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**Post 9/11 Trauma and Identity Loss of the Female Protagonist in Laila
Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land***

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Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Master's Degree in Anglophone Language, Literature,
and Civilization

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Dedication

To

My mother

A strong and gentle soul who taught me to trust Allah, believe in hard work and that so much could be done with little

My father

For earning an honest living for us and for supporting and encouraging me to implicitly believe in my capacities

My brothers

Abd El-Ghafour, Boubaker, and Houcine who passionately back me up morally and financially, for their immortal love and care

My sisters

Amel, for being my second mother who would sacrifice her life to make me happy, Ismahen for your constant motivation and priceless advices, Chaima for being my little adorable sister

My nieces and nephew

Djana, Ordjouane, and Zayd for adding such an incredible joy and happiness to our family

My friends

I would infinitely express my gratitude and admiration to my best friend I can ever have, Kamel. This dedication also goes to my cousin Abd El-Kader for his collaboration. To Mouhamed, Inchirah, Selma, and Sara for their endlessly true friendship during my career as a student

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Abstract

The field of Arab American literature is a fertile and a rich sphere for conducting researches and investigations, especially when it comes to the literary works produced by Arab American women writers following post 9/11 trauma. Therefore, the present study basically focuses on the identity loss of the female protagonist in Laila Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land*. Salwa as an Arab-American encounters many difficulties and hardships with her husband in the United States, immediately after September 11 terrorist attacks. Moreover, this research paper tries to shed a light on the repercussions and effects of these events on the female protagonist's behaviour. The present study also seeks to globally depict the image of Arab-Americans being reshaped through the American media, and how they regard the American social discrimination, as well as anti-Arab racism. Besides, this study is an attempt to demonstrate and prove to what extent September attacks affected Salwa's marriage, her new attitudes towards her husband, her Arab-American friends, and her American colleagues. Furthermore, the present study drastically emphasizes on what it means to be an Arab after the 9/11 events and how the social, professional, political, and personal positions are impacted by these events. Most importantly, through the analysis of *Once in a Promised Land*, the research paper aims at investigating Salwa's hybrid identity, that she neither affiliates to the American society nor to the Jordanian. Consequently, the scope of the present study is relatively linked to the idea of how Salwa gives up on her Jordanian origins as an Arab woman in order to cope with the American Dream, and to become an American consumerist citizen.

Key Words:

Arab American Literature; Post 9/11 Trauma; Anti-Arab Racism; Identity Quest

ملخص

يعتبر مجال الادب العربي الامريكي ارضية خصبة و غنية، التي يمكن من خلا لها اجراء العديد من البحوث الاكاديمية خاصة عندما يتعلق الامر بالاعمال الادبية التي قامت بانتاجها الروائيات الامريكيات ذات الاصول العربية، بعد احداث 11 سبتمبر 2001. لذلك تركز هذه الدراسة اساسة على قضية فقدان الهوية لبطله الرواية مرة في ارض الميعاد للكاتبة ليلي حلي. باعتبار سلوى عربية امريكية فانها تواجه العديد من الصعوبات و المشقات مع زوجها بعد صدمة سبتمبر. علاوة على ذلك، يسعى هذا البحث الى تسليط الضوء على تداعيات و اثار هذه الاحداث على سلوك البطله الروائية. يهدف هذا البحث ايضا الى وصف صورة العرب الامريكيين التي اعيد تشكيلها و بلورتها من طرف وسائل الاعلام الامريكية، وكيف ينظرون ويستقبلون فكرة التمييز الاجتماعي الامريكي، وكذلك العنصرية المعادية للعرب. اذن هذه الدراسة المتواضعة هي محاولة لاطهار و لاثبات لاي مدى يمكن ان تؤثر احداث 11 سبتمبر سلبيا على زواج سلوى، كما تؤثر ايضا على مواقفها الجديدة تجاه زوجها. اصداقاتها العرب الامريكيين، وزملائها الامريكيين. تسعى هذه الدراسة ايضا الى التاكيد على فكرة ماتعنيه ان تكون عربيا في الولايات المتحدة الامريكية بعد احداث سبتمبر الدامية، وكيف يمكن للفرد ان يخسر موقعه ومنصبه السياسي، الاجتماعي، الاكاديمي والشخصي. الهم من ذلك، من خلال تحليل مرة في ارض الميعاد، جوهر هذا البحث هو التحقيق في هوية سلوى الهجينة اي لايمكن اعتبارها امريكية ولا اردنية، كامرأة عربية وسعيها الدائم هو احتضان والتاقلم مع الحلم الامريكي لتصبح مواطنة امريكية مستهلكة.

الكلمات المفتاحية:

الادب العربي الامريكي؛ صدمة 11 سبتمبر 2001؛ العنصرية المعادية للعرب؛ البحث عن الهوية

Résumé

Le domaine de la littérature Arabo-Américaine est une sphère riche et fertile qui mène à bien des recherches académiques, notamment quand il est question des œuvres littéraires produites par des Arabo-Américaines écrivaines après 9/11 traumatisme. Par conséquent, cette étude se concentre surtout sur la perte et la défaite identitaires du protagoniste féminin dans le roman de Laila Halaby *Once in a Promised Land*. Salwa est considérée comme une Arabo-Américaine, qui rencontre de nombreuses difficultés et épreuves avec son mari dans les États-Unis, immédiatement après les attaques de 11 Septembre 2001. En outre, ce document de recherche tente de mettre en relief les répercussions et les effets de ces événements sur le comportement du protagoniste féminin. L'étude présente vise également à décrire d'une manière globale, l'image des Arabes-Américains étant remodelé par les médias Américains, et comment ils considèrent la discrimination sociale aux États-Unis, ainsi que le racisme anti-Arabes. D'ailleurs, cette humble étude est une tentative pour démontrer et prouver dans quelle mesure les attaques de Septembre affectent le mariage de Salwa, et ses nouvelles attitudes à l'égard de son mari, ses amis Arabo-Américains, et ses collègues Américains. En outre, cette étude souligne fortement que signifie le fait d'être un Arabe après les événements de 9/11, et comment le côté social, professionnel, politique, et personnel a été touché par les faits. Donc, la portée de l'étude est relativement liée à l'idée ou Salwa se renonce de ses origines Jordaniennes (une femme Arabe) afin de se débrouille avec le rêve Américain, et devient un citoyen consommateur Américain.

Mots clés:

La littérature Arabo-Américaine; 9/11 traumatisme; le racisme anti-Arabes; la Quête d'identité

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Introduction

Arab American literature has existed in the US since the 1920s. It started mainly with the foundation of Al-rabitah Al-qalamiyah¹, which took charge for establishing Arab American literature in the US. It owes its success to the efforts of both; Gibran Khalil Gibran, whose book *The Prophet* has never been out of print, and Ameen Rihani, who wrote *The Book of Khalid*, the first Arab American novel. The history of Arab American literature can be dated back to the late 1800s, as the first wave of Arab immigrants started to settle in North America in considerable numbers mainly from the Syrian state of the Ottoman Empire. Most of these immigrants were Christian, not willing to reside for a lifelong but to only sojourn. Hence, their residence basically in Boston and New York was temporary, wishing that they would get back home one day. Yet, the distance between the United States and the Middle East did not prevent Arab immigrants to maintain a connection with what was happening in the Middle East at that time, fundamentally through their political and sectarian newspapers and articles.

Against Arab immigrants' wishes and desires to return home, they unintentionally established a large community in America though, resulting in a new generation of Arab-American born children. Issues had increased ever since, involving how to maintain Arab identity and to minimize the impact of Americanization on this generation, especially that America does not tolerate ethnic groups. All these actions of Arab identity preservation and reacting against the American social pressure were of great importance that took place to be geared and expressed through magazines and newspapers.

Laila Halaby is an example of highly praised contemporary Arab American women writers and influential novelists. Halaby was born in Beirut to a Jordanian father and an American mother. However, she was raised in Tucson, Arizona. She is a gifted novelist, poet,

and currently works as an Outreach Counselor for the University of Arizona's College of Public Health. Halaby's current publication is a memoir of poems *My Name on his Tongue* (2012), and a project novel which is basically centered on an American soldier who returned home from Iraq after achieving three years of service in the area. Furthermore, Halaby is also a talented writer in the domain of children literature; involving a yet unpublished book called *Tracks in the Sand*, which is essentially a set of Palestinian folktales, collected from children at the time she was studying folklore in Jordan.

Due to her belonging to different cultures, Halaby likes contradictions and juxtapositions, especially when they color her novels to give a postmodern touch to her works. She also considers artists in all domains as universal translators and mediators who bridge the gap into other people cultures, in an attempt to reject or redefine the stereotypical and stigmatized images of oppressed and submissive nations. As a novelist, Halaby is a winner of a PEN Beyond Margins Award for her novel *West of the Jordan* (2003), and a Barnes and Noble Discover Great New Authors selection for her masterpiece *Once in a Promised Land*. (2007)

Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* can be considered as the first effort made by an Arab American novelist to shed a light on the outcomes of 9/11 on Arab-Americans. The novel goes on the far side by demonstrating and investigating the psychological, political, social, economic, and cultural repercussions of these events, hand in hand with the perplexed thought of citizenship and identity. It also discusses the representations of gender, class, geo, and socio-political aspects of the post 9/11 trauma.

*Once in a Promised Land*² basically revolves around a crumbling marriage of an Arab American couple (Salwa and Jassim) in the post 9/11 chaotic period. On the one hand, Jassim

the Jordanian male protagonist who holds a PhD in hydrology works as an expert on water quality control with a consulting firm. Salwa on the other hand, is the female protagonist whose works as a banker and real estate broker opened for her a rich and luxurious life that she would never realize in her homeland, Jordan. Salwa and Jassim are a financially and socially well-situated Muslim couple living in Tucson, Arizona. Both of them neither belongs to the Jordanian society, nor to the American's, because they constantly seek to draw a position for themselves, however they fail, encountering social rejection and exclusion, leading to their hybrid identities.

The Arab American novel *Once in a Promised Land* (OPL), has been vastly perceived. Silke Dewulf in her article "Arab-American Identity Construction: A Comparison between Pre- and Post-9/11 Literature" (2009), assumes that the mixture of places clearly makes it more difficult for Salwa to establish an identity for herself, since she is raised in Jordan to Palestinian parents, but born in the United States.

Likewise, Georgiana Banita in her article "Race, Risk, and Fiction in the War on Terror" (2010), asserts that "Salwa similarly strays from what may be considered decent, professional conduct, yet her transgressions carry much more symbolic weight than Jassim's." (Banita 247) In her profession as a real estate agent, Salwa seems complicit in the image of the United States as an agent of territorial infringement and occupation.

Steven Salaita in his book *Modern Arab American Fiction* (2011), reviews that the novel explores how anti-Arab racism and that Islamophobia intersects with domestic policy and spills over into the way Americans deal with one another. He also contends that political events explicitly affect the characters' psychological development (Salaita 91).

Mudasir Altaf Bhat puts it forward in his article “Broken Promises in a Promised Land: Race and Citizenship after 9/11 in Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land*” (2014), that the political events have a great influence on the protagonists’ lives and their psychological disorders. He claims as a result, Salwa begins to question the nature of her existence in the US.

Arab American feminist activists have also tackled many issues of Arab-American women’s victimization and racialization like Lisa Suhair Majaj in her article “The Hyphenated Author: Emerging Genre of Arab American Literature Poses Questions of Definitions, Ethnicity, and Art” (2007), besides Carol Haddad in her article “Anti-Arab-IsM” (2011). Both of them have successfully defended Arab-American women’s social, cultural, economic, and political concerns.

Since the novel implicitly tackles the psychological impacts of 9/11, in addition to its feminist perspective towards female Arab-American characters, this research therefore applies two major literary approaches, psychoanalysis and feminism. On the one hand psychoanalysis, which is a theory used to analyse one or more of the characters; the psychological theory becomes a tool to explain the characters’ behaviour and motivation. In other words, the aim of the psychoanalytic literary criticism approach is to analyze the author’s psychological tendencies, and the character’s abnormal behaviour in a given literary context. The process of criticism is pretty close to Freud’s analytic procedure, tackled in his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* itself, however the application differs. Thus, many critics perceive the abnormal behaviours and attitudes of the fictional characters as a fertile scope of psychological case studies. To illustrate, among Freud’s most frequently used concepts in the analysis of literary works are: id, ego, and superego, penis envy, slips of the tongue, and Oedipus complex. The

more closely the theory seems to apply to the characters, the more realistic the work appears. The present study analyses Salwa's psychological problems and their outcomes on her matrimonial life.

On the other hand, feminism is broadly conceptualized as the school of thought which seeks to describe and analyse the ways in which literature portrays both female and male characters' economic, social, political, and above all the psychological problems that are driven either by internal or external forces. Furthermore, Feminist Literary Criticism is the resistance and struggle of the female's conscious against the male's stereotypical and fake representation images of her identity. The idea of female identity is in essence related to the transformation of her experience into a state of consciousness, and her recognition of the social, political, economic, and cultural roles that she should be integrated in.

Yet, feminism defines itself as a universal ideology and concept, it came out for the first time within a western context, it has only discussed issues and worries of the American women, away of the social and religious factors. Hence, the present study focuses and applies what is known as Arab American Feminism. The latter acquired its strength during and after the first Gulf war (1990-1991) mainly because of the anti-Arab discussions held in America. Arab American feminists could find an outlet for their concerns including racism and segregation, this freedom of expression can be linked to two factors. Firstly, the religious factor which drastically helped in drawing its principles in parallel with Islam principles. Secondly, during the 9/11 events epoch women were viewed less harmless than men who were portrayed as terrorists. Arab American feminists then found it easier to rebel against the western feminism itself, which claims that Arab women are totally oppressed and victimized by men.

Back to the 1990s, Arab American feminism had three different discourses and viewpoints. Primarily, Arab American nationalist feminism, that opted for assimilation as a way to subvert and undermine the thought of sexism and racism. Then, Arab American liberal feminism, as the term 'liberal' implies, it calls for an individualistic view and engagement against racism, keeping heritage, however negating racialization. Eventually, Arab American women of color feminism, which has been proved to be the most flourishing one. It matches the common experiences of both; Arab American women and the other minorities of different ethnic groups, for this type of feminism discourse is stretched from a self-awareness chronicle of Arab American women as being part of their ethnic community. Accordingly, Arab American feminism in the present study is applied to the female protagonist Salwa, who experiences otherness both as Arab in the USA and as a woman in a patriarchal society.

The present study is organized into three chapters. The first chapter is entitled Women Presence in Arab-American Literature and it gives an overview about women appearance in literature produced by Arab-American writers before and after the events of 9/11. It also highlights a common theme among all those Arab American women writers which is the issue of hybrid identities; however each writer discusses this subject from a different perspective, using different literary techniques and styles as well.

The second chapter, The Impacts of 9-11 on Salwa and Jassim, studies the outcomes and consequences of 9/11 incident on Salwa and Jassim. It deals with both Salwa and Jassim's Perceptions of 9-11 Trauma and Anti-Arab Racism, and The Effects of 9/11 on Salwa's Marriage. Moreover, this chapter investigates the sudden behavioural changes of the protagonists right after the 9/11 events, and how the lack of communication overwhelms their

academic and personal lives, causing an emotional distance and a break down of their marriage.

The last chapter goes even deeper to scrutinise Salwa's Quest for Identity. It pictures her as an Arab Woman in the United States, who seeks solidarity in her memories once she has lived in Jordan. It also, depicts her as an American Citizen with new tendencies and orientations of celebrating the American Dream at its highest. Salwa, therefore does not completely fit in the American society, nor remains the Jordanian Arab woman.

The significance of this research chiefly lies in analyzing and depicting the psychological changes in Salwa. It is highly noticeable that this change was caused by the post 9-11 trauma. It also sheds a light on Salwa as a female Arab American, who is in a constant quest for a lost identity. The main objectives of this study are; to examine the 9-11 events effect on the psychological and behavioral changes of the female protagonist Salwa. In addition, it seeks to study Salwa as an Arab and an American citizen. Moreoften, the present study aims at investigating the sudden change in the attitude of the American government towards Arabs in the post 9/11 trauma. How Arab-Americans are then regarded and perceived by the American media as terrorists. Thus, some of the questions to be answered in the present study are; does Salwa succeed to recognize her identity? Would the lack of communication between Salwa and Jassim cause her psychological problems? How would Jassim and Salwa perceive the 9-11 trauma and its effects on their intimate relationship? Finally, does Salwa carry on her role as a Muslim wife?

Chapter I Women Presence in Arab American Literature

Over the last two decades, Arab American women writers have become crucial models in the field of Arab American literature, drastically tackling issues like the loss of identity, diaspora, American racism, class gender, sexuality, hybridity, and politics. This chapter highlights that many contemporary Arab American women writers have focused on female characters' self-recognition, struggle, and identity formation in the U.S.A, both before and after 9/11 events.

Hence, they can be divided into two categories, but they share the same tendencies, the only difference is time and place of the novels' events. On the one hand, those who have tackled problems of segregation, racism and affiliation. They have thus written a bunch of fictional novels before 9/11 including; Mona Elizabeth Simpson *The Lost Father* (1992), Diana Abu-Jaber *Arabian Jazz* (1993), Naomi Shihab Nye *Habibi* (1997). On the other hand, those who have produced astoundingly fruitful masterpieces after 9/11 trauma, so as to accentuate hybrid identity, and diaspora including; Alicia Erian *Towelhead* (2005), Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006), and Evelyn Shakir *Remember me to Lebanon* (2007) The present chapter also tackles the above mentioned prolific female novelists' contributions in the field of Arab American literature, as well as their renowned masterpieces.

I.1 Women Writers and Female Protagonists in Arab American Fiction before 9/11

In her article "A Sister's Eulogy for Steve Jobs" (2011), in *New York Times*, Mona Simpson states that

I grew up as an only child, with a single mother. Because we were poor and because I knew my father had emigrated from Syria, I imagined he looked like Omar Sharif. I hoped he would be rich and kind and would

come into our lives (and our not yet furnished apartment) and help us. Later, after I'd met my father, I tried to believe he'd changed his number and left no forwarding address because he was an idealistic revolutionary, plotting a new world for the Arab people. Even as a feminist, my whole life I'd been waiting for a man to love, who could love me. For decades, I'd thought that man would be my father. When I was 25, I met that man and he was my brother. (Mona Simpson)

To begin with, Mona Jandali was born on June 14, 1957 in Green Bay, Wisconsin. Her parents Abdulfattah Jandali, born in Syria, and Joanne Carole Schieble, who is of German Catholic descent, they immigrated from two different countries to the U.S.A, where they met and got married, but they were soon divorced. Thus, the effects of the divorce can be seen through her novels, including her three sequels; *Any where but Here* (1986), *The Lost Father* (1992), *A Regular Guy* (1996). Steven Salaita puts forward in his book *Modern Arab American Fiction* that she is not typically categorized as Arab-American. Fundamentally, for the reason that she does not highly contribute in that sort, in addition to her limited examination of the themes which ought normally to be tackled with Arab-Americans (Salaita 108).

Mona Simpson has been selected in 1996 as one of Granta's ³ Best Young American Novelists among the new wave of contemporary American writers during the 1980s, who confirm that her works greatly delve into the knotty relationships within families caused by split-ups, divorce, and absent fathers. Simpson's second published novel *The Lost Father* has a stunning plot that pushes the reader to be actively involved in the events, which can be every

one's own story. It also describes deeply the struggles of a young girl with a hybrid identity because of her father's absence, and that gap would not be filled unless she meets him.

The Lost Father is predominantly centered on Mayan, the female protagonist who has opted for medical school as a way to initiate a new life for herself. However, she is still disrupted by her father's past. She is emotionally paralyzed, powerless and can not put herself into a loving relationship. In addition to her hybrid identity which creates infinite questions to be answered by her long lost father. Mayan is now an eminent doctor, yet her life remains incomplete. She then settles on fighting her obsession with her Egyptian lost father.

In her article "Children of Al-Mahjar Arab American Literature Spans a Century" (2000) Elmaz Abinader states that Mayan and her mother have always been waiting for the man who disappeared. Though he carelessly escaped from their lives, Mayan still imagines him as hero, extraordinary, and above all a savior. She keeps on hoping that one day her father would appear on the doorstep, with a smiling face. That is why she is ready all the time to embrace him, feel that she is complete, and their miserable life would soon change. Additionally, Mayan's yearning for her father is unconscious (Abinader 14-15).

In other words, as Christina Clark points out in her article "Why Fathers Matter to Their Children's Literacy" (2009) in literary discourses that, fathers usually represent protection, power, and belonging, which are attributes that Mayan totally lacks. Thus, the feeling of belongness is often associated with fathers especially when it comes to the field of Arab-American literature (Clark 14).

At the outset, Mayan is hesitant when it comes to her search for her father. She is afraid that her father might be already dead or in prison. This fear is brought up that she would never find out her Arab origins, and so her identity. Later on, she makes up her mind and

appoints a private detective to cover this search. However, evidence is rare, she knows only that he is an Egyptian man who, taught at many universities, and always had keenness for both women and gambling.

Throughout the story, Mayan seems to be obsessed with tracking her father. She ultimately travels to the Middle East, all wishing that she would be able to complete her self-recognition. Furthermore, she would lastly realize how to build a successful relationship with a man. Surprisingly, all her hopes, dreams, and expectations are gone once she meets her father who looks frigid, and indifferent to her. Mayan then decides to go back to the life she is accustomed to without the man she has always dreamt of, that he would one day fill her hybrid identity.

Linda F. Malou in her article “From Immigrant Narratives to Ethnic Literature: The Contemporary Fiction of Arab British and Arab American Women Writers” (2013), asserts that many Arab-American women’s cultural designation has been actually impacted by writers from other ethnic communities as African Americans, Asians, and Natives. These women writers refuse to accept any false representations or stereotypical images that underestimate their social position (Malou 21-22).

It is crucial then to set up in this chapter the place of these writers in the larger tradition of Arab American writing. Diana Abu-Jaber is of great importance when talking about the most noteworthy Arab American authors in the United States. Born with a hybrid identity, of a Jordanian father and an American mother, she lived most of her life traveling to the two countries, a fact which contributed in her passion for literature and hence for the alluring novels she has written. Abu Jaber’s father always told her that she is totally Arab, unlike her father’s relatives who considered her as a pure American with a white shining face

and green eyes. Moreoften, throughout her childhood she was so confused which identity to adopt and which community she would fit in.

Being a daughter of immigrants is another reason of dealing with her differing and conflicting Arab-American identity, as Bahareh H.Lampert explains in his book *Voices of New American Women: Visions of home in the Middle Eastern Diasporic Imagination* (2008), that Abu Jaber began to write so that she would be able to build and constitute herself as the kid of Arab-American immigrant. So writing for Abu Jaber was a kind of escape into her own world, it also was a wild adventure, in which her female characters were portrayed, in a constant quest of their identities and their common struggle against the American racism (Lampert 120).

Since Litarature is broadly about fiction and non-fiction, most of the feminist novelists shed a light on female characters, who try to break the norms and traditions of their societies. The Egyptian-British novelist Ahdaf Soueif is a great example of the above mentioned idea that literature is a way through which any person can change or escape from their reality. Thus, in her short story “1964” (1983), which is included within the “I Think of You” (1983) collection of short stories, the female protagonist Aisha is as ablaze as Abu Jaber.

According to Steven Salaita in his book *Modern Arab American Fiction* (2011), *Arabian Jazz* (1993) was the first Arab American novel published since Etel Adnan’s *Sitt Marie Marie Rose* (1982) had appeared more than a decade earlier.⁴ It would help generate an interest in Arab American fiction that eventually led to the steady publication of Arab American novels throughout the 1990s, which has in turn developed into today’s prolific and diverse fiction (Salaita 96-97).

To initiate, *Arabian jazz* (1993) is to be deemed as Abu-Jaber's first productive novel, and the one which fundamentally sheds a light on female characters' analysis from a feminist perspective. The main protagonists are Jemorah and Melvina Ramoud, two sisters who have moved from Jordan to America with their father Matussem after the death of their American mother.

Jemorah and Melvina are old, yet they are still unmarried and confused about their hybrid identities. The constant questioning of the American and the Middle Eastern cultures takes a considerable portion in their daily life. Matussem's sister Fatima -a Muslim woman with some strictly religious beliefs- wishes that the two sisters would follow their motherland norms and conventions. The aunt then devotes her time, looking for apt grooms for them (Salaita 97).

Jemorah is the elder daughter who is unhappy and struggling all over the novel with her hybrid identity, unlike Melvina the younger daughter who is dynamic and active for her profession as a nurse. Consequently, identity construction from a Middle-Eastern point of view is implicitly revealed through Fatima's speech. She claims that marriage is vital for the social position of Arabs in order to bear on the family's name, however the two daughters can not mingle in the Jordanian culture, and therefore refuse the planned matrimony.

From a feminist angle Jemorah, Melvina, and Fatima, behave divergently. That's, each reacts with her principles towards feminism itself. For instance, Fatima always desires for her nieces to live according to the practices and the rituals of the Arabian culture. Her perspective of feminism is not then mutinous but compliant to the culture instead. She, otherwise does not regularly stick to this role either, she sometimes becomes impertinent to her husband and usually refuses to comply his orders. Fatima is at some levels tired of the restrictions and

limitations that the Jordanian society draws for women. She feels that she is submissive to the Middle East conventions; however she is already accustomed to them (Wiki, Arabian Jazz; 2008, para. 6).

In contrast to Fatima, Jemorah and Melvina are not likely to be ordered to live the way they want or to be passive and docile but rather all the other way around. They seek to study at the college, have their private life and choose the career they crave for. Both of them, therefore represent feminism through the eyes of Diana Abu-Jaber, she is confusing to categorize, catch, or classify, just as her female characters in general, Jemorah, and Melvina in particular.

Nye's works are usually expressed throughout her emotions, her exposure to the different cultures she has encountered, and the so many travels she has made around the world. Naomi Shihab Nye has recently appeared as a foremost Palestinian orator that represents the American perception towards the Palestinians and their cause.

She was born in 1952, in Missouri to a Palestinian father and an American mother. However, her family moved to Jerusalem at the age of fourteen, to later on retravel to Texas with her husband and son. Throughout her works, she immensely tackles the life of Arab-Americans as well as of the Mexican-Americans in addition to the different practices of local subcultures in the U S. Education for Nye was a chief reason that helped her start writing poetry at the age of seven. Hence, she began to show her literary skills by evoking and producing stunning collections of poetry, novels, and reviews. In Nye's canon *Contemporary Women Poets*, Jane Tanner in the *Dictionary of Literary Biography* claims that "Nye observes the business of living and the continuity among all the world's inhabitants...She is international in scope and internal in focus." That is, in Nye writings she highly deals with

different nations and ethnic groups' cultures and customs, due to her constant travels and contact with people, as she tackles problems of integration, racism, segregation, and injustice.

Paul Christensen also asserts on the other hand in the Poetry Foundation magazine⁵ (2010), that "Nye is building a reputation...as the voice of childhood in America, the voice of the girl at the age of daring exploration" (Paul Christensen).

In other words, if one digs deeply in her works, it may be demonstrated the concept of deconstructing boundaries, in addition to the idea of multiculturalism and hybridity, as Wafa Yousef Al-Khatib argues in her article "An Examination of Postcolonialism, Multiculturalism and Hybridity in Naomi Shihab Nye's *Sitti's Secrets*, *Habibi*, 19 Varieties of Gazelle Poems of the Middle East and *Red Suitcase*" (Al-Khatib 27).

Consequently, Nye has achieved a name for her poetry and novels which reveal, people and things from a totally new angle. She says, "For me the primary source of poetry has always been local life, random characters met on the streets, our own ancestry shifting down to us through small essential daily tasks."

As mentioned above, Nye has written a bunch of poems and novels, including her best selling and masterpiece one *Habibi* (1997). A dazzling and a noteworthy novel through which Nye has brilliantly developed her characters, and especially the female protagonist Liyana. To sum it up, the story mainly revolves around Liyana, who was born to an Arab father and an American mother. She currently witnesses a turning point in her life. She moves with her family from Louis, Missouri to Jerusalem where her Father's Arab family is present.

Habibi is widely viewed as captivating, for its plot is centered on Liyana's progress as she grows into her hybrid identity. Liyana is a thorny character, embodying the challenges and conflicts of girl teenagers. It can also be noticed that at the beginning of each chapter, there

appear some italicized lines, which express Liyana's stance, and which may help out the reader to concentrate on the forthcoming events as well as understanding Liyana's changing manners, yet they are composed in the third person.

Identity is a crucial theme in Arab-American literature and in American literature in particular. A conversation between Liyana and her father takes place, demonstrating how confused she is about her hyphenated identity.

“I'm not a woman or a full Arab, either one. She slammed her bedroom door, knowing what would happen next. Poppy [her Arab/Palestinian father] would enter, stand with hands on his hips, and say, ‘Would you like to tell me something?’ Liyana muttered, ‘I'm just a half-half, woman-girl, Arab-American, a mixed breed like those wild characters that ride up on ponies in the cowboy movies Rafik [her brother] likes to watch. The half breeds are always villains or rescuers, never any body normal in between” (Nye 120).

It is obvious in the above quote that Liyana lives in-between. She does not consider herself as a free American girl, or a conservative Arab who should follow her Palestinian's customs and conventions. Consequently, she is not even able to reveal it to her inner thoughts that she can not fit in any of the two countries, because both of them do not accept hybrid or dual identities, as well as cultural differences.

Abdalwahid Abbas Noman condemns in his article “Woman Voice in the Arab-American Literature” (2015) that Nye has put forward that Arab-American identity should not merely be defended, eluded, or denied, but it should be another side of being human. In language that is readily accessible to a mainstream U.S. readership, Nye creates spaces in

which Arab and Arab-American experiences can be articulated, not through nostalgic reclamation, but by honoring the diversity of experiences and the necessity of change (Noman 502).

In his article “Border Shifting in Naomi Nye’s *Habibi*” (2013), Tawfiq Ibrahim Yousef declares that the issue of identity is tackled at large in Nye’s novel. The female protagonist Liyana is constantly described as searching for her hybrid identity, whether in America or in Palestine. For instance, in Jerusalem, she can not fit in that new setting, which offers nothing but confusion and loss; besides the various accents she can not grasp (Yousef 974). She tells Omer the Jewish boy whom she encounters during her walk in Jerusalem that she is “an American...Mostly” (Nye 165). She, thence is not certain whether she had better behave according to the American or to the Arab culture. She says:

“If I were at home, on a beach I could run up and down the sand with just a bathing suit on and no one would even notice me. I could wear my short shorts that I didn’t bring and hold a boy’s hand in the street without causing an earthquake” (Nye 125).

Wafa A. Alkhadra in her article “Identity in Naomi Shihab Nye: The Dynamics of Biculturalism” (2013) reconfirms that Liyana, the female protagonist sets for Nye herself, who shows her severe sense of hyphenation at a rage moment, as soon as she is asked by her father not to stuff her shorts in the bags, since, they are leaving for Palestine, because he strongly believes that “No one wears shorts over there” (Nye 19).

Liyana, therefore feels that she can not recognize who she is, a question which has ever come into her mind. When her father is talking about Arab women in order to create a new atmosphere for his daughter so that she would not feel strange, once they arrive to his

homeland. However, her reaction is entirely unexpected, she still convinces him that she is neither an American, nor a purely Arab girl (Alkhadra 189).

Once the family arrives to Jerusalem, Liyana seems to make a shift as a new immigrant, who gradually gains knowledge of her Palestinian legacy, her father's family members, and herself. Her perception towards that foreign culture and traditions is likely to be embraced. This can be mainly seen through the italicized lines, she writes at the beginning of each chapter, as previously mentioned, to fundamentally indicate the miscellaneous themes, being tackled throughout the whole novel.

For Nye, despite of identity crisis and the difficulty of immediately accepting the other culture, or customs seem perturbing as well as worrying. Still, she strongly believes that those conflicts and tensions are actually natural and normal, since cultural values themselves vary from one nation to another. More often, the concept of divergence is likely to be admitted and accepted, otherwise there would not appear international, national, and even regional struggles or differences (Alkhadra 190).

I.2 Women Writers and Female Protagonists in Arab-American Fiction after 9/11

Arab-American women writers have produced astoundingly fruitful masterpieces after 9/11 trauma, so as to accentuate identity crisis, diaspora and hybridity. Unlike the previous years in which men controlled the literary sphere. Alicia Erian is one of those most remarkable Arab American novelists, mainly known for her renowned novel *Towelhead* (2005).

She is a hybrid-born, to an Egyptian father, and an American mother. She spent most of her life in Syracuse, New York; to later on move to Massachusetts. During her career she received a B.A in English from SUNY Binghamton and a M.F.A in writing, a fact which

paved the way for her to publish her first collection of short stories entitled *The Brutal Language of Love* (2001). Each story drastically portrays a female protagonist, seeking love, relations, and sex. Three factors which might cover their hybrid identity and self-recognition.

Erian's novel *Towelhead* features the story of the female Arab-American protagonist Jasira. A thirteen young girl, sent by her mother to reside with her strict lebaneese father, when she finds out that her boyfriend is sexually harassing her daughter. Once Jasira arrives to her father's home, their coonnection and relationship becomes difficult and severe due to the lack of dialogue, and the constant presence of orders discourse. One can not deny the fact that Jasira is getting through a hard time of body, mental and emotional transformations (Salaita 126-27).

In his article "This Hyphen Called My Spinal Cord: Arab-American Literature at the Beginning of the 21st Century" (2007), Williams David argues that the writer of *Towelhead* geniously conceives a plausible young protagonist, Jasira, that is obliged to arrive to a real understanding of her situation, and then celebrate it the way she thinks it fits her, because her identity can not be neither negotiated nor constructed, unless she shapes her self-recognition (Williams 55-57).

Williams David adds that right from the very begining of the novel, negotiation and discussion is toughly sterile to reach. It can, thus be interpreted at both levels: either her parents are unaware of her needs and of the sensitive period she is passing through, or it is just a matter of parental irresponsibility (Williams 58).

The setting mainly takes place in 1991, during the Gulf War, where local, national, and international conflicts are heavily arising. Although, media was not that accessible and sophisticated as nowadays, this terrible war reached almost every American citizen's house.

Resulting in isolating Jasira from her classmates, simply because she is an Arab, she is a Lebanese. The protagonist then becomes the objective through which her classmates have fun on Arabs, mock, and utter stereotypical expressions (Williams 60).

Jasira does not experience that much bicultural identity crisis like Jemorah and Melvina. For the reason that the features of her Arab culture have never been egged on to be supported. However, those newly Arab acquired customs and traditions are learned from her father, who still preserves them, and who assumes as well that Arab girls have to follow, respect, and obey these traditions.

Hassan Ali Abdullah Al-Momani maintains in his article “Negotiating Generational Conflict and Identity Formations as a Way to Self-Actualization in Contemporary Arab American Women’s Literature” (2011) that Jasira fights to construct her identity merely through celebrating her sexuality, which is the major theme in the whole novel. That’s, her desire for recognition, acceptance, love, and affection lead her to be in multiple sexual relationships with both; Thomas the African American boyfriend, and with their neighbor Mr. Vuoso, whose son she babysits (Al-Momani 125).

Furthermore, Jeff Giles testifies in his article “The Young and the Reckless” (2006) that *Towelhead* is “a novel narrated by a character who doesn't understand the implications of her own story”. In other words, this form of narrative has been chosen along with the idea that adolescent readers would then make out or recognize her psychological turmoil and, if it were convied through a young girl’s consciousness (Giles 322).

Additionally, Jasira's choice to be involved in a sexual affair with the old white man Mr. Vuoso is out of her conviction that he really cares for her. However, she is being

exploited. Her naivete is hence explained as a way of compensating for her parents' carelessness and lack of acceptance.

Erian skillfully deals with Jasira's identity crisis through her sexuality, unlike most of the contemporary Arab American women writers, who dealt with that theme in relation to the double-consciousness and hybridity of identity that is a mixture of Arab and American cultures. This amazing representation would attract both young and parents readers. The former type can be identified with Jasira. The latter type, are the aware parents who carefully look after their children's needs and desires, and the ones who massively contribute in constructing their identity.

As Giles claims

Towelhead nicely captures the rush of sexual stimuli that, especially when coupled with a lack of hard facts, turns an awakening into a fever dream. What the novel really nails, though, is grown-ups: their delusions, their pettiness, the way they sometimes seem, as a class, uniquely unqualified to raise children. (Giles 322)

One can not deny that adolescents-parents interactive relationship would effectively create a stable atmosphere for their identity construction. Yet, the wide gap between Jasira and her parents is the explicit outcome of loosing the sense of her self-actualization as well of her self-recognition. Most of their disputes are violently held, without respecting one's private space. To illustrate, once she visited her father before moving to live with him for a full-time.

“As a child, I still had to visit him for a month every summer, and I got depressed about that...It was just too tense, being with Daddy. He wanted everything done in a certain way that only he knew about...Once

I spilled some juice on one of his foreign rugs, and he told me that I would never find a husband” (Erian 1).

In relation to the issue of identity crisis, Mohja Kahf, a literary critic and poet is regarded among those previously mentioned-Arab American women writers who creatively dealt with many issues throughout their female protagonists’ eyes. Her contributions in the field of Arab-American literature are of great importance. Taking into account that she is a feminist, who proudly celebrates her Arab-Islamic legacy, in addition to her encounter with the American culture in the US.

Mohja Kahf is a Syrian-American novelist, who was born in 1979 in Syria by Syrian parents, however, was raised in the United States. She has always been a passionate of literature; she therefore received a PhD in comparative literature, and is currently a professor of English at the University of Arkansas. Through her career, Kahf has written many collections of poetry, in addition to some novels. In 2003, she published her famous poetry collection *Emails from Sheherazad*, following it her 2006 novel *The Girl in the Tangerine*.

Due to Kahf’s growing up in the U.S.A, her works have masterfully and vastly tackled her view towards the multicultural aspect of America. Moreoften, both differences and similarities of the two countries are at large in her writings at many levels such as sex, clothing, and hairstyle. It is obvious that the United States is uniquely divergent of the Arab community, especially when it comes to veil or Hjab that is frequently disputed by Kahf.

In his article “Woman Voice in The Arab-American Literature” (2015) Abdalwahid Abbas Noman argues that Kahf is one of the most apparent contemporary Arab-American women writers who act as feminist activists. She is also highly committed in depicting the real images of Arab and Muslim women in the United States, away of the stereotypical

presentations that would create a gap between both cultures. Noman adds that most of her writings are centered on the articulation of hyphenated and hybrid identities, and it can be thus revealed through her novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, which is basically based upon Khadra (Noman 499-500).

In their article “The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf” in *Indiana Magazine of History*⁶ (2006), Carroll and Graf assert that Kahf’s novel is a bildungsroman. The story takes place in the United States. It is essentially concerned with the Syrian-born girl, and the female protagonist Khadra Shamys. Throughout the story, it can be noticed that flashbacks and flashforwards are frequently used by an omniscient narrator. Khadra lives with her parents in Indianapolis due to its astounding location, in which lands are reasonably priced, scales of crimes are low, and most of all an international airport is found in there. Shamys family carries out the mission of spreading Islam so that fellow Muslims in America would then complete the practice and the rituals of Islam (Carroll and Graf 90).

Khadra’s parents have no scruple about imposing the religious practices on their friends. The protagonist is brought up by a tight-knit community of Muslim aunties and uncles, consisting of South Asians, Cambodians, and African Americans. Although those ethnic groups are structured by Islam, it is characterised by partisan between Sunnis and Shias, in addition to the the segregate preconceptions of Arab members against their African and African American members.

Kahf intensively digs into the contradictions and difficulties of identity that are expressed at many levels through Khadra’s eyes. Hence, asking what it means to be Muslim, a Muslim feminist, an Arab, a Hoosier, and an American. As the novel progresses, Khadra gets her simplistic understanding of each of these identities and gains a more complex one. During

her sojourn in Syria following her divorce, she has an epiphany regarding Sufism, an experience that challenges the religious orthodoxy of her youth and helps to solidify her burgeoning feminism (Carroll and Graf 91).

Carine Peirera Marques explains in her article “Mohja Kahf’s *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* Seen through the Hijab Perspective” (2012) that before moving to Indiana, Khadra has firstly lived in Square One, in the Rocky Mountains where she has never encountered any kind of racism or segregation. However, as soon as she comes to Indiana her feelings of not fitting in start to rise. For instance, the Shamy family becomes conscious that they were unwelcome in their first day of unloading their stuff, when a group of boys tossed some glass bottles at their doorway (Marques 182-83).

Likewise, prejudice does not end up at the neighboring level, but it rather extends to the school level. That’s, she believes that she has solely to confront the racial discrimination on the students’ part. Yet, she learns about her teachers’ carelessness towards her, because in one of the novels’ scenes Khadra was violently hurt and stalked by two boys who finished by slashing her scarf into pieces, and resulting in making her nakedheaded. A teacher then does not feel sorry for her “Mr. Eggleston came out of his room down the hall. Silhouetted by the daylight streaming from the the double doors at the end of the hallway, he shook his head, gave her a look of mild disapproval, and went back inside” (Kahf 125).

In her article “American Scheherazades Auto-orientalism, literature and the representations of Muslim women in a post 9/11 U.S. context” (2012) Martina Koegeler argues that the development of the storyline permits Kahf to expose the knotty contact between the Dawah⁷ community and the U.S.A cultures which enclose Khadra’s resolutions of

how practising Islam. Whilst her family's religious outlooks impact her previous slants, thus do her experiences of U.S. bigotry and discrimination (Koegeler 47-48).

For instance, as a way of establishing her hybrid identity and of self-defense, Khadra opts for practising a fanatically revolutionary act of Islam. Yet, she undergoes the complexities of several worldviews crashing in her person, besides she believes in the need of firstly becoming a semi-secular, while adult Khadra experiences the difficulties of multiple worldviews colliding in her person, and she sees the need to become first a semi-secular, followed by a self-defined practicing Muslim woman of feminist sorts. As a result, the ending of her mystical journey transforms her from living a devout life of stiff conventions and practices. She says: "I'm too religious for the secular men, and too lax for the religious ones" (Kahf 354).

Furthermore, from a feminist standpoint, Volpp Leti in her book *Feminism versus Multiculturalism* (2001) claims that it is widely crucial to bear in mind that the depiction of Muslim women identity in the west as well as in the majority countries has been oppressed, more than ever when it comes to the anticolonial fights and nationalist movements. Women, therefore hold the heavy liability to reveal the growth of their homeland cultures in the American orientalist society. That emblematic liability and the American perspective of Muslim women's stereotypes cancels out any implementation to Muslim women themselves, for feminism and Islam are nowadays remarked as reciprocally fashionable stances (Leti 1195).

As an activist feminist, Fatima Mernissi points out in her book *The Veil and the Male Elite. A Feminist Interpretation of Women's Rights in Islam* (1992) that whether conservative Muslim societies or the western countries hold an entirely wrong conceptualization of feminism. Henceforward, she established what is to be called Muslim Feminism which stems

its principles from equal and democratic interpretations of religious texts and extensive history of Muslim feminist thinking. Mernissi explains:

We Muslim women can walk into the modern world with pride, knowing that the quest for dignity, democracy, and human rights, for full participation in the political and social affairs of our country, stems from no imported Western values, but is a true part of Muslim tradition.

(Mernissi viii)

In her article “Mohja Kahf’s the Girl in the Tangerine Scarf Seen through the Hijab Perspective” (2012) Carine Pereira Marques presumes that Khadra is wholly denied in her American society. This can be detected when the shamy famliy’s green card run out, thus they were not able to get an access to a new passport due to some political purposes. Then, Khadra’s father submits an application for American citizenship; however when they went to the courthouse things seem to turn upsetdown. In other words, the narrator declares that they are “like a family in mourning.” (Kahf 141). Accordingly, Khadra’s mother weeps the whole night, whereas adult Khadra is portrayed as such

To her, taking citizenship felt like giving up, giving in. After all she’d been through at school, defending her identity against the jeering kids who vaunted America’s superiority as the clincher put-down to everything she said, everything she was. (Kahf 141)

The progaonist is not then fully merged and fused in the American society owing to the fact that she is a veiled Muslim woman. In addition, such an odd dressing assumed by the Americans would create a difference and a communication barrier between one another. She is aware of not fitting in the U.S.A and that her mother country is found somewhere else, the

concept of dwelling remains blurred and unclear. To illustrate, once when the Shamy family was heading towards Mecca for pilgrimage “Khadra felt funny. The phrase ‘leaving home’ came into her head. But Indianapolis is not my home, she thought indignantly” (Kafh 157).

Throughout the novel, Khadra sounds to be constantly struggling to build her own identity, and to recognize who she is. She is eventually acquiring what multiculturalism is, like Liyana in Naomi’s novel *Habibi*, on her trip to Syria, as a new means of interacting with people from different religions, mainly with the Syrian Jews who claim to be of authentic Syrian identity. Consequently, after her return to America, she unexpectedly adopts a new multicultural identity, and she thus gets open-minded towards the religious miscellany that is found in Philadelphia, where she has stepped to go in for a degree in photography.

It is vital to set up the place of the Arab-American women writers all along with the practice of Arab-American writing. Evelyn Shakir is a second-generation Arab American, and one of those talented novelists who have covered a fundamental area in the field of Arab-American literature. Evelyn Shakir (1938-2010), was born to a Lebanese father and American mother. She was raised in West Roxbury as the younger of two kids. She was always a huge adoring for literature, a fact that impelled her to receive a master’s degree as well as a PhD from both Harvard and Boston universities. Throughout her glamorous career, Shakir taught writing at many universities whether in the U.S.A or overseas where she tutored in the Middle East at the college of Damascus and of Bahrain.

In addition to her profession as a university teacher of English, Shakir was a trailblazer in the domain of Arab-American literature. Her first published work was named *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab American Women in the United States* (1997), a story which deals with the daily life challenges and difficulties of Arab women in America. Then a 2007 ten short stories

collection was published, entitled as “Remember me to Lebanon” which reflects her interests in the Arab American culture and literature, and most of all in the histories of Arab American women in America. The collection chronicles a group of women ranged in age, each telling her own experience and story as an orientalist woman in the U S (Salaita 68).

“Remember Me to Lebanon” (2007) drastically draws on the chronicles of Lebanese girls and women who continually encounter the intricacies and struggles of the identity formation in America. Those ten short stories are arrayed in time from 1960s until currently. As a critic in the histories of Arab-American women in the U S, Shakir sketches her tussles and experiences she had been through in order to become a member within the second-generation of Arab American women writers. Those, whose literary works basically mirror the conviction that the first generation did not face identity problems, for they were strongly tied to their origins and customs.

To exemplify, Elmasry Faiza believes in her article “Lebanese American Writer Inspired by Current Events and Cultural Heritage” (2007) that “They may have difficulties in the new country. They may have conflicts, but their sense of identity is pretty strong. They know where they came from.” In contrast to the first generation, Shakir and her second generation colleague writers are likely to be caught between two cultures, two traditions. They are trying to bridge that gap (Elmasry 3). That is, the political state in Lebanon is heavily related to the crisis of the second generation. In other words, Shakir essentially attempts to highlight that the Lebanese civil war is to be the main reason of splitting up the immigrants’ kids from their homeland customs and conventions.

Additionally, in his book *Modern Arab American Fiction* (2011), Steven Salaita argues that Shakir constantly employs archetypal themes that are not solely associated with Arab-

American writing, like many other Arab-American women writers such as Mona Simpson. Ethnic and cultural differences between Eastern immigrants, Women's roles in the Arab-American communities, Islamophobia, and anti-Arab racial discrimination are broad themes that can be traced in the Short story "The Trial". However, there is no single scene in which the trial is really found. It is metaphorically used to symbolize the emotional and cultural meaning (Salaita 72).

Practically, among those ten short stories, "The Story of Young Ali" and "Oh, Lebanon" (2007) seem to be highly tackling the influence of clash and conflict on the identity hybridity and formation of the protagonists. So, Shakir suggests that self-actualization deeply requires Arab-American women to realize how to dispute on their own, whether with family members or in possible love relationships.

Moreover, when analysing each story, it seems that the protagonists confront conflicts while discussing with their parents. It also can be noticed that most of the conversations right from the start are held implicitly. Each protagonist expresses her own desires and needs in a way that may reach a compromise, in addition to the parents' prospects because of their stiff decisions they make, owing to the Arab mentality they still embrace at large all along with the American culture.

Hassan Ali Abdullah Al-Momani implies in his article "Negotiating Generational Conflict and Identity Formation as a Way to Self Actualization in Contemporary Arab American Women's Literature" (2011), that due to to the lack of negotiating in an open way with the parents, the protagonists result in having stressful and uptight relationships for the reason that both grandparents and parents wish for them to merely stick to the Arab norms and customs. They feel oppressed and marginalized, and therefore yearn for building up and

forming communication skills inside their Arab-American community to give a voice for their cases (Al-Momani 91).

To point up, Rima the main protagonist in “The Story of Young Ali” is obliged to discuss with her father’s first generation issues concerning gender roles in the Arab traditions that women must stick to housekeeping, taking care of children, and not having relations out of the parents’ permission. Her father says: “Listen and learn...why this girl does not know our ways?” (Shakir 2). Her mother also plays a major role in respecting her husband’s orders. She then tells her daughter “The children belong to the father” (Shakir 2).

This may be similar to the concept of the British feminist Virginia Woolf’s *The Angel in The House*. Rima is then exhausted like most of the female young protagonists in the contemporary Arab- American fiction. Consequently, her confusion of self-recognition and identity comes into being. She is neither an Arab nor American and even her father’s assignments of Arab traditions are taught from an American perspective.

Hanan as the chief protagonist in one of the short stories is asked by her professor to speak about Arab women. Yet, she is incapable of introducing them as born and grown up in the Middle East, mainly because she has never had a voyage in there, nor counting to do so. Meanwhile, the professor obliges her to answer, she then gets confused. Should she speak from an American point of view? (Which seems out of what is required), or should she discuss the topic from an Arab perspective? (That she is entirely ignorant about). Hanan’s firm response to the professor hints at her hybrid identity. To illustrate, she can not find any word to describe Palestine, she merely knows that it is located somewhere in the Middle East. Further, throughout the classroom discourse Hanan actually comes to realize that she is not

complete, though she masters a perfect American English which enables her to fluently communicate (Salaita 75-76).

“Oh, Lebanon” (2007) reconfirms the idea that Lebanese civil war has a huge impact on forming the Arab women’s identities. In this short story, the anonymous female protagonist tries in a way to build up her hybrid identity, basically by conferring with her parents and her Lebanese American boyfriend. Several Years ago the protagonist has suffered from Lebanon’s civil war, she has been a victim of cruelty, brutality, hostility, and violence. She has therefore decided to go to the U.S.A in order to finish her college degree, attempting to dissociate herself from the war aftermaths. By moving to the United States, the protagonist also wants to completely forget about her heritage, past, and Middle East traditions. However, she can fulfil neither splitting herself up from her origins, nor fully assimilating and fusing into the American culture, her dreams are partially shattered, and her identity is largely lost, misplaced, and incomplete.

Unlike the first generation of Arab immigrants in the U.S.A which did not indeed suffer from issues of hybrid identities and racial discrimination, the second generation has confronted and still confronts a lot of complexities as well as difficulties, a fact evident which pushed contemporary Arab-American women writers to stand against those fake representations and stereotypical images of Arabs. Literature is a mirror that reflects a writer’s imagination, whether in a fictional or non-fictional way.

Therefore, those feminist writers have become aware and committed to the Arabs intensifying state before and after 9/11 trauma. Consequently, in the last two decades, the loss of identity especially among Arab women who are fictionally depicted through many novels became an important topic. The previously discussed novels fall under one basic theme which

is: self-recognition, and identity crisis of the Arab-American female protagonists. Starting from Simpson's *The Lost Father* and ending with Shakir's collection of short stories "Remember Me to Lebanon", we notice that each protagonist constantly faces the problem of identity formation. However, in the latter it is revealed and expressed differently; that like Jasira who principally relates her identity's establishment throughout celebrating her sexuality.

Further, Arab-American women writers are encouragingly bonded with one another mainly through Arab-American feminism in order to oppose the American prejudices and bigotry. They also strive to appraise wars taking place in their homelands, and defend those oppressed people who are the victims of social marginalization which caused the wars aftermaths.

Chapter II The Impacts of 9-11 on Salwa and Jassim

Arab American fiction as a broad field is constantly concerned with subjects of anti-Arab sentiment and Islamophobia. Modern history shows that Arab American communities have been subjugated to an extended history of falsification and misrepresentation.

After the events of September 11, 2001, Arab Americans have become a visible society that would assumingly impact the United States' political and social dimensions such as; foreign policy, legislations, and elections, whether explicitly or implicitly. Thus, many Arab American women writers have brought out many works of fiction, mainly portraying Arab American characters, who daily experience anti-Arab racism and segregation as well as the complexity of their hybrid identity (Salaita 110).

Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land*, reveals how the war on terror has extremely had an effect on the Arab Americans' sociopolitical and personal lives. This chapter principally aims at investigating Salwa and Jassim's perception of 9/11 trauma and anti-Arab racism. It also seeks to examine to what extent do 9/11 events affect their intimate relationship. Eventually, the present chapter is an attempt to depict the psychological problems of Salwa which are caused by her lack of communication with her husband.

II.1 Salwa and Jassim's Perception of 9-11 Trauma and Anti-Arab Racism

The novel opens with a prologue that describes both Salwa and Jassim as Muslims, and Arabs. It is immediately familiarized with the discourse that gathers Arabs and Muslims all together as a harmonized community.

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 are Muslims. But of course they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything. (OPL vii-viii)

“Nothing and everything” chiefly draws attention to the unstable position Arabs take in America’s ethnic hierarchies. They are depicted as criminal people. That’s, since 9/11, laws enacted by the federal government have directly suspected any Arab to be involved in the bombings of the Twin Towers. Additionally, most of Americans were convinced that Arabs are terrorists and camel straddlers, due the media propaganda, which have stereotypically marginalized Arabs using “them” and “us”.

In his book *Orientalism* (1977), Said Edward asserts that:

Today, bookstores in the US are filled with shabby screeds bearing screaming headlines about Islam and terror, Islam exposed, the Arab threat and the Muslim menace, all of them written by political polemicists pretending to knowledge imparted to them and others by experts who have supposedly penetrated to the heart of these strange Oriental peoples over there who have been such a terrible thorn in “our”, “flesh”. (Edward p xi)

In other words, Edward goes further by creating an image of anti-Arab sentiment that is basically shaped by policy makers’ legislations, and the different kinds of media, that have finally resulted in what is known as Islamophobia. Arabs are then seen as a heavy burden which threatens their national traditions, heritage, norms, and the so called culture. Moreover, the world has become a binary one ever since. Therefore, new pejorative terms and concepts have been coined such as; “they”, “we”, “them”, “us”, “orient”, and “occident”.

Amanda Lloyd argues in her article “Reverse Orientalism Laila Halaby’s *Once in a Promised Land*” (2012), that in a response to what Edward claimed that the world is divided into two different spheres; East and West. Halaby suggests that the events of September 11, 2001, were the exact outcome of the world drought, poverty, and epidemics. They can not be therefore restrained in the third world, unless Americans try to transcend the dual and binary divisions and change their perspective toward Arabs so that crisis can be avoided at a large scale, and there would come into being what is known as a Cosmopolitan (Lloyd 15).

Arab American feminist Carol Haddad asserts in her article “Anti-Arab-Isim” that the victimization of Arab American women has been mainly owing to the American media which has derogatorily depicted them as “camel rider”, “camel jokey”, and “desert nigger”. The feminist also maintains that Palestinians have been portrayed as terrorists, and Muslims as religious fanatics, in particular. Moreover, Haddad takes into consideration the fact that the American feminists and the American media continuously describe Arab American women as if “They are forced to wear veils, forced to marry at young ages, subjected to genital mutilation, and subject to the sexual demands of lecherous husbands in polygamous settings” (Haddad 21).

To boot, Haddad strongly upholds Arab American women by emphasizing on many realities American feminists may ignore. Firstly, that wearing a veil is pre-dated to Islam, and was a way of practicing customs and traditions of the Byzantine and Persian women, as well as of the upper class of Christians. Secondly, Arab women had had nationalist affiliations, fighting for their countries’ independence, functioning as soldiers, and widely manifesting in the streets (Haddad 22).

Then, during the 8th, 9th, and 10th centuries Arab women occupied higher and sophisticated positions such as; theologians, nurses, doctors, businesswomen, soldiers, and engineers. However, at that time Western women were totally dominated by the Roman laws, and had no rights to proclaim but to remain passive, and submissive. Finally, on the era of 1982, American feminists have witnessed a large resentment and sore death because of their demand of sex equality, whilst the principle is already written in the constitution of many Arab nations (Haddad 24).

Nadine Naber in her article “Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/American (ized) Whore” (2006) reconfirms from a feminist point of view what Haddad has previously argued that the events of 9/11 are to be considered as a turning point in the history of anti-Arab racism in America. It has shaped the position of Arab Americans they occupy nowadays. She further contends that media tools in general have played an obvious role during the period of war on terror. Films, Newspapers, and TV shows have then become the main factors of both; forming and changing the national and international public opinions (Naber 96).

Practically, the novel seems to include various scenes in which anti-Arab racism is gradually revealed in post-9/11 America. The effects of the events are apparent on Salwa and Jassim. Both of them are ultimately bound in insecure situations, Salwa by having a bad choice, and Jassim by being present at the wrong place as well as at the wrong time.

Salwa and Jassim are among the wealthiest families in Tucson, with a large house, fancy cars, and professions that would insure a comfort lifelong. However, some minutes may change one’s life forever. The tower twins did only take some minutes to be bombed and

attacked by, Muslims, Arabs, or simply by terrorists, because terrorism has neither a religion nor an ethnicity.

Though Salwa is born in America, the sense of dislocation is marked throughout the novel especially in the wake of post 9/11 trauma. Her fear is daily increasing that if she is pregnant her baby will be raised in danger and in a society that is full of anti-Arab racism. “It is different now, she thought. If I am pregnant, I cannot raise my child here, away from everything I know. If I am pregnant” (OPL 54). Upon the terrorist attacks, Salwa’s family has called her several times just to make sure that she and Jassim are fine, although they already know that New York is a bit far from Arizona. Salwa, on the other hand has phoned her friend Randa many times, believing that living in America will be tough and it will no longer be a promised land.

“Salwa had talked to her friend Randa several times as well, babbling about how horrible it was and how she feared for the repercussion toward Arabs in this country” (OPL 21). Moreoften, Salwa started embracing the idea of the importance of the community rather than individualism, mainly because Arab Americans are seen as a minority. She is aware that anti-Arab racism overwhelms all the Arabs, and not only she and her husband. Her desire of being pregnant and getting a baby is portrayed through her concern about Randa’s kids.

“I think you might be right about Randa, though. I think the worst that would happen to her kids is other children saying unkind things to them; she worries too much about them, always thinking they are going to get kidnapped or hit by a car” (OPL 21-22).

In his article “Cartographies of Identities: Resistance, Diaspora, and Trans-cultural Dialogue in the Works of Arab British and Arab American Women Writers”, Youcef Awad

(2011) contends that Salwa as a banker, is academically and professionally admired among her colleagues. Yet, with the 9/11 events, things seem to turn upsetdown. She is now perceived as a terrorist Arab (Awad 276). This can be noticed when a white American woman rejects to work with an Arab. Feelings of refusal and rejection by white Americans put Salwa on the margins. Thus, she can not accept the idea of being segregated and furiously addresses the woman “Would you like to work with a Mexican man or an American lesbian?” (OPL 114)

Historically, Americans have always been proud of their belonging, culture, customs, language, and civilization. But, it would be better said; culture that many ethnicities have brought, customs that several communities have influenced, and a civilization that is a direct outcome of old histories of many nations. America or the United states remains a shaky debate, once American literature is deemed as a modern field in comparison to Arab or English literature, which both of them can be called classic literatures.

Throughout the novel, Halaby tries to reveal that pride through a scene in which salwa is asked to put a flag on her car so as to prove her eternal love to America, and that she is not involved in what happened to the twin towers. Still, does one have to carry a flag to be loyal to America? Or is it because America herself has not yet reached a point of democracy and affiliation?

“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” Said Joan (OPL 55). Salwa accepts her boss’s demand, but keeps remembering the significance of the stars, is it of the American dream because stars always symbolize dreams, hope, and happiness however it was not the case with Salwa at all. She is a racialized other in a white society.

Consciousness is globally defined as the state of being awake and aware whether literally or metaphorically. In this sense, Joan seems to be metaphorically conscious that both Salwa and Jassim are involved in the attacks, simply because they are Arabs, Muslims. She often makes hints that Arabs are a heavy burden, and this can be seen in her conversations with Salwa that she never utters Jassim by his name, but your husband instead. “Joan always referred to Jassim as your husband, as though the six letters that filled his name in English were too scary, as though in trying to say them she might trip, or show some secret, private part of herself” (OPL 55).

As previously mentioned that the propaganda made by media during the attacks has influenced and reshaped the angle through which Americans perceive Arabs. On the way home, Salwa was driving her car trying to forget about the war on terror that has become every American’s daily conversation. But, thinking about such an idea in the United States sounds impossible. It is now a war of racializing the other, the orient, or the inferior.

She pressed the forward scan button on the radio, searching for the station with soft rock and no commercials. A man’s voice blared out: Is anyone fed up yet? Is anyone sick of nothing being done about all those Arab terrorists? In the name of Jesus Christ. They live with us. Among us. Mahzlims who are just waiting to attack us. (OPL 56)

Salwa views the 9/11 events as a pretext from the US to raid the Middle east’s natural resources and exploit them. This proves her dual fear, that she is any more included as an American citizen, and as an Arab. Therefore, she attempts to impose her existence through rejecting the other. To illustrate, she still holds the idea that she is a white normal American but with new perspectives towards people of colour and even homosexuals. For instance,

Salwa detaches herself from Petra, the white American lesbian, because she is socially and sexually rejected. Salwa, then does not want to be passive and thrown out as a minority, but she rather wants to interact with heterosexual people in the majority society.

To paraphrase Petra's words that her partner Molly was dating with a man, Salwa wonders and gets confused of how Petra thinks that dating with a man is terrible. "It must be awful. Really, how awful, and how odd to feel such sympathy and disgust all in one moment" (OPL 183). The scene depicts that Petra enjoys talking to Salwa not because she is attracted to her sexually, but she believes that both of them share the same suffering of being marginalized by the other.

Lisa Suhair Majaj asserts in article "Arab-American Literature: Origins and Developments" (2008) that Arabs and Muslims "are conspicuously absent from discussions of white ethnicity, and are popularly perceived as non-white" (Majaj 9). This idea of rejecting and not accepting multiculturalism can be explicitly linked to the ending scenes of the novel, in which images of violence and anti-Arab racism are intensively taking place. Jake, the drugs dealer harshly beats Salwa because she wants to get back to her homeland. However, his reaction is unexpected; he immediately utters racist and insulting words that would describe her as inferior, oppressed and submissive.

Likewise, Jassim has turned out to be the target of an FBI investigation because of the secretary who reds him to the FBI, assuming that he is a well-to-do Arab with an accession to the water supply of the city which means that he is a conspirator against the U.S.A government. Yet, he can not bear it any more. Jassim can not help himself and immediately replies:

“Means is one thing, motive is another. I am a scientist. I work to make water safe and available. I am a normal citizen who happens to be an Arab. Yes, I have access to the city’s water supply, but I have no desire to abuse it. The mere fact that I am an Arab should not add suspicion to the matter” (OPL 232).

He adds:

“I have spent my entire life trying to find ways to make water safe and accessible for every one. Just because I am an Arab, because i was raised as a Muslim, you want to believe that I am capable of doing evil. It is sometimes best to look within before casting such a broad net” (OPL 232).

Katharina Motyl declares in her article “No Longer a Promised Land” that though Jassim is proved to be out of guilt by the American police when he hits an American boy, the latter seems to have clear anti-Arab sentiments. To illustrate, the boy’s skateboard contains a sticker that reveals “Terrorist Hunting License”, a fact which demonstrates he is already conscious that every terrorist act is straightly linked to Arabs, in addition to the physical traits he has which makes it easier for Americans to recognize him. Consequently, the persecution of Jassim is due to his ethnic origin (Motyl 231-32).

Throughout the character of Jassim, it is noticable that Halaby reasserts the idea of creating a cosmopolitan, and once East and West as terms of inferiority and superiority are omitted, the whole world would be unified under humanistic causes, rather than never ending debates of ethnicity, religion, and language. Jassim also tries to convey a message that it is not

about being a muslim or an Arab, but by being a professional in their domains, and what each can contribute to solve or reduce the world current crisis.

Georgiana Banita presumes that Jassim becomes obsessed with the idea of anti-Arab racism and it negatively overwhelms his daily life. In this respect, she sums it up by saying that Halaby's novel "productively assesses the overbearing moralism of racial profiling in the war on terror, especially in relation to its most vulnerable targets, citizens of Arab American Descent" (Banita 265).

It is true to a great extent that the attacks of 9/11 have an impact on Jassim. Still, Banita lowers him to a passive and submissive victim of racial discrimination and prejudice. She does not pay attention to the fact that Jassim constantly attempts to defy the racial marginalization and identification. Besides, his endeavour to affirm his whiteness is depicted via dating with the white working, American girl, Penny.

If one digs deeply into the Americans' perspective and stereotypical images toward Arabs in the US, it would be remarkable even before the events of 9/11, when the American Jack Franks meets Jassim at the pool. Both of them start a conversation, though Jassim sounds uninterested and disturbed, because swimming for him is like a prayer that creates a spiritual balance. To illustrate, anti-Arab racism implications are clear in Franks' words. He says "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" (OPL 6).

In addition, on the occasion of Randa's daughter birthday, Salwa and Jassim decide to go to the mall so that they can find a suitable gift. The incident takes place right after few days of the attacks. However, the couple seems to regret for having that shopping day because of

what has happened to them. It was then proved that Americans do actually consider Arab Americans as terrorists and most of all they have a strong anti-Arab sentiment.

“What happened, habibi?” she asked.

“If you look behind me, you will see a woman with a walkie-talkie on her shoulder. She thinks she’s Clint Eastwood. She’s following me. Apparently I am a security threat. Maybe she thinks I’m going to steal all this fashion and climb on that motorcycle, which I am then going to fly off its pedestal and into the mall. God give us patience”

(OPL 28-29).

After a while that giant security guard closes up to the couple, and salwa stares at her with wide open eyes that hold a lot of questions:

“Is there a problem? Salwa asked in English over her husband’s shoulder.

No, ma’am.

Then why are you following my husband?

Which is what exactly? asked Salwa with scissors in her voice.

To protect the security of the establishment

And how are you doing that by following my husband?” (OPL 29).

Being an Arab in America is not that easy after September events. Jassim is to be suspected because of his creepy Middle-Eastern appearance as the shopping centre worker, Amber would argue. She justifies her call for the security guard as a way of protecting the mall from being bombed or blown up, just because he stares for a long time in front of a

motorcycle. However, deep down that girl is likely to have anti-Arab sentiment as well as the boy Jassim hits. Simply because her uncle died in the towers attacks.

Salwa makes it clear to Amber that America is a large country with countless ethnicities and over populations, so why would Arabs then be the first accused category among all communities.

Salwa knew something like this was coming, had been waiting for the moment when it became spoken. I am sorry to hear that. Are you planning to have every Arab arrested now? she paused for just a second. Do you not use your brains? This country has more than fifty million people in it, and you're worried about your tacky little store. But now you'll have a lot to talk. (OPL 30)

Consequently, what has just come into her mind is that living in America is becoming sorer and harder. Most importantly, she overhears the workers' conversations, a topic which seems to never end. They keep on talking over and over about Arabs and Muslims. "Out of nowhere, a thought louder than any of the voices popped into her head, a thought she had not had before: We cannot live here anymore" (OPL 54).

Ethnicity discourses are usually seen as accepting or excluding the other from a majority group of people. Hence, the American white girl, Penny whom Jassim dates, has become more interested in watching television than before she knew Jassim. That is, her obsession with television is mainly linked to both; 9/11 attacks and Jassim, because most of Americans perceive Arabs as terrorists, except for Penny. She considers him as a well-educated person with an academic profession, and a high social position. She says:

“The one has nothing to do with the other. And he’s from Jordan, not Afghanistan. Jassim is a good guy - he’s not like them, shouldn’t be judged like them. But those people over there, they oppress women and kill each other. They’re the ones who should be bombed” (OPL 281).

However, Penny’s defense and view of Jassim goes hand with hand with her exclusion. In other words, Jassim’s anti-Arab racism and sentiment is principally ethnical. She is then unconsciously attracted to him, not because he is academically qualified or rich, but they simply have a common issue which is social discrimination and exclusion from the American society. Halaby, therefore perfectly makes use of one of the Minor Literature’s principles, which is the common and shared interests of the marginalized and oppressed ethnicities.

In addition, if one analyses Penny’s last two sentences of the above quotation, it may be deduced that she holds racist preconceptions towards the other Arabs or Muslims, especially the Afghani ones. This can be related to the images she perceives from the television which has reshaped Americans’ perspectives and perceptions of the war on terror concept itself.

II.2 The Effects of 9/11 Events on Salwa’s Marriage

Globally, as couples engage, their differences may be overlooked, whether socially, culturally or ethnically. However, once their relationship turns out to be a seriously long-term marriage, these differences would get more calamitous. Moreoften, the potential lack of communication may widen and pave the way for attraction of one partner towards another person who might be of a different ethnic society or social background.

Salwa is aware of the changes caused by September events at many levels. One of these levels is her marriage. America is then no longer a promised land, nor a country of celebrating Salwa's marriage. Her social position as a banker and real estate, could not offer her a perfect American fairytale that calls for a life happily ever after.

Salwa's marriage starts to crumble immediately after she stops using the contraceptives, and she thus gets pregnant. However, she keeps this secret out of her husband's reach. Accidentally, Salwa miscarries, this shocking incident becomes the starting point in her post 9/11 American life ever since. Therefore, Salwa becomes more obsessed and miffed with her baby's loss, in addition to the Americans' racist perception that throws her to the margins and makes her out of the country's boundaries; both geo and socio-politically.

"Emptiness is a dangerous substance, allows its possessor to believe in taking rash measures as a way to fill up the tank cheaply. 'Like going abroad in search of water or oil.' Salwa desperately wanted to fill it" (OPL 202).

On the one hand, it is within these circumstances that Salwa feels a void to be filled physically, emotionally, and ethnically. She gets attracted to a young white American part time banker, and a professionally drugs dealer. Jake, whom Salwa always considers as an aimless American adolescent and whom she has never thought that she would date one day. On the other hand, Jake perceives her as an orientalist exotic Arab woman, with an amazing American classy appearance, and clearly facial Arab traits.

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. (OPL 171)

Afterwards, Salwa is grabbed and seduced to Jake's house. She is fascinated by the way he utters Arabic words, and above all his sweet accent that would render her to think about her homeland. Salwa's identity is exoticized with Jake's constant eagerness to learn more about Arabic Language and culture. Although Jake is regarded by everyone as a wiered person with an abnormal behavior, Salwa still thinks of him as the key motif to her nostalgia and spiritual loneliness.

Against all that she knew to be right in the world, and well aware that *as friends* was one of those lines Americans tossed back and forth without meaning, she entered his apartment and stood, awkward, out of place.

(OPL 270)

Unfortunately, Jake has a sexual affair with Salwa and then brags it to his friends without mentioning the woman's name he attracts. Consequently, both of them are involved in an interest relationship rather than a merely sexual one. That is, Salwa considers Jake as the white icon who would literally or metaphorically embrace her as a minority, and would as well make her feel included within the majority society again. Jake also digs to recognize everything that is related to Arabs' traditions and practices.

Georgiana Banita argues that by dating with Jake, Salwa becomes guilty of having smashed Hassan's innocent wishes, that her childhood sweetheart is gone in parallel with a humble future away from the astounding, but devastating American dream. Banita further puts it forward that the alienation and detachment of Salwa is the narrative's core as being immoral and unethical in relation to the Arab customs and conventions (Banita 247).

Moreover, Salwa drifts from what may be regarded as professionally and socially adequate and respectable. Still, her misconduct embodies a lot of symbolic representations that can be classified among the psychological problems; through which Salwa constantly passes all along the novel. Then, the boundaries which are drawn by her position as an American and a Jordanian are exceeded, once she has sex with Jake in one of her properties' bedroom she wills to sell. It is metaphorically revealed that Salwa "The Palestinian woman has entered territory she had been excluded from and betrayed her status as tolerated guest, both in her native Jordan and in the U.S" (Banita 248-49).

Developing intimacy of one's relationship basically requires the couples' mutual confidence and faith. However, when this development becomes incomplete and subdues to external, social, and psychological factors such as 9/11 events, it would then cause betrayal. Hence, betrayal and treachery can be considered among the ugliest offences that partners can ever commit against each other.

In his article "Betrayal, Rejection, Revenge, and Forgiveness: An Interpersonal Script Approach" (2001), Julie Fitness presumes that rejection takes place in the very first process of attempting to maintain a relationship, unlike betrayal which comes along with an already set up relationship, where partners appear to be concerned with, and most of all, they trust each other (Fitness 3). In this sense, Salwa seems to reject her reality, which is the loss of her baby, and seeks more alternatives for the hollowness she is experiencing. On the other hand, Jake is ready to start a relationship that is admitted by Salwa's part.

Further, Rodger. L Jackson explains in his article "The Sense and Sensibility of Betrayal: Discovering the Meaning of Treachery through Jane Austin" (2000), that betrayal serves as a conflicting factor on individuals' integrity, and influencing the capacity to tolerate.

Cynicism and scepticism are thus the results in diminishing and undermining trust as well as judgment. “Betrayal changes not only our sense of the world, but our sensibility toward the world” (Jackson 72). To illustrate, as previously mentioned, Salwa loses faith in the so called American dream, which is primarily caused by September terrorist events. Her attitudes also become more emotional and sensible than her relation with Jassim used to be.

Relatively, Salwa’s loss of her marriage is mainly owing to the racial profiling, she keeps absorbing. She enters a descending curve that turns her unemployed and detached from Jassim and America. She begins questioning and suspecting the decision she has once made up, that coming to America and living in its vastest desert endangers her happiness, and so her marriage (Banita 252-53). Consequently, Halaby seeks to reveal that being pessimistic in perspective towards humanity, and one’s self in particular, fundamentally reflects the representation of the individual as powerless and psychologically unstable. The sociologist Frank Furedi agrees upon this idea in his book *Culture of Fear: Risk Taking and the Morality of Low Expectation* (1997), by saying that “the pessimistic view of humanity that is implicit in the precautionary principle is reflected in the representation of the individual as helpless or sick” (Furedi 10).

Additionally, Halaby implicitly depicts that Salwa’s alienation from her husband is because of her total embracement of the American lifestyle, as well as of the solely materialistic perception she holds during her nine years of residence in the United States. In this context, a comparison is suggested between Salwa and her Friend Randa at the level of marriage and family unity. Basically, Randa is more satisfied with her current situation, though she is an Arab and anti-Arab racism is found all over America. Randa’s satisfaction is then due to her appreciation and preservation of the Arab traditions and rituals, unlike Salwa

who seems affected by the way Americans live. As a result, once Salwa's marriage is unraveling, she starts looking for consolation in Randa's fellowship (Lloyd 9).

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. (OPL 283-84)

The difference of how two female Arab Americans can protect their marriage is explicitly demonstrated in the above quotation. Referring to the homeland's native culture, would probably save Salwa's marriage and does not put her in the head of the trigger, although it is too late to glue a broken glass into one piece.

Salaita reconfirms the idea that the crumbliness of Salwa's marriage and her attraction to Jake is the outcome of her viewpoint towards the concept of Americanism. "Her ethnicity is built into Americans' perception of her, and any negative associations with that ethnicity come forward in unguarded moments" (Salaita 91). Salwa finds herself lost and misplaced as a semi married woman in post 9/11 trauma discourses. Because her ethnicity is shaped and manipulated by what Americans think of her as an Arab, her self-confidence and belief in the marriage that is gradually melting, is at risk, fundamentally due to her non-recognition of the seriousness and importance of the marriage.

Besides, it can not be denied that Salwa's marriage to Jassim was not established on solid basics, as she quickly accepts his demand when he asks her to marry him. "I would like to ask you to marry me. If you agree, I will come with my family to ask officially" (OPL 68). Nevertheless Salwa still dates with her boyfriend Hassen, she wills to marry Jassim, whom

she does not know anything about, but he lives in America. Her sudden marriage can refer to her inner dreams and desires to realize the American dream instead of establishing a family.

“I would like that very much. I would like to go to America too” (OPL 68). Salwa’s reply seems more materialistic and pragmatic than it is decisive. In other words, instead of saying, yes I would like to marry you in an explicit way; she implies that America is more important than marriage itself. Because Salwa was born in the United States, she has always dreamt of living in a big house, having a fancy car, and wearing silk pajamas. Consequently, the concept of marriage is metaphorically present, but literally absent, which indicates that Salwa is already Americanized in thinking and ready to embrace all America’s cultures.

In her article “Arab-American Identity Construction: A Comparison between Pre- and Post-9/11 Literature” (2009), Silk dewulf argues that one of Salwa’s important factors which led to her marriage’s unstabiliy is the lack of language and communication. Concerning language, Salwa can not think of her relationship with Jake using Arabic. On the one hand, she is afraid of encountering the Jordanian boundaries that are drawn for every Arab woman and that can not be crossed otherwise, it would be considered as betraying the native culture; however Salwa is clearly accustomed to betrayal. On the other hand, Salwa deconstructs the English language and adopts it to fulfill her emotional, linguistic, and terretorial emptiness (Dewulf 49).

Then, communication or the lack of communication can be regarded as the marker of her constant lies. Hence, this tragically calls for a soon separation. For instance, as Salwa informs Jassim that she plans to turn back to Jordan for some time, however without him, he confirms that the lack of communication which has been held for so long; means the end of their marriage (Dewulf 49). “In leaving out what was most on his mind, Jassim realized that

they had spent their lives together not saying what mattered most, dancing around the peripheries instead of participating” (OPL 303).

At the final scenes of the novel, Salwa visits Jake in his apartment; however this visit seems more official and holds a farewell implication. Jake urges Salwa to break up with her husband, yet she refuses to do so. In a blink of an eye, he acts violently and physically beats her leaving Bruises that reveal the effects of drugs he is taking. Therefore, salwa starts regretting the bad things she has done with Jake, in addition to her late recognition that he hates Arabs and sees them as terrorists living in pigsties (Banita 248-49).

“So you’re running back to the pigsty?

Salwa’s brain skipped. Pardon?

I said you’re running back to the pigsty you came from. He spoke these words clearly and slowly, as if to someone who might not understand the language” (OPL 320).

Salwa reaches a shaky stage of her marriage that leads her to reconsider about the position she occupies in the United States. Though, she has been through an unethical relationship, one can assume that the human psyche might deviate from what is socially acceptable. Due to the impact of 9/11 on Salwa, she suffers from traumatic and unstably psychological attitudes towards her environment. In addition, the constant conflict between the psychological structure of Salwa’s personality are increasing to finally fall one step behind the other.

In his article “An Outline of Psycho-Analysis” (1940), Sigmund Freud divided the human psyche into three categories or concepts that are interchangeably related to one another. They are respectively classified as the following; the id, the ego, and the superego. As

he claims that these principles are the key factors which permit for the interpretation of abnormal behaviours (Freud 28). In this context, Salwa's id, ego, and superego seem to appear when her marriage is crumbling, and the feeling of guilt comes to light, resulting in her desire to go back home.

On the one hand the id is primarily the reference to any psychological activity and energy. The latter is consisted of the libido. That is, once the libido is not controled, this will give rise to amatory actions and behaviours, however if it is not contained the result will be in blocking the libido. Whether the libido is checked or not, it threatens the individuals as well as the society respectively, because any society sets some limitations and boundaries that are known as customs and traditions, which should not be overlooked by these individuals. Besides, the id is associated with the pleasure principle, so Salwa is, whose goal is to maximise pleasure and get rid of any obstacles that may hinder her, realizing that pleasure. Those obstacles may be revealed in the way she thinks and uses the English language during her relationship with Jake, because if she uses the Arabic language, the action itself may lead to the damming up of her libido (Freud 30).

Freud calls the way of processing data and thinking by id a primary process, which is basically reasonless, emotional, and most of all full of illusions and imaginations. He reconfirms that the precepts of hostility, aggressiveness, and selfishness are also of the main reasons in which the primary process functions unconsciously (Freud 50).

Salwa reaches a shaky stage of her marriage that leads her to reconsider about the position she occupies in the United States. Though, she has been through an unethical relationship, one can assume that the human psyche might deviate from what is socially acceptable. Due to the impact of 9/11 on Salwa, she suffers from traumatic and unstably

psychological attitudes towards her environment. In addition, the constant conflict between the psychocological structure of Salwa's personality are increasing to finally fall one step behind the other.

Salwa's inner voice had grown weary, unwilling to battle, and so had turned off the light and gone to bed. Salwa, who at the moment of her birth was twice displaced from lands holier than this, allowed an American boy to push off her shoes with his toes, to unbutton her shirt and remove it, allowed him to unzip her skirt and lace her clothes neatly on a chair next to the futons. (OPL 210)

Happiness is a mental or emotional state of well-being, defined by positive or pleasant emotions ranging from contentment to intense joy. Happy mental states may also reflect judgements by a person about their overall well-being. Thus, it results from the possession or attainment of what one considers good or bad.

Entering Jake's apartment and unexpectedly looking for happiness, seems another motif that pushes Salwa to be distant from her husband. Eventhough Jake is attracted to Salwa, he ironically attempts to reveal that once a woman loses her internal beauty and self-confidence, she becomes ugly, and she will never be able to find happiness.

"This is from a Japanese myth about a young woman who searches for happiness, and each time she thinks she has found it, it escapes her. Happiness takes different forms, which are represented by different animals in different pictures" (OPL 209).

The picture of this young woman symbolizes Salwa who experiences a spiritual holowness, and feels exhausted with her marriage. Semiologically, Salwa will never be happy,

because she lost her beauty once she approaches to Jake and demonstrates her readiness to be controlled by her id rather than her ego.

On the other hand, the ego is conceptualized as the principle of reality that is commanded and structured by the society's norms and customs instead of the unchecked pleasures by the id. The ego is fundamentally more related to reasonability and logic. In this phase, the data-processing of it is marked as the secondary process, where the activities done by the individual can be conscious, or the ego may meet the id's desires. For instance, it can be metaphorically explained as the horse and rider relationship. The horse stands for the id in its primitive image as the reference to energy, however the rider is regarded as the ego which orients and manipulates this energy into an acceptable behaviour (Freud 33).

Throughout the novel, Halaby tries to demonstrate the psychological conflicts and instability that Salwa suffers from, especially when she is with Jake at his apartment. Her ego revealed itself all along the evening. "To avoid wrinkles. Watched as he removed his own clothing in a heap, stood before her in underwear that reminded her of Jassim's bathing suit" (OPL 210).

Salwa's acceptance and rejection of the situation in which she is present, reminds her of her husband and her marriage. The latter may not be perfect, but in reality it was agreed officially and blessed intimately. In other words, Salwa married Jassim with their families' presence in Jordan, and not in the United States. Therefore, all the Jordanian traditions and customs were respected. In this sense, the ego's role is to get Salwa back to her reality that living in fantasies and in a fake relationship would only accelerate the id's demands. Salwa compares Jake to her husband in the swimming suit, this indicates that even though he is physically distant and absent, she still feels his existence all over the room. Moreover, the

ambivalence of her emotions when she is in Jake's arms shows how conflicting her thoughts are. Once she decides to leave his apartment and never gets back in there again, and once she enjoys her bodily instincts, especially when Jake flatters with her body and and comments how her emotional and mental state should be when she lays with him.

As long as Salwa's id is full of selfish desires and pleasures, she could never attain a self-recognition, and self-esteem. However, if she reaches the conscience state she might be psychologically healed. "She sat up and looked at herself in the mirrors that covered the closet doors. Is this what Jake had seen and said was beautiful?" (OPL 211).

Despite the fact that Salwa is perceived by Jake as exotic, she no longer appreciates her bodily traits, unlike before when she used to buy silk pajamas and appears as the queen of softness and femininity. Her self-esteem is negatively lowered because of the conflict of the two dogs inside of them. The evil or mean dog has just fulfilled its desires, yet the good dog is ringing on the conscience's alarm.

Hence, the super ego as the supreme power of consciousness appears after the abnormal behaviour that Salwa has just experienced. Globally, Freud defines the super ego as the principle of social and religious ethics, being perfect and not factual. That is, unlike the id which is principally linked to selfishness, lament desires, and the ego which refers to the reality criterion. The super ego deals with perfections such as customs and conventions that individuals acquire from their family and society (Freud 45).

They stared at each other, stranger at stranger. One loved silky pajamas and was outraged by injustice; the other had allowed a baby to die within her and in compensation had let herself be entered by a man who was not her husband. (OPL 211)

Salwa's reflection at the mirror tells more about her conscious state after finishing the affair with Jake. There are two clashing women in the mirror; each can not recognize the other, the feeling of guilt may blind and kill the criminal, as it may open their eyes to the principles and ethics acquired during a person's whole life. The American Salwa Haddad betrays the Palestinian-Jordanian Salwa Khalil, and causes a marriage crumbling that was once in contact with the Jordanian lands.

Waiting for a new life in the United States would never come true, this is what Salwa assumes. Forgetting about her past, culture, traditions, customs, and conventions would stab her with hundreds of knives. Letting go what happened with Jake seems more difficult than deciding to leave him.

Salwa aimlessly and disappointedly makes her mind up to go back to her native country, Jordan. One can assume that if she stays in America, she would turn more miserable and deviated. Her relationship with Jake would last for so long, mainly resulting in a new way of life of drugs and ambiguity. Salwa would be aimless as she once thought of Jake before she has an affair with him. Based on Salwa's decision, Halaby reveals the role of the ego in maintaining a balance between the id's desires, and the super ego's social and religious ethics. To illustrate, by traveling to Jordan Salwa would be cleansed and free from what she may recommit with Jake or with somebody else, and she would thus reembrace her Jordanian traditions she has been raised on.

Though the novel ends vaguely, symbolizing the unclear and undefined position of Arab Americans in general, and Salwa in particular, one can assert that it would be better if Salwa goes home and realizes the balance of her psyche structure.

Once in a Promised Land (OPL), clearly emphasizes on the anti-Arab racism, following 9/11 terrorist attacks of the Twin Towers. Jassim and Salwa are the main protagonists and prototypes that fictionally represent all Arab Americans who are subjected to anti-Muslim sentiments. As a well-to do married couple in Tucson, they undergo many racist situations which hinder their communication with each other. Besides, Post 9/11 trauma can be regarded as the explicit outcome of the constant disappointments of the couple at many levels; socially, professionally, and intimately.

Socially, both Jassim and Salwa are perceived as terrorists, due to their ethnic affiliations, and due to the precepts of hatred and resentment that most of Americans hold towards Arabs. Thus, September attacks are the outlet through which Americans express their grudge and rage. It would be then a stereotypical and a limited viewpoint that terrorism is associated with Muslims and Islam. If one refers to history, it may be noticed that the first use of the term terrorism can be traced back to the period of Romans, approximately around 105 BC, when they used the term (*terror cimbricus*) mainly to portray the fright and panic resulted, as they set up for any furious attack by other tribes. Thousands years later, the concept was used and taken into consideration at times of the French Revolution. In this respect, how would it be even possible that Americans still hold this perspective, yet the term is coined from a western point of view.

Professionally, Jassim comes to lose his job because of an unjustified investigation of the FBI, that he possesses secret information which might help finding solutions for the world water shortage. Salwa is also absorbed by the American anti-Arab racism, which sounds overriding. It can be deduced then that those attacks have become more politicized than ethnical. That is, the wide propaganda fabricated by media has put Arab Americans in a knotty

position, as they hold the snakes' venom and the so called America would get contaminated by Muslims' religious practices.

Intimately, the gap between Jassim and Salwa is widening owing to the secrets and lies they keep from each other. The effect seems stronger and tougher on Salwa, as she experiences a starting point in her life. She gets into a vortex that is gradually taking her away from her marriage, and so from Salwa that was one day soft, and innocent. Salwa's behaviour becomes abnormal and unchecked, in a constant quest for her lost soul in the American materialism. Her choices change from modest, decent to more daring and dangerous ones at once.

Chapter III Salwa's Quest for Identity

Due to the miscellaneousness of ethnic groups in the United States many social, political and cultural problems have arisen since the 9/11 attacks. Among these segregated groups are Arab-Americans; who suffer from both social discrimination and identity crisis. This fact has empowered many Arab American women writers and activist feminists to tackle the issue of hybrid identities with an emphasis on female protagonists.

Therefore, this chapter aims at examining Salwa's quest for identity, applying social psychoanalysis and feminist approaches of identity. Firstly, the female protagonist will be discussed as an Arab woman, before travelling to American and embracing its pop culture. Secondly, Salwa will be viewed as a passively American consumer, after being absorbed by Hollywood and Disney Land fantasies.

Identity is globally conceptualized as a set of behavioral and personal attributes that identify who one is. It is the uniqueness which integrates one into social relations, and social group memberships. In the present chapter, identity can be linked to the past; what Salwa used

to be true of herself, to the present, what she is actual of herself, and to the future, what she might expect or realize. However, when it comes to ethnic identity, concepts may be discussed differently. In his article “What is Ethnic Identity and does it Matter?” (2005), Kanchan Chandra defines ethnic identity as the social classification in which one is desirable to be accepted in a social membership of the majority country (Chandra 4).

III.1 Salwa as an Arab Woman

The construction of identity is then related to how one perceives oneself and the others. In this context, identity seems to have a social dimension in which it is gradually established, because it is achieved through measuring and comparing one’s identity to the others’ similarities and differences. However, the process of identity construction may differ when it has to do with people who are of different ethnic and racial affiliations ((Dewulf 5). That is, people with hybrid identities often encounter this difficulty of not completely constructing and recognizing who they are in countries like the United States which stands as a barrier in front of their identity formation process. Consequently, the construction of identity becomes a fuse between both; the self and the others whether in a majority or in a minority community.

When talking about the construction of identity as being ethnic, a question would be then asked, are boundaries (whether literally or metaphorically) one of the main factors that helps establishing a cosmopolitan and communal interaction among citizens? Or are they built unconsciously to react against a certain event? In this respect, the 9/11 attacks may be regarded as an answer to the latter question, that America has drawn literal and metaphorical boundaries which make Arab-Americans reconsider about their identity as a hybrid one.

Vince Marotta asserts in her article “The Hybrid Self and the Ambivalence of Boundaries” (2008) that boundaries play a major role in perceiving and grasping social and human interactions when one is at the stage of forming or renegotiating their identities. In other words, she puts it forward that unless one does not experience geographical or sociopolitical boundaries in a majority country like the United States, identity construction can not be negotiated whether in sociology, psychology, or in literature (Marotta 302). In addition, she objectively contends that “the problem is not boundaries in themselves, but how they are used, the type of boundaries and who imposes the boundaries and why” (Marotta 299). Salwa as an Arab has not yet reached this feeling of boundaries or hybridity and has not even recognized the threads she has been once knitted and roped into, though since her first birth in America the Ghula knitted and roped her skin with thousands of threads that would not be easily removed or got rid of.

From a feminist viewpoint, Lisa Suhair Majaj contends in her article “The Hyphenated Author: Emerging Genre of 'Arab-American Literature' Poses Questions of Definition, Ethnicity and Art” that identity formation is differently viewed nowadays, mainly highlighting two perspectives. The first one holds the idea that Arab-American identity is primarily linked to the concept of transplantation of the Arab identity, in addition to the protection and admiration of the Arab traditions, language, norms, and customs. However, the second perspective argues that Arab-American identity can be conceived within the American context, as it can be more related to the theory of multiculturalism. In other words, identity from an American point of view becomes politicized and depends on the Americans as well as the policy makers’ perception, whether they are assimilationists or anti-assimilationists. Still,

if one considers Arab-American identity as merely Americanized, this would be a direct betrayal and trachery of the Arab legacy (Majaj 30).

What these doting parents didn't know was that when the mother gave birth out of place to her youngest moon-faced child a ghula visited her. The hairy hideous ghula saw the beauty in the 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 in all sorts of places—between finger joints, next to her nipples, under her eyes, at the base of her neck. When the ghula was done, the baby lay asleep with a thousand and one red threads hanging from her. The ghula held the ends of the threads together and pulled a skein from under one of her large, dangling breasts. After she secured them, threads to skein, she said some magic ghula words and the threads became invisible. (OPL 331-32)

The above quote implicitly sums up Salwa's life from birth to an unknown future, and most of all to a hybrid identity. It is symbolically portrayed that Salwa was born, away from her parents' homeland and trees of olive; an interpretation can be maintained that trees of olive chiefly represent Palestine, and far of their residence country which is Jordan. Although the Ghula refers to the Arab folklore, it is employed within the American context. To illustrate, the Ghula metaphorically symbolizes America, and the threads being wrapped around Salwa's body are the different seductive aspects that the Promised Land offers to her, until she reaches the edge of confusion and sense of displacement. The Ghula is able to

provide anything that Salwa would ask for, unless her Arab origins would be omitted from her memories.

In the first place, Salwa as an Arab woman appears clearly in the novel's events, however through memories and yearning to the homeland in her living in America after 9/11 trauma. That is, if one analyses most of the scenes in which Salwa is depicted as celebrating the Jordanian traditions, they may notice that these traditions and attributes of being an Arab woman, are expressed throughout a narrative of memories. More precisely, the analysis of Salwa as an Arab woman, would be done in relation to her residence in the United States rather than in Jordan, because most of the scenes in this context are narrated in a remembering manner.

Salwa's Arabness is fundamentally established upon her social environment especially her family members, friends, and most of all Hassan. Thus, the aspect of how she used to be an Arab woman comes to light after the 9/11 events, besides the hollowness and affection of returning home. In one of the scenes after her recognition of being pregnant, she feels guilty and regrets not telling her husband about her pregnancy. An interior monologue takes place, however using the Arabic language which has always stood as a marker of intimacy and a reminder of her Arab origins. "Salwa asked herself in Arabic, her language of thought and intimacy." (OPL 10)

Mary Chamberlain assumes in her article "Diasporic Memories: Community, Individuality, and Creativity—A Life Stories Perspective." (2009) that personal and collective memories are both important to one's remembering of the homeland in diasporic contexts as the case of Salwa, who desperately keeps on calling memories from childhood to her days in the university, and from being an innocent Arab woman, living in a simple country to

experiencing a new way of life. So, Chamberlain reconfirms what has been previously mentioned that memories are the door through which Salwa would remember who she was and who she is now. They are also the motif which pushes her to reconsider about her home's customs (Chamberlain 180).

Clearly, memories are all unique and personal, each an account of the individual's life course from childhood to maturity, of the transformations from a...village to a migrant in a busy metropolis, and of the fictionalizing process inherent in the construction of a narrative of self. Memories are a key route into revealing and understanding the processes, adjustments, and negotiations of migrants, of the mobile and liminal worlds they inhabit, of the connections with and the longings for home. (Chamberlain 185-86)

As a result, according to Chamberlain, personal memories are of a great significance when it comes to the construction of one's identity in addition to the recognition of the diasporic experiences; that either help in raising the awareness of the importance of reembracing the local culture, or ignoring about the latter and subdueing to the majority practices under the assumption of openness.

Furthermore, though establishing an identity is seen as an individual process in which many factors are involved be them memories. However, as Chamberlain claims that one's construction of identity requires a collective and a communal memory as well in its broadest senses. Memories "Also contain those all-important traces from an older past, those deeper levels of values, attitudes, and behaviors, clues to a collective memory" (Chamberlain 186). In

other words, the consciousness of cohesiveness which may be observed in diasporic societies is due to the role of collective memory.

Actually, America is known as the melting pot or the salad bowl, in which there exist a lot of cultures from all over the globe. Hence, ethnic groups and individuals seek to find ways and strategies so that they can set some limits and boundaries between their local cultures and the host country culture. Susan Friedman argues in her book *Mappings: Feminism and the Cultural Geographies of Encounter* (1998) that the grounds and causes which lead these individuals to maintain those limits are to preserve their heritage from being influenced by the majority culture. “Cultures tend to erect boundaries between themselves and other cultures, defensively defining their own identity through assertion of difference from others” (Friedman 135). They also tend to draw those boundaries so as to gain “protection from more powerful others” (Friedman 135).

As a way of being protected from the United States’ culture, and still feeling as an Arab woman, with a constant flow of the Palestinian blood, Salwa usually resorts to her friend Randa, who in the novel represents the homeland. Through Randa, Salwa becomes an Arab woman in her language, thoughts, and memories. Language plays a vital role in their conversations, especially when they code-switch into the Jordanian and Lebanese accents. Salwa feels at ease when she uses Arabic, this creates an atmosphere of her family past discussions and of Hassan’s passion for politics. “Hi, Salwa. How are you, Habibti? Salwa loved Randa’s accent, loved how her Arabic was like a song” (OPL 77). Thoughts and sentiments are also of a big deal, when Salwa talks to Randa about the Arabs’ situation in the United States, she seems to have patriotic affiliations and opinions, and this consequently depicts her Arab thinking and utterance. Ultimately, memories are usually common between

Salwa and Randa, because both Lebanon and Palestine have suffered and still suffer from civil wars, conflicts, and struggles for freedom as most of the Arab-Americans do.

One can argue that identity has a political dimension in its first seeds. “Salwa is a Palestinian by blood” (OPL 70). This quote explains the heavy burden Salwa carries her whole life, not because she is a Palestinian, but how she should represent Palestinians if asked to do so. In addition, to what extent she deserves this sacred blood, when compared to Hassan Shaheed whose name implies; extreme chauvinism, sacrifice, and martyrdom. In this sense, Hassan is an essential part of Salwa’s construction of identity and memory. That is, Siham; Salwa’s sister has always considered him as the representative and voice of who Salwa is. “He reminds you who you are” (OPL 240). Maybe the shared feature between Salwa and Hassan lays down in their Palestinian origins, and once she admires these origins, she can transgress the 9/11 trauma.

Priscilla S. and Wathington, B.A argue in their article “Eating Homes: A Critical Inquiry into the Representation of Arab American Identities in Contemporary Arab American Writings on Food” (2007) that as ethnic identity, identity politics are gradually acquired and developed via several psychological processes, so cultural identity is. Though the objective of this research is not to shed a light on identity development, it is rather to recognize how this cultural identity is viewed and remembered by Arab-Americans, and how it helps them being Arabs (Priscilla and Wathington 44). To illustrate, because of 9/11 trauma and the issue of hybrid identities, food has been another marker of Arab identity, which is vastly tackled in contemporary Arab American literature. In this regard, food is used in fictional and non-fictional works to symbolize the cultural aspects of the Arab identity particularly, instead of the national patrimony. Yet, Arab food is admired and considered by female protagonists as a

natural subject matter whether in their homes, or beyond it. That is, in their Arab-Americans' houses. On the one hand, Americans may perceive it as a newly strange phenomenon, but quiet interesting that requires curiosity. On the other hand, people with xenophobia may reject this cultural identity, in fear of losing theirs, they thus put these female protagonists to the margins and exclude them (Priscilla and Wathington 50-52).

“I love these. Actually, I’ve only had them like this in Indian restaurants, but we use shumur, fennel, in some foods, and the flavor is so distinct that one bite and I taste them. 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” (OPL 209).

Because food is a crucial part of Salwa’s identity, once she tastes the fennel flavor, many memories are brought back, and so her home is. Memories are restored and now retrieved in an abstract and concrete way. This match or feeling is occasional, if she is not invited to Jake’s home to have lunch, one can not recognize that her identity as an Arab woman is also based upon her Jordanian food traditions, which are likely to appear in moments of stress, anxiety, and void.

To reconfirm the previous idea that food is a central and symbol of Arab identity, the poet Suheir Hammad indicates in her book *Zaatar Diva* (2006) that Arab women should celebrate their food traditions, even if they are exposed to exclusion and social discrimination. As the title implies, this collection of poems depicts a female narrator carrying a paper bag in which her Arab identity is symbolically portrayed. According to Hammad these carried ingredients such as: honey, sweet oils, and sumac originally represent the Arab culture, and

much more aid at constructing and establishing one's identity. Moreover, this belief and preservation of food tradition supports one's affiliation to the Arab community as well (Hammad 65).

Hammad's female narrator holds a bag with a lot of Arab ingredients which metaphorically reflects her Arab identity, whilst Salwa carries latent memories that reveal her Arab identity. Therefore, Halaby implicitly manages to demonstrate Salwa's identity as an Arab woman, however in a more elaborative manner that provokes the reader to delve into her memories, and the Arab traditions of food, so that the whole scene or picture would be clearer. Halaby also uses an allegorical imagery to maintain or give a general representational process of Ramadan and the Eid throughout a conversation between Salwa and Jake.

"I wanted to ask you about Ramadan."

"Sure."

"We're almost at the end of it right now, right?"

"Right. This weekend is the Eid" (OPL 147).

According to this context, it seems that Ramadan is already taking place, and Salwa is tipped about it. She still remembers the coming of the Eid, however she feels bitter not spending it with her family as she used to do. It is not explicitly uttered that she fasts or prepares traditional dishes for Ramadan, yet she is aware that it is about to end and the Eid is in this weekend.

"Is it different from how you celebrated when you lived in Jordan?"

Oh God, what a difference! Back home we would be cleaning for Eid for days before. Fasting and cooking and cleaning and fasting and cooking and cleaning more

That doesn't sound too fun

It's a lot of work, but it's all worth it. Almost the whole country celebrates Ramadan" (OPL 147).

Despite the fact of salwa's distance, she can still catch every detail of both Ramadan and the Eid in Jordan. Instead of cleaning, decorating the house, preparing traditional sweets, and buying new clothes, Salwa is celebrating it in a desert state that might deny such rituals and solely pays attention to the hard work that would benefit America as a whole. Furthermore, one can notice that eventhough Salwa lives in America for nine years; she is attached to the inevitable religious ceremonies, presuming that they are as important as cultural, ethnic, and identity politics. Being an Arab as previously mentioned extremely requires a strong memory and embracement of the Arab identity traits. To emphasize, all these rites were practiced and still engraved in salwa's memory. She explains that during the Eid little children get a sum of money, in addition to their newly beautiful outfits which make this occasion more joyful and colorful. Families also visit one another bringing with them all kinds of sweets and gifts to spread love, caring, and tender. Consequently, Salwa feels as an Arab woman, being bound to her family and relatives during such religious customs. Hassan is argued to make Salwa who she is; a Palestinian. At the days of the Eid Hassan annually brings Salwa's family a pot of amazing flowers, which he personally plants just to make her happy. "We have one friend, Hassan. He would come to our house first and bring flowers. These were flowers he started from seeds months before, that he grew on his own for the very special occasion of giving them to us on Eid" (OPL 148).

Back to the idea of social identity construction, Erikson believes in his book *Childhood and society* (1950) that the relationship between both; the individual's social

surroundings and his psychological development would positively result in the identity formation. However, in this context Erikson sheds a light on social identity from a psychological dimension. “A functioning social identity nurtures the ‘ego identity’ and promotes a strong sense of self” (Erikson 269). In other words, once the individual sticks to his homelands’ traditions and customs, the sense of belongingness and affiliation would then rise. For instance, Salwa’s ego identity is linked to the recognition of her Arab origins, and to the reality of being an Arab woman depicting both Palestinian and Jordanian roots.

Boesenberg argues in her article “Gender, Voice, Vernacular: The Formation of Female Subjectivity in Zora Neale Hurston, Toni Morrison and Alice Walker” (1999) that in spite of the disposition and desire to practice social, cultural, and religious customs in a majority country, this community partially restricts these practices and does not allow self-expression at a large stake, ethnic groups are internalized then (Boesenberg 105). “If collective marginalization brings about a group’s cohesiveness, it also makes the group critical of radical departures from its norms” (Boesenberg 44). That is, in the case of Arab-Americans in general and Salwa in particular, due to the Americans’ pejorative and racist perception towards Arab-Americans’ local cultures that help forming their identity, these ethnic or minor groups would believe the inferiority of their cultures and heritages, and then undermine gradually connections to their roots and origins. Hence, the analysis of Salwa’s character as an Arab woman through her memories is an attempt to reveal alternative literary methods which do not completely describe her as being internalized, but connected to the Arab traditions, simply via the technique of stream of consciousness⁸.

In his book *Gender and Sexuality: Critical Theories, Critical Thinkers* (2005), Chris Beasley denotes that there are two modern and postmodern feminist theories that tackle

women's hybrid identities, who are socially excluded from the majority countries' social, political, and cultural practices. The first feminist approach is coined as a singular one, which is specifically concerned with non-white women groups, revealing their struggles against the American racism and segregation, nearly since the civil war. The second postmodern feminist approach is a multiple one that deals with post-colonial women's literature, ethnicity, racialization, gender, and identities of women who are regarded as non-western and perceived as the other orientalist, like the case of Arab-American female protagonists. In addition, these 'orientalist other women' are also analysed from a psychoanalytic perspective, with an emphasis on the impact of marginalization and power on their ethnic and cultural identities. The feminine other is no longer a submissive and passive according to this postmodern variant, though the modern single approach already defined the ethnic groups in terms of binary division such as; men/women, black/white, first/third world. In reaction to this division, the postmodern multiple approach disapproves with this pejorative binary and rather stemmed the scope into the characteristics that would unify these ethnic communities instead of internalizing them. More precisely, post-colonial and psychoanalytic feminisms focused on the characteristics which gather the ethnic groups' marginalized and hybrid identities, by exposing them to their local cultures and folklores, and that women should not under any circumstance devalue their position in host countries (Beasley 96-97).

Though the postmodern multiple feminist theory strongly holds the idea of reviewing and negotiating marginalized identities, and the belief that ethnic women or post-colonial female characters; who are described as facing issues of self-recognition, racism, trauma, and hybrid identities. This approach fails at some levels to be deconstructed and criticized. To put

it differently, “the invocation of the feminine, of black women or Third World women remains” (Beasley 98).

According to the postmodern multiple approach, women from ethnic communities, ought to look or bring back their memories of the homelands, and the traditions, be them written, oral, or unanimous, so that they can identity themselves. In other words, taking the example of Arab-American identity construction and how it is seen in the United States by both Arabs and Americans, one can presume that one of the above mentioned memories of the homelands is the Jordanian oral tradition or folklore. In a blink of an eye, Salwa captures the stories of her grandmother she used to enjoy listening to with her sisters.

Kan ya ma kan fee qadeem az-zamaan...There was or there wasn't in olden times...a woman who could not get pregnant. Years passed, and her yearning for a baby grew and grew. One day as she was working in her house, she heard a merchant's cry through her window: Pregnancy apples from the mountain! Pregnancy apples from the mountain. (OPL 93)

The beginning of the quote introduces the reader to know about the Arab folklore through the use of this expression, which is almost equivalent to the American fairytale introductory sentence, ‘once upon a time’. The story is as important as the metaphorical meaning is. That is, Arab folklore does not bring out stories out of the blue –though they are not academically classified as perfect literary texts- they reflect many social aspects, and above all they teach what an Arab is. The events of the story revolve around a boy called Nus Nsays –the woman's son in the short narrative above- who happens to be too smaller than his pairs. However, this could not prevent him from defeating the wicked Ghula and then

becomes the hero of his village. One can suggest that it does not matter whether being small or tall, rich or poor, beautiful or ugly, what really matters is the firmness, determination and intelligence. “small characters can defeat larger evils” (OPL 98). To illustrate, Nus Nsays symbolically represents every Palestinian who still regards patriotism. Moreover, through this story Salwa’s grandmother implicitly tries to convey a message that yet Salwa was born in America, she had better not forget about her Arab Palestinian origins. One can also assert that Salwa should be a Nus Nsays, regardless of her ethnic identity in the United States.

When Salwa was a child, she always asked her grandmother for the meaning behind the stories.

It is just a story.

But what is the point of him being so small?

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. (OPL 98)

Consequently, Salwa as an Arab woman is portrayed through the technique of story telling narrative, despite of the settings. That is, as precedently argued that Salwa’s identity as an Arab woman is explained in terms of memories in the United States, because the place of the story narration took place in Jordan as well as of the time, during Salwa’s childhood.

Arab oral tradition is principally related to fictional events and fictional characters, however it tells about moral and ethical values that every Arab man and woman should recognize, and must not overpass. This is what makes Salwa appears as an Arab with decent and respectful attitudes. In one of the scenes, during Salwa’s university days, it happens that she and Hassan are alone in her cousin’s car, and Hassan wants to take advantage from the

situation of being physically and spiritually close to each another. Hassan kissed her in a moment of bursting feelings, but it did not last for so long because Salwa recognizes that such unethical behaviour is not accepted in the Jordanian society, in addition to their position in a public place. “Then she pushed him away, gently, politely. She felt a mix of fear of being caught” (OPL 242).

One’s consciousness of the values, norms and customs which are drawn by their society may protect them from deviating and losing their identity. Therefore, social laws which are enacted and stretched from religious and ethical supremacy might as well help developing a social and cultural identity that must be specific to Arabs per se.

Arab identity as a vast and widely tackled issue in many disciplines, it has attracted scholarly thinkers, critics, and writers. Arab American women writers and feminists deal with this thorny issue from different artistic perspectives. Halaby perfectly forges the theme of Arab identity using a pushing technique which requires readers to actively involve themselves in the events, and participate via searching into the Arab culture and folklore so that the novel puzzles would uncover. Although Salwa is introduced as an Arab woman through her memories in Jordan, she is likely to deviate from that representation, mainly because of her physical and emotional distance from the homeland. Thus, does living in America make Salwa pay the price of betraying her Arab culture? Or being stitched by the Ghula threads already defines her as an American citizen?

III.2 Salwa as an American Citizen

Donald E. Polkinghorne assumes in his article “Narrative and self concept” (1991), that “We are all the time constructing narratives about our past and our future and...the core of our identity is really a narrative thread that gives meaning to our life, provided...that it is never broken” (Polkinghorne 143).

The American Dream has always attracted a bunch of ambitious people from all over the world, to put their aspirations on solid grounds. Apportunities were available for every one who believed in the determination of the hard work. Thus, money, cars, and luxurious houses were the results of this hard work. However, their dreams were stolen and raped by the ghost of America itself, and the fortunes gathered were at the expense of their past, origins, culture and more importantly identity construction which has been to a great extent Americanized and unconsciously hybrid. In his book *The American Dream: A Short History of an Idea that Shaped a Nation* (2003), Jim Cullen defines the term as

That American Dream of a better, richer, and happier life for all our citizens of every rank, which is the greatest contribution we have made to the thought and welfare of the world. That dream or hope has been present from the start. Ever since we became an independent nation, each generation has seen an uprising of ordinary Americans to save that dream from the forces which appeared to be overwhelming it. (Cullen 4)

Though the definition seems well expressive and introduces the term in a briefly understood manner, it implicetely carries political and cultural discourses. According to this quote, the American dream only involves American citizens from all social classes, but it excludes and rejects any other ethnic groups and communities, which are described as the

ones who would overwhelm or ruin the so called American Dream. One puts it forward that eventhough a lot of ethnic groups have been an active part of it a long time ago like Arab-Americans, they were from the very beginning racialized and seen as working machines which aim at developing their America.

In his book *The Interpretation of Dreams* (2010), Sigmund Freud contends that “Dreams are the royal road to the unconscious” (Freud 50).

In spite of growing up in Jordan in a Muslim and conservative family, Salwa always holds her dreams and desires to live a prestigious life and to be different from her sisters. Her embracement and clasp of the American Dream are uncounscious and cursed by the Ghula threads. Since her childhood she is called the queen of pajamas, if one digs deeply in the origins of pajamas it may be noticed that it is western. In addition, once Salwa’s aunt brought her a pajama from Thailand, this made her extremely happy because of the soft texture that covers all her tiny body. However, her mother disagrees about that fact, thinking the pajama’s tissue may catch fire. “In what became a famous family comment, Salwa argued, Oh no, Mama. These pajamas are beautiful, because in them you can be a queen” (OPL 47).

Salwa strongly believes that only rich women with high social positions put on pajamas made of silk. This feeling makes them different and attractive at the same time, in contrast to the Jordanian women who often have thick fingers, thick hairs and thick bodies. Salwa thinks that these women are made for house keeping, raising their children, and looking after their husbands, a life she never wishes for herself. Yet, ambition to fulfill dreams is a nice sentiment that individuals seek to reach, Salwa paves the way for westerners and precisely Americans to confirm the stereotypical images and fake representations held towards Arab women.

Unlike Salwa who is unaware of her love towards America, her family members and relatives do know that since she was born in the United States, she is then an American. This appears throughout the constant vexer, annoyance, and mocking of her.

As the only child in her family who happened to be born in America, Salwa had already been the subject of teasing, irresistible pointing and poking and giggling: Made in USA. Miss America. Oh, don't make Salwa do it; she won't know how she was born in the U.S. And then, to formally cement her difference from the rest of the family. (OPL 47)

Generally, racism is associated with America, however in this context it sounds that Salwa is racialized at the level of her family members. This racism does not cause Salwa trauma or isolation, she does not pay much attention to that, besides it is only about not accepting the difference in a society that is surrounded by limitations and boundaries. Consequently, a stereotypical perception is maintained, but towards the American culture itself that Americans can not be exposed to though works, they merely tend to live in big houses, driving expensive cars, and dressing luxurious outfits, just as Salwa wishes to do.

Following Salwa's academic studies, she opts for economics as the main field, when talking about economics and finances money must be the main core of these domains. As previously mentioned, that the American Dream is built upon the idea of working hard and getting an access to a sophisticated and happy life. Salwa likes playing and counting numbers as she will count her wealth in the deserts of Tucson. "the one who loved numbers, who played with them for the sake of stretching her mind" (OPL 146). Playing with numbers is likely to be concerned with capitalism and individualism, unlike Hassan who believes in

collectivism and communism. Philosophically, the latter symbolizes unity and solidarity of societies, still the former has to do with more materialistic orientations.

Salwa is Palestinian by blood, Jordanian by residence, and American by citizenship. That is why she uses so much water and has a taste for luxury. We tease her that she is really first world. A colonizer. You see, she even studies money! Abu Siham's eyes twinkled as he said these things, his love for his daughter welling up in his face. (OPL 70)

During the ceremonies of Salwa's proposal of marriage, she is introduced by her father as a three persons in one body. That is, her origins are Palestinian, she lives in Jordan, and she was born in the United States. Despite the shortage of water Jordan suffers from, Salwa overuses it whether in her showers or while watering flowers she takes care of. These attributes of planting flowers and wasting water are stemmed from the American culture, and weirdly new for the Jordanian society. Salwa's behaviour is also reflected in terms of colonization. In other words, the very first principles of any colonization are to bring new habits and practices that are not accustomed to the colonized people, and try to eradicate those norms. In this sense, Salwa is the colonizer because she plants flowers, overuses water, and innately tends to everything related to the field of money.

To be sure, the ancient belief that the dream reveals the future is not entirely devoid of truth. By representing to us a wish as fulfilled the dream certainly leads us into the future; but this future, taken by the dreamer as present, as been formed into the likeness of that past by the indestructible wish. (Freud, *The Interpretation of Dreams* 2010; 73)

All Salwa's dreams and wishes have come true, once she moved to live in America with her husband. She is now an American citizen, her counting of numbers has become a counting for dollars due to her jobs as a banker, and a real estate. The American Dream has absorbed Salwa but has not wholly spitted her out. She is the victim of the American consumerism and pop culture. As Noam Chomsky explains in his book *Profit over People Neoliberalism and Global Order* (1999), which neoliberal democracies create shopping malls and markets, instead of establishing communities, and urge people to become passive consumers rather than active citizens (Chomsky 66-67).

“It's fine, Salwa. It just seems that two entire drawers filled to bursting with pajamas is a lot. That's not including another drawer for panties and bras and another one for socks and stockings. You have filled a whole dresser with undergarments. You could probably clothe an entire village in underwear” (OPL 48).

The pajama given by Salwa's aunt seems to be multiplied into many kinds and sorts; with different colours and textures. She is then a shopaholic American citizen, who spends most of her free times wandering and buying new brands of undergarments in shopping malls. As antecedently argued that Salwa enters the wide world of American consumerism, hoping to be integrated and accepted in that society.

At the outset, being an American citizen with an estimate social position paves the way to Salwa's freedom including her new choices of pajamas, and underwears. “ As her years away from home lengthened and her susceptibility to American marketing increased, her pajamas transformed, morphed from elegant and flowing to tight, more revealing, more alluring” (OPL 48).

Consequently, the innocent Arab girl Salwa has changed and become more open and daring as for her personal selections. The pajamas of long sleeves and large pants are taken up, and new tight and revealing pairs are replaced instead. Salwa feels as classy and self-admiring as those American women who are pictured on the magazines she used to glance at, when she was a little girl. However, what Salwa ignores is that being born in America does not make her an American citizen; it accelerates the tension of being misplaced and betrayed by both her Arab identity and her American citizenship. She swells up and down, trying to find a balance so that she does not fall on the hard ground on which every American walks.

Americans usually give names to their children when they are born according to the types of music like calling a boy Rock or Pop, they also tend to give them strange names that have nothing to do with religious or cultural references, unlike Arabs whose names usually follow their ancestors's. Arabs appreciate religious, historical, and cultural figures or events. For them names should symbolize patriotism and kids take their parents' last name once they are born. For instance, Salwa's last name is Khalil, if one deconstructs the name it may refer to the Palestinian city which is situated in the Southern Western Bank. So, carrying a Palestinian name is indeed a sign of collective concern and a strong belief of the case.

After the fifth ring he heard a click and "Hello. This is Salwa Haddad.

Your call is important to me. Please leave a message after the tone and I will get back to you as soon as possible. Thank you and have a great day. And a beep

Hassan was shocked. He stared at the phone a moment before he hung up. Salwa Haddad. (OPL 36)

Salwa Khalil becomes Salwa Haddad, and easily gives up on her Palestinian roots. Once the individual gets rid of their family names, they can be easily manipulated as well. Identity construction becomes more fragile and more exposed to questioning it. In other words, before Salwa's arrival to the United States she was bound to her family rules and restrictions, and could not transgress them. However, the inner rebellion and pent up desires were hidden in her unconsciousness, waiting for the right moment to blow up and reveal themselves. America is the appropriate place in which freedom is practiced, away of these limitations and orders.

Maha Yahya explains in her article "Gender Nation and Belonging. Arab and Arab American feminist perspectives" (2005), that yet Arab-Americans seek to be integrated in the American's large tradition; they can not fulfill their desires in an absolute way.

Arab-Americans, particularly a hyphenated identity that is both Arab and American while not fully one or the other, those of us who were born and raised in the Arab world are either citizens of Arab countries or else choose not to identify as Americans. (Yahya 13)

In other words, because of their ethnicity and the Arab environment in which they were raised, they still encounter the feeling of double-consciousness and twoness. Moreprecisely, Arab-American women's hybrid identities widen the gap of whether they ought to preserve their Arab roots and origins not to feel misplaced, or they should follow what Americanism offers for them. In both cases, it seems difficult to be an Arab in a country that perceives Arabs as inferior and terrorists, likewise adopting the American culture in ethnic or Arab communities in the United States is an other shaky issue, for it is considered as a betrayal to the homeland traditions.

Salwa acts in the United States as a pure American citizen at many levels, one of them is her job as a real estate. In other words, being a Muslim Arab woman requires many aspects and principles to be respected and followed, especially when it comes to women's professions which are usually perceived in relation to the society's structure and customs. Salwa's job necessitates her to be working out with clients of both gender; females and males and much more with the latter type. So if one takes the Islamic perspective into account, this would be pretty undesirable when the contact comes directly between a Muslim woman and a strange western man without being accompanied with a husband or a close relative. Salwa then becomes free or rather too Americanized in her choices. In one of the scenes, Salwa seems open in her conversations and relations with the clients; this appears when she talks to Jack Franks who once meets her husband in the swimming pool.

“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?” (OPL 7).

Nevertheless, the quote indicates that Jack Franks is flirting with Salwa, and sees her as exotic and attractive, like any other American would do, bearing in mind the stereotypical and stigmatized images toward Arab women. Jassim does not react and defend his wife, he rather acts in a passive way arguing that morning symbolizes for him an absolute spiritual balance which should not be interrupted under any circumstance. However, this totally contradicts Arab men roles when it concerns their wives' honor. On the other hand, Salwa

likes it too when she is being flirted by American men because her reaction is similar to Jassim's. Salwa is unconsciously sinking in the American mud, but not admitting this fact.

Due to the openness of Americans, and their extreme freedom, their love and sexual relationships are easygoing, unlike the Arab world which is controlled and surrounded by severe boundaries concerning this issue. Marriages are the proof and the fruit of couples' engagement and seriousness towards each other, however in the United States the concept of marriage itself is not really idealized, since couples are free to date and even live with each other without considering it offensive or unethical. Therefore, Salwa loses her Arab principles she once learned and acquired in Jordan, and follows the Americans' way, however in terms of betrayal, a concept which mainly refers to western countries.

Salwa's inner voice had grown weary, unwilling to battle, and so had turned off the light and gone to bed. Salwa, who at the moment of her birth was twice displaced from lands holier than this, allowed an American boy to push off her shoes with his toes, to unbutton her shirt and remove it. (OPL 210)

Against Hassan's wishes to kiss Salwa once they were alone in a car in Jordan, she is now not kissing Hassan but having an unethical sexual affair with an American boy, who could smear her self-esteem as a Muslim woman. Salwa becomes like these American women who often tend to have multiple relationships, maybe to celebrate their freedom or femininity. The Arab values and norms are buried in Salwa's shoe which is pushed off by that American boy, all forgetting about the Jordanian society's religious beliefs and just exploiting her body in a way of revealing like hot American women. Consequently, Salwa

reconfirms the stereotyped image of Arab women, because through her act of betrayal she is still regarded as the exotic Arab woman belly dancer, and not as an American citizen.

In her article “Arab American Identity Construction: A Comparison between Pre- and Post-9/11 Literature” (2009), Silk Dewulf argues that Salwa’s identity construction and culture is influenced and based upon the American culture rather than Arab traditions at many levels including religion, language, food, gender, and class (Dewulf 46).

Culture in its broadest definitions can be conceptualized as a combination of values, customs, religion, behavior, and the spoken language in a given society. However, cultural differences are the existence of a variety of cultural or ethnic groups within a society, including language, race, values, ethnicity, and religious practices.

To begin with, religion is considered as a key aspect in constructing one’s identity and culture. In the very first scene of the novel, Salwa is introduced as a Muslim woman; however her religious practices and rituals are not clearly emphasized. She is rather portrayed as a secular, but in an implicit way. In addition, in one of the scenes she is having a conversation with Jake during Ramadan, however she is merely informing him about this occasion when she used to spend it in Jordan, one can assume that there are no actual markers indicating how she spends Ramadan in America. Furthermore, during the day of the Eid she seems to be out with Jassim, his Jordanian friend and his American wife, and also working in the bank instead of staying home preparing traditional sweets and making visits as she used to do before coming to the United States (Dewulf 48).

Secondly, language is another essential factor that describes Salwa’s identity construction. Though she keeps using the Arabic dialect in conversations with Jassim and Randa, she sometimes code-switches between the two languages, uttering a perfect American

English. Moreover, Jake's determination to learn the Arabic language paves the way for Salwa to metaphorically invest in the American English instead. In other words, since Salwa believes that Arabic attracts Jake, it means that he does not mind adopting a new language and elaborating it, she then considers using the American English in most of her conversations as a natural act. Yet, if one assumes that Salwa's use of English is appropriate in context; this would be all the other way around. Salwa does not use the Arabic language when talking about her so called American issues and problems; she rather opts for English to cope with the circumstance and situation being held (Dewulf 50-51).

As precedently mentioned, that food stands as an important factor in forming and shaping one's identity, especially when it comes to Arab food traditions. However Salwa appears not to stick to these traditions, her food habits become more Americanized and fundamentally depend on delivery and pickup food. In one of the scenes Jassim decides to deliver food, while Salwa is in the kitchen. Notwithstanding, Salwa does not mind and agrees with the idea of delivery (Dewulf 53-54). One can wonder why she is then in the kitchen? Or that American kitchen is only built to make the house looks more Americanized?

“Thai food would be perfect. As he studied the flier he found his eyes drawn to the words on the bottom: We Deliver. Live rewed. Devil were. Liver weed. Led review. We reviled
Hi, habibi, greeted Salwa as she walked into the kitchen” (OPL 131).

Likewise, gender issues are widely problematic depending on each society. For instance, western countries hold a totally different perspective of gender roles than Arab countries do. This difference of perspective and viewpoint may refer to many factors and agents; religious, social, cultural, political, and economic. In literary contexts, a gender role is

a complicated task that led many western feminist activists to proclaim women's roles as being equal to men's. However, if one takes this principle into consideration from a western feminist angle, there would be no social order that divides and preserves at the same time women's roles and rights. Hence, Arab American feminists would deal with this issue in terms of referring back to the Arab's religious and cultural conventions concerning the division of male/female roles, and that there are conventional roles which Arab women should never adopt.

Western feminism, of course, is grounded in Western thought, ideology, and values. Arab women's struggle is equally grounded in the religious, cultural, and political norms of the Arab world. According to some Arab women, it is a difficult if not impossible task to write about Islamic feminism in a climate that assumes the universal supremacy of Western feminism. They believe that Western feminism is rejected by Muslim women because it calls for a form of cultural conversion at a time when the West is seen by them to be a dominating force. (Yahya 104)

Western feminism itself considers Islamic feminism as inferior and enslaving Arab women, in terms of religious, social, cultural, and political practices. Arab American feminists also argue that instead of shedding and projecting a light on Arab women's assumingly concerns, Western feminists must shift their attention to the more thorny problems that most of the American women suffer from, such as American consumerism, violence, the obsession with the body image and the freedom of exposing the body itself.

Women's status has occupied a central place in the modernization efforts in the region; for decades, the modernists argued that reforms in

the position of women in the economic, educational and legal spheres would lead to more “modernization”, and consequently, to greater gender equality in all spheres. (Yahya 104)

Whether Middle Eastern or Arab-American women; both of Islamic feminists and Arab American feminists believe that gender roles and equality are chiefly based upon the idea of being modernized through getting an access to education and to the world of business. According to them, once Arab women progress and succeed in their professional lives, the topic of gender roles would gradually decrease to become a matter of competence and competition (Yahya 105).

In the case of Salwa, she totally deconstructs and detaches herself from Arab women’s traditional roles being practiced in Jordan. This detachment or non-traditional behaviour is realized by both Arab characters like Hassan and Arab American characters like Munir, the husband of Randa (Dewulf 55). Concerning Hassan he thinks of Salwa in this manner “Even if a lot of women did take their husband’s names, he never thought Salwa would be one of them. She had erased Palestine from her name. He couldn’t believe it” (OPL 36). In addition, Munir, the husband of Randa usually has some cynical thoughts towards Salwa’s behaviour. “What he really thought was that he did not approve of Salwa Haddad” (OPL 86).

Besides, the idea of gender roles is implicitly expressed in the novel, when Salwa holds an overgeneralization concept of American men, that they are aimless. The prejudgement is measured upon her overgeneralization of Arab men as well, asserting that both Arab and American men lack what is called manhood. Salwa also gives a prototype of how Arab men violently and miserably treat their wives, resulting in their submissiveness and passivism (Dewulf 55-56). Because Salwa considers herself as an American; she awlays

seeks freedom and independence, whether physically or materialistically. Consequently, she strives to push away the Arab Salwa away in fear of being oppressed and submissive; however this irritation is filled with her jobs, for independent women are hard to be manipulated.

In one of the scenes which depicts the change in salwa's attitudes is that when she and Jassim are shopping in the mall, it happens that one of the workers calls the security on Jassima, assuming he is a terrorist. According to the Arab gender roles, in this case it is Jassim's mission to talk and protect himself so his wife is, because men always refer to the notion of protecting and preserving their families. However, it is Salwa who surprisingly talks to the security guard instead. "Is there a problem? Salwa asked in English over her husband's shoulder" (OPL 29). This indicates that Salwa no longer pays attention to the different roles which must be distinctively performed by both males and females, she transgresses the Arab female's traditional role and rather adapts a male's one. "Salwa, I'm going out of the store. Please let it go. Jassim walked toward the door" (OPL 30). Jassim's role is given up to Salwa who is now supposedly to be the man.

Eventually, Salwa's class in America becomes entirely different of that in Jordan since she belongs to the middle class of the United States society. Her position as a well-to do independent woman at the financial level allows her to drive a fancy car and dwells in an astounding home. All the mentioned factors and agents push her to live a highly sophisticated American lifestyle. For instance, Salwa monthly sends to her family a considerable sum of money. "Her mother had called again yesterday, this time to thank her for the money she had wired on Wednesday. Fourteen thousand dollars was an enormous help for her family" (OPL 26).

Arab American literature as a fertile discipline has widely examined many controversial issues, whether in relation to Arabs in the Middle East or Arab-Americans in the United States. Social, cultural, religious, and political topics have been under scope due to the skillfulness of Arab American women writers and activist feminists. Owing to the unstable position Arabs occupy in America, this has led to their displacement and duality of identities.

Halaby's fictional novel is therefore a perfect depiction of identity construction and deconstruction at the same time. Through the female protagonist Salwa, the reader can identify the Arab aspects and characteristics that render her as an Arab woman. This description is however established through unique narrative techniques, which are the intensive use of flashbacks and memories that literally and metaphorically portray Salwa's attitudes and behaviour in Jordan. The novel also implicitly pays attention to different historical and religious agents that make the Arab culture rich and various.

Moreoften, Salwa's new habits are likely to take a large place in the novel, after her coming to the United States. She finally walks on her dreams' ground and thus becomes Americanized. One can link her new orientations and tendencies towards the American lifestyle to the Jordanian social and religious restrictions and boundaries. She is blindly obsessed with the American consumerism, in an attempt to rebel against the traditional roles of Arab women, and to be socially accepted among Americans.

Yet, Salwa's construction and deconstruction of identity increases her feeling of security in the United States, she becomes threatened by the ghost of both; betraying her Arab heritage and trying to merge in an American society that principally does not completely consider Arab-Americans as purely American citizens. Salwa faces two conflicts of two

socially, culturally and ethnically different countries. This conflict increases, resulting in a psychological trauma.

Salwa will never be the same again, once she left behind who and what she is. Salwa will never be the same as an Arab woman who is left behind in Jordan even if she does return, since she lost her self-recognition and innocence. Her hybrid identity comes to light swinging between her homeland's forgotten history, and American new history.

Conclusion

The issue of identity construction and formation has scholarly brought a wide attention in the field of literature, especially when it comes to the field of Arab American literature. The debate over the term has become more shaky and complicated after the 9/11 events, though many Arab American women writers dealt with it in their fictional works before these events. The political, cultural, and literary dimensions of the concept of identity crisis have been the main interest of contemporary Arab American women writers. However, it is noticeable that all these fictional works merely tackled Arab-American female protagonists instead of male ones, due to the circumstances at that time. In other words, September attacks explicitly put Arab-American men in danger of being involved in the terrorist attacks, unlike women who are perceived as less dangerous, for most of these writers have Arab American feminist contributions and perspectives in the field. Consequently, Arab American feminists played a vital role in standing against these stereotypical images and opting for a new means of depicting both Arab and Arab-American women as modern and sophisticated, but without overpassing the Arab heritage and traditions.

The novelist has skillfully attempted to foster and humanize the stereotypical image of both Arab-Americans and Muslim Arab-Americans, who have been victimized for decades as inferior, oppressed, and terrorists. Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (OPL), is a fully accessible chronicle that masterfully reflects Arab-Americans in general, and the protagonists Salwa and Jassim in particular. The 9/11 events have actually had a clear impact on their social, political, academic, and personal lives. Before the occurrence of the events, the couple is socially accepted and admired among Americans; they are often seen as a couple, trying to reach happiness and success by devoting their time into hard work in order to achieve the so

called American Dream. However, the twin towers attacks have redefined what it means to be an Arab in 9/11 post America. Although anti-Arab racism appeared a long time ago in the United States, its traces are now more visible because of the propaganda and smearing manipulated by the media tools. Governmental institutions and political activists have turned their rage towards Arab-Americans, claiming that America is no longer a country which embraces Arab terrorists; their citizenships should be removed and renegotiated. Thus, Salwa and Jassim have proved to be victims of political racialization and discrimination, a situation they have never thought they would reach one day, however it happened to both of them.

Through Salwa and Jassim's fictional representation, it is confirmed that Americans' attitudes towards Arab-Americans have entirely changed, they have become a heavy burden and a contaminating epidemic that Americans must be cautious of. The contradiction of perspectives can be underlined with Halaby's different perception of epidemics; unlike Americans Halaby puts it forward that the direct reason of 9/11 events are because of the world poverty, drought, and global warming. Academically, September attacks have also proved that Salwa and Jassim's loss of jobs are the main outcomes of them.

At the intimate level, Salwa loses her marriage, and the gap of communication gets wider. This lack of communication and interaction finally results in an abnormal behaviour that Salwa keeps on absorbing. Furthermore, she thinks and acts in a newly Americanized manner which renders her as lost and confused about her self-recognition as well as of her self-esteem as an Arab woman. All these psychological problems and attitudes lead her to commit a betrayal with an American boy. The incident makes her reconsider about the position she occupies in the United States. Therefore, the sense of identity loss and

misplacement starts to appear, in an inner conflict between being an Arab woman and an American citizen.

Salwa gives up on her role as a Muslim wife, and chooses to identify herself as a secular woman. Still, she does not succeed, realizing that idea because her hybrid identity may also refer to the weak belief in Islam, and the rare practices of it. In addition, American consumerism is proved to be one of the major motifs in Salwa's deconstruction of the traditional roles of Arab women.

Through *Once in a Promised Land* (OPL), Halaby effortlessly makes use of Arab mythology, a theme which can be elaborated on its own. The use of the ghula stands for America, and more precisely for the American dream. The ghula is an imaginary female evil that takes a huge place in the Arab folktale tradition. It deceives children by offering some sweets and gifts so that they can be dragged to her cursed house, so America is when it urges immigrants and their kids to believe in the American Dream, provided that they would forget about their homelands' past, heritage, language, culture, and customs, and any attempt to get back home, these immigrants would be racialized and treated badly, as Salwa when she decides to return home to get attached to her Jordanian culture and values. However, Jakes prevents her from doing so by beating her so violently. Although, defeating the ghula requires wisdom, intelligence, and bravery Salwa could not defeat her willingly, but still silenced and confused. One can expect that Salwa is not even conscious about the existence of that beast, as she does not recognize the illusions and lies that the American Dream has brought.

Notes

1. Al-Rabiṭah al-Qalamiyah, also spelled al-Qalamiyya, the Pen League in English. In addition, it is known as al-Mahjar "emigrant", that can be considered as the first Arab-American literary society, primarily established by Nasib Arida and Abdul Massih Haddad during. Yet, it was reformed in 1920 by a group of Arab writers in New York led by Kahlil Gibran.

2. Once in a Promised Land henceforth as OPL.

3. Granta is a literary magazine and publisher in the United Kingdom whose mission centres on its belief in the power and urgency of the story, both in fiction and non-fiction, and the story's supreme ability to describe, illuminate and make real.

4. Joseph Geha's "Through and Through" was published before Arabian Jazz, however it is a collection of short stories that provides an amazing glance into the Lebanese community in Toledo and Ohio.

5. Poetry Magazine Foundation is a monthly specialized magazine in publishing verse in the English speaking countries. It is mainly printed and published in Chicago since the 1912s, however it is recently published by the poetry foundation.

6. Indiana Magazine of History is a peer-reviewed academic journal which is quarterly published by the University of Indiana Bloomington, Department of History. Founded initially as a site for historical documents, precisely on Indiana's territorial and early-statehood periods.

7. Dawah, also Daawa(h); Arabic دعوة invitation. It principally implies the preaching or converting to Islam. Da'wah literally means issuing a call, or making an invitation. It also stands for a Muslim who practices da'wah, either as a religious worker or in a volunteer community effort, is called a dā'ī, داعي, plural du'āh/du'āt. A dā'ī is thus a person who invites

people to understand Islam through dialogue, not unlike the Islamic equivalent of a missionary inviting people to the faith, prayer and manner of Islamic life.

8. Stream of consciousness is a literary innovation that permits readers to delve into the emotional, moral, and intellectual thoughts from inside character's head, and paves the way for new new possibilities of perspectives and viewpoints beyond traditional first or third person narration.

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