Arab-Israeli War, in 1948. Furthermore, unlike the first wave, who were mostly Christians and illiterate, most of the people from the second wave were educated Muslims i.e second wave was characterized by the arrival of many professionals and university students (Luiza 6). According to Naber, this immigrant group “brought new and specific forms of Arab nationalism to the U.S. and began to self-identify according to the classification of Arab more than the previous immigrant wave” (40). Due to the higher level of knowledge, the second immigrant group was more nationalistic than the earlier group emphasizing on the awareness of a distinct Arab-American identity (Luiza 6).

In fact, the second wave witnessed the emergence of the Arab-American women writers. They contributed by different productions which focused on such themes :family relationship, food, women’s role, music, and folktales in order to create a bridge between their experiences and those women in the Arab homelands (Kaid 70). Cooke argued that

since the late 1980's, Arab-American women have begun "to take responsibility for the production of knowledge about women, gender and religion" (qtd. in Kaid 72)

Generally, the Arab-American women writers have been strongly influenced by other American ethnic groups like African Americans and Asian Americans. Handals noticed that the Arab-American writers have found a cultural and psychological connection with other ethnic groups in terms of feeling of marginality and alienation i.e "The connection of the Arab-American women draw between themselves and women of other ethnic groups articulate common bond in struggle to negotiate their diverse and plural identities" (Handals 159).

The third wave of immigration started in 1967 and continues till nowadays. This wave is characterized by many changing and happeninig events like Arab-Israel War of 1967 and Lebanese Civil War in the 70's and 80's in which both of them contributed a greater flow of immigration. Moreover, the main feature of the third group is totally different from the two previous waves, is that the third category possesses a much stronger sense of Arab nationalism (Naber 40). In addition according to Ludescher, "for the first time, Arab American organizations were formed to defend the Arab point of view and to combat negative stereotypes of Arabs in the popular press" (94). In other words, since the United States supported Israel instead of the Arab world, Arab-Americans felt the need to emphasize their distinct identity and claim their rights as a minority group (Silke 7).

2.2. Overview of Arab-American Literature

Mahjer poets are the earliest group of the Arab-American writers. The term is translated into English as Immigrant poets. Unfortunately, the English translation lost the exact meaning of the Arabic word *El Mahjar* which refers not only to the immigrant but the immigrant's destination, the new place where a person lives but maintains her diffrence. Most

of these immigrants came from the Levant (which included Lebanon, Palestine, Jordan, and Syria) of the Middle East. *El Mahjer* represents the in-between space in which the immigrants experienced in the new homeland (Kaid 67).

The best known of *El Mahjer* poets are Khalil Gibran and Ameen Rihani, Mikhail Naimy. The writers introduced new stylistics, thematic, and cultural influences from Western arts and literature into Arab poetry. Among their main themes were :

The desperate need to escape the mundane materialism of the peddler lifestyle; admiration for American vitality and hatred of American materialism; a desire for reform in the Arab world; acute concern about international politics and the political survival of the homeland; an obsessive interest in East/West relations; and a desire to play the role of cultural intermediary. (Ludescher 97)

Indeed, both Rihani and Gibran are considered as the most famous leaders of *ElMahjer*. On one hand, Rihani is viewed as the father of Arab-American Literature. He started to introduce free verse to the Arab literary canon as early as 1905. He is the author of the first Arab-American poetry collection (1905), the first Arab-American *play Wajdah* (1909), and *The Book of Khalid* (1911). His famous novel is based on the immigrant experience. On the other hand, Gibran is probably the most famous figure in *ElMahjer* group. He becomes one of the most acclaimed authors in the United States besides being one of the outstanding Arab writers in the whole world. Gibran is well known by his incredible work *The Prophet*. Finally, his works were published in both Arabic and English language (Kaid 67).

Therefore, the importance of *El Mahjar* group lies in the fact that it is considered the first literary school in Arabic, but, in America, this group is not granted with status and

privilege, including Gibran, who, despite being well-known in America, is not acknowledged by critics (Ludescher 98). According to Ludescher :

the defining moment in the history of Arab American literature came with the publication of two anthologies of Arab American literature, a twenty-page collection called *Wrapping the Grape Leaves: A Sheaf of Contemporary Arab-American Poets* (1982), edited by Gregory Orfalea, and the larger and more comprehensive anthology, *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry* (1988), edited by Orfalea and Sharif Elmusa. (103)

The importance of these anthologies is that they made it possible for common readers to get acquainted with Arab-American writers, some of which are contemporary ones. Besides these literary works, another important one is the autobiographical novel *Children of the Roojme: A Family's Journey* (1991), by Elmaz Abinader. The publication of this book was especially important because the author gives realistic accounts of the hardships experienced by immigrants (Ludscher 103).

Arab-American literature really began to flourish in the middle of the 90s. It has been included in school curricula and many scholars around the world have dedicated their researches to it. Ludescher noticed the fact that, recently, Arab-American literature has begun to be more accessible to the American audience in general, mainly through school curricula. She states, "In the last decade, in particular, the works of Arab-American writers were taught in the college curriculum, and conferences were held that were devoted specifically to Arab-American literature" (105). Therefore, Ludescher states that there are two factors which highly contributed to the growth of Arab-American literature. According to her,

the first was the search for voices outside the traditional canon of Anglo-American male literature, a search which led to the burgeoning interest in ethnic American

writers. The second factor, like so many things in the Arab-American community, was political. Recent events in the Arab world combined to raise the political consciousness and solidarity of the Arab- American community. (106)

Ludescher also mentions that many issues have faced the Arab-American writers, mainly concerning “what constitutes Arab-American literature” (106). She pointed out several questions that those writers have to deal with, nowadays, since the Arab-American group is extremely broad, such as: “should Arab-American writers focus on the Arab side of experience, emphasizing the traditions and values of the Arab world, or should they focus on the American side of experience, emphasizing American immigrant experience in the context of multiculturalism?” (106).

Another issue that Arab-American writers need to face is related to the social and ethnic status that members of this ethnic group have in the American society. The problem is that Arab-Americans occupy a contradictory position, since, as Majaj states, they are, officially, considered white, but this does not prevent them from suffering prejudice, just like other non-white groups. According to Majaj,

Arab-Americans currently are officially classified as white. This classification, although seeming to grant inclusion in mainstream American society, is ambiguous . Classification as white means that Arab-American experiences of racism and discrimination often go unaddressed on the basis that white people can not suffer racism. (qtd. in Ludscher 108)

Orfalea also highly regards the importance of Arab-American writers to the improvement of the situation lived by the Arabs in the United States. According to him,

Arab American fiction is making fascinating strides. The voice of people who bear the burden of a unique history in the United States is becoming more confident. It is

confident enough . . . to create a strong, at times joyful, more often agonizing linkage to the Arab world. And this is no surprise. With American warships and armies splayed out across the entire Middle East hunting for the elusive Fountain of Terror a complete reversal of those adventurers who came to the New World for the Fountain of Youth we have something to say, something to get across that matters, something to stand for. It is called humanness. In any case, there has been no value and a great deal of harm – in letting others say it for us. (132)

Generally speaking, the Arab American writers faced a lot of barriers from the beginning i.e with the first immigration. “ The debates revolving around Arab American racial classification, starting with the first wave of immigrants and persisting to this day, the Arab Americans are transformed throughout history from nonwhite, to white, to somewhere outside the limits of racial categories" (Saliba 311). But 9/11 is considered as one of the most painful issues that faces the Arab-American writers, particularly, how to react against the War on Terror.

After 9/11, Chalala expresses the shock and horror in which many Arab- American writers and intellectuals felt. He notes, “ the terrorists destroyed the very thing that he and many others had spent years trying to correct: anti-Arab stereotyping in American society” (qtd. in Luiza14). Although some Arab American intellectuals have argued that they do not need to explain themselves to the American public because they do not share the views of the terrorists, Chalala feels that explanations are required to prevent a racist backlash. He also feels that the Arab American community should defend any position taken against the Arabs (Luiza 14).

In short, discrimination, prejudice, negative stereotype, alienation, in betweenness, and marginalization are some of the barriers that faced the Arab-American writers and any one

who lives far from his motherland. Nevertheless, War on Terror leads to the increase of the previous issues, as well as, the increase of the solidarity between all the Arab-American writers in order to define and to defend the Arabs origins, roots, identity and to correct the negative image of the Arabs, particularly, the Arab-Americans who are accused to be terrorists.

2.3. Arab-American Identity Issue

The Arab-American community is remarkably heterogenous because, on one hand, it is made up of numerous people who are from different countries and different religious denominations. They are defined by the U.S. as Americans who can trace their ancestry to the North Africa of Algeria, Tunisia, Morocco, Egypt, Lybia, and Western Asia countries of Syria, Yamen, Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Lebanon, Kuwait, Palestine, Qatar, Oman, Saudi Arabia, and United Emirates Arabs. And on the other hand, the Arab-Americans hold a unique set of cultural values, beliefs, and attitudes which is totally different from the American's ones (Kaid 27).

Despite more than a century of migration, the Arab-Americans have not fully adopt the culture, the language, and the American lifestyle. But, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11, several things have changed in the U.S., particularly, toward the Arabs who find themselves obliged to choose between the Arab identity or the American one. As a result, identity has become a debatable issue which faced the Arab-Americans who live between the tradition of the Arab's values and the freedom and the opportunities of America which seems to offer (Kaid 42).

In recent decades, identity as a problematic concept have been tackled by several scholars and writers. According to the scholar Khayal : “ identity formation then, is not singular process with a definitive end point but an evolving social-psychological experience

of self-discovery that changes with events, issues, and sociopolitical circumstances surrounding a person” (qtd. in Llyod 45). Other scholars, like Homi Bhabha who called the continuous change of person’s identity “Hybridity which means the fusion of elements from the homeland and adopted home to create a third culture and/or identity which reflects diasporan’s in-betweenness” (qtd. in Olwan 73).

On the other hand, each writer attempts to negotiate the issue of identity according to his experience and struggle in the New world. For example, Maha El Said, in her article “The Face of the Enemy: Arab-American Writing Post- 9/11”, points that, since 9/11 “Arab-Americans, who are a *mélange* of Arab and American, become trapped in an attempt to redefine their identity, and reconstruct a hybridity that seems impossible in a world that is divided into “we” and “them” (qtd. in Llyod 53). In the same context, in his article “Edward Said’s Out of Place: Criticism, Polemic, and Arab American Identity”, Aboul-Ela notes, “The post-September 11 moment in Arab American history has seen an acceleration of interest in a multicultural view of Arabs in the United States one that treat[s] the Arab American experience as a set of specific anthropological details related to cuisine, courtship, religion, language, and various social practices” (qtd. in Luiza 34).

In addition, many names can also be mentioned like, Diana Abu Djaber , Naomi Shiheb Nye, Elmaz Abinadir, and Laila Halaby as one of the most important figures in the contemporary Arab-American literature. She represents the concept of identity in her work *Once in a Promised Land* which is the case study of this work, she depicts how the Arab-American protagonists Jassim and Salwa struggle to find a space for themselves and claim the Arab identity without being marginalized by the American society.

2.4. The Revival of Scheherazadian Narratives

In fact, after the 9/11, the Arab-American writers started “to open up with an outpouring of their own voices, telling their own experiences and stories” (Silke 97). The interesting thing is that after 9/11, the Arab-American feminist writers appeared strongly, in order to preserve their Arab identity and to challenge the false Western vision side by side with the Arab-American male writers. As a result, Arab-American women writers tend to use different literary strategies to justify the stereotyped image about the Arabs in general and Arab women in particular.

Scheherazad's story telling as a symbol of the Arab tradition is revived in the twentieth-century by the Arab-American women writers who used her words and ideas in order to resist and to challenge the prevailing Western representation of the Arab women. Through reviving Scheherazadian narrative, the Arab-American women writers seek to negotiate their issues and even try to save their lives as well as the lives of the Arab women from the negative connotation which imposed on them as Scheherazad did i.e she saved her life and other women's lives from murder by Shahrayar (Kaid 99). In the first lines of Mohja Kahf's poem “*Email from Scheherazad*”, explains the importance of the storytelling in shaping the Arab-American women writing :

Hi Babe. It's me. It's Schehrezad. I'm back

For the millennium and living in Hackensak,

New Jersey. I tell stories for a living

You ask if there is a living in that

You must remember : where I came from

Within the post 9/11 context, the Arab-American Women writers showed a stand-up of the comedy performance which has a connection with the Arabic oral tradition in order to protect their heritage. They revived the orality of Sheherazad from the *Thousand and One Night* because they believe that the storytelling of Scheherazad is a symbol of safety and responsibility toward themselves and the other Arab-American women as well as the Arab women in general i.e Scheherazad saves her life and other women's life through weaving nightly tales to the king Shahrayar. As a result, the Arab-American women writers re-engage their experience to save the Arab women every where (Sabry 196).

Through this, many of creative Arab-American women have tried to transmit the Arab oral tradition like Sheherazad into a form of creative performance. One of the best examples is Laila Farah's one woman show and Mayson Zayid's stand-up comedy routine. Both Farah and Zayid address the audience through discussing the important issues that have increased particularly after 9/11 against the Arab-American women but in a form of jokes and storytelling. This genre allows performers like Farah and Zayid to gain the possibility of presenting themselves as an active Arab-American women agents as well as to make the American audience aware about the reality of the Arab-Americans (Sabry 197). They tackled many issues like race and gender i.e "Through these two women's performances, which explicitly discuss problems of race through public artistic formats, Scheherazade's orality is brought to the fore as a central issue for discussion through the public mode of performance." (Sabry 198). In addition, "Race and gender become central issues as these women foreground the problems of being Arab-American within the historical and political context of the US agendas in the Middle East as carried out by the George W. Bush administration" (Sabry 199).

2.5. The Veil and Arab-American Women Identity

The issue of Veil stands also at the core of Islamic tradition and religious beliefs. It has become the subject of many scholarly debates as Literature. Both Veil and El Hijab have been used synonymously, veil means to cover the face, while El hijab is to cover the body of the Muslim women when she is in presence of adult men who are not close relatives.

However, both Veil and El hijab are supposed to ensure modesty, decency, chastity, respect, and purity (qtd in. Kaid 102). Hence, Veiling of women is widely misunderstood in the American society. This reality leads the Arab-American women writers to use Islam in order to empower the historical and the cultural variations of the veil, to break down the patriarchal systems of oppression, and to subvert the false image of Muslim women's Veil which has been and still misinterpreted by the Westerners (Kaid 103).

After 9/11, many women still adopt the Veil as an act of resistance as well as a symbol of identity and belonging to Islam. As a result, many Arab-American women have engaged in the issue of *the Veil* and its connection to Islam in order to correct its meaning from the negative Western's vision. In this context, Ahmed argues that "veiling to western eyes becomes the symbol of both oppression of women and the backwardness of Islam"(152). In addition, Hirshmann claims that the West has perceived Islam as "form of barbarism fueled in contemporary times by popular antipathy toward terrorist bombing and hostage taking which is considered the main source of Muslim women's inequality and the veil now read as the ultimate symbol, if not tool, of this inequality" (qtd. in Kaid 104). However, she confirms that the Muslim Women wear the Veil in order to present it as a mark of "resistance, agency, and cultural membership" (qtd. in Kaid 104).

The writing of many Arab-American women writers shows their manifest resistance to the West and a growing awareness towards the the misunderstanding of the practice of veiling

and its place within its own cultural and religious context, and particularly, the importance of veil as a marker of their religious identity as well as a significant part of their commitment to the Muslim faith. In addition, *the Veil* became the most controversial and debatable issue in the Western societies, especially, after the terrorist attacks in which many women are veiled and denigrated (Kaid 105). One of the writers who discusses such issue is Donnell who states in her article “ Visibility, Violence and Voice ? Attitude to Veiling Post-11 September ” that :

The difference in social conditions and political status enjoyed by different communities of veiled women. The many cultural variables and specificities that attend the wearing of veils are seldom the interest of those who represent the veiled women to and for the West. Even the word veil implies the fixing and homogenizing of a range of dress practices and garments which are worn in accordance with hijab. (qtd. in Kaid 105)

Despite the difficulty of representing the Arab community, the Arab-American writers are obliged to write, otherwise, their image will be defined by those who assume and believe that all the Arabs and Muslims are terrorists supporting terrorism. In this context, Davay points that the act of writing is a choice i.e “ to write or to be written ” and the Arab-American writers have decided to show the solidarity with the Arab community (Kaid 107). Finally, the Arab-American writers tend to re-correct the western mistaken perception and stereotype about the Arabs, particularly, the Arab-Americans, to show why it is important for the western audience to understand the real image of the Arabs as well as the Muslims, and even their experience.

No doubt, since the 9/11, the west has deployed all its efforts to spread the negative representations of the Arabs and Muslims and create a misunderstanding of such ethnic group

in addition to the false depiction of the *Veil*. Among many of the Arab-American women writers, Mohja Kahf tries to contextualize the Arab-American experience and situates the Muslim women's choice of veiling in the Western discourse. In general, the veiled Muslim women can not be fully incorporated into American society because "their bodies can not escape being marked as others" (Abduraquib 88). Kahf states that :

In these texts, women who wear hijab (veil), by virtue of their adherence to a practice that is clearly not American, can never construct a narrative which comfortable assimilation is the denouement. As a result, immigrant Muslim Women who veil must create new genre that defies the demands of American culture. (qtd. in Abduraquib 89)

In her short volume of poetry, "*E-mail of Scheherazad*", Mohja Kahf discusses the issue of veiled immigrant Muslim women in relation to the society in which they migrate. She argues that the act of veiling is a very complicated issue because on one hand, it is seen as an ethnic dress for the Arab Muslims who considered it as the image of the homeland and its culture as well as a part of their identity, roots, and belonging. However, on the other hand, the Americans see the veil as a marker of difference as well as a division between "Us" and "Others", and between a friend and enemy (Kaid 111).

Post 9/11 have witnessed the increase of many Arab-American literary works that belong to different genres. The works shared the experience and the real stories of the writers themselves and the other Arab immigrants i.e the events of 9/11 have similar effects on their lives. Names like : Naomi Shihab Nye, Elmaz Abinadir, Leila Halaby, Diana Abu Djaber, and others become widely known through their works which represented the situation of the Arabs, particularly the Arab-Americans and asked the Western audience to search for the truth of the Arabs who are accused to be terrorists and the enemy of the entire world.

2.5. Illustration from Arab-American Literature.

2.5.1. "Profile of an Arab Daughter" by Elmaz Abinader

"Profile of an Arab Daughter" is an example of post 9/11 literary work. This latter is an autobiographical short story that is written by the American born and raised Abinader who has lebanese roots. The story dealt with the effects of 9/11 on the life of the Arab-Americans, especially, it talked about two tragedies. On one hand, the collapse of the Twin Towers as an international tragedy and on the other hand, the fall of the writer's mother as a family tragedy due to the negative impact of 9/11 (Silke 58). As it is mentioned above, the writer and this family belong to the category of the Arab-Americans due to their lebanese roots, however, in the short story Abinader draws attention to the fact that her mother radically distinguishes herself from the label Arab : " My mother never considered herself an Arab. We're Lebanese, descendants of the Phoenicians" (qtd. in Silke 58). In addition, Abinader's mother used the term Arab to refer to the Muslims in Lebanon. " She talks about Arabs as them, the other population in Lebanon, her home country" (qtd. in Silke 59). In fact, Abinader's mother defines herself as a non-Arab because of her Catholic background.

According to the mother, their Christianity distinguishes the family from the label Arab as she identifies Arabs with Muslims : " They have been in the United States for 63 years, they have attended Catholic church every week of their lives" (qtd. in Silke 60). The quotes indicate the Americanness of the family that lives in the United States for so long and consists of Christians, just like the mainstream American family. The climax of the story raises since the collapse of the Twin Towers. Abinader described the discrimination against the Arab-Americans and even her family and the harsh situation they lived. An important point has been highlighted which is how the Americans confused between the Arabs and

Muslims i.e they believed that all the Arabs are Muslims and any one who looks like an Arab person is a terrorist. This false image makes Abinader's family suffer from the negative stereotype, in spite of being Christian family who lived in America for long time. Moreover, the writer talked about her experience when she is profiled in the airport after 9/11 because she seems as an outsider and different from other groups despite being born and raised in the United States. This accident makes her remember the same situation when she is profiled at school (Silke 62).

2.5.2. "Letter to Any Would-Be Terrorist" by Naomi Shihab

"Letter to Any Would-Be Terrorist" is a poem of the author Naomi Shihab Nye. She was among the earliest Arab American literary responses to the events of 9/11. She is a Palestinian American poet who has been named the "outstanding American poet of Palestinian origin" (Orfalea 56). She tried to show how the Arab-American authors used literature to confront national catastrophe, how do they remember and narrate the grief, pain, and confusion ensuing in the wake of the attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon. Nye's poem represents a type of Arab American literary response that reconciles Arab Americans with the immediate need for a period of mourning, rumination, and reflection (Olwan 172). In many ways, Nye's work addressed the terrorists and asked them to consider the ramifications of their actions on Arab Americans, she writes :

I am sorry I have to call you [terrorists], but I don't know how else to get your attention. I hate that word. Do you know how hard some of us have worked to get rid of that word, to deny its instant connection to the Middle East? And now look. Look what extra work we have. Not only did your colleagues kill thousands of innocent, international people in those buildings and scar their forever, they wounded a huge community of people in the Middle East, in the United States and all over the World.

If that's what they wanted to do, please know the mission was a terrible success, and you can stop now. (qtd. in Olwan 186)

Nye's response to 9/11 shows how this Palestinian woman believes in the power of literature and words in promoting a better understanding of the Arabs, particularly, the Arab-American situations, "We believe in the power of the word and we keep using it, even when it seems no one large enough is listening" (qtd. in Olwan 187). Her message to the terrorists is to join the human family and find another way to live. Her belief in the importance of writing to defend the Arabs' identity, culture, and tradition has been noticed in many of her works. In *19 Varieties of Gazelle*, she writes :

I kept thinking, as did millions of other people, what can we do? Writers, believers in words, could not give up words when the going got rough. I found myself, as millions did, turning to poetry ... We need poetry for nourishment and noticing, for the way language and imagery reach comfortably into experience, holding and connecting it more successfully than any news channel we could name. (qtd. in Olwan 189)

2.5.3. "Muslim and Arab American Writing" by Nouri Gana

Nouri Gana's essay "Muslim and Arab American Writing" discussed the traces and the effects of the events of 9/11 "which catapulted Muslims and Arabs from a state of precarious obscurity into one of ominous conspicuousness" (qtd. in Olwan 277). Gana's essay shows how the political environment in the United States created racism towards Arab Americans in general, and Muslim Americans in particular, encouraging the visual, cultural and literary denigration of Islam. In addition, she confirmed how the function and role of such literature played a great role in contextualizing the situation of the Arabs and Muslims (Olwan 279). She writes :

The task of Muslim and Arab American writing is nowadays to wager more programmatically on formal adventurousness in order to wrest the universal humanity of Muslim and Arab suffering from the grinding machinery of the war on terror. (qtd. in Olwan 279)

Due to the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Arab-American literature has gained more attention despite of being in existence for many years ago. Its traces relates to the Arab immigration to the United States which is devived into three waves. Befor 9/11, the Arab-American literature is seen as an invisible literature in the American literary studies, and only, in recent years, it begans to recognize as a part from the American literary studies. Or in other words, the terrorist attacks of 9/11 is considered as a turning point for the Arab-American literature because this latter shifted it from the invisibility to a visible literature.

The negative impact of 9/11 on the Arab identity makes the Arab-American writers feel in need to react in order to define, defend, and erase the negative stereotyped image of the Arabs for the entitre world. Several works have been published to depict the real life situation of the Arabs who suffer from many issues and even to show the difficulty of preserving the Arab identity in the American society, particularly, in post 9/11. To devote the Arab identity, the Arab-American writers revive the Arab folktales like Scheherazadian tale to show the similarities between the role of Scheherazad in protecting her life and the other women's lives which is the same for the Arab-American writers who use their pen to save their lives as well as the Arab's life. They also negotiate the issue of the veil as a part from the Arab identity. Elmaz Abinader, Naomi Shihab, and Mohja Kahf are some of the most famous figueres who have an important role in defending the Arab-Americans situation, after the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Chapter Three: Identity Doubleness in Hallaby's *Once in a Promised Land*

Since the terrorist attacks of 9/11, several Arab-American authors have published many literary works which depicted the Arab-Americans struggling to maintain their identity in the American society. 9/11 has shifted the Arab-Americans from being invisible into a “highly visible community that either directly or indirectly affects America’s so-called culture wars, foreign policy, presidential elections, and legislative tradition” (Salaita 110).

Consequently, the Arab-American authors had responded by portraying characters who deal with the complexity of both their hybrid identity and fraught position in the United States, finding themselves disconnected from Arab and American cultures alike. One of the biggest issues that faced the Arab-American characters is their inability to find their space in the Western society due to their Eastern culture in post 9/11. Or in other words, the issue of living inbetween is well discussed and explained in Laila Halaby’s 2007 work, *Once in a Promised Land*.

Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land* is the author’s second novel. Halaby, like other Arab-American writers, found herself in need to respond, to define, and to defend the Arab-American community. As a result, she decided to include the Arab-American’s struggling in her novel of *Once in a Promised Land* in which its central characters challenged the prejudice, the discrimination, and the negative stereotype of the American society toward the Arab-Americans since the 9/11 attacks. Halaby represents the bleak image of being an Arab in the U.S. In addition to many issues which have been discussed in the novel, Halaby has focused on the issue of identity i.e. how her protagonists Jassim and Salwa become aware of their inbetween position concerning Arab identity and American identity, and how the terrorist attacks of 9/11 effected them to think again about their identity either to stick to their roots or to obtain the American culture. Halaby specifically addresses this point on her personal website:

I have always believed that if other people could see my world, could see a Palestinian, Arab, or Muslim family/person/story, from the inside, then they couldn't have such ridiculous and negative stereotypes. I think over the years I have really come to appreciate the role of artists more, the role that translation plays in art. I don't have an agenda as a writer, but I do believe that it is my responsibility to offer an honest and challenging story. *Once in a Promised Land* is my offering. (qtd. in Olwan 225)

Once in a promised Land is a story of Jordanian couple Jassim and Salwa who left their native Jordan for the American desert of Arizona in order to chase their dreams, opportunities, and freedom. Jassim is a Jordanian hydrologist who believe of haversty water for the benifit of all humankind "Water is life, technology, is power" (Halaby 245). Salwa is a banker, and real estate agent. She is a Palestinian from Jordan who have been born in the U.S., "Salwa is Palestinian by blood, Jordanian by residence, and American by citizenship" (Halaby 70). The couple met each other in Jordan, when Salwa attends a lecture presented by Jassim. They start meeting each other after the lecture and soon, they got married and they move to America. Before 9/11, their marriage appears, on the surface, to be a happy, fulfilled one. Jassim and Salwa are wealthy, they own a beautiful house in Tucson, they drive a Mercedes, and even Salwa send money to her Palestinian familly in Jardon. Jassim incorporates in daily swims to instill balance in his life, Jassim "did not believe in God, ... he did believe in balance," (Halaby 3). Salwa, on the other hand, enjoys shopping and spending time at the mall while secretly harboring a desire for a child. On the surface, both characters perfectly embody the American goals of upward mobility, economic, prosperity, and cultural and racial assimilation. The narrator describes them :

That afternoon, driving up recently repaved asphalt to his nestled-in-thehills home, Jassim pulled up his glinty Mercedes next to one of many identical expectant

mailboxes, each painted a muted rusty brown ... in the coolness of his house, Jassim removed a gleaming glass from a glossy maple cabinet and filled it with the purest spring water money could buy, [h]e pulled the trashcan out from under the right side of the sink (the spot where 92 percent of Americans keep their kitchen trashcans, he remembered hearing somewhere, though he doubted the statistic) so that he could reach the recycling basket, into which he deposited a handful of direct mail and ads (except for Salwa's overpriced-underwear-catalogue, Salwa's two magazines (one ... with a photograph of someone's pristine white living room) found themselves on top of the underwear catalogue, the bills were slit open with a steak knife and stacked. (23- 4)

The couple's marriage begun to unravel from inside as well as the outside, since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. From the inside, their marriage become a fragile one, a marriage that lacks loyalty, confidence, and intimacy i.e they start to lie to each other and to hide their own secrets. Salwa becomes pregnant, however, her pregnancy is against her husband's wishes. Later on, she finds herself engaged in relation with an American man called Jack Franks. While, Jassim's work threatened by FBI investigation as well as he finds himself a killer of an American boy by accident and even in relation with an American lady called Penny. And from the outside, the Jordanian-Americans Salwa and Jassim are accused to be terrorists according to the American society. Although they are wealthy, educated, and they are in America for a long time, but the Americans still look at them as foreigners, outsiders and why not as enemies who menace their safety. In other words, as "Jassim and Salwa's personal lives begin to unwind after 9/11, they become oddly more connected with American characters who they initially view as accepting; in both instances, however, their impressions of sympathetic American characters are far too trusting" (Lloyd 22).

In brief, Halaby's novel is a story about what it is like to be an Arab in America after the devastating attacks of 9/11. Halaby intended to show how the prejudices and the sad reality

of being considered as outsiders cause the couple's alienation not only from American society, but also from each other, how their life and career have changed due to the suspicious to be terrorists. The situation of Jassim and Salwa is a reflection of the Arabs situation, particularly, after the terrorist attacks, in which they find themselves hopeless in America, the country of democracy and justice.

Halaby's novel begins with a "Before" section which is divided into two sections. In the first section, the narrator used the traditional opening for Arab fairytales, she writes, "Kan ya ma kan fee qadeem az-zaman" (vii). With these opening words, Halaby offers the reader two important things, the first one, a promise of a happy ending. And the second thing, a reality about who she is, to which culture she belongs. Then, the opening is immediately translated by the narrator to "They say there was or there wasn't in the olden times." In her introduction, Halaby tells the reader that "our story" is about two main characters who live in America. She Halaby describes her main characters in this way:

Our story takes place in the provincial American town of Tucson, Arizona, a locale with weather and potential (and very little water). Our main characters are Salwa and Jassim. We really come to know them only after the World Trade Center buildings have been flattened by planes flown by Arabs, by Muslims. Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims. But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything. (vii-viii)

In this brief opening statement, Halaby identifies Salwa and Jassim as Arabs and Muslims for a purpose which is to assert that though the two characters are Arabs and Muslims but they have no direct connection with the attacks. By contrast, they are innocent people.

The second part of the “Before” section indicates that *Once in a Promised Land* is based on the writer’s experience of living between two different worlds i.e she is born in Lebanon to a Jordanian father and an American mother and she lived in Tucson in her early age. She also suffered from the negative stereotypes by the Americans since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. She depicted her situation where she was profiled at the airport because of her appearance and had to step aside for further examination of her luggage. In this way she indicates the consequences of 9/11 on herself, as an Arab- American.

Were you the only person to pack your luggage?

In my house we do not wear shoes; we leave them at the door so that any soil or dog shit that we may have stepped on does not scatter itself on the floors.

Has your luggage been out of your possession at any time?

Do you see the tiny box I have placed in front of you?

Please remove your shoes and place them in a gray bin.

The traveler refuses to offer any answer or story before her request is met:

Before I tell you this story, I ask that you open the box and place in it any notions and preconceptions, any stereotypes with regard to Arabs and Muslims that you can find in your shirtsleeves and pockets, tucked in your briefcase, forgotten in your cosmetic bag, tidied away behind your ears, rolled up in your underwear, saved on your computer’s hard drives. This box awaits terrorists, veils, oil, and camels. There’s room for all of your billionaires, bombers, and belly-dancers.

(viii)

Mentioning the writer's experience at the airport adds more authenticity and availability to the novel *Once in a Promised Land*. From the first pages of Halaby's work, she asked the reader to be ready for the prejudices and the stereotypes toward the Arabs and to be aware of the issue of having an Arab identity as one of the biggest issues in post 9/11.

Because Halaby puts the light on the issue of identity, she used in her writing the Arab tradition and culture as a sign to dedicate the Arab identity for the reader. She used the Palestinian children's tale entitled "Nus Nsays" which is told by Salwa's grandmother, and which can be translated into English as "half of a halving" or "half-halvsies" (93). In the story, the tiny Nus Nsays captured the ghula who wants to offer her "gold and silver and money" for freedom, but Nus Nsays responds, "I don't want gold or silver or money. I want peace for my village" (Halaby 97). In addition, Salwa asks her grandmother why Nus Nsays is so small, her grandmother responds, "To show that with determination and a clever wit, small characters can defeat larger evils. Every Palestinian has a bit of Nus Nsays within him. Or her" (Halaby 98). But when Salwa asks who is the ghula in the story, her grandmother does not give an answer. Halaby represents this tale for specific purpose, On one hand, Nus Nsayes represents Salwa and the whole Arab population and the ghula embodies America itself and its temptations of affluence. On the other hand, in both stories, the protagonists have been beaten by the antagonists i.e Salwa is beaten by America and by the end she discovered that it may not be possible to live peacefully in post 9/11 America.

Again, the Arabian folktales appeared at the end of Halaby's novel. The second tale also started by the traditional fairytale opening familiar to Arab children "Kan ya ma kan fi kadeem az-zaman" which she accurately translates as "They say there was or there wasn't in olden times" (Halaby 331). The story turns around a peasant girl who was born in a land far

from her ancestors were “fathers and often mothers too labored so that their children could change their fates” (Halaby 331). The ghula begins to “pulling the girl away from her familiar world while preparing to eventually eat her” (Halaby 332). The ghula still represents America and its temptations, however, the peasant girl represents Salwa. Halaby intended to use the story of the ghula and the peasant girl in order to make a comparison between how the ghula tries to attract the girl to be far from her roots which is the same way for America which used its opportunities to attract Salwa and Jassim to ignore their origins and to create new identity for them. Halaby describes how the ghula deals with the girl :

The hairy hideous ghula saw the beauty in child's face and grew madly jealous, wanted the baby for her own, but knew she wouldn't get past security, so she took out her wild ghula threads and began to stitch them under the baby's skin ... when the ghula was done, the baby lay asleep with a thousand and one red threads hanging from her. ... when the ghula thought the girl would be grown and ripe for eating, she began to reel in the remaining threads, pulling the girl away from her familiar world, gently turning the ske in a bit more each day. (331-32)

Before 9/11

In her writing, Halaby intends to divide her work into two parts : before and after 9/11. Her purpose is to explore the lives of the Arab-Americans in the two different contexts, to prove the negative impact of the terrorist attacks on the Arabs i.e how the American society badly and negatively mistreats the Arabs, how the prejudices and the sad reality of being considered outsiders cause the alienation not only from the American society, but also from each other. . Before 9/11, Salwa and Jassim live as an invisible members in the American society. They are successful in their lives and their carrier i.e from the surface, they seem to have reached the American dream. They admire America as the country of dreams and

opportunities, “That was something Jassim admired about Americans, something he had done his best to absorb for himself: they didn’t allow social constraints to get in the way of the day plan”, they adopt the American way of life, and they engage in the American consumerism.

After ten years in America, Salwa and Jassim are assimilated into the American society, they became very fluent in the use of English language. When Hassen, Salwa’s ex-boyfriend called her, after a long time, he was surprised by the language of Salwa i.e she speaks like Americans without accent. Through the novel, Halaby shows that her characters speak English in order to communicate with the westerners, while, between each other they switches the two languages i.e Arabic and English language. When Salwa visited her best friend Randa, this latter switch between the two languages in this conversation.

“Everything’s fine.”

“Are you okay?”

“It’s nothing, habibti. I just wanted to see you.”

Randa squinted her eyes, tilted her head, and listened for truth.

“There’s something. Come in.” They kissed twice on both cheeks.

“I’m cleaning the kitchen, folding laundry, and watching a Lebanese game show.”

And then in English she added, “*I am Randa, Mistress of Multitasking. I’ll make tea.*” (Halaby 282).

In addition, in the Before section, Halaby indicates that the married couple are Muslims, “Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims”(VIII). And later on, she describes “Jassim did not believe in God, but he did believe in Balance” (3). What is important is that, through the events of the story, the couple have rarely practiced the religion

comparing to the other characters like Randa who still uses the religious expressions in her language like, God bless you , Thank God, God willing, and Praise God. Similarly, to the telephone call between Salwa and Hassan, her Jordanian ex-boyfriend, is full of references to God. The same can be noticed in the conversations between Um Siham and Hassan, when she heard about the terrorist attacks of 9/11 and how she worried about her daughter's safety (Salwa). Um Siham says "God have mercy on those poor souls on the planes and in the buildings. God have mercy on them" (Halaby 13).

In spite of the fact that Salwa and Jassim have been living for nine years in the United States, their food habits are still very Arabic. Salwa prepares Arabic dishes, such as musakhan. Moreover, when Jassim swims, he remembers a scene of lunch from his childhood in Jordan, " lamb that had been roasted with garlic in the outdoor stove. For years to come Jassim could taste it, the garlic having left a pleasant taste in his mouth and, later, in his years of being away, a taste of home " (Halaby 39). Similarly, Salwa enjoys the Arabic coffee made by Randa because " the coffee boiled away thousands of miles of home sickness" (Halaby 284). The coffee brings back the feeling of being in Jordan, not only because of its taste, but also because of the customs that are tied to it, " I'll make you Arabic coffee. You can't come over here un announced and not have tea or coffee. That would be too American"(282). In addition, the narrator says :

Randa pulled the pot off the burner and added two spoonfuls of coffee, each heaped to the ceiling. She stirred them in, reached across the continental United States, stretched her arm across the Atlantic until she found Beirut, and ... the coffee boiled away thousands of miles of homesickness. (283-4)

In addition, Jake shows his interest in the Arabic tradition in order to win Salwa's heart. He asked her about Ramadan and Eid and how they prepare for it, " Back home we would be cleaning for Eid for days before. Fasting and cooking and cleaning and fasting and cooking and cleaning more " (Halaby 147). Another scene, when Salwa goes to Jake's house, he offers her shumur which is a typical ingredient of the Arab kitchen. Consequently, the shumur reminds Salwa of Jordan, " The crack of fennel in her mouth brought back desserts eaten only during Ramadan, brought back home in one tiny burst and then another, fireworks in her mouth that took away her breath " (Halaby 209).

Halaby also focused on the westerners stereotyped image toward the Arab woman and man before 9/11. Throughout the events of the story, she shows how the American society has a faulty image about the Arabs and their Arab traditions. For example, when Penny asks Jassim about his traditions, she uses the prejudice expression, "Men over there can marry four women at once, make them wear those sheets over their whole bodies" (Halaby 281). Another one, when Jassim meets Jack, for the first time, Jack starts to ask him about his personal life. Jack knew that Jassim is a Jordanian man, he tells him that he went to Jordan because his daughter married a Jordanian man. Jack's words show that he dislikes the Arab man because his daughter becomes an Arab woman. The narrator says :

Jordanian? I went to Jordan once. Followed my daughter there. She married a Jordanian. Not one like you, though. This one was from the sticks—or the sand, as the case was.

I hope she was happy there, said Jassim, Hard to say.

She converted. She's an Arab now. Probably still lives there. Don't know. Haven't talked to her for years. That's another story. (Halaby 6)

Jack thinks that Jassim has an American wife. When Jassim tells him that she is an Arab and she is from Jordan, Jack asks him if she is veiled and beautiful. Later on Jack starts to describe how he is sexual attracted to an Arab woman called Salwa. Jack says :

No offense intended. I'm just amazed by the beauty of the women there. Incredible.

The hair, the eyes. No wonder you fellas cover them up. There's a woman at my bank, First Fidelity, who's from Jordan. Absolutely beautiful. Eyes like magic, the clearest, lightest brown you've ever seen, and thick, thick hair that never seems to move. Never seen anyone like her. Can never remember her name. Starts with an S and sounds like Sally, I think. You know her? (Halaby 7)

Halaby also includes another scene about how the Arab woman are represented in the American society. Jake thinks of Salwa as follows:

mature without seeming old. This mixed with her foreignness made her sophisticated. Exotic. And married. The challenge of this combination turned him on, and he wondered if all Arab women had this allure the physical one and the shadow of a man behind them and if that was why they veiled themselves. (Halaby 171)

3.2. After 9/11

After the 9/11, Salwa and Jassim become visible members, they find it difficult to maintain their accepted position in the American society and in the same time their Arab identity becomes at risk and in danger. Jassim is so confident that the Americans have the ability to distinguish between the perpetrators of the attacks and the other Arab-Americans. But later on, he discovered that he was wrong in his belief. . He asks Randa to be calm and do

not worry about her child's safety, Randa is worried about her kids, thinks someone might try to hurt them, she told him later. Why would anyone hurt Randa's kids? People are not so ignorant as to take revenge on a Lebanese for the act of a few extremist Saudis who destroyed those buildings'' (Halaby 21).

Furthermore, Both Salwa and Jassim are recognized as Arab-Americans who belong to the middle class. Shortly, after the terrorist attacks, when the married couple go to shopping, , a sales clerk at the mall named Amber follows Jassim and calls a security guard. Quickly, Salwa speaks to Amber " Excuse me, young lady, Why did you call that security guard on my husband?"(Halaby 29). Amber responds, "He just scared me, He just stood there and stared for a really longtime, like he was high or something. And then I remembered all the stuff that's been going on" (Halaby 30). When Amber's manager, Mandy, asks Amber why she called security, Amber explains her actions: "You told us to report anything suspicious, and I just thought he looked suspicious" (Halaby 31).

Another example, When Jassim kills an American boy by accident, the FBI makes an investigation suspecting him as a terrorist. Jassim can not imagine that this behavior would take place in the country in which he has lived for so many years: "Things like this aren't supposed to happen in America. Americans are pure, simple people, their culture governed by a few basic tenets, not complicated conspiracy theories" (Halaby 299). Also, the accident makes Jassim admits that he longs for Jordan, his home, " And for the first time he felt unsettled in his beloved America, vaguely longed for home, where he could nestle in the safe, predictable bosom of other Arabs''(Halaby 165).

Moreover, after 9/11, the Americans start to place flags in their cars as a symbol of supporting the country in such black period. One of Salwa's coworkers offers her an American flag. Salwa becomes aware that despite that they have lived in this country, but the

Americans still look at them as outsiders, “You should put one on your car, on the back window. You never know what people are thinking, and having this will let them know where you stand” (Halaby 55).

The mistreatment of the Americans toward the Arab-Americans makes both Jassim and Salwa recognize that living in America became difficult and even their lives became in danger and risk. As it is mentioned above that Halaby’s protagonists have a long time in America and they speak English fluently. However, after the attacks, they found difficulty with their own English language use. As an example, when Jassim made an accident and killed an American boy, he became unable to speak fluently, at the same time, he goes back to his native language, “ For all the years his tongue had been using English to communicate, he now found it difficult to work through, standing at the end of each sentence and translating it back to make sure he said what he had wanted to say” (Halaby 120). Moreover, he feels as if the police officers do not understand him correctly. The narrator says:

as with many American conversations, the words he spoke had not conveyed what he had intended by them. He could never decide if it was his English, his actual use of language, or if it was because people didn’t really listen and instead put into words they heard the words they expected to hear (125).

Furthermore, at the beginning of the novel Salwa defines the Arabic language as “ her language of thought and intimacy” (Halaby 10). However, when they started to face the American problems; both Salwa and Jassim use English language. When Salwa contemplates her hidden pregnancy she talks to herself in English. And even, when she has kissed Jake, “What have I done? ‘ Salwa demanded herself in English, this being an American problem, an American situation. Another scene, She uses English to tell Randa about her affair because

she believes that English language is used to discuss the immoral and the incident things, “And I don’t know how, but I...I...God, Randa, I can barely say it, I made love with him”. Randa said in English, “ Friends is okay, Lovers is another story. God keep catastrophes far from you” (Halaby 284).

The same thing for Jassim, when he feels attracted to Penny, the waitress at Denny’s, and invites her to go on a kind of date with him, he talks in English. “ What in God’s name, on God’s earth, am I doing? he asked himself out loud in English” (Halaby 157). In contrast, when he decides to cancel the date, he speaks Arabic, as if his Arabic side that prevents him from having relation with Penny. “I can’t do this, he said aloud in Arabic” (Halaby 158). Finally, when Jassim is in Wal-Mart with Penny, he hears a Jordanian couple talking in Jordanian Arabic, “ in one breath he was in the souq in Amman, a place he couldn’t stand, for the same reason he wouldn’t have liked Wal-Mart if he hadn’t been invited to go with Penny: too many poor people ” (Halaby 278). In contrast to Jassim, this Jordanian couple looks as if they have not left Jordan and are still looking, behaving and speaking as back home.

At the beginning of the novel, Halaby indicates that her characters still preparing their Arab dishes. But, this does not mean that Halaby’s characters never get access to some American food habits. After the accident, Jassim wants to eat some Thai food, “Thankful for the luxury of living in a country where any kind of food was minutes away, he got the pile of menus from a drawer beneath the counter and began picking through” (Halaby 131). In other occasion, Jassim deviates from his morning routine and instead of going to the Fitness Bar to swim, he goes to Denny’s to drink some coffee. he eats sausages and eggs in which, he was surprised by its good taste, “ He bit into a biscuit and was startled by how tasty it was. Not heavy or filling, though, and he found himself eating quickly, propelled by each bite to have another one” (Halaby 155).

The couple's marriage begun to unravel since the terrorist attacks of 9/11. To protect themselves, Jassim and Salwa become more closer to the Americans rather than to each others . Because Salwa is treated badly by American customers at the bank where she works, she finds Jake's attention comforting. Salwa engaged in a secret relation with Jack. However, after the terrorist attacks, Salwa tells Jack that she will to return to Jordan, "Jake, I'm going home" (322). When Jack hears about the decision, he beats Salwa and even starts to scream at her repeatedly "Jesus fucking Christ. Boom. Just like that?" He ran his fingers through his hair again and again, forcing oily clumps into untidy formations" (320), "Bitch! Goddamn fucking Arab bitch..." (322). Similarly, Jassim who becomes a killer of an American boy, he finds himself attracted to Penny. The narrator says :

He just wanted to be with Penny and her large breasts and her soothing easy smile and her lack of connection to his life. The further away he drove from Denny's, however, the more impossible the scenario seemed. At a stoplight, he pulled out the piece of paper on which she had written the phone number. "I can't do this," he said aloud in Arabic. "I could have then. Could have taken her away, somewhere private, and had American sex with her, fulfilled this need, but this takes too much thought." He got out his cell phone and dialed the number. (Halaby 158)

Through the analysis of Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*, two important points should be highlighted. The first point, the novel confirms that after the events of 9/11, the Arab-Americans become the subjects of the Western gaze which is the same case for both Jassim and Salwa who face their American problems despite they have lived there for a long

time. The second point, Halaby wants again to confirm that the negative stereotyped image of the Arabs is increased more due to the terrorist attacks of 9/11.

Because the terrorist attacks of 9/11 have redefined the meaning of being Arab in America, Halaby responds by her second novel *Once in a Promised Land*. The novel deals with the story of Jordanian married couple Salwa and Jassim who left their home land to reach the American dream. Halaby's protagonists life have been changed since the horrible event of 9/11 in which they find themselves in the front of the American society's prejudice, discrimination, and negative stereotypes. As a result, this experience reinforces the feeling of living in between two different societies and even feeling of dislocation and alienation from both their home and host country.

Halaby's novel gives more attention to one of the biggest issues which is faced the central characters Salwa and Jassim. Having double identity i.e the Arab identity and the American identity become a problem for the Arab-American protagonists, particularly, after the terrorist attacks. The Jordanian writer divided her work into two parts, pre 9/11 and post 9/11. In the first part, she describes how Salwa and Jassim are invisible people, how they live a wealthy life, how they are succeeded in their work. But shortly after the terrorist attacks, every thing has changed, the married couple become visible members, they loss the American dream and their own marriage. The direct and the indirect impacts of 9/11 cause the protagonists to question and to revise their situation and even to choose between to stick to their Arab culture, language, and tradition or to look for the opportunities of America.

The analysis of Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* reveals that the Arab culture plays an important part in identity formation of both Salwa and Jassim. After 9/11, the protagonists recognise the position of the Arab identity. The story affirms Marotta's statement that "the hybrid experience may result in emotional distress, psychological vulnerability and

cultural homesickness when the social conditions of the host society are less favourable. Due to the experience of racism and discrimination their hybrid condition causes anger and frustration and heightens their feelings of detachment and alienation” (qtd in. Silke 55).

Conclusion

The present research began with documenting the stereotyped image of Arabs in the U.S. before 9/11. Several studies have examined how the Americans and Western media represent the Arabs in TV, radio, movies, cartoons, advertisement, and even games. Consequently, the recent studies indicate that the Arab-Americans have been negatively represented in the American society, for many years ago. The unexpected coming of 9/11 attacks is contributed to the shift of the Arab-Americans from an invisible group into a visible one i.e. After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, the Arab-Americans have not only experienced the negative stereotyped image by the Americans, but also have experienced the increase of many issues like, discrimination in media, education, and workplace.

After the terrorist attacks of 9/11, Islam becomes one of the most debatable issues in the American society. The Americans confuse between who is an Arab and who is a Muslim and they believe that Islam is the religion of violence and its followers are suppose to fight under the name of El Jihad and even to make it the religion of America. In addition, The issue of the Veil also which it is seen as a symbol of women's oppression and the backwardness of Islam as well as a marker of difference between veiled Muslim women and the Western world.

Despite that the Arab-American literature has been in existence for many years ago in America, but it has only gained more interest after the terrorist attacks of 9/11. Its traces relate to the Arab immigration to the United States which is divided into three waves. What is important is that the attacks of 9/11 are considered as a turning point in the Arab-American literature i.e. the negative impact of the terrorist attacks on the Arab identity makes the Arab-American writers feel in need to react in order to define, defend, and erase the negative stereotyped image of the Arabs for the entire world, particularly, the Americans.

As a result, several of Arab-American literary works have been published in order to depict the bleak image of being an Arab in America as well as to show the difficulty of preserving the Arab identity in the American society, particularly, in post 9/11. Arab-American writers like, Elmaz Abinader, Naomi Shihab, Mohja Kahf, and Laila Halaby are some of the famous writers who show their solidarity and have a role in defending the Arab identity through their works. To dedicate the Arab identity, the Arab-American writers revive the Arab folktales like Scheherazadian tale to indicate the similarities between the role of Scheherazad in protecting her life and the other women's lives which is the same for the Arab-American writers who use their pen to save their lives as well as the Arab's life. They also negotiate the issue of the veil as a significant part from the Arab identity.

Halaby represents the real life of the Arab-Americans via her second novel *Once in a Promised Land*. The novel deals with the story of Jordanian married couple Salwa and Jassim who left their home land to reach the American dream. Halaby's protagonists life have been changed since the horrible event of 9/11 in which they find themselves living in between two different societies and even they experience the feeling of dislocation and alienation from both their home and host country. Halaby wants to confirm that Jassim and Salwa are victims of 9/11 attacks, " Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both Muslims. But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything."

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