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The Arabs' Image and Position in Contemporary Arab-American Novel

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Dedication

To the memory of my father, AbdelKader

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General Introduction

This thesis tries to figure out how the Arabs are represented in contemporary Arab-American fiction. In other words, it tries to shed light on the way the Arab World is portrayed to the world through Arab-American novels, and if this portrayal matches the image generally spread by Orientalism and shown in media or does it differ from and break the misrepresented image. Many examples of literary works will be discussed, but the major focus will be on four novels by Arab-American writers: Abu-Jaber's novels *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescen*t (2003), Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), and Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000). The choice of the novels is simply illustrative. The problematic is mostly motivated by the fact that Arabs' image is increasingly distorted not only in America, but in the whole world. In addition, while attention is given to the Arabs' picture as seen and produced by the West, this work tries to focus on the Arabs' reflection of their own picture in their literary productions. The motive, then, is that if the Western literature, mainly novels were influential on culture and dominated the Orient, this thesis questions the possibility of Arab-American writers to use the same tool-which is literature- to influence the mainstream culture in order to change the racist stereotypes, why not subvert Orientalism.

Arab-Americans have a long history of presence in America. They suffered and do still suffer political, social, and cultural marginalization. They face diverse integration problems, discrimination, and identity dilemmas. Besides, the Arabs are among the most stereotyped and defamed minorities in the United States. One among the many reasons behind this distortion is that the United States lacked the immediate presence in the Middle East. So, at the beginning of the 20th century, the motion pictures, Hollywood precisely, acted as a substitute to bring the Arab World to the

Americans and not the opposite. The "fabricated" image became the model for the Arabs' picture in the minds of Americans.

Consequently, American media and cinema frequently mock Arabs and misrepresent them by all the means. Arabs are often shown as savages, ridiculously rich, hook-nosed, and womanizers and in other occasions are described as terrorists and brutal enemies depending on the political circumstances of each era. Ironically, Arab-American invisibility has increasingly turned into a distorted visibility mainly after 9/11 attacks. Thus, Arabs are portrayed more and more as terrorists and becoming, as a result, victims of discrimination, violence, and hate crimes.

Arab-American identity and culture are the result a combination of both Arab and American identities. Logically, their literature is the result of both Arab and American literary influences and modes of life. Hence, Arab-American literary discourse has been for a long time busy with issues of community, political, social, and cultural preoccupations and identity quest. Representing Arabs in Arab-American fiction is among the frequently dealt with themes in contemporary Arab-American literature. However, Arab-American writers are caught between two categories of readers, American and world readers on one side, and Arabs on the other side. In other words, they need to gain editors interest and mainstream public attention, on the one hand and on the other hand, the Arab-American writers feel responsible for Arabs' erasing the long ages of distorted image.

Arab-American writers are trying to face the anti-Arab wave of rejection and violence in American community and culture, at the same time, they hope for fame and gaining more American and universal readers. Their concerns about quantity and quality of readership compete with their duty of well representing people of their own

culture and origin. Arab-American existence and survival in America is linked to a variety of political, social, and cultural conditions. Arabs' image in the world is shaped in parallel to the changing political and economic interests and circumstances, as well. Hence, Arab-American novelists' quest for larger readership plays a role in influencing their tendencies and strategies to satisfy different reader's desires, opinions and even conflicting ideologies. Besides, they find themselves in a need for explaining the Arab culture to the Western readers.

Many of the literature I read are based on presenting the Arabs in media and cinema, as in the case of Jack G. Shaheen. The later's work focuses on racism and Orientalism, particularly in popular culture such as Hollywood films; how Hollywood corrupts or manipulates the image of the Arabs. Edward Said, on the other hand focuses on the repercussion of Orientalism on the Arabs' History. Other researchers based their work on Arab-American Literature, Like Suhair Majaj's "To Words emerging: Arab-American writing at the Crossroads" and others. But rarity of researches deal with self-representation in Arab-American literature or combine the representation of the Arabs in these previously mentioned mediums like media, Hollywood and literature in one work. Though a nascent trend is growing in the field of studying Arab-American literary production, the focus on self-representation and political resistance themes are not given a wide attention and interest. According to Hassan and Knopf-Newman, this lack of interest is due to the disconnection between political determination and the literary production of Arab-Americans (5).

Hence, this research tries to make a link between the effects of misrepresentation on Arab-Americans, and the reaction of the Arab-American novelists by creating a committed literature to counterpart the results of such long-standing distortion and misrepresentation. Besides, and because of the confusion between Arabs and Muslims

in media and cinematic representations I often use the "Arab/Muslim" pattern to refer to this confusion, and sometimes I use "Arab" and "Muslim" terms interchangeably.

Given the nature of this study, the combination of historical, socio-cultural and post-colonial approaches is necessary. On the one hand, through a historical and socio-cultural approaches this work will analyze Arab-Americans' social and cultural conditions within the American community and their attempts for integration and adaptation to the mainstream culture. On the other hand, a post-colonial approach to analyze literary productions by Arab-Americans is likely to serve the purpose of this work. In other words, this work depicts the representation of Arabs in some Arab-Americans' novels. To handle the present problematic of how Arab American novelists deal with the representation of the Arabs image, either by following the mainstream or creating a different image, this research will be divided into two parts.

Part one contains three chapters. Through adopting a historical and socio-cultural approaches, the important issue to be considered here, is the representation of Arab-Americans and Arabs in general, in the Western and precisely in the American cultures. This part will investigate the various historical, social, cultural, and ideological causes that contributed to the Arabs' distorted image. Chapter One*, "The Arabs' Image in the Early Orientalist Interpretation and Literary Productions*," traces the Arabs misrepresentation back to the early Western Orientalism. This latter is a strong discourse interlinked with political, socio-economic institutions. Though Orientalism is known by its imagination and fantasy descriptions, it involves dangerous theoretical and practical policies to manipulate the Oriental way of life, which have been seriously established and applied since the late eighteenth century till the present day (Said 6). The chapter also traces the Arabs' portrayal in early Western literary productions.

Chapter Two*, "Depiction of Arabs' Image in School Textbooks, News Media and Cinema,"* deals with the traces of Orientalist images in school textbooks, news media and cinema. In most European countries, Arab misrepresentation in schoolbooks is often linked to issues of Jihad, polygamy and mainly relating Islam to terrorism (Almosa 39). Literary and other academic productions are affected as well, and the media which has the tendency to entertain more than being considered as a reliable source of authentic information, is often biased and ethnocentric (Kamalipour 66). In Hollywood, on the other hand, Arabs are the most targeted group if compared to other ethnic groups. Furthermore, since the 'black and white' movies era, Arabs have always been easy targets for obliteration in French, British, and Israeli war movies. For instance, in World War I drama *The Lost Patrol* (1934), a British soldier shoots Arabs and calls them "dirty" and "swine." An American cameraman as well annihilates a "horde of [Arab] tribesmen" in *I Cover the War* (1937) (Shaheen "Reel" 178).

Chapter three, *"The Impact of Arabs' Image on Arabs and Arab-Americans"* investigates, also, the direct and indirect impact and repercussions of such misrepresentation on Arabs and Arab-American existence and culture. This chapter is focusing on the historical and socio-cultural context of Arab-Americans and their political and religious conditions within a multicultural American reality. The chapter traces the Arabs' existence through the different historical periods in the United States. So, the immigration history of the Arabs to America went through three major waves. The first wave immigrants came between 1880 and 1925, the majority of which were Christians from Great Syria. The second wave arrived between 1925 and 1965, and came from a variety of Arab countries and was composed of both Christians and Muslims. The third wave came after 1965 (Smith and Tang 59). The second wave of Arab immigrants continued to flow to the Unites States in spite of the "Asia based"

restricted immigration policy which had affected the Christian sects in particular, while the Arab Muslim sects were somehow at advantage. The third major wave of immigration that started after 1965 was a varied and completely different category of Arab immigrants. The very beginning of this wave coincided with two major events in the Middle East; the 1960s Pan-Arab movement, and the 1967 Arab Israeli War.

The negative portrayal of Arabs interferes in the Arabs region's geopolitical stability and the shaping of their future. Being accused as potential terrorists, the Arabs do not feel at ease, at home, or outside their borders for they always expect suspicion and segregation. The Arab-Americans on the other hand, are the first victims of the mobilized public opinion. Their private as well as public life become under scrutinizing lenses and they become the first suspects at any danger threatening the American national security. Hate and anti-immigrant feelings are chasing the Arab-Americans everywhere in America like in media, work places, malls, and schools.

Part two, which is divided into four chapters, deals with the rise of an Arab-American cultural, political and literary activism to counteract misrepresentation. Through a historical and socio-cultural, and postcolonial approaches, this part deals with the Pan-Arabism that painted the whole Arab world political, social, and literary life and has left a great impact and sense of Arab identity on the new travelers to the United States. In spite of the increasing number of Arab-Americans in the United States, their integration is not happening smoothly due to political, religious and ideological reasons. Their cultural and political strategies for survival and adaptation to an alien way of life, also, will be deeply analyzed in chapter one which is entitled "The Development of Arab-American Cultural and Political Activism." As an ethnic group attached to and affected by the home country events, and the Arab- Americans live a

dilemma for survival in America, Arab-Americans are eager to develop a cultural and political activism.

In chapter two, "The Development of Arab-American Literature," the historical development of Arab-American literature will be discussed. The evolution of Arab-American society witnesses a side by side evolution of its literature. This latter keeps abreast with the community's issues and changes which occur in the surrounding environment and influence gradually and undoubtedly the literary productions of the very writers of the community. Literature, being a text cannot be looked at as mere words composing novels and poems but rather a reflection of everyday experience, especially for minority communities. As early as the Mahjar movement, or even earlier, the political commitment started to shape the literary works of these pioneer writers embracing the renewed and fashionable genres of writing of the era that were not cut off the homeland cultural and social dilemmas and political turmoil. Many issues were heavily and constantly discussed like identity and the challenging question of adapting to the new country.

Chapter three "The Arab-American Novel and Thematic Concerns" focuses on the way Arab-Americans portray Arabs in their novels. This chapter is devoted to the analysis of the major themes dealt with in the selected Arab-American novels and how they reflect the image, position and preoccupations of Arabs in general and Arab-Americans in particular. Arab-American writing as any other kind of literature produced outside the Arab world, tended to be nostalgic (Ludescher 108). The novels studied in this work differ from one another in their tackling of representation matters in using various strategies as themes and language deployment. Homes, land of ancestors, and origin have often painted the thematic considerations of Arab-American writing, and

lately identity quest and other communal matters became the focus of Arab American writing.

Chapter four, "*The Arab-American Activist Novel and Self-representation*," deals with the activist mission of the Arab-American novelist of self-representation. The idea of self-representation remains a recent interest of Arab-American novelists. In their writing as Ashcroft et al. state: "The strategies which such writing employs to maintain distance and otherness while appropriating the language are therefore a constant demonstration of the dynamics possibilities available to writing within the tension of 'centre' and 'margin'" (59). A dual communication between the mainstream "centre" with its distorted representation and the strategies developed by "the margin" writers to recreate a better representation of the Arabs depending on appropriating the language - English- of "the centre" itself.

This chapter looks, as well, into the overt and hidden reasons behind the dilemma of Arab-American writers and novelists, in particular, those who try to revive the Arab origin and culture and preserve their American belonging at the same time. They are caught between identifying as Arabs and gaining American citizenship or completely integrating and compromising their background and ancestry links to become fully "American."

This chapter questions the extent to which the Arab-American novelists are faithful in representing the Arabs in their works. In other words, it will evaluate the auto-representation of Arabs in their own literature. Fiction; believed to be so influential to the point of being able to change reality (Sironval 232) is made a motive for utilizing fiction to change the belief and image about the Arab people and provide them with more welcome and tolerance in the Western societies. It became a kind of the duty of

the writers show that the Arab is not what is painted in all times as lacking intellect and human potentials, backward, and violent. This self-representation provides a different perspective of the Arab image to defy the distorted image manipulated by Western media, cinema, and literature.

The novels analyzed, in the last two chapters, are an illustration of Arab-American novels depicting Arabs' image and a special focus will be put on four novels: Abu-Jaber's novels *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescen*t (2003) which have a deep interest in the questions of survival, identity and politics, the novelist Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000) and Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) which is the recent concrete illustration of this type of literary production concerning the representation of Arabs position after the 9/11 attacks. This chapter tries to investigate deeply the representation of Arabs in Arab-American fiction written by American writers of Arab origin. It investigates how these double cultural generations of novelists are influenced and influential, through their own works, in presenting the Arab picture to a wide variety of readers.

In Abu-Jaber's novel *Arabian Jazz,* the main characters are members of an Arab-American immigrant family from Jordan: Matussem Ramoud, a jazz musician, is living with his daughters Jemorah and Melvina after the death of their mother Nora, in a poor neighborhood in New York. Fatima, Matussem's sister is an Arab traditions' advocate who is fervently trying to persuade her nieces to accept arranged marriages to Arab husbands. Jemorah is caught between her Arab skin color and her white mother's identity. Melvina is white-skinned and passionately preoccupied with her job as a super nurse at the hospital.

Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* is about the cook Sirine, a daughter of an Iraqi father and an American mother, living in Los Angeles. She fell in love with a politically exiled Iraqi -Hanif- whom she met at Nadia's Café where she cooks Arab recipes for the homesick Middle Easterners. Nadia's Café is a safe and nostalgic place where students and immigrants of different nationalities meet to drink coffee, enjoy Sirine's food and discuss homeland matters. Sirine's love for Hanif ends up with a heartbreaking open ending.

Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000), is another story about a nostalgic Cairo house cherished by the Gigi, the main character, living in Cairo house a childhood full of aristocratic life memories of Pashas and King Faruk's Egypt. The house was a meeting place for politicians and aristocratic families. All that aristocratic privilege has been destroyed by the coming of President Nasser and his sequestration policies. She then moved to the United States for settling after wandering in many places including Jedda, London, and Paris. After her failed marriage to Yusuf she moved to live with Luc in exile.

Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land* portrays the unbalanced life of the main characters Salwa and Jassim as a result of the events of 9/11. They are immigrants who left Jordan seeking their dream at the land of promises: The United States. Their dream and their marriage as well were shuttered by the devastating events of the Twin Towers. Jassim's accident of hitting an American boy leading to his death, and losing his job as a side effect of 9/11 while Salwa's affair with an American boyish character-Jake- led to the falling apart of their life and love in their promised land.

Part One: The Representation of the Arabs' Image and its Effect on the Arab-American Presence in the United States

Chapter One

Chapter One: The Arabs' Image in the Early Orientalist Interpretations and Literary Productions

Various historical, social, cultural, and ideological causes contributed to the distorted Arabs' image. This distorted representation goes back to the early Western Orientalism and even before. Literary representation of the Arab figure has always followed the same distorted picture painted by the early Orientalist and travel tales. These stories and images were often nurtured by exaggerated imaginative descriptions, and deliberate false information circulating during the Middle Ages due to the quasi-total ignorance about the Arab World at that era. Hence, the representation of Arabs in the Western, especially American, culture has a long history of distortion and falsification since Orientalist texts and literary productions to the present means of entertainment and the different forms of popular culture.

Western domination of the Arab World, since the long years of military occupation till the present is deeply related to the politicized strategies and methodical manipulation of the Arabs' mind and image. Arab lands, cultural and material riches are exploited through false and ill-founded excuses and arguments. Pretending to civilize what they call the "savage," "retarded" and "backward" Oriental, the Western powers deluded their own people to gain their support and contribution in invading Arab countries. Arabs' image and representation became a permanent stigma, or more precisely, a part and partial of Western culture and vision towards the Orient. This image is repeatedly evoked in the works of literature, either in the Middle Ages or later, which in turn inherited the Orientalist legacy of image painting about the Arabs and Muslims in general, starting from European writings and eventually reaching the American literary productions.

1.1. Forming Images and Stereotyping

Studying an image of a category of society in the consciousness of another society and literature is difficult and risks the mixture with invention and imagination. Analyzing literature is an attempt to show and put into question the erroneous images and representations, myths and stereotypes, and the prejudgments deeply rooted in people's minds and cultures about other people and their cultures. Hence, analyzing the Arab image in Western conscious and popular culture is tricky due to the complicated steps the formulation of such images went through. However, many literary analysis focus on what is called the "disinfection" of collective conscience to struggle against the mistaken images that prevent real knowledge about and comprehension and sympathy between people (Lahjormi 9-10).

The stereotype is recurrent, hard to die, and overgeneralizing. It may be defined as the following:

> [A] collection of traits or characteristics are combined to delineate or identify a group or a member of that group without reference to particular individual differences or complexities. More often than not, these "identifying characteristics" are half-truths which distort or obfuscate the full reality. On both conscious and subconscious levels, people may accept stereotypes as factual representations. (Terry 8)

Stereotyping overgeneralizes these "identifying characteristics" on the whole Arab people being Arabs, Muslims or non-Muslims and even non-Arabs. Iranian or Afghans are all considered Arabs and consequently treated equally. Some traits known for one group is overgeneralized on the whole group of people; terrorism in the Middle East is linked even to who have a look of an Arab as a Sikh or Hindu. Arabs and

Muslims are seen as "one" and the "same" people, and the same attributes are always attached to both groups. The two terms "Arabs" and "Muslims" are used in Western writing interchangeably or substituted by the terms "Muslim/Arabs" or "Arabs/Muslims" (Almosa 27). Besides, "if an instance fits the generalization, it is held to support it; if it doesn't fit, it is regarded as irrelevant and the generalization is not discarded. So, the Turks, and Muslims, were fierce by nature to centuries of Europeans. A gentle, a kindly Muslim, should one happen to meet one, would merely be an exception to prove the rule" (Oxtoby 5). For Western societies good Arabs are rare.

Moreover, myths and images, deeply rooted in the Western collective consciousness, display a strong resistance to any feeling for sympathy and openness towards the stereotyped (Lahjomri 12, 16). Prejudgments usually shape the visions and expectations of people about others before dealing or seeing them. In his book, *Public Opinion* (1922), Lippmann writes:

> The subtlest and most pervasive of all influences are those which create and maintain the repertory of stereotypes. We are told about the world before we see it. We imagine most things before we experience them. And those preconceptions unless education has made acutely aware, govern deeply the process of perception. They mark out certain objects as familiar or strange, emphasizing the difference, so that the slightly familiar is seen very familiar, and the somewhat strange as sharply alien. (89-90)

Though the representation of the Arab World is as old as the classical works of literature, its strength and importance has been increased by the last two centuries. Arab/Islamic stereotyping in the West, "as presented in the mass culture, has come a

long way from its inception in the 11th century A.D. to the present. It has witnessed many shifts, which allowed it to be influenced by several factors, such as religion, or romantic works, or the mass media" (Mousa 71). In addition to the Western attitudes regarding the Middle East which have been formed over many centuries, the recent "media—films, television newspapers, magazines, textbooks and popular writing—have deluged the Western public with images of the Arab and Muslim worlds […] together with religious and historical interpretations, many of which date back to the Middle Ages, form the basis for most Western concepts of the Middle East" (Terry 7). Besides,

> Although there may be some truth to stereotypes, Hollywood and other major outlets behave as if stereotypes may be the correct way to portray certain groups as "truthful." In turn, the reinforcement of stereotypes may cause others to see certain groups in a stereotypical light, therefore, causing them to possibly believe that all people from this ethnicity behave in the same manner. [1] (Elayan 13)

As a result, the incorrect images about the Arabs became unquestionable and easily received in the Western culture and consciousness. Overgeneralization also has been of great impact in shaping the whole Arab/Muslim people reputation. So, the history of the Arabs' false representation has been intensified by the Orientalist studies and writings, that drew an everlasting impression on the Western mind and imagination, and has been translated later into works of art and literature and finally into media and cinematic distortions of the Arab image and identity.

1.2. European and American Orientalism

Despite the harsh criticism of Said's work *Orientalism*, he clearly explains the West's manipulation of the Arabs' image. Said ascribes that to Orientalism which he

identifies as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (3). Orientalism was created not only to serve early colonial agendas but even devoted to facilitating future Western and policies in the so-called Orient for centuries later. In other words, this phenomenon is interpreted according to the norms of culture manipulation. In Said’s words: “cultures have always been inclined to impose complete transformation on other cultures, receiving these other cultures not only as they are but as, for the benefit of the receiver, they ought to be” (67).

Orientalism is a strong discourse interlinked with political, socio-economic institutions. Though it is known by its imagination and fantasy descriptions, it involves inside it dangerous theoretical and practical policies to the Oriental way of life which have been seriously established and applied since late eighteenth century till the present (Said 6). The Orient was shaped by a huge enterprise involving varied contributing institutions and academic, intellectual, and literary circles. The Orientalist studies paved the way not for just the discovery but even the domination over its countries and people by Western empires. This Orientalist “information was not only used to define the East, but also aid in Western dominance over the Orient” (Captan 5).

The repeatedly portrayed picture with no other counterpart ability of checking helped the perpetuation of the Western representation of the Arabs in the consciousness of the Western people. The Orient has been represented according Orientalists’ fantasies and desires. Moreover, there is no alternative effort done by Oriental people to substitute or refute it, so they are left to be represented by the Occidental people.

In dealing with the Orient, no real distinction is made between Arabs or Muslims because they are the same from the Western perspective**.** Occidental fear of Islam has a long history since the early victories of Muslim armies. Since this successful expansion, Europe started to consider it as a threat to its existence and culture. Fear from Islam then originated as a result of Muslims increasing strength. Such fear led to the appearance of the Oriental studies in attempt to face such growing power and threatening 'enemy' (Said 74). The demonization of the Arab and Muslim world reflects a deep serious thought and constant fright and fear of its development and prosperity that might overcome European civilization. This image then, is due to the "perpetuating myths about Islam, fundamentalism, and the Middle East" (Khatib 165).

Furthermore, historians and intellectual followed the steps of Orientalism in throwing judgment about the Middle East without much research or checking. They blindly imitated sources in their writings mainly as early as the seventeenth century, where very "few Europeans went to the Middle East, even in the time of the Crusades, and very few Muslims went to Christian Europe. It took months to make the trip. What Europeans therefore knew of Islam and the Eastern Mediterranean was second-or third-hand information at best, and usually a caricature" (Oxtoby 4).

Therefore, all what was other than European has been seen as backward, and as standing in opposition to Western values, and thus should have been contained and regarded as threat to Western civilization. Islam then was more than a competing expansion power. It was seen as a huge scaring moving "monster" that threatens the European borders, its dominance and even its existence. Islam was looked at as opposing Europe not just in question of religion but even as a political, economic and cultural substitute to its values and principles. In order to legitimize conquest ambitions, the Europeans made the picture of conquered Oriental people as ignorant creatures

trapped by Islam and that it was the duty of the civilized Occident to guide to them to the true faith; to the light. Consequently, the image in Orientalist thought that Islamic nations as source of despotism was widely spread at that era (Sharafuddin xxii). One of the voices reflecting such way of thinking is John Esposito who argues that:

> The history of Muslim-Jewish-Christian relations has been more one of competition and combat than dialogue and mutual understanding, driven by competing theological claims and political interests. The confrontations and conflicts have spanned the ages and reinforced images of a historic and global militant Islam. (170)

Consequently, missionary expeditions were sent to the Orient to help the "helpless" "deceived" "barbaric" Muslims, with the help of course of thinkers of all kind; writers, philosophers, historians who took part in the so-called "civilizing mission" by deeply implanting a mythic vision about the Orient to justify the Western occupation. They engaged in paving the way for colonization by pretending the urgent need by Oriental people for the intervention of the Occidental to save them from themselves. Through the invented stereotypes and prejudgments, they have definitively fixed a mythic image about the Muslim Orient in the Western mind. It is not astonishing then to find that Islam becomes the symbol of terror and barbarism. Arabs, and Islam as their religion, become enemies who are charged for all the pains and troubles in this world because they are the "Other"; they are the strangers who should be hated and fought against (Lahjomri 39, 46). As a result, "Turkey was associated with absolute despotism, and this image colored the West's whole perception of Islam" (Sharafuddin xx), and Muslims.

From another perspective, Islam is repeatedly explained as "the religion of submission while the exact meaning of Islam in Arabic is the giving of oneself to God. The root of Islam is 'Sallama,' meaning to give and not to submit, and other root is 'Salima,' meaning being unharmed" (Nassr 234). An accusation emphasized to make out of submission the only connotative meaning to the word Islam hinting to the idea that Islam calls for and leads to surrender to others. So, the distortion of Muslims' image is attached to the meaning of words and notions concerning Islam as a whole and the "image of violent, aggressive religion which spread its message over most of the globe in order to build an empire has been part of the Western psyche for over a thousand years […] The Western response has been to demonize Arabs and their religion" (Almosa 30).

By the turn of the twentieth Century, the representation of Arabs continued but with a slight difference. The Arabs are portrayed as nomadic people wandering aimlessly in the desert without a fixed nation or home country. Any mentioning or a picture of a camel ridden by covered-head men became the icon referring to Arabs. The Arab is also shown as easily defeated and as the symbol of surrender to the imperialist powers. With the creation of a nation for the Jews in Palestine, a worse picture is drawn to the Arabs. Describing the Arab as wandering nomad, this gives them a pretext to consider Arab lands, mainly Palestinian, as "empty" (Nassr 242) that need to be filled by the Israeli people. Considered as empty lands and if peopled, these inhabitants are mere savages living in chaos. Hence, the Arabs are considered a burden and obstacle and a source of threat to the Israeli people, then to the whole Western world; violence as a synonym to Arabs became a fact to Westerners.

Moreover, after the discovery of oil in the Arab lands, another perception appeared, which is the rich Arab who owns money but wastes it purposelessly. Another

spread image about the Arabs is being the ostentatious rich. Arab kings and princes became the prototypes to all Arabs as owners of oil fields. The Arab also is shown as seeker for desire and lust through the overgeneralization of the issue of polygamy to concern all Arab males. Marrying up to four women becomes a general rule to apply to Arab societies.

Consequently, by creating the hateful 'Other,' a psychological gap has been between the occidental and oriental people by keeping the occidental people far away from understanding and having any connection with the Orientals. Keeping their people's knowledge about the Orient ambiguous and limited, Orientalists found more freedom in shaping their foreign policy in a way that suits their political agendas. Though being just a theory at its beginning, Orientalism proved its long-term consequences in shaping the past, present and the future of the Orient (Said 42, 45-6).

Nineteenth century American Orientalism has adopted the European clichés about the Arabs as timeless barbaric, in addition to the inherited image of Arabs as pirates enslaving Americans, as early as the navy encounters corresponding to the beginnings of America as a nascent nation. American Orientalization of Muslims and Arabs "has a long history that can be traced to the foundational Holy Land myths of the Christian settlers and the U.S. Navy's war with the Barbary States (early 'terrorists' in the Mediterranean) in the 1780s" (Maira 321). The Orient was primarily a European frontier; however, the Americans used European imperialism as a substitute for the physical absence of America in the Orient. In other words, the Americans used the popular culture vehicles to explore the Oriental frontier after the closer of the Western frontier (Captan 135-6).

Perhaps the first contact of the American culture with the Arab World was through the 1893 Chicago World Fair [2]. In 1893, and for the first time, the Americans had the chance to watch presentations from the Middle East, especially the "belly dancing" phenomenon that amused and at the same time shocked the fairgoers; they have enjoyed the *Arabian Nights*–like settings, and awed by vulgarity and seduction comprised in the dance. This picture was strongly connotative and has been linked to the Arabs ever-since. In this first encounter, the Arabs' image is painted to satisfy the appetite of American imagination about the Orient as savage, exotic and timeless. Driven by turning profit from the fair, the Arab organizers of the Orient section, tried to satisfy such imagination by showing Arabs as tent-dwellers, camel-riders and belly dancers without really paying attention to real representation of the Arab life and culture and ignoring the repercussion of such image and the continued effect on the American fantasies that turned to be an everlasting stigma (Captan 77, 94).

The far Orient then, is brought close to satisfy the fascination by the Americans towards the exotic life often heard about in literary descriptions and tales about the Mediterranean pirates. Furthermore,

> Orientalist images of Muslim "infidels" and "barbaric" Arabs have historically permeated U.S. popular culture, providing an antithesis for American national identity and helping to legitimate U.S. imperial expansion and racial domination, including its interventions and support for colonialist projects in the Middle East […] including U.S. support for the Balfour Declaration of 1917 and the creation of the state of Israel in the Middle East in 1948. (Maira 320-321)

With the growth of the urban entertainment, the cinema became a crucial part of the popular culture. The same images of timeless erotic characters painted in the *Arabian Nights,* were adopted by the cinema to satisfy the thirsty imagination of viewers who received such clichés as reality wrapped in fiction. Motion Pictures were the visual interpretation of exploring the mysteries of the Orient and presenting it as an open land with savage inhabitants (Captan 101, 115).

Moreover, by the end of the WWII, Arabs were portrayed as a direct threat to the American security. The Arab countries' opposition to Israel has shifted their image from harmless pre-modern into post-modern enemies (Captan 67-8). Dealing with the Middle East as a home for Israel made things rather more complicated and traumatizing than before. Having an ally in the Middle East, which needs protection and support, requires a great deal of smartness and patience in treating the Arab countries. Perpetuating the old-new image of Arabs and emphasizing them as violent then as terrorists who deserve killing and containing, is one of the Unites States strategic means to have an upper hand over the Arabs.

By replacing the British role of protecting Israel, the United States has inherited the responsibility towards Israel by continuing some old British Orientalist strategies as the basis for its policy towards the Middle East which is image-making. Such image is focused on the sensuality, brutality, lack of order and being often shown as the 'Other'. This time, the United States used new ways and tools to keep the same image through the media and the cinema "[a]lthough the United States was a latecomer, entering the region after the Suez Crisis in 1956, the anti-Arab/Islamic tradition continued in U.S. dealings" (Mousa 73) with the Middle East.

As a recompense and a reaction to the Western military failure to keep the ex-colonized countries under control, cultural invasion was suitable means to erase the former military defeat and replace it with mass-media and other cultural strategies to contain the Third World and keep it culturally dependent (Lahjomri 11). The Third World that includes the Orient represented a complicated body of countries that stand as a challenge and opposition for the United States foreign policies and interests. Hence, to keep having the upper hand over the Middle East, the United States tried to keep its dominance over shaping the Arab and Muslims' picture. Consequently, United States employs "representations about Others' bodies, habits, beliefs, feelings, and political sensibilities, thereby justifying interventions, sanctions, and other actions within, across, and outside of its borders" (Nayak and Malone 257).

In the American context, there is always a targeted minority or group that receives all the blame of the inconvenient moments of history or political critical, and awkward issues, and "used to consolidate American national identity; after 9/11, the targeted group is a conflated Arab/Muslim category" (Alsultany 2). Following such tradition,

> [T]he racialized identity that fulfills the position of the "Other" through which the nation defines itself during times of crisis, is continually recreated depending on the national political and economic objectives of the historical moments—from Latinos being defined as illegal aliens, African-Americans as criminals, Native Americans as violent savages, Asian Americans as forever foreign to Arabs and Muslim as terrorists. (Alsultany 3)

As a result, living in the Unites States, Arab-Americans and their culture are the focus of such dominating strategies by the US government. Their culture, on the other hand, is among the minority cultures over which the American mainstream hegemonic culture dominates. Such dominance influences individual Arab-Americans and leads them to alienation, psychological turmoil, and loss of identity. Moreover, the perpetual distorted image implanted in the American consciousness adds to the ambivalent spiritual and intellectual situation of Arab-Americans. Arab and Muslim Americans "were subject to a certain amount of discrimination or 'Othering,' a concept in which certain groups of people are marginalized by dominant groups in a society. For instance, in the United States, White Christian is considered the norm and non-White, non-Christian is considered 'Other'" (Mufdi 4).

After the 9⁄11 events, the negative representation has increased as it "has always been after any terrorist or political unrest in the Middle East. This may reflect passive interest in the region—remembered only when it is in the media. Such interest does not produce consciousness about the region, but fear and misunderstanding" (Almosa 18). Moreover, in "American intellectual circles there is a deep distaste and scorn for Arabs […] These opinions are founded on the level of word, symbol, and image, the very currency of thought and it is precisely on this level that the Arab has been impoverished, misrepresented, and finally abused" (Makari 59).

1.3. The Depiction of Arabs' Image in Western Literature

Orientalism came to restrain the Islamic expansion and growth. It served as source for all other academic writers, artists and others who have never been to the Orient. It was and still is a readymade data-base for writers who had never visited the Orient. Major distortion about Arabs' image and culture goes back to such writings

about Muslims and Islamic teachings providing fictitious images and descriptions showing the total ignorance and disdain the ancient writers had towards Arabs.

Nietzsche is a best example of writers who just rely on the available Oriental studies in Europe to achieve their works. His knowledge and appreciation of Islam and the Arab world are totally fed by his readings of the "extremely unreliable canon of Orientalists for his information about Islam and Arab culture […] Nietzsche's opposition to 'progress' led him to react positively to the kind of racial and generic defamation attributed to the Middle East by these 'experts'" (Almond 11). Some other writings were even older than the Orientalist era.

In the Elizabethan England, for instance, writers were subjective and contributed to painting a false image about Islam with a much exaggerated defamation and distortion as Salem argues:

> In their writings on Islam and Muhammad the Elizabethans were greatly subjective. They reported credulously the tales of their guides, and the fables of the Middle Ages. The Elizabethans lived in a transitional period. They were rooted in the Middle Ages and they reflected its credulity; but they were also on the verge of a progressive, commercial culture, and were therefore in part shrewd and cynical. Their writings on Islam reflected more the spirit of the Middle Ages than that of the Renaissance. (43)

Their false description of Islam is due to their lack of knowledge about the origin of Islam and the life of the Prophet (PBUH) so; they relied in their writing on imagination and false information creating so diverse and contradictive stories. They were "fluent, however, in their subjective description of his character and of his

religion. In their eyes, Muhammad was not only fickle but ugly […] Newton speaks of him as a 'counterfeiter and dissembler' but eloquent" (Salem 46). In one of their stories they accuse the Prophet (PBUH) of faking his prophecy:

> Muhammad trained a wild bull to take bread from his hand. With this bull, Muhammad staged a conspiracy. After writing the Qur'an he tied it around the neck of the bull and left it in the desert. Having done this, he went to the people and told them behold God hath sent you a law from heaven: go to such a desert there ye shall find an ass and a book tied about his neck'. The people went, saw and believed. (Salem 48)

Moreover, Islam is often considered a religion of deception, barbarism, cruelty, and disloyalty (Lahjomri 39). This image is designed with huge desire for a mythical and hostile way of painting a ridiculous picture about Muslims and their institutions, as a heritage of the Crusades which became in turn a tradition surviving for centuries later. The Prophet (PBUH), as well, has been defamed since the early years of the emergence of Islam and "famous figures, such as Dante, Voltaire, and Gibbon fueled these old concepts in their writings" (Mousa 72). Voltaire, in his play "*Mahomet*, and in other writings, used the figure of Islamic prophet to show up credulity and superstition as lying at the root of every religion. He was aware of that there was some deliberate distortion in his picture of Muhammad, but, to him, the politics and religion of the Orient were equally suspect" (Sharafuddin xxi). Voltaire also gives examples of provocative description in his *Candide* (1759) painting a very dark picture about Arabs of North Africa by stressing the already negative image by showing them as hostile, violent and blood-thirsty in this extract from his anonymous 1991 translated version of *Candide* to English:

> Morocco swam in blood when we arrived. Fifty sons of the emperor Mouley-Ismael had each their adherents; this produced fifty civil wars, blacks against blacks, and blacks against tawnies, and tawnies against tawnies, and mulattoes against mulattoes. In short it was a continual carnage throughout the empire. (25)

In another extract, he shows them as, thieves and heartless pirates, a picture that shaped the image of Arab males till the present time in all entertainment means, and becomes a symbol for Arabs:

> I need not tell *you* now great a hardship it was for a young princess and her mother to be made slaves and to Morocco…No sooner were we landed, than the blacks of a contrary faction to that of my captain attempted to rob him of his booty. […] The northern nations have not that heat in their blood, no that raging lust for women, so common in Africa. It seems that you Europeans have milk in your veins; but it is vitriol, it is fire which runs in those of the inhabitants of Mount Atlas and the neighbouring countries. (25)

Another extract emphasizes the recurrent stereotype of Arabs as European women chasers:

> A Moore seized my mother by the right arm, while my captain's lieutenant held her by the left; a Moorish soldier had hold of her by one leg, and one of our corsairs held her by the other. Thus almost all our women were drawn in quarters by four men. My captain concealed me behind him; and with his drawn scimitar cut and slashed every one that opposed his. (25-6)

Such dark image is clearly depicting Arabs as womanizers, bloodthirstily, violent, drawn by lust, and waving their scimitar aimlessly. This same picture became leitmotiv in the modern cinematic representation.

Besides, many early writers were reflecting and even encouraging imperialism in their works and had influenced the hegemonic European culture and boosted its impact on the Orient (Said 14). Almost "every nineteenth-century writer (and the same is true enough of writers in earlier periods) […] like John Stuart Mill, Arnold, Carlyle, Newman, Macaulay, Ruskin, George Eliot, and even Dickens had definite views on race and imperialism, which are quite easily to be found at work in their writing" (Said 14). The exaggeration and prejudgment inherited from the Western Orientalist writers and travelers are admitted by their fellow Orientalists such as Nerval who admits the falseness and dreamy descriptions about the Orient to which he travelled to discover and live the imagined settings he read about in his youth: "c'est une impression douleureuse, à mesure qu'on va plus loin, de pèrdre, ville à ville et pays à pays, tout ce bel univers. qu'on s'est créé jeune, par les lectures, par les tableaux et par les rêves" (60-61). Travel writers like Chateaubriand continued to revive and recreate this dark image to the extent of becoming a constant "Oriental myth" (Lahjomri 40).

By the turn of the eighteenth century, and with the publication of the translated *Arabian Nights* by Galland (1704-1711), the dream of romanticizing the Orient became true (Lahjomri 44). The *Arabian Nights*, while having less effect on the Arab literary texts, ironically the book had and still has a great influence on Western texts, and "the stories that would be transcribed into various editions of the *Nights* had long been considered no more than mere common or folk tradition, rather than a distinguishing feature of a more refined Arabic literary culture" (Makdisi and Nussbaum 2). In fact, the book had less reflection of the real life and culture of the Arab people of that time,

but provided a rich source of images and inspiration for Western writers and their stories about the Arab culture and behavior.

The imaginative romantic descriptions provided a sole and exclusive window through which the Western readers had a look at the life and culture of the Arab world in which fantasy and reality were not cleared. *Arabian Nights* with its dreamy settings and stories became a fascinating literary influence all over Europe; as fashionable and attractive romantic style of literature that was largely attracting the readers as a new and highly imaginative depiction of the Orient. Besides, the picture of the Arabs being depicted as threatening and fearful, or mysterious exotic beings, is accompanied with drawing the Arab world as an obscure, wild land full of mysteries and composed of difficult puzzles to be solved by the Western mind. This solving mission was achieved through intelligent adventurers and explorers who acted as preparatory stage for colonization. The *Arabian Nights*, also,

> [O]ffered a particularly powerful vision of an Asiatic culture seemingly saturated with references to sensuality, extravagance, indulgence, violence, supernaturalism, and eroticism: the very things that the rising European powers were—for all their own obsessive interest in them—keen to disavow as elements in their own cultures as they sought to find ways to justify their conquest and rule over other peoples, particularly in Asia. (Makdisi and Nussbaum 4)

Moreover, representing the Orient became a fashionable element in 19th century Romantic Movement. In other words, the Arab was a suitable example for what they call "the primitive" and "exotic." The Oriental was painted as an exotic being to look at, an enjoying object, and imagined as fairy tale character from the past and Islam was reduced to symbols as "Mahomet" (the Orientalist translation mistakenly given to the

Prophet Muhammed (PBUH)), "Quran," and "crescent." They were used, and still are, as signs for the Muslim world and its culture. Put simply, whenever these symbols are mentioned, they automatically reflect Islam and Muslims in the readers' mind. These symbols were deliberately voided from their religious content and become mere poetic icons. Hence, the romantic writers might freely use their imagination to attribute many fictitious qualities and features to Islam and Muslims (Grossir 89, 90). Besides, the romantic writers had "ambiguous attitudes to Islam: on the one hand, it offered a convenient symbol of the tyranny they all sought to overcome; but on the other, it offered an alternative to the compromised or corrupted political and social systems of Europe" (Sharafuddin xxi).

As a source of fascination and fantasy of the romantic writers about old building styles, like the gothic style in Europe, Islamic architecture also became attractive to the romantic dreaming writers like Chateaubriand, especially the minarets, which are put in contrast to the bells of the churches, are usually described as arrows towards the sky. Consequently, architectural and landscape elements like minarets, mosques, palm trees, and other desert sites became rich repertoires for romantic caricatures about the Muslim/ Arab World. These elements are given violence and desire connotations (Grossir 96) in Western writings. Mortimer adds: "Throughout his travels, Chateaubriand praises Christians and denigrates Muslims. Comparing the Arabs to the Native Americans of the New World, he considers either group civilized, but distinguishes between the Native Americans who have not yet reached the level of European civilization, and the Arabs who, he says, have lost it" (297-8).

The following lines from *Les Orientales* (1829) by Victor Hugo, a "collection of poetry that confirms the poet's interest in a region he never visited yet used as a geographical space to project specific Orientalist stereotypes: cruel Sultans, violent

pirates, beautiful virgins prey to male lust and jealousy" (Mortimer 297), he illustrates the romantic hints about Islamic buildings as in Part l in "Les têtes du Sérail" where he describes the Islamic architectural achievements in a very poetic way and associating it with the *harem*:

> Le dôme obscur des nuits, semé d'astres sans nombre,
> Se mirait dans la mer resplendissante et sombre ;
> La riante Stamboul, le front d'ombres voile, …
> A voir ses grands harems, séjours des longs ennuis,
> Ses dômes bleus, pareils au ciel qui les colores,
> Et leurs mille croissants, que semblaient faire éclore
> Les rayons du croissant des nuits. (Hugo)

Hugo, in the following lines, focuses more on mosques and especially Minarets as the recurrent symbol of Islam in Western Writing:

> Les maisons aux toits plats, les flèches des mosquées,
> Les moresques balcons en trèfles découpés, (…)
> Là, de blancs minarets dont l'aiguille s'élance
> Tels que des mats d'ivoire armées d'un fer de lance;(…)
> Et sur les vieux sérails, que ses hauts murs décèlent,
> Cent coupoles d'étain, qui dans l'ombre étincellent
> Comme des casques de géants." (Hugo)

Though he seems fascinated by the Islamic architecture, he obviously hints in a sarcastic way to the Minarets as a threatening weapon.

The East, ironically, was represented both a threat to the European boundaries and values and at the same time a heaven to the dreamy artists, writers and thirsty explorers who seek new and distant boundaries to discover. Eisele explains that the romantic tradition of nineteenth century Orientalism:

> [C]ontinues to sustain popular images of the Middle East today also contained contradictory images of the East as other: a positive or an irenic one […] which saw the East as a land of adventure, ancient knowledge, magic, and fantasy, and a negative one, which viewed the East, through the eyes of colonialism, as a land of ignorance and corruption, savagery and decadence, just waiting for the hand of Western civilization to "recivilize" it. (69-70)

Women, for instance, were a romantic subject by excellence in Western writings. Women were portrayed as victims to the Turkish society being either Arabs or strangers. Western women were presented as victims being kidnapped, enslaved or captured by the Turks. Western women were romantic heroines who struggle to keep their Western and feminine heroism against the Turkish Sultans' lust. Oriental women, also, were largely imagined, described and romanticized. Portrayed as victims again, the Oriental women were presented as slaves enclosed in their homes. Muslim women were described as silenced, deprived of any chance of opinion or decision or any aspect of public life. Moreover, exaggerated description of sensual scenes, as in the texts of Balzac, between Arab women and men are more than acceptable and they are just done to satisfy the fantasy of European writers and to shock and amaze the European readers rather than reflecting the reality of Oriental life. Hence, the romantic text became the pure expression of desire (Grossir 99-102). Nerval's description of desirable women in Cairo reflects the recurrent theme of *harem* in Western writings, which describe them sometimes as desirable exotic creatures, and sometimes as submissive, voiceless, and silenced. The following extract shows the desirable beauty of Oriental women in the eyes of Nerval:

> [I]l y a quelque chose de très séduisant dans une femme d'un pays lointain et singulier, qui parle une langue inconnue, dont le costume et les habitudes frappent déjà par l'étrangeté seule, et qui enfin n'a rien de ces vulgarités de détail que l'habitude nous révèle chez les femmes de notre patrie. (252)

Like women, the "desert" is another romantic representation stressing the primitiveness and simplicity of the Oriental life, being the cradle of humanity and its beliefs. While the desert is a limitless space and rebellious earth challenges human survival. In other words, the desert reflects the chaos before Creation. Sometimes, the desert embodies the Divine power and authority (Grossir 98). The desert's meaning has developed to acquire new connotations like evolving from "the classical example of the opposition between nature and science […] between wilderness and civilization" (Khatib 22). The desert, put simply, is seen an open space inhabited by savages; an empty land full of endless dunes ready to be exploited by Westerners. It becomes an invitation for colonization. Western "literature, folklore and academic writing have long reflected largely negative attitudes toward the Middle East [both land and inhabitants]. In recent years, the Arab- Israeli conflict coupled with strategic and economic concerns; have aggravated these long-held enmities" (Terry 7). For instance, the novel *Exodus* (1958) of the American writer Leon Uris keeps describing Palestine as "fruitless, listless dying land" (235) and these descriptions reinforce "the average Western concept of the entire Middle East as a one vast desert. The images totally belie the reality of Palestine as an ancient agricultural region. In the early twentieth century, Palestine was still predominantly agricultural with largely peasant society. Citrus fruits, grains and olives were the major crops" (Terry 16) and more false descriptions appear in his novel, as in this extract:

> Their Promised Land was not a land flowing with milk and honey but a land of festering stagnated swamps and eroded hills and rock-filled fields and unfertile earth caused by a thousand years of Arab and Turkish neglect. It was a land denuded of its richness […] A fruitless, listless, dying land. (235)

In *Exodus,* Middle East history and reality are completely distorted. For many readers, the novel "*Exodus* stands as the definitive account of Israel's creation. The events and people described seem real […] The images of the Middle East have become the reader's conception of the reality [...] Uris purposely exacerbates the confusion[…] by claiming in his dedication that 'most of the events in *Exodus* and *The Haj* is highly distorted and slanted'" (Terry 16).

Illusionist ideas by Uris has been, also, created in his novel *The Haj* (1984), to mislead the readers where in his (Foreword) he insisted that "many of the events in *The Haj* are a matter of history and public record. Many of the scenes were created around historical incidents and used as a backdrop for the purpose of fiction" (13). Later in his novel, the "Arab, and more particularly the Palestinian, is figured conveniently as *absence*, as non-presence, that consequently waits to be filled by the Zionist, just as this page of 'Oriental' history has waited, blank, to be filled in by the Western scribe" (Manganaro 8).

Uris declares in *The Haj* that Arabs and Jews were living in harmony in Haifa and neglecting the Zionist terrorist attacks on innocent Palestinians leading to terrify them in order to leave their lands, and he is showing Zionist as hospitable neighbors, in the following extract:

> For the most, the Arabs and Jews of Haifa had gotten along well. There was a great deal of commerce between them and a smattering of neighborly relationships. A delegation of Haifa's Jewish leaders met with the Arab leadership and tried to persuade them to remain, citing Ben Gurion's policy. (390)

However, Manganaro argues that the reality imposed by the Dalet Plan 1948 [3], was exactly the opposite of what Uris declares [4], she explains that:

> Arabs were then systematically "transferred" to allow for Israeli expansion by carefully planned military actions designed to terrify the local Palestinian. By May of 1948 the Jews had already implemented thirteen operations under Plan Dalet to strategically capture cities and villages in the part of Palestine which the U.N. Partition Plan of November 1947 had allotted to the Arabs. (10)

This story has gained a lot of success by the public as Makari describes it: "Uris's unchecked racist venom has generated over six million dollars in sales in a few months testifies to the breadth and depth of anti-Arabism" (59) in the United States. To an "American popular audience which knows so little about the Middle East, Uris' history is a welcome simplification and clarification. The recognizable journalistic method of narration lends to Uris' fiction an aura of complexity, of completeness. He has done the extensive research, he has provided the facts, he has written the history" (Manganaro 11).

The following extract by Uris gives a voice to Arab characters, in *The Haj*, not to defend themselves but he rather to defend his point of view:

> Islam is unable to live at peace with anyone. We Arabs are the worst. We can't live with the world, and even more terrible, we can't live with each other. In the end, it will not be Arab against Jew but Arab against Arab. One day our oil will be gone, along with our ability to blackmail. We have contributed nothing to human betterment in centuries, unless you consider the assassin and the terrorist as human gifts. (971)

As a reaction to this view by readers, it becomes obvious that "nearly everywhere in America there is the same insistence on seeing the Arab as less than fully human" (Makari 58). In Uris's novels:

> [N]egative stereotype of the Arab, coupled with the over-simplified historical account of Israel's creation [...] Uris is feeding the public what it already knows, or, more significantly, what it is conditioned to hear. With respect to Middle East policy, the Zionist ideology is a dominant one in the U.S., so it is not surprising that Uris, as a popular American writer, would openly reflect that ideology in a novel about the Middle East. (Manganaro 11)

In addition to Uris and other writers' misrepresentations about the Arab culture and history, doubts about the nature of Arab identity itself is spread as well. Many scholars deny that Arabs do have a clear identity in pre-modern times, and assert that the concept of "national identity" is brought to Arabs by the colonizers (Sheehi 7). Such presumptions about the Arabs were made possible to believe via highly imaginative narratives, encouraged by imperial ambitions, and facilitated by the wide ignorance about the "far faraway lands".

Orientalist efforts have effectively painted dramatically a very dark picture about the Arab individual and culture. Consequently, the Western literary production is replete with misrepresentation. As illustrated above, artistic and literary figures had a wide contribution in portraying their fictional characters according to the Orientalist agendas. The misrepresentation is also traced in other artistic and academic fields starting from primary school to university level, and eventually conquering the news media and cinema.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: The Depiction of Arabs' Image in School Textbooks, News Media, and Cinema

Textbooks at Western schools, as well as the news media and cinema, have inherited the distorted image of the Arabs dictated by the Oriental studies and old literary productions. Stereotypes are nurturing all cultural sources for the Western population in all domains starting from schools, to media, to higher institutions. The same tendency of imitating the old stereotyped image is also vivid in the news and cinematic representations when dealing with the Arab identity, culture and, history. The same image of the "retarded," "violent," "terrorist" enemy is rotating in the American news media and cinema, reflecting the strategies and will to keep such image and perpetuate an everlasting denial and rejecting impression by the public opinion towards the Arabs.

The modern Western/American educational and entertaining means are inspired and nurtured by the old legacy of romantic and sarcastic representation of the Arabs. This image continues to shape public opinion and nurture the prejudgments against Arabs in contemporary times. Put simply, such pre-established ready-made clichés are just duplicated in the means of information and entertainment, and easily received, as well, by readers and viewers for they are already accustomed to. The average Americans start receiving and believing the Arabs' portrayal since early learning steps at school, which a very critical stage in life where innocent and primary conception of the world around is acquired, and then such stigma lasts in their mind as true and deterministic. Besides, this portrayal is emphasized simultaneously via news and entertainment visual means. This picture then, sticks in their mind for lifetime, and eventually shapes their reactions and racist behavior towards the Arabs.

2.1. The Depiction of the Arabs' Image in School Textbooks

Textbooks at Western schools, either European or American, are filled with wrong and biased information towards Arabs and Muslims, and the "Israeli-Arab conflict shaped the contours of the study of Islam with images and stereotypes inherited from the Crusades and Colonialism" (Douglass and Dunn 52). For instance, in French textbooks (between 1986 samples of textbooks and those of 1997-8), despite a little change in themes and extracts dealt with in too different periods, the same image is kept with its distorting function (Nassr 230).

Distorted Images are the ones presented to innocent learners at early age and textbooks are open windows over other cultures. The image children acquire about other people and cultures are "symbolic representations, which children tend not to question, or seek alternatives. Children absorb uncritically positive and negative images, stereotypes and value judgments" (Almosa 31). In textbooks, in the United States as well, "fundamental facts are ignored, while other details are selectively emphasized […] explanations of Islam as the religion of the Arabs typically begin by describing an arid, harsh physical environment inhabited by nomadic camel herders, traders and townspeople" (Douglass and Dunn 59-60). Besides, "all of the books emphasize nomadism as a primary lifestyle of the Arabs, some older texts barely mentioning towns. Text illustrations offer images of modern Bedouin survivals and camels projected backward fourteen hundred years" (Douglass and Dunn 60). The image of backwardness, nomadism and empty lands are usually the recurrent descriptions of Arabs and their desert in the popular culture. There are no correcting efforts made to erase the false images at the early learning stages where children start to build their primary notions about the outside world including other civilizations, cultures, and people. Moreover,

> School textbooks, an area where accuracy and fairness would seem to be of great importance, tend to provide some of the most unbalanced, inaccurate descriptions of Arab people. The Middle East Studies Association (MESA), and the Middle East Outreach Council (MEOC) conducted a joint study of textbooks used in social studies classrooms in U.S. schools. Their findings indicated that there is a gross over portrayal of nomads, camels and deserts. (Mufdi 44)

Concerning the issue "of spread of Islam by force was found in Greece's schoolbooks. In *Christianity and other Religions*, printed in 2002, and *Byzantine History* the concept of Jihad was presented as Islam being spread by force and imposed on others against their will" (Almosa 38). The same thing is found in a study based on the investigation of twenty textbooks used in American junior and senior high schools in Indiana, according to Perry:

> Some of the authors - in the worst cases - are merely passing on the vague and distorted images which they have acquired from novels, Hollywood movies, casually-heard propaganda statements, and other textbooks. The result is not only a great deal of misinformation but also - whether from malice or a simple lack of knowledge-biased accounts of certain subjects, especially the Arab-Israeli conflict. (57)

In most European countries, "schoolbooks misrepresentation is found in reference to the topics of Jihad, women rights, polygamy, democracy, submission, 'Islam …as religion of terrorism'" (Almosa 39). Some books assert that "Islamic monotheism in some way grew out of Meccan polytheism" (Douglass and Dunn 61)

denying its distinctive nature. This extract (from Krieger et al 1997, 186) shows the confusing interpretation of the emergence of Islam:

> Before Muhammad, the Bedouins and the townspeople worshipped hundreds of gods and spirits. Spirits called jinn were thought to reside in rocks and other natural objects. Mecca was the home of the most sacred of these rocks. The Black Stone of Mecca was [still is] embedded in the wall of a shrine called the Kaaba.... The Kaaba also contained idols representing 360 gods, including one deity called Allah. (Qtd. in Douglass and Dunn 61)

No full and clear descriptions are mentioned about the most important teachings about society and life in general. Only confusing and ambiguous brief accounts are found in the textbooks that nurture the early perception of children about Muslims and Islam, making out of them uninteresting people and culture to know more about. Besides, these textbooks make of Islam even a disgusting and scary religion based on prohibition and violence especially when mentioning, over and over, Islam as encouraging violence against women.

Furthermore, texts chosen for pupils to make them learn about the other people outside their world are taken from stories, well-chosen according to special purposes, to limit and manipulate their knowledge about the capacities of other nations described as far and alien. Concerning textbooks dealing with Islamic contribution to human knowledge and civilization embodied in technical and scientific innovations, “most authors are parsimonious and do not take interest in this aspect, giving it little space. Moreover, among them, there are those who give priority to the borrowing Muslim scientists did from the heritage of Greeks, Persians, Indians and Chinese and then its

transmission to the Western world" (Nassr 232). What is peculiar, also, about education in America is that American schools are decentralized, and this "complicates the task of infusion and leaves it to individual schools […] infusion of multicultural material will depend on the discretion of each school or district. This is true also in the case of international material. Since there is no ministry of education to monitor such policy, it is left to individual schools' district" (Almosa 32). Consequently, interest groups, ethnic groups, publishers and teachers may all contribute to content formation basing on their desires, interests, visions and cultural preferences. Likewise, the distortion is a "current habit in American education of essentializing religions, civilizations and ethno-racial groups in the interests of either patriotism or cultural self-esteem" (Douglass and Dunn 70).

Even textbooks at the American universities stress that idea of violence about Arabic language in which "every other word in the language had to do with violence, and that the Arab mind 'reflected' in the language was unremittingly bombastic" (Said 287). Not only the Arab is shown as violent but even his language, culture and his way of thinking as well. Consequently, the misrepresentation of

> [O]ther people and cultures has negative consequences, not only on those so misrepresented but on those who misrepresent others as well. Unless it is corrected, stereotyping is self-perpetuating, so people continue to know only distortions. Further, it is possibly, unintentionally, using the forum of education to dispense political propaganda, which should not be the purpose of education […] For example, reaction to the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11) transformed fear into physical action when overt misrepresentation of Arabs and Muslims translated to hate crimes against Arabs. (Almosa 7)

The textbooks show indifference in repeating the same well-spread images about Arabs and their religion or culture in general but injection of poisonous ideas in school curriculums to paint a fixed stigma about the Arab being in pupils' subconscious at early age. So,

> No special efforts were made to include the literature of Arabs in the curriculum or school library or to affirm their cultural identity. Americans had a vague idea of life in the Middle East, and stereotypes of the camel-riding man in flowing robes and head scarf persisted. They had no specific details of exactly who Middle Easterners were and what their values and culture were. Since 9/11, Arab Americans and Arab immigrants have increasingly become targets of hate crimes and discrimination. (Al-Hazza and Butcher 7)

As a result of this prominent ignorance about the Arab culture, the events of 9/11 brought the stereotyped Arab into the surface to face hate crimes and prejudgment attitudes. Such hate and misrepresentation are further encouraged via media and cinema that have been the visual embodiment of stereotypes and contributed largely to the formation of public opinion about other cultures and people.

2.2. Arabs' Image in the American News Media and Cinema

Mainstream media/cinema is the ultimate source to inform and shape the public opinion. It is as "just as European Orientalist intellectuals were the voice of authority in European societies during the nineteenth century, mainstream media has become a post-modern vehicle of information and the primary method by which Americans are informed about the World" (Captan 28). The same Orientalist clichés about Arabs and

Muslims willingly rotating and reduplicating all the time in the modern media and cinema. Besides,

> The use of media in constructing national identity through narrating internal and external Others is not unique to times of war. Contesting and redefining who the 'real Americans" are in a constantly being engaged and reengaged in politics and popular culture. After 9/11, who the "real Americans are" is being defined in relation to Arabs and Muslims as the enemy-Other. (Alsultany 3)

In the post 9/11 moment, Islamic fundamentalism have been invoked and perhaps, the most memorable comment was President Bush's "description of the War on Terror as a 'crusade,' a statement that Outraged Muslims around the world and led to intense damage control efforts on the part of the White House" (Ali 1044). This statement has raised a harsh anger invoking grievances and violent reaction in the Arab world. Ali explains that although it "was conceivably just an ill-advised and unintentional statement by the President, the comment nonetheless suggested that the collective enemy was Islam; and further, to some Muslims, it engendered strong notions of the Middle Ages, when Christian armies embarked on numerous battles with an expressed goal of conquering Muslim lands" (1044). Such description is enriched by media that spreads the already tarnished image widely spread during the old times of religious wars between the Christians and Muslims over Jerusalem.

2.2.1. Arabs' Image in the American News Media

Negative representation of Arabs has always been present while "positive representation of Arabs and Arab-Americans have been extremely scarce in the U.S. media. Jamie Farr on *M.A.S.H* (1972-1982) and Hans Conreid on *The Danny Thomas*

Show (1953-1971) are the only consistent Arab-American characters in the history of U.S. television" (Alsultany 45). Stereotyping in news media then, "is the rule rather than exception [...]Stereotypes used in one medium feed into others, both reflecting and perpetuating old prejudices and distortions" (Terry 8). The same Orientalist stereotype are reproduced in media, given the growing U.S. involvement in the Middle East, "perhaps it is not surprising that an Orientalist imaginary of the region as fundamentally anti-modern and antidemocratic persists and permeates mainstream media in remarkably unsubtle ways" (Maira 321). Being the direct, easily reached and only source of information about the political events abroad, news media are the manipulators of public opinion and even policy-makers motivators.

Besides, television news "has brought current political events in the Middle East unrelentingly into the lives of the Western public. Because oversimplifications are inherent in the brief news capsules used to convey information in that medium" (Terry 7). For instance, American media's siding attitude with Israelis at the expense of Arabs and Muslims, even before the creation of the Israeli State, is normally understood mainly when "research revealed that before 1944, the U.S. reports increasingly drew from 'French, British, and Jewish sources […] Hence, the logical conclusion is that American stereotypes of Arabs were colored by European view based on the mostly 'French-British-Jews views' that was formed in the 1940s or before" (Mousa 73). American journalists, as other politicized means, despite the pretended objectivity and fairness towards the reported events, they usually side with their governments' points of views and the Israeli interests instead of showing the real victims of the raged wars against Palestinians and Arabs in generals. They often find excuses and pretexts for the unjust policies of the Western governments. Moreover, they

> [T]end to report world events in accordance with their own ethnocentrism, through their eyes, and largely in line with views of their government, especially during conflicts and crises […] Such ethnocentric reports coupled with global reach of the American media, often tend to be more confusing than enlightening, entertaining than informative, sensational than factual, and biased than balanced. (Kamalipour 66)

Prestigious American newspapers do not hesitate to follow the general mood of calling Arabs Muslims "terrorists" even if they have a right cause to defend. Though, the "Palestinian armed men who fought for the liberation of their homeland were labeled prior to 1948 in the *New York Times* as 'Arab terrorists or saboteurs.' This stereotype was coined by the British in the 1940s and, unfortunately, survives today as the catchall phrase for any Palestinian effort at self-determination" (Mousa 74). Slogans "are taken so much for granted that we neglect to question what they actually mean. In print and on air, they seem harmless, but they often carry subliminal messages […] media perpetuate buzzwords, such as 'Lebanese terrorist,' 'Palestinian terrorist,' 'Muslim terrorist'" (Shaheen "Media" 168-9). Furthermore, the same media contributed in the confusing use the terms "Arabs" and "Palestinians." Thus, "by accepting the European view of the situation in Palestine during the period between the world wars, journalists fell into the trap of defining Palestinian Arabs as 'Arabs,' and their acts as 'Arab.' Leading to the introduction of more unfavorable terms, such as, 'anti-Zionist Arabs' or 'Arab terrorists'" (Mousa 75). Consequently, mixing up Arabs and Muslims in the Westerners' mind is also the result of this mixture found in the media.

People's perception of "Others" is usually framed by what they have received via media. Put simply, images are created by the "image-makers" (Kamalipour 60). Media's role in shaping people's perception of things is greatly increased all over the

world to a certain point of what could be called ‘dependency’ and complete trust; since “our opinions cover a bigger space, a longer reach of time, a greater number of things, than we can directly observe. They have therefore, to be pieced together out of what others have reported and what we can imagine” (Lippmann 79). For instance, through CNN and other politically oriented channels, the “U.S. as a territory comes to delimit what can be spoken and heard about Israel and Palestine is restricted by the dominant rhetorical space that equates perspectives that support the Palestinian’s right to a nation of their own with being pro-terrorism and anti-Semitic” (Alsultany13). Any voice that defends Arabs and Palestinians, in particular, is overtly accused of anti-Semitism;

> [A]nti-war becomes anti-American and anti-patriotic, while attempting to understand the perspective and potential motives of the “terrorists” into supporting irrational violence and the murder of innocent people. What can be spoken, heard, and reasoned within the U. S. rhetorical space is severely limited by the mainstream news media that frames and explains terrorists as irrational fanatics who need to be killed in order to defend democracy and civility. Through these terministic screens, violence against Arabs and Muslims becomes necessary for national security and thus justifiable. (Alsultany13)

Attacking Arabs Muslims in the American media is always justified as a necessary action to the United States’ security, or further more as an act of heroism against a constant danger. In the American media, usually “statements against Asians are deemed ‘xenophobic,’ those against African-American are ‘racist,’ and if targeted against the Jews, they are ‘anti-Semitic’” (Kamalipour 60). Yet, statements against Arabs are accepted and even defended. Human organizations rush to condemn racist statements and bias appellations against other minorities and nationalities, but

"obnoxious statements against Muslims are justified in the name of nationalism, freedom of expression, and national security. Muslims are the last group we can still make fun of and not be politically incorrect" (Kamalipour 60).

The following extract from *The Washington Post,* about 9/11 attacks, clearly demonstrates how media reports the government's version of events and shows unconditional support to the government's policies and actions:

> "My subject tonight is patriotism," the speechwriter Peggy Noonan said in a Heritage Foundation lecture a few years ago. "Our society does not teach patriotism to the young. The media do not teach it or suggest it or encourage it. When they refer to it at all, it's to show patriotism as vulgar or naive or aggressive."
>
> Standing next to her is Ruth Cohen, 27, from Adams Morgan, who advocates a different kind of "long-term campaign" from the one proposed by [Bush] administration officials. "War will not make our country safe," Cohen insists, because it does not address the underlying problem. She thinks hatred for America, embodied in the suicide attacks Tuesday morning, stems from global inequities that keep the United States fat and happy while other populations scrape along and starve." (Leiby and Montgomery)

Besides, the major and the most viewed television American network stations (e.g. ABC, CBS, NBC, WB, FOX, etc.) usually show reality shows which are considered authentic by the average viewers. As a result, representing Arabs, Muslims inside and outside the United States, as threat and as terrorists that threaten the citizens

and the security of the nation in general (Alsultany 46-7) could easily be believed and adopted by the viewers.

Furthermore, the media facilities made even the wars electronic. A war fought on electronic battles and unfortunately:

> [W]ars produce casualties, and in the contemporary wars of images, the Middle East and everything associated with it, including religion, politics, language, climate, and custom has been under an unscrupulous attack by the Western media. Based on the prevailing Western media reports and perception studies, it is safe to state that the Middle East is perhaps the most misrepresented, misperceived, and stereotyped region of the world. (Kamalipour 57)

Consequently, the concentration of media in few corporations which are influential, controlling and well known, makes the stereotype easily reach the public by leaving huge impact on their reception of Arabs and Muslims. Hence, "if one major news organization exploits a stereotype, the chances are that others may do the same" (Shaheen "Media" 169).

The interplay between different sources of information is sure in spreading the stereotypes in popular culture. According to National Broadcasting Company (NBC) executive Jerome Stanley: "Television entertainment producers take their information from newspaper headlines, from editorial cartoons and from articles in magazines, rather than get the information for themselves" (Qtd. in Shaheen "Media" 166). Consequently, such media's images stand as ready frames in which the Arab's portrait is drawn by the cinematic skillful imagination.

2.2.2. Arabs' Image in the American Cinema

The Arabs' images originating from the Crusades' rage, which were perpetuated and rooted in different forms of expression like literature (Lahjomri 45), art and media, became fixed myths. In fact, Western people's perception of the "Other" originates from what they see and hear in media. Hollywood "films have the ability to shape crucial understandings of the Middle East and guide Americans perceptions of Arabs" (Captan 51). Consequently, more distorted history of the Arabs is reflected in the cinematic productions, by the turn of the twentieth century, especially in Hollywood. Images of Arabs in early American cinema are influenced, as mentioned earlier in media and textbooks, by the old Orientalist literary representations, Eisele poses:

> [F]ilms in this early period' added to the inventory of narrative devices and character types in the eastern, mainly by adopting them from earlier traditions of popular and literary Orientalism found in plays, operas, songs, novels, and the like. These elements included abduction and enslavement (of women) in a harem or imprisonment (of men) in jail; identity twists; and the depiction of the East as a place of both terror and redemption for sins. Hollywood's Orient thus shared many features with the Orient of the popular imagination, but its features became reduced and refined in the crucible of repeated re-workings until any film about the Middle East shared a limited set of elements (68).

This set of elements or pictures like brutality, lust… are stressed and repeated till becoming interchangeably used to refer to Arabs. Besides, the "caricature of the sheikh in the United States must be contextualized with in a tradition of Orientalist representations of sheikh characters in Hollywood films such as *The Sheik*, *The Son of the Sheik*, *The Thief of Bagdad*, *Harum Scarum*, and *Lawrence of Arabia*" (Jarmakani

996). For instance, the silent movies *The Sheik* (1921), and *The Son of the Sheikh* (1926) stress the stereotype of the Arabs as lust seekers and Western women's chasers. These movies are perpetuating and illustrating once again the myth of the rapist Arab and his fascination by the white Western women. However, the Western man always interferes in the appropriate time to rescue them from the Arab's savage desire. Again,

> The rescue fantasy, when literalized through rescuing a woman from a lascivious Arab, has to be seen not only as an allegory of saving the Orient from its libidinal, instinctual destructiveness but also as a didactic allegory addressed to women at home, insinuating the dangerous nature of the uncivilized Arab man. (Shohat 42)

The visional shaping of concepts and ideas help keeping vivid impression in human mind; human memory keeps images better than things heard or read. The technological innovations are well used in facilitating the reception of images about all aspects of human life. Not only real images are broadcasted but even fictional ones about other worlds and people easily received at home by simple zipping of the remote control. Hollywood "has ever made-more than 900 films, the vast majority of which portray Arabs by distorting at every turn what most Arab men, women, and children are really like (…) an injustice: cinema's systematic, pervasive, and unapologetic degradation and dehumanization of a people" (Shaheen "Reel" 172).

The film makers show reluctant attitude towards presenting Arabs with normal family life and as fear to be called Pro-Arab (Captan 50). Consequently, in Hollywood, Arabs receive a virulent treatment being shown as violent all time, like in these examples where characters declare that, there is often no distinction "between an Arab and another: 'They all look alike to me,' in *The Sheikh Steps Out*, 1937; 'All Arabs look

alike to me,' in *Commando*, 1968; 'I can't tell one from another. Wrapped in those bed sheets they all look the same to me' in *Hostage*, 1986" (Almosa 20).

Besides, with the Israeli-Arab conflict over the foundation of the Israeli State in 1948, a new image has strongly painted the Arabs representation being enemies and source of threat to the State of Israel, so the image in cinema is stressing the Arabs as terrorists. Yet, this image was intensified by the events of 1973 oil embargo that was considered as a direct threat to the American economic stability. Using the cinema to represent the Arabs is another means to emphasize the already doubtful relation between the United States and the Arab world, for films are linking "the past and the present then examined as a form of knowledge, ideology, and power relations" (Khatib 2, 3).

Though the stereotypes by the American cinema touch almost all races and countries, the portrayal of the Arabs is exaggerated. The case of American-Indians, for instance, is flagrant: while the American-Indians are getting a better representation in cinema, the Arab image is getting darker (Eisele 72), perhaps the American-Indians are no longer a source of threat to the American interests while the Arabs are still so. Hence, in late 20th century, Hollywood's representation of Arabs continued but with a slight difference. The Arabs' image has changed from "a faintly outlined stereotype as a camel-riding nomad to an accepted caricature as the embodiment of incompetence and easy defeat" (Said 285) and continued to be represented as such in the turn of the twenty first century with more focus on the picture of the Arab as "terrorist" mainly after the 9/11 events.

Politically speaking, Hollywood manipulates domestic public opinion, and the international one as well, and tames it in order to accept any policies applied by the US

government in the Arab World being either cultural, economic, or even military. American cinematic "images of foreign peoples result from a ratio between objective and subjective factors, and Hollywood can make a considerable contribution to international understanding by increasing the objective factor in its treatment of foreign characters to the extent that current public opinion will allow" (Kracauer 53). For example, the threat which is repeatedly shown in the movies of Iraqi state to the national security of the US, was a helping factor to dramatize the false arguments the politicians gave to persuade the American people to accept attacking Iraq in 2003. By creating fear, the American movies create scared people who believe that their government is eager to protect them from any enemy outside their borders; hence, the government's military attacks would gain unconditional popular support. As another way of surviving of hegemony, is to mislead people about the intention of military intervention. The "United States has had to justify its military action as being about rescue rather than conquering. Films about the Gulf War, *In the Army Now* and *Three Kings,* illustrate this by portraying American military presence in the Gulf as a rescue mission" (Khatib 8). So, many films are badly vilifying Arabs and Muslims in the eyes of viewers like in "*The Hitman* (1992), *The Finest Hour* (1993), *Shield* (1992), *Hostage Fligh*t (1985), *The Delta Force* (1986)[…] *Executive Decision* (1996), *The Siege* (1998)" (Kamalipour 66) and many more.

Additionally, many historical events in the Middle East, mainly in the late twentieth century, contributed to the already negative representation of Arabs in the American cinema. Events like Iranian Revolution 1979, the Israeli invasion of Beirut 1982, the increase of activities of hijacking planes by Hezbollah and Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) during the 1970's and 1980's, The 1991 Gulf War, and the event of September 11, 2001, gave a strong pretext to movie makers to justify the

distorting image they compete to convey to the ordinary viewer all over the world (Khatib 3). The American cinema being the visual window on the world, is utilized as a cradle for images that help shaping the public opinion. Arabs are the most targeted group if compared to other groups, especially in picturing them as enemies who deserve death. The cinema, as well, tries to reflect the sense of superiority of the West over the East by showing the weakness, lack of morals and the need of the Eastern people for protection by the West.

Another dull picture about the Arabs is found in the popular movies of *Indiana Jones*. In the first movie entitled *Indiana Jones and the Raiders of the Lost Ark* (1981), Indiana, the protagonist, is shown as a hero killing Arabs in hordes, easily and pathetically without showing resistance. They behave in a very disgusting coward manner. In addition, one scene shows how Indiana, in a triumphal and arrogant manner, is shooting an Arab who is ridiculously waving a sword. It is a clear hint to portray Arabs as uncivilized living out of time; in the age of technology Arabs still use the sword in the face of the gun. Once again, the movie stresses the overconfident belief of the Western superiority and pretending the "inferior" situation of the Arab Word. The movie *Indiana Jones*, also, emphasizes the issue of Arab female fertility; Salah (the Arab guide of the hero) has nine children. Besides, the connotative meaning of the film is deeply symbolic:

> *Indiana Jones* reproduces the colonial vision in which Western "knowledge" of ancient civilizations "rescues" the past from oblivion ... The film symptomatically assumes a disjuncture between contemporary and ancient Egypt, since the space between the present and the past can "only" be bridged by the scientist and certainly not by the ignorant Arab crowds which merely occupy the background of the film. (Shohat 41)

Another movie entitled *Indiana Jones and the Last Crusade* (1989) is overtly reminds of the old Crusades were the Cross is waved in front of the Quran. In their quest for the Holy Grail [5] by the Western archaeologists, they humiliate the Arabs (even if they are Christian Arabs, by killing them, crossing their lands, using all to persuade the leaders of Arab countries get their help by giving them presents. Hence, the old ambitions and Crusade trips are still alive in the Western consciousness which explains the permanent eagerness of the Westerners to raid the Arab countries, especially the sacred sites like Jerusalem in the pretext of finding Christian artifacts.

The movie *Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen* (2009), for instance, stresses more dark images. One of the movie settings is an American military base in Qatar. Qatari people are presented as Bedouins living in an isolated place in ruined villages and houses in the middle of the sandy dunes; no developed cities or sites of civilization are shown but only images of undeveloped and retarded way of living. The people are portrayed as ridiculous, scary, greedy, dirty faced, irresponsible, and as cowards who could do nothing without guidance and help of the Americans.

Arabs are, often, shown as dirty like "Habib in *Things Are Tough All Over* he uses the same knife to clean his toenails and to eat his meal" (Shaheen "Media" 165). Besides, children are usually shown as guides, helpers, servers to the American soldiers behaving with respect and obedience. This servitude of Arabs is stressed in *Indiana Jones,* as well*,* where these loyal servers are helping guiding and sacrificing everything to satisfy the Westerners. Hollywood, then, is really creative in shaping the Arabs as willingly accepting to serve the Westerners. In the movie *Hidalgo* (2004), a little child came voluntarily and happily to serve the character Hopkins because he has no place to go. This humiliating servitude reflects the unconditional obedience the Westerners

believe to be their right in order to match their superiority over the "Other," especially, the Arabs.

The action in American films is usually located in open space, outdoor, on the Other's land. The Middle East is usually shown in stories dealing with terrorism, Israeli-Arab conflict, and any threat of the U.S. security from outside even if it comes from space in science fiction films. Fighting American battles in Hollywood should be far from home in order to show its mastery over all spaces in a suggestion to the right of intervention freely at any place in the name of security of people, liberation rescue and other pretexts. In the movie *The Siege* (1998), by using radar screen shots to survey the sheikh's car in the Saudi desert, the radar surveying American spies meant to show the mastery and the easy penetration to Other's space (Khatib 20, 21). Even in the science fiction movies, in which the setting of events is either in present or in the far future, Arabs' environment and situation remains the same; Arabs still live a deprived way in the oasis and old crumbling walls and ruined houses, surrounded by dirt.

In the movie, *Sahara* (2005), the escape of characters from Mali was easy through crossing Algerian borders (availability to cross them easily, and a hint to make a necessary step to get rid of problems, terrorist militia…). The movies usually refer to the Arabian Desert as being "nowhere" while "the American wilderness (desert) is never shown in the same way. As a symbol of 'savagery;' the Arabian desert "is invested with ideology. It is not only –being 'foreign'—a condition of excitement (…) but also a condition of fear. Fear is transposed to the people who inhabit it" (Khatib 22). In the film *Sahara* though the story is taking place in Nigeria, many statements are mentioned in Arabic, as if the desert belongs to Islam and Arabs, though the Nigerian Muslims are a minority, and the major scenes shown in the movies contain Islamic rituals like the call for prayer and Arabic sentences. Arabic language is always shown as

ambiguous and never translated. This makes viewers feel the strangeness of the language and sometimes it is shown as undeveloped, primitive, or out of date. The "Arabic language, in most of these films, exists as an indecipherable murmur, while the 'real' language is European: The French of Jean Gabin in *Pepe le Moko* or the English of Bogart and Bergman in *Casablanca*" (Shohat 40).

The Arabs, "dwellers of the desert," are always portrayed as brutal and heartless in dealing with strangers or even with each other. In the movie, *Hidalgo*, Arabs are shown as savages fighting each other over a horse and a woman. The protagonist Hopkins is shown using and despising his Arab translator who himself is oppressing and brutally treating a very young servant. Brutality is drawn as a normal quality in the Arab Bedouin life which is practiced between and against relatives, women and even lonely orphan children. The same picture is duplicated in *Lawrence of Arabia* (1962), which was awarded seven Oscars, where Arabs are shown as brutal and fighting each other for money.

Hollywood does not only distort the image of Arabs/Muslims but even the fundamental principles and rituals of Islam and even mock and despise Muslims and their religious practices. In the movie, *Hidalgo,* Omar Sharif, playing the role of the Sheik, is promising God if his horse wins the race, he will pray five times a day as if prayer implies immediate material reward. In the movie *Robin Hood* (2010), a Muslim Arab is shown praying without ablutions and doing very strange rituals in his prayer. Robin is shown blaming him for praying instead of doing his job of helping him fighting his enemies. Hence, prayer is shown as a kind of waste of time, neglect of duties, and perhaps an obstacle to the Western and "civilized" way of life. In the film *Conan the Barbarian* (2011), a decorative jar, belongs to the villain character, is

ornamented by an Arab written name of Allah, in a blunt despise of Islam by associating it with evil.

On the other hand, Arab women filming goes hand in hand with the old Orientalists' descriptions and fantasies. Arab women are depicted, once more, as prisoners and victims of the Arab men. The created image in old Western written stories is surviving in present visual stories. Arab maidens are usually known for their belly dancing and "submissive" nature of being "*harem*". This term "*harem*" is emphasized throughout the Hollywood history as it is clear in movie *Harum Scarum* (1965). Ironically, the movie shows the meaning of *harem* as symbolizing instinctual desire. The movie depicts the story of a king's beautiful daughter Aishah who was kidnapped by a man who wants Johnny to help him kill the king. Of course, the white good well-bred American Johnny Tyrone kills the kidnapper and restores order to the government. Johnny married Aisha, and the film ends by showing all the family honeymooning in Las Vegas. The triumphant rescuer sings:

> I'm gonna go where desert sun is;
> where the fun is;
> go where the harem girls dance;
> go where there's love and romance--
> out on the burning sands, in some caravan." (*Harum Scarum)*

Besides, the notion of Western "hero rescuer" appears again this in movie, while the White-man as a rescuer of women, both Western and Arab, from the brutality and savageness of the Arab male, who is always considered as a source of slavery, lust and violence. This image is usually intensified by motion pictures' entertainment. Accordingly,

> Western rescue fantasy, which metaphorically renders the Orient as a female saved from her own destructiveness, while also projecting a narrative of the rescue of Arab and Western women from Arab men […] Such an indirect apologia for colonial domination also carries religious overtones of the inferiority of the polygamous Islamic world to the Christian world as encapsulated by the monogamous couple. (Shohat 40)

The veil is the prominent indicator of the Arab women in Western culture and film-making. It is another way to pretend that Arab women are enslaved and repressed. The recurrent figure of the "veiled woman in films such as *Thief in Damascus* (1952) and *Ishtar* (1987) can be seen as a metaphor for the mystery of the Orient itself" (Shohat 40). Hence, Arab women portrayal ranges from "belly dancers leering out from diaphanous veils" to "Beasts of Burden, carrying jugs on their heads," to "shapeless Bundles of Black, a homogeneous sea of covered women trekking silently behind their unshaven mates," to recently " Bombers intent on killing Westerners" (Shaheen "Reel" 183-4). Terrorism is not an exclusive Arab man's characteristic but even women became a prominent threat to the Western "cosy life" on cinematic screens. Their image is developing from a tool of amusement and seduction of both the Arab and Western men, to an evil being helping their Arab mates in terrorizing the innocent Western citizens.

Depicting all Arabs and Muslims as terrorists is the main pleasure of American cinema. The movie *The Siege*, portrays Arabs and Muslims as terrorists planning to blow up the World Trade Centre. In the late seasons of popular American series such *CSI Miami*, *Criminal Minds*, especially after the 9/11 events, almost every episode accuses Muslims and Arabs of terrorism. The scenes of muezzin as a background setting for the time of attacks are becoming the icon of any terrorist attack. Muslims

while arrested in Guantanamo are shown as the headquarters of attacks on the U.S. The series *24* also received a large criticism by Muslim interest groups[6] for its blatant stereotyping, giving a large space for portraying Muslims, even Muslim American, as a threat to national security:

> Muslim interest groups have protested against seasons 4 (2005) and 6 (2007) of the serial, in which Islamistic terrorists were depicted as evil villains and cultural 'others'. When season 4 was broadcast on TV stations in the United States, the serials' creators and producers met harsh criticism concerning the representation of a terror cell as an ordinary Muslim American family. (Halse 5)

In addition, like in old Hollywood's movies, where movie stars usually contest and vanquish Arabs as "Kurt Russell in *Executive Decision* (1996); and Brendan Frasier in *The Mummy* (1999)" (Shaheen "Reel" 177), the "old romantic stereotype of an Arab as a wandering dweller has given way to that of a 'dark, shifty-eyed schemer and coward'" (Mousa 76) and easily defeated who also is a coward killer, is reinforced in television dramas. In the NBC's series *The West Win*g, a kind of melodramatic realism, Episode; in which the character Josh explains Islamic fundamentalists to group of students in a history lesson after 9/11:

> The "why does everyone want to kill us?" mantra espoused by *The West Wing*'s fictional students, becomes […] a form of "infantile citizenship" that allows adult viewers comfortably to confront the horrors and guilt of war by donning the cloak of childhood innocence (epitomized, of course, by the wide-eyed figure of President Bush himself, who, in his first televised speech to Congress after the attacks, asked, "Why do they hate us?"). (Spigel 245)

Saying “Arabs,” or “Muslims,” does not make difference on the cinema screens which show them as oil and money owners. In fact, somehow this stereotype is less harmful than being portrayed as terrorists. This is increasingly stressed in cinematic representation and hence, directly influences the viewers and affects the Arabs, either in the Arab world, or in America. To sum up, “for Hollywood and Madison Avenue there is no safer villain than the Arab” (Makari 59). As a matter of fact, with the growth of cinema, and the “coming of the electronic media the image of Arabs and Islam wavered between romanticism and in the early years, and an extremely negative view, with religious overtones, by the end of the century. Such portrayals undoubtedly affect the Arab character and influence relations of the West and Arab world” (Mousa 71).

The dark image about Arabs in schoolbooks, and news and cinematic means had a very strong impact on formulating a fixed conception about the Arabs. These pictures’ recurrence creates a constructed truth about the Arabs in the minds of all categories of viewers as the cinema and media in general do not only affect common people, but affect intellectual and educational circles as well. Consequently, the existence of Arabs in the United States is hugely influenced by the spread bad reputations about them.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three: The Impact of Arabs' Image on Arabs and Arab-Americans' Existence in the United States

The impact of the image of Arabs has a great influence on the settlement of Arabs in the United States since the early immigration waves. Their adaptation to the American society proved to be challenging due to segregation as a result their tarnished image. They have always suffered political, social, and cultural marginalization. Furthermore, the development of news media and cinema has added more pressure on Arabs, in the Arab world, and more and more obstacles to Arab-American integration and acceptance within the mainstream society, especially in the present Electronic Age.

3.1. A Turbulent Arab-American Existence in the United States

The presence of the Arabs in the United States has been received with rejection and has consequently led to a kind of identity crisis. This crisis contributed to the appearance of varied categories of Arab-Americans who differ in identifying themselves and their culture with the host American or the Arab one. Such debate has shaped the different waves of immigration and the different cultural and political orientations.

3.1.1. Arab-American: Arab or American?

The story of immigration of Arab-Americans to the USA is usually described in terms of waves. The first wave immigrants came between 1880 and 1925, the majority of which were Christians from Great Syria. The second wave arrived between 1925 and 1965, and came from a variety of Arab countries and was composed of both Christians and Muslims. The third wave came after 1965 (Smith and Tang 59). Each wave contains a category that differs according to the social, educational and religious

varieties of immigrants and even the country of origin. For that reason, the Arab-American formula is considered by a large number of other communities as "ambiguous." This so-called ambiguity is confusing not only to common people but even to scholars. Moreover, this "ambiguity lies in many ways in which they have been described, and have described themselves, at various points in their history in the US" (David 836).

At the very beginning, the Arabs of the first wave were considered by the American government as Turks, being subjects of the Ottoman Empire, while those people used to call themselves Syrians according to Great Syria: Syria, Lebanon, Palestine, and Jordan. Later, after 1924, the immigrant Arabs started to refer to themselves according to their individual countries, as Syrians-Americans, Lebanese-American and Palestinian-Americas, and so on (David 836-7). These so many labels added to the complexity of categorizing them; being from varied and not one single country, and having too many religious fractions, was a confusing matter for the Americans to consider them as one ethnic group or too many different groups. However, the label Arab-American officially appeared, as late as the end of the 1960's (Aruri 35), with the ethnic movements of that time, to give the Arab-Americans a substance and voice in that era of activism and reforms.

The term Arab-American is being used to point to the Arabs living in the United States. Many Arabs even felt not at ease in being called Arab-Americans, especially in early years of immigration, where many of them saw life in the US as a temporary stay. On the other hand, saying "I am Arab-American" was considered a huge concession to the norms of assimilation. It is even almost shunned to include the "American" label, even in second in order after the hyphen in composing this identity label. This hyphenated label created a kind of discomfort and a disloyalty of Arab identity,

Arabism and the Palestinian cause. Hence, before 1967, Arab immigrants used to refer to themselves as people from Syria or Lebanon focusing more on nationalistic identity rather than Arab identity (Aruri 35). The period after World War II "saw a growing consciousness of Arab identity, and it was common that more people nationally saw themselves as Arab American, although often others continued to refer to themselves as being of Lebanese, Syrian, or Palestinian ancestry" (Boosahda 3).

Conversely, the increase of bad portrayal of Arabs after the 1967 war was an overwhelming factor of the approval of the new hyphenated label of Arab-Americans. The Arab community in the United States felt a need to a voice and a forum to express their refusal of the onslaught against the Arab being and his culture. The foundation of "*The Association of Arab-American University Graduates, Inc*" (AAUG) at the October 1967 meetings of the Middle East Studies Association, in Chicago, was the first organization that utilized the hyphenated label of "Arab-Americans." In spite of this nomination, Arab-Americans kept being seen in the powerful circles in the mainstream society more as Arabs than Americans, and many of their rights were compromised (Aruri 34-5). The label, on another perspective, has emerged from a political awareness to defend Arab issues and the right for existence in the Unites States. So, a "fundamental turning point in Arab-American community and identity occurred during the1967 war between Israel and neighboring Arab States, and the negative reaction of American society to the Arab world and culture" (David 836). This enormous transformation in vision and existentialistic preoccupations urged them to embrace an Arab belonging to the ancestry homeland as well as a need for proving the right to exist as an American born, as the last rampart for surviving.

Nevertheless, the hyphenated nomination either accepted by Arab-Americans or not, is regarded by many, as hiding a deeper subjective connotation. In the so-called

multicultural American context, the American hyphenation "ostensibly serves to bridge racial otherness or naturalize the alien, but its net effects is political accommodation within the nation. The dilemma of the hyphen is familiar to scholars who work in the field of race and ethnic literatures and question the politics of multiculturalism which often conceals all manners of exclusion behind a pretext of inclusion" (Hassan and Kopf-Newman 4). In other terms, hyphenation could be a proxy for the label "Other."

3.1.2. A History of Immigration

When compared to the other minorities' early existence, the Arab immigrants' history in the United States is more humble and recent. However, Arab adventure in the early colonial America is worth mentioning, especially that of the rich Arabs travelers to Salem. Later, the major waves of Arabs immigrants to the United States started in late nineteenth century. It was in "the late 1890s and early 1900s that the first descriptions of Arab immigrants appeared in periodicals. A particularly sensitive and sympathetic account of life in the 'Syrian colony' of New York City was printed in 1903 in Harper's Monthly" (Pulcini 27). In spite of the increasing number of Arab-Americans in the United States, their integration is not happening smoothly due to political, religious and ideological reasons. Despite all that hardship, there has been a great rise in Arab countries towards immigration to the West, thereby, affecting both the host county and the societies of the countries of origin (Nydell 131). Leaving the home countries was beneficial to both families at home and the Arab nations in receiving money sent back home by Arab workers in the US, and the host county benefits from cheap labor power.

The early Arabs to immigrate to the United States were usually Lebanese who left the poor agricultural region of Mont of Lebanon to seek better conditions in the

New World. In the early twentieth century, waves of immigrants were often drawn by the Michigan's booming automobile industry. The Detroit car industry was among the attractive motives inspired by the 'land of opportunity' for the early waves of Arabs who started to form collective life, resulting in the establishment of the largest Arab-American community in the United States. However, today's immigrants are often refugees and victims of wars, political oppression in addition to difficult economic conditions in their home countries (Shryock 34). In the late twentieth century, the points of tension and war regions in the Arab world like the case of Iraq-Iran war, the Lebanese Civil War were among the very factors for Arab forced immigration.

3.1.2.1 Arab-Americans of Pre-Columbus and Early Colonial America

Despite the neglecting tendencies of the Arab existence in pre-Columbus America by historians, there are some views that go to the reality of the successful trips of some Arab adventurers in reaching the New World and surviving and challenging the scary ocean, especially that they were highly advanced in maritime equipment and geography. Al -Idrissi, for instance recounts the Arab crossing of the Atlantic Ocean or the "Sea of Darkness and Fog," as it was called at that time. Moreover, a story of an even earlier crossing adventure is recounted by the scholar Al-Masudi about the adventures of Khashkhash Ibn Saeed Ibn Aswad of Córdoba, who returned in A.D. 889 after crossing the Atlantic. Al-Masudi had a map of the world which identifies a big unknown island inside the Atlantic Ocean. This latter described as "the source of all oceans" and that it contains many strange phenomena (Abdo 64-5).

On another side, many Muslim Arabs of North Africa are said to have gone to North America according to Chris Lovelace, an American imam, arguing that Muslim

explorers met the original people of America and treated them gently, traded with them and even invited them to convert to Islam. And that the first Muslim a Berber from North Africa came a century before the landing of Mayflower in 1620. According to these stories, Arabs are the pioneer explorers compared to the early immigrants from Europe and North African nations were the first nations to recognize the United States as a new nation. In addition, and during the American Civil War, the Unionists brought soldiers from Algeria to help them defeat the Confederate Army. For that reason, a memorial in Pennsylvania is built and dedicated to the people of Algeria (Ahmed 8, 168-9). Despite the varied stories about the Arabs early discovery of America, such stories remain debatable due to the lack of concrete and evident traces and clear records of their existence in the United States.

3.1.2.2 The First Major Migration Wave of Late Nineteenth Century

The major movement of Arab immigrants to the United States came about 1870s (Naff 2), and lasted from about 1880 until 1915 (Boosahda xii); or between 1880 and 1925 (Smith and Tang 59), the majority of which came from Syria and Lebanon, mainly Mount Lebanon, and most of them were from Christian sects as “Maronite”, “Melkite”, and “Eastern Orthodox.” The minority were Sunnis or Shi’as and fewer from the semi-Islamic Druze faith. Many also came from Palestine and all arriving Arabs were subjects of the Turkish Ottman Empire (Naff 2). Those immigrants of various sects were trying “to avoid the stigma often attached to Muslim ‘Turks’ and simply called themselves Syrians. Official U.S. immigration records list them as people from ‘Turkey in Asia,’ or ‘Other Asia’” (Abdo 70). Small numbers of them have migrated to North and South America, however the majority settled in New England mainly in Worcester, Massachusetts, that is considered an area of a large Arab-American community

settlement. While most Arab immigrants were males, there were women adventurers like widows with children and single women who immigrated first then were followed by other members of the family. They started working as cooks or women door-to door peddlers, selling goods and dried food to other ethnic groups in the neighborhood (Boosahda xii, xiii).

The majority of immigrants from Mont Lebanon were from an agricultural environment. They left their lands and rural life, and intended to make money and return back like many other minorities who looked at America as the country of opportunity and success. Most Arabs, at that time, have gone to "America as sojourners and not for permanent residency" (Boosahda 19). Though few in numbers and strange to the new culture, the early Arab immigrants were active, ambitious and ready to handle any work provided by the era conditions. They have taken any available jobs honorably and seriously, starting from door-to-door business and little by little they moved to industrial labors, then the real estate peddling establishers. A group of Albanian Muslims, for instance, have settled in Maine and worked at the mills, while other Muslims from Lebanon moved to Quincy, Massachusetts, about 1875 to work in the shipyards (Abdo 71).

Gradually, these humble workers and traders ranking at the bottom of the economic system started to move up to a respectful position among the early business leading societies. Such success, on the other hand, was accompanied with moments of hardship and industriousness to survive in a totally challenging and very demanding cultural and economic environments. However, the flow of immigrants was interrupted during WWI adding to the already shy and late arrival of Arabs to the United States. The hazardous conditions of WWI and the involvement of the United States in that war were hampering obstacles to many Arabs who canceled their dreams to reach the

American shores. The other effect of the WWI on the Arab immigrants in America is a turning point in viewing themselves. After a harsh time of rapture between them and their relatives in the homeland during the cruel years of this war, they were forced to cease the desire to go back home and adapt instead to the life at hand. They started to accept the new country as home and even started to feel the patriotic pride and further accepted to join the American army. In other words, they were ready to embrace the American citizenship and favored the choice of community that encourages solidarity and cooperation for survival. Such a unity that was obtained during the WWI has imposed a kind of isolation that led them to reinforce the communal bonds. It is, possibly, among the early factors that convinced them to become and accept to be "Arab-Americans" (Ludescher 98).

After WWI, the American authorities have widely contributed to the slowing down of the already slow pace of Arabs' immigration by enforcing the "National Origin Act" of (1921) in 1924 which minimized the quota of immigrants arriving from the Middle East to only 100 persons per year (Haddad Y. 4). By the acting of the National Origins Act, or what is known as the "Asiatic Barred Zone" they meant the ethnic selection and guaranteed the northern Europe majority such as German and Irish, while many other nationalities of immigrants' quotas are restricted like that of Greeks and Italians, being southern Europeans. Immigrants from Asia and precisely Arabs were no exception of the restriction strategies. So, the huge waves who have left for the US since the 1880's are no longer possible to duplicate after 1921 and beyond. Thousands of Syrians, who arrived before 1921, for instance, are reduced to few hundred by this innovated quota law few years later (Abdo 62-3).

As an additional factor to the restriction of the immigration from Asia, especially Christians of Arab origin was the Bolshevik Revolution (1917) in Russia. After this

revolution and with the rise of communism in Asia, many Asians became suspects of being un-American and or represent the "Red scare" that threatens the American values. Consequently, many religious factions who had connection to Russian like the members of Eastern Orthodox Church, which was under Russian jurisdiction, were among the suspects. This element, in consequence, has added to the reduction of Asian origin immigrants' rate and slowing their flow as much as possible. As a result, the newly arrived immigrants have always been seen as strangers and Arab-Americans suffered a great deal from such restrictions, despite the fact that America is the country of immigrants in the first place. Nevertheless, the Arab immigrants were not excused in the time of drafting for WWI. Many of them, especially Syrians, were unconditionally ready to serve in the American Army, and so many have lost their lives for the American flag (Boosahda 135, 138). However,

> [T]he Syrians origins and customs were unknown in America. They qualified for nativist prejudice on every score: they were dark-haired, swarthy-skinned, spoke little English, were largely uneducated, arrived with little money, and were mostly Catholic or Orthodox Christians-all traits either feared or looked down upon by a host society which stressed Anglo-Protestant conformity. (Samhan 13)

Moreover, the racist and assimilating environment of that time was not really in favor of the coming of more Arabs to the United States while 'Anglo conformity' used to be the barometer for citizenship and Protestantism defining what is an 'American' (Haddad Y. 4). As a result, many Christian sects were pressed to assimilate and abandon their original faction. Consequently, "[u]nder such pressure to assimilate, many Syrians repudiated the cultural and religious patterns typical of their homelands and embraced unqualified 'Americanization.' Surely this pleased the Anglo-Saxon establishment"

(Pulcini 29). The renowned theologian and historian (Lebanese) Abraham Mitrie Rihbany is one case among many. Even before his arrival to America in October 1891, he was attracted to the Anglo-Saxon culture due to his influence by the British missionaries. While in America, he completely relinquished his Orthodoxy and turned to Protestantism and chose to become a minister in a Protestant church in Boston. The same path was pursued by the historian and Orientalist Philip Hitti who devoted a long time of his life documenting the history of Syrian immigrants in America, he also became completely Americanized. Though the shape and extent of assimilation were often a source of conflict and argument among Syrian and other Arab-American immigrants, the assimilation found supporters and devotees. Besides, many of them were obliged to assimilate due to the nature of their jobs. For instance, people who practice peddling were forced to immerse themselves in mainstream culture; whereas others chose to remain ghettoized and kept remote from the new culture, but peddlers could not for they needed toget a living (Pulcini 29, 30, 40).

The labor-seeking immigrants occupied humble jobs like digging ditches, laying down railroads tracks and peddling, then, gradually shifted interest in opening stores and doing businesses that provide the growing needs of their small communities (Haddad Y. 4). Even those who accepted and wanted assimilation as a result of isolation from the country of origin, and who thought of themselves worthy obtaining citizenship after they proved their commitment to America as home by risking lives in both wars, many hurdles were put in their path for getting American recognition as equal citizens. Sometimes they were denied their ethnicity to be white, and another time by refusing their Asian origin. As a result of American immigration policies, and “despite the enthusiasm about becoming Americans, Arab-Americans soon found that there would

be impediments on the road to assimilation in the form of charges that they were racially inferior and thus not worthy becoming American citizens" (Ludescher 99).

3.1.2.3 The Second Major Migration Wave

Another major wave (1925-1965) (Smith and Tang 59) of Arab immigrants continued to flow to the Unites States in spite of the Asia based restricted immigration policy which had affected the Christian sects in particular, while the Arab Muslim sects were somehow at advantage. The economic factor caused the immigration of what is estimated at 4, 300 Muslims to the United States in the period between 1899 and 1914 before WWI was the same reason to bring more by the end of this war. The decline of the economy in the Arab world, in addition to the degrading aftermath conditions of WWI, brought more Muslim immigrants to America. As a result, no reverse immigration happened, (which was the aim of early immigrants who thought of gaining money and returning to the homeland), but on the contrary, more immigrants left their deprived countries looking for better life and seeking the promising conditions expected in the United States (Haddad Y. 2-4).

Furthermore, more unskilled Arab workers continued to leave to the US. The first immigration wave of (1875-1912) which most of its male individuals were unskilled and the same for the following wave of (1912-1922), and the third of (1930-1938) that was composed of relatives of the earlier immigrants. This category of immigrants searching just to gain a living were easiest to assimilate and even compromise their religious values, even Muslims among them, resulting later in the huge assimilation tendencies of their children and grandchildren (Pulcini 46, 47).

Other Arab-Muslim immigrants, settling the far Midwest, have achieved a kind of Islamic communities, among which some have survived despite assimilation.

Detroit's automobile industry demanding less skilled labor, led the rising of what became the large Arab and Muslim agglomeration in Dearborn, Toledo and Chicago (Abdo 71). The rise of Muslim communities led, in fact, to a sense of unity against the huge assimilation mechanisms by reviving the traditional ways of the countries of origin. Despite the restricted quota for Arabs, Arabs continued to come. Dearborn's Arab- American community "began in earnest in 1927, when Henry Ford opened his River Rouge plant in the city. Lebanese immigrants had been coming to the Detroit area in small numbers for a decade to take advantage of Ford's unprecedented five-dollar-a-day wage for assembly line work" (Qazwini 111). Their contribution, however, was prominent. The Arab-American immigrant populations "have been a significant factor in Detroit's economic revival. They have been responsible for the creation of business ventures in Detroit and the nearby city of Dearborn […] Yet, the pattern of success for Arab-Americans has received little attention by the researchers" (Smith and Tang 63).

Another category of the Arab-Americans which arrived at the US after the WWII was generally composed of Arab students from middle class and urban areas instructed according to Western principles and curricula, and recruited in American universities as future assets to American interests while returning home. However, the majority of these students chose to settle in the United States. This category of immigrants represents the best and the elite or 'brain drain' of Arab population (Haddad Y. 5) being the best students given scholarships to study in the American Universities. This settling has been planned for by the United States government, like all other Western countries, to use these well-instructed elite by providing them with the best life conditions that could never be made available in their homeland. The minority, among them that preferred to leave, were hoped to go with the role they are expected to do in saving the interests of the United States, being immersed in the American culture that

would direct their way of thinking to implant such Western ideas in their home countries hence, going with the planned Western agendas.

3.1.2.4 The Third Major Migration Wave, or Today's Arab-Americans

The third major wave of immigration that started after 1965 was a varied and completely different category of Arab Immigrants. The very beginning of this wave coincided with two major events in the Middle East; the 1960's Pan-Arab movement and the 1967 War. The Pan-Arabism that painted the whole Arab world political, social and intellectual life left a great impact and sense of Arab identity on the new travelers to the United States. These immigrants were more educated and politically aware, especially enthusiastic to the Arab matters and the Palestinian cause. Additionally, the "Asia Exclusion Act 1965" changed the constituency of the new arriving Arabs to the Unites States. The new comers contain a variety of people from different ethnicities and cultures reflecting the wide diversity of the Muslim and Arab worlds (Haddad Y. 5). U.S. immigration changed policy in 1965 that focused, also, on job skills and family reunification as key factor for entering America rather than early quota system based on country of origin gave immigrants, and for the first time, a better chance to immigrate in huge numbers from the Middle East and South Asia (Qazwini 78).

There was "a slight shift in numbers from Western Europe in favor of Asia and Latin America, with little or no real increase in the total number of new arrivals each year" (Abdo 62). Other historical and political events had contributed to the improvement and increase of the number of immigrants from Arab countries leading to the range of categories of Arabs which led to creating a new and rich variety of cultural comers with different traditions, accents and social and political orientations and

interests. The new wave then brought with it more challenges and promises in creating a new fabric of Arab-Americans:

> Events of the 1950s and 1960s changed radically the development of Arab American ethnicity. Thousands of new immigrants from Arab states suffering from varying degrees of political and economic crisis came to the U.S.; whether as refugees, exiles, students, or professionals, they were witnesses to both the strengths and weaknesses of the emerging nationalism in their Arab homelands. Generally, they came with far greater resources than had the pioneers of six decades earlier, and yet they came with an ideological dilemma which was new. Many of the recent immigrants were Muslim by faith, and were unwilling to surrender their cultural and political heritage or convictions in the name of Americanization. (Samhan 16)

The new arrivals from the Arab world were different in the way of thinking and how they saw themselves as Arab immigrants with strong ties to the Arab culture and origin. While the already "Americanized" Arabs have a different vision and sense of belonging. This influx of new category of Arab-Americans from different generations, from first to third, in addition to being highly politicized, "exacerbated the conflicting characteristics of each. In many cases, the religions of the old and newer immigrants were different. Additionally, those who had been living in the US 'forever' were viewed and viewed themselves as very American (despite any lasting ethnic traits) while the newer immigrants were viewed as more foreign" (David 837) and usually considered more Arabs than Americans, especially those bound to their homeland political interests who brought with them their countries' problems and concerns or those who politically exiled. Consequently:

> [T]he Arab-born immigrants of the 1960s and 1970s organized beyond village and religious ties into Arab American institutions openly conscious of their role in U.S. -Arab political and economic relations. Specifically, it was the Palestinian struggle for national rights that became a force that both unified many segments of the Arab American community and exposed the more politicized members to new forms of racist exclusion. (Samhan 16)

Arab-Americans with Christian names, also, contributed to the invisibility of Arab-Americans despite their presence in the various political, economic, and cultural fields, in addition to the transformation of Arab names into Western names. However, despite the pride the Arab-Americans show towards their Arab origin and cultural heritage, by trying to preserve and pass it from one generation to another and eagerness to visit the home country, there were among them who denied and avoided to show their identity in public. Some even avoided to practice Arab traditions in front of other people. Such a denial is partly linked to the dilemma American born generations face through their attempt to conciliate home instructions and larger society requirements.

Lately, though assimilation was necessary, Arab-Americans, especially young generations, developed a sense of pride and resistance and started to question the long years of conformity to mainstream desires. The waking up waves chose to present the Arab history and culture through writing in the "*The American Arabic-Speaking Community Almanac*" in the 1970s (Pulcini 39), to counterpart the caricaturing of the Arab heritage in the American popular culture. Such writing was intended to explain the chronicle of Arab-American immigration process and different ways of surviving socially and economically; showing at the same time their contribution to the American life.

As an expected result of coming from different areas of the Arab world, the Arab community in the United States is distinguished for its varieties of cultural religious, tribal, linguistic, and national differences. People coming from more than twenty Arab nations brought with them the differences and conflicts existing within and between their countries. Today, Arab-Americans are dispersed throughout the Unites States where two thirds are living in ten states with, for example 33% living in California, New York, and Michigan. Arab-American agglomerations choose to settle in the wide urban areas and big cities like Los Angeles, Detroit and Washington D.C and New York. The majority of late arriving Arabs are considered as refugees as a result of domestic political conflicts as civil wars, or as immediate outcome of the American intervention in the Middle East either directly by military occupation, or indirectly by the imperialistic policies that serve its interests. They are metaphorically called the "collateral damage" of American foreign policies in countries in the Arab World as Somalia and Iraq, and elsewhere (Haddad Y. 2, 6). Due to the growth of Arab immigrant communities in Detroit, on the other hand, the way of life in these communities became a duplication that of the Middle East (Shryock 34). Economically speaking, the Arabs in Detroit "enjoyed steady progress until 11 September, 2001 […] in the nine weeks following the attack […] Arab American stores were looted and the fear of Arabs led to a decline and shutdown of many Arab-owned small businesses" (Smith and Tang 61).

Muslim immigrants become more and more competing with the early Christian majority and created a kind of balance between the two groups. The new comers continued to immigrate in huge numbers, from all Arab countries, and especially from Iraq after the 2003 war. Moreover, recent generations of Arabs, old and new comers, "include both entrepreneurs and professionals […] younger and better educated than the

general American population […] Many Arabs have achieved professional success in medicine, science and entertainment" (Smith and Tang 60).

However, throughout the American history, Muslims/Arabs have been seen as an "'other,' a group (…) not welcomed" (Qazwini 78). The invisibility of Arab-Americans in the mainstream community turned into a problematic and disturbing visibility. Arab immigration to the United States, the "phenomenon largely neglected, suddenly became a matter of widespread concern with the inception of the Gulf crisis, sometimes to the detriment of Arab Americans, who became targets of prejudicial--and occasionally violent --activity" (Pulcini 27). Contradictorily, Arab-Americans though not really suffering discrimination on race basis (as people of color), for they are considered whites according to the 1960's Census, they are discriminated against as being a special ethnic group that raises doubts of terrorism and threat to the national security; an accusation which appears directly linked to the American foreign policy in the Middle East and its effect on the American domestic matters (Aboul-Ela 22).

American public in general, had a limited knowledge about the Arab and Islamic world, despite America's heavy engagements in the Middle East and despite the large number of Muslim and Arab population in the world, the little they know about Arabs is that they are uncivilized, violent …and all that stereotypes spread by media. Unfortunately, such knowledge is adopted by the academic circles in the American society. However, "the media and lack of knowledge of Islam were also major threats" (Ahmed 445) to Arab-Americans and America.

3.1.3. 9/11 and Arab-Americans

The 9/11 with its huge effect on the public opinion towards the Arabs in general had in fact more effect on the Arab–Americans whose situation reflects the "general

rule that ambivalence will follow when a once-ignored or outright slandered community is suddenly offered unceasing attention and is asked to define and redefine itself daily" (Salaita "Anti-Arab" 78). Vilifying the culture of these unwelcomed people was a strategy followed by immigrations policies and reinforced by media. Arab-Americans, like many of Asian minorities, have suffered these same old/ new policies since early waves of immigration. While these policies "did not begin on 11 September 2001, they expanded in scope and became increasingly institutionalized and systematic after that date within the context of a nation in crisis" (Naber 242).

The 9/11 events put Arab-Americans, and more precisely Arab Muslims under siege with FBI raids on their homes, mosques and chasing students at the universities with stereotyping and hatred as a result of the media's misinforming the public by labeling Muslims as the new enemy of the West (Abdo 5). The 9/11 effects on communities of color grew rapidly including communities of south Asia origin or who appear with Arab names. Few months later, the Bush administration started to apply a series of laws and security policies which target Arabs, among others Muslims, in all fields of daily life; at home, at work, inside transportation, hospitals, police offices and airports and others contexts. "Security" became the alarming term to manipulate, and investigate people's lives, leading them to detention and even deportation. Either private institutions, or even individuals, took as a pretext the so-called "national security" to practice racist actions against Arabs in the daily interactions extra areas of work in the neighboring areas. Rejecting demands by Arab individuals for renting houses became a common practice by house-owners. Sometimes, the house owners increase the renting price just to hurt or discriminate against Arab clients. Banks also dared to cancel bank accounts as a discriminating act against Arab and Muslim clients in case of failure in providing documents, for security reasons pretext. In fact, the private sector started

gradually to obey the governments' pressure by preventing Arab or Muslim individuals from having any business activities if their names appear on the terrorism watch list (Nguyen xx- xxi). Names appearing on this list are innocents who were suspects just because they bear an Arab name and for any proved "terrorist" activity.

The 9/11 events had effects on labor market for Arab-Americans. These events had, as repercussion discrimination toward Arabs leading to a decrease in their wages and opportunities to get jobs, in addition to the racist behaviors they get on a daily basis, in the job spaces. Such discrimination has effectively harmed their economic situation and destabilized their income hampering, as a result, their social and economic status. They came to a finding that "September 11th was not significantly associated with changes in employment or hours worked of Arab and American men, but it does appear to have lowered real wage and weekly earnings of Arab and Muslim men which were reduced by between 9-11 percent below what they would have been in the absence of the September 11th attacks" (Kaushal and Kaestner 304). It is clear that:

> the events of September 11th triggered increased animosity towards persons perceived to be Arabs and Muslims. Here we have shown that this increased prejudice was associated with lower earnings among men from predominantly Arab and Muslim countries. These results are consistent with prejudice-based labor market discrimination, in which increased prejudice resulted in a decrease in the demand for Arab and Muslim workers. (Kaushal and Kaestner 304)

The increasing discriminating environment that chases the freedoms and comfort of Arab-Americans reaching even their means of living, adds to other pressures resulting from the pre-9/11 already restricted chances for desirable life. Since the early

days after the events, “countless cases in which immigrants perceived to be Arab or Muslim were targets of hateful assaults and epithets from employers” (Naber 246). Furthermore, employers used the post-9/11 to oblige the Arab/Muslim employees to live under a constant threat. They “would be quick to call in the FBI or NSA to fire workers for minor incidents or would make threats such as, ‘I will report you to the NSA or FBI if you complain about wages or refuse to do what I say’” (Naber 247).

Furthermore, thousands of Arabs and Muslims were immediately detained few months after the events, with great secrecy, with no access to attorneys and without clear charges. The majority of pretexts of detention were presented as accusations of actions having relation to terrorist activities. FBI agents have visited and raided thousands of houses anticipating the collection of any tiny hints or data that may lead to terrorist intentions. Interviews with individuals became a routine for Arab families. Besides, *The USA Patriot Act* (October, 2001) has aggravated the situation of public liberties and private life of people by giving the government easy intrusion in personal affairs of the suspects via investigation and tracing information provided by their banks, credit cards companies and libraries in a flagrant violation of civil rights. One year later, with the application of the “National Security Entry-exit Registration System” (2002), hundreds of noncitizen men over sixteen have registered with the government. So, each visitor from counties that represent a “security threat” to the United States should submit to special control at the entry of the country. These practices created a kind of unease and mistrust among people towards the government and its agencies. Other preventive practice by the government is the limitation of refugees seeking freedom and escaping oppression in their countries. Refuge restriction led to the decrease of the number of refugees accepted in 2002 from the poor countries, especially Africa, while Europeans remained at advantage (Nguyen xvii, xviii, xix). One example of racist

behavior could explain such treatment is the same "racial logic underlying Japanese internment and the targeting of persons perceived to be 'Arab-Middle-Eastern-Muslim' post-9/11 have been shaped by a similar process by which particular immigrants have been rendered different, then inferior to whites *and* enemies" (Naber 242).

However, racism then was not absent but hidden till it suddenly emerged to the surface by 9/11 events, and became more public and justified by media and political behavior. Racism increased in public by media's spreading of "Jihad-killer" stereotype which became a chasing nightmare for Arab-Americans everywhere. Immediately after 9/11, the Bush administration "overreacted to any suspicion of a Muslim-associated threat, using not the proverbial sledgehammer but helicopter gunships to kill a fly. Everything Muslim was exaggerated and fed into America's fear and anger of what it saw as a threatening minority rooted in its deep structures" (Ahmed 215). In instant reaction to the 9/11 events, the American government apparently decided to detain as many as possible Middle-Eastern individuals for alleged pretexts, accusing political and human rights activist among them of carrying explosives and hence raiding their homes without warranty, or even further allegation related to immigration situations. This mass arrest and what developed into preventive detention sometimes without charges, and which was encouraged by Attorney General John Ashcroft, has a precedent in American policy perhaps that case of Robert Kennedy in the 1960's (Bâli 26) who without respect to the American Constitution prohibits, he has "arrested all the Italian-Americans—using ethnicity as a proxy for connection to the mafia--" (Bâli 26). Based on discrimination concerning ethnicity, violation of the vital rights of individuals and groups became an adequate behavior for policy-makers and prominently for Ashcroft who did not pay any attention to such prohibitions. In other words, systematic racism is

legally blessed by the department of Justice and either ignored or covered as logical reaction by the government in the means of media.

On international scale, these preventive detention policies may be derived from the Israeli attitudes as pretext of national security. The link between "U.S. administrative abuse of detainees and the tactics developed by the Israeli government to control Palestinian resistance to Israeli occupation suggests an 'Israelization' of U. S. policies in the 'war on terror'" (Bâli 48). As a resulting conclusion, these policies pretend good will by applying "administrative detention in both countries as an alternative to criminal prosecution where reduced evidentiary standards and a presumption of guilt expedite the government's desire to keep 'suspect' categories of individuals off the streets" (Bâli 49). From such comparison one may conclude that the collaboration or more frankly expressed, a twin U.S. and Israeli policies toward vulnerable minorities is the core of their political beliefs. While the Israeli government follows the same steps to restrict the areas occupied by the Palestinians as the U.S. government did to restrict the lands of the Native Indians into small dispersed reservations, now the present U. S. policies are derived from the Israeli attitudes towards the same ethnic group, the Arabs. Such harmony and mutual inspiration raises doubts about the singling out of the Arabs as more discriminated among the many minority groups as the Blacks and the Japanese during WWII. A scrutinizing eye may distinguish the difference in treatment embodied in very harsh attitudes of an overreaction towards the Arabs in post-9/11 short period surpasses the whole history of racism toward blacks, or Japanese minority during the war against Japan. Initiated policies of detention, torture, violent physical, and moral insult towards the whole Arab community by both government and ordinary people on daily basis, reinforces the intended targeting of Arabs as the "enemy at home" who should be feared and punished.

Discriminating reaction by the different business agencies creates a kind of feeling of being second class citizens for individuals with Arab names (Nguyen xxii). Not feeling at ease concerns all sides of life inside and outside home. Either men or women, young or old, at home, at work, or at school, and the feeling of America as home became doubtful for people with Arab names. Hate crimes usually is the immediate expression of rejection by the main-society of the Arab community after the 9/11 events. After being associated for decades with Blacks, hate crimes became a focus on Arabs. Their quality of being productive element did not help enough to avoid racism; intellectuals at universities or mere workers face similar discrimination actions.

Despite the discriminating and bad treatments they got from official agencies and ordinary people, Arabs in America did not relinquish their duties towards the public good. They were among the first to hurry for help and even raised money for the victims of 9/11 attacks. They donated for the Red Cross and supplied and sponsored blood drives (Nydell 132). Though these contributions got little recognition, and was a sign of good will and recognition to America as home, Arabs continued to contribute to the good of the country.

Though the hardships the Arab-Americans went through in the early attempt to settle in a very harsh environment nurtured by hatred and racism that resulted from centuries of image distortion, they still struggle now to face more offensive treatment by the mainstream society, governmental policies and fellow citizens, deepened by the news media and cinematic representations against the Arabs and Arab-Americans as immediate representatives of the enemy culture, and the primary suspects in any governmental security matters.

3.2. The Impact of Arabs' Image in the American Media and Cinema on Arabs and Arab-Americans

The impact of the distorted image had and still has devastating effects on Arabs inside and outside the United States. The image that developed through the centuries is now concentrated and spread by news media and cinema, which became the handy and more accessible tool of knowledge and influence. The perceptions and impressions about the Arabs' culture and character are deeply influenced by their spread image. The reaction of people and governments towards Arabs, as individuals and nations, is molded by their own picture. The United States foreign policies in the Middle East are not less harmful than domestic policies when dealing with individual and private life of Arab-Americans. Arabs' picture, then, determines the means of conducts by which they are treated either as suspicious individuals or as "rogue states."

3.2.1. The impact of Arabs' Image in the American Media and Cinema on Arabs and the Arab World

The American media is not really "innocent" and honest in conveying information and making the American people learn about other people's lives and culture. Their role is usually deviating when dealing with Arabs and Muslims mainly after targeting them as enemies, starting from the Israeli Palestine conflict, to Oil Crisis issue and later as replacement for the Soviet Union enmity. In the "post-Cold War era, when the Soviet communist nuclear threat against capitalism has vanished, most signs appear to demonstrate that the Middle East and Islam have replaced the 'Red menace'" (Kamalipour 64).

After 9/11 events, more focus is oriented towards Arab "terrorist" requiring huge machinery of media to be devoted to observe, describe and warn from. As a result, the media loses its objectivity and biases with its government to face the same monster-like Arab and appear as the saving angel or the saint hero. Accordingly, the children grow up with the negative images in their consciousness as facts which are hard to change or erase; the "media teach children to hate others" (Mousa 82). As Shaheen comments, also, "the news programs are used by some producers and directors to deny they are actually engaged in stereotyping. 'We're not stereotyping,' they object. 'Just look at your television set. Those are real Arabs'" ("Reel" 189). Additionally, it is believed that islamophobia is, in fact, the heir of Orientalism (Ali 1038).

The majority of Americans are ignorant about the history of Palestinian people and some of this ignorance is due to the misleading role of media and cinematic representations that focus on showing Palestinians as terrorists instead of victims:

> A number of more systematic studies have shown beyond reasonable doubt that there is a substantial quantitative preponderance of reporting from or about Israel as compared with the Arab states, as well as a distinct bias in terms of adjectival stereotyping favourable towards Israel and unfavourable towards Arabs […] US newsmagazines were very reluctant to criticize Israel, while assigning generally negative stereotypes to the Arabs. (Hudson 92)

The American viewers will systematically bias with Israelis who are portrayed victims of violent and villain Palestinians and they will not bother knowing the reality and conditions of the oppressed Palestinian population. As a result, the Hollywood Palestinians are the enemy of peace in the Middle East who are chasing peaceful Israeli people. Consequently, any attack on Palestinian lands and people is seen as self-defence

right for the Israelis. Hence, Hollywood is giving a great assistance to American and Israeli policies in the Middle East, especially when many movies are done with the participation of Israeli actors and producers such as "*Sinai Guerrillas* (1960) and *Sinai Commandos* (1968)" (Shaheen "Reel" 178). As early as the creation of Israel State cinematic propaganda started to prepare public opinion for the later colonial policies. Many Hollywood films started war on Palestinians on screens as early as the real war and oppression are applied on them by Israeli State; *Exodus* (1960) is a best example of such movies.

Hence, such declared wars on Palestinians are made by movies like *Exodus*, as a "necessary" step and crucial process to be taken to save the State of Israel and its citizens, in the eyes of universal viewers. In other words, killing Palestinians is becoming a justified and normalized action if not legal. Israeli people are helped to gain sympathy by viewers rather than Palestinians. It is a clear explanation for the unconditional support Israel gains just because of such erroneous pictures and distorted historical facts displayed quietly through emotional scenes on the screens. As all Arabs are the same and Arabs and Muslims are the same too, Iranians are Arabs also; "[a]t the height of the Iranian hostage crisis anti-Arab feelings intensified, as 70 percent of Americans wrongly identified Iran as an Arab country. Even today, most Americans think of Iranians as Arabs" (Shaheen "Reel" 189). Throughout "American history, politicians have demonized certain groups as the 'other' in order to legitimize government policies toward those groups in times of conflict, this presumption is only exacerbated" (Ali 1038).

Besides, with huge effect of media and cinematic warning about Arab potential terrorist attacks on the US, and as immediate reaction to the first World Trade Center attack in1993 and the Oklahoma City bombing in1995, these government policies are

curtailing individual civil liberties, and spreading fear and accusations. They are obviously,

> [C]ontroversial provisions included the limiting of habeas corpus [7] rights and the reintroduction of "guilt by association" tactics, which potentially criminalized support of groups that were wholly lawful but disfavored and gave designation authority to the Secretary of State to name any foreign organization a terrorist group if she determined that group to "engage in terrorist activity." This broad discretion most notably affected Muslim charities that were often controversially accused of giving material support to "terrorist" groups. (Ali 1040-1041)

Since the "Arabs are the only ethnic group that can be flagrantly and negatively stereotyped by the film and television industry without fear of retribution in law or public opinion" (Hudson 98), American media and cinema are creative in creating phobia from Arabs and Muslims and making out of them monsters who are always planning to harm the Americans. American public is increasingly Arabo-phobic and Islamo-phobic as a result of media description and vilification. Minor violent incidents are emphasized by the media to frighten people of Arabs and describe their countries as zones of extreme danger and all that is reflected in the cinema. Put simply;

> Islamophobia …as an ideological and political framework, it remains deeply ingrained in the psyche of most Americans. Islamophobia manifests both consciously, as a result of the effect of ongoing political campaigns against Islam, as a religion, and subconsciously, through the permeation of stereotypical images of those who appear cognizably "Muslim" (Ali 1034-1035)

Stereotyping creates the dislike of the stranger or "xenophobia," this leads to the fact that "when one ethnic, racial, or religious group is vilified, innocent people suffer" (Shaheen "Reel" 174). Hence,

> Mediated Orientalism informs our cultural memory not only as a consequence of structural inequities and historical context, but also as a contributing factor in the construction of limited norms and misguided practices. The harmful repercussions of domestic policies, such as racial profiling, and foreign policies, such as military intervention, are exacerbated by the socio-political ideologies that legitimate damaging mediated characterizations. If we are to resist the Orientalist discourse that justifies normative prejudice and limited foreign policy, the limitations of these characterizations and narratives must be recognized more broadly. (Wilkins 24)

History in fact is full of example of Asians, American Indians, Blacks, and Jews who suffered accusation, segregation and displacement in America as a result of historical and political conditions:

> In February 1942, more than 100,000 Americans of Japanese descent were displaced from their homes and interned in camps; for decades, blacks were denied basic civil rights, robbed of their property, and lynched; American Indians, too, were displaced and slaughtered; and in Europe, six million Jews perished in the Holocaust. This is what happens when people are dehumanized. (Shaheen "Reel" 174)

Consequently, immediate reactions of viewers and politics towards enemies created by the media are over-generalized and unforgiving. When calling a number of people 'terrorists' by the media, this is going to be the label of the whole group of

people, which has in fact a devastating repercussion on Arabs. This authorization for bloodshed is given freely and automatically to politicians by the media-orientated public opinion. Besides, "the popular media's interpretation of Islam and the Muslim world has flowed freely into schoolrooms and then back out again to the wider public without being subjected to much critical analysis and correction" (Douglass and Dunn 53). Put simply,

> The mass media cannot be underestimated in terms of their power of perpetuating ethnic and racial bias; they are part of cultural mechanism that promotes and exploits commercial stereotypes. Such images become dangerous when they materialize in the complex social narratives and foreign policies enacted simultaneously on the world stage and in the human mind and heart. (Palmer 139)

Media's and cinema's impact is not exclusively pointed at the viewers but most importantly on the viewed; the represented people. Hollywood which "can be seen as an ideological tool that maintains American domination in world politics" (Khatib 7), is always used to manipulate domestic public opinion, before the international one. Newspapers become the leading ally for government's policies and contribute in manipulating the public opinion. The *Washington Post* for example, is very manipulating;

> *Washington Post* is a newspaper with the potential for a disproportionately large impact on US foreign policy. By virtue of its location and widespread influence, the *Post* is obligatory reading for the American and international diplomatic community. While it certainly hasn't dictated foreign policy, the newspaper's editorial page has helped guide both the agenda and focus of international initiatives. (Palmer 144)

Arabs are now being chased all over the world, not only in America, because of the distorted image accumulated though centuries of stereotyping machinery. The Quran has been burnt, humiliated; and masjids are attacked and burnt. Many Muslims are killed just for being Muslims like the Egyptian Marwa el El Sherbini who was murdered on the 1st of July 2009 by Alex Weins in Germany as a result of hate crimes. The Prophet (PBUH) is being caricaturized. Minarets are forbidden to be built in Switzerland by making people believe that the Islam and Muslims are real threat which reflected the referendum on the 29th of November, 2009 concerning the ban of construction of minarets in Switzerland giving as a pretext the stopping of the so-called the "Islamization" of Switzerland which is a racist and anti-freedom of worship statement adopted by the Swiss People's Party.

All these actions are nurtured by ignorance and the hatred accumulated through centuries of perpetuating myths about Arabs' image. Shaheen comments when he uses the Egyptian proverb "al tikrar biallem il hmar (By repetition even the donkey learns)" (Shaheen "Reel" 171) referring to the repeated stereotypes that led the fixing of bad images about Arabs turning it into a fact. As he insists on the role of repetition in misleading viewers. So, American cinematic illusion and myths about Arabs are created and distributed worldwide reaching not only viewers, but other film-makers who imitate the American movies and reproduce the ready-made myth. Because film watching affects the reaction of people, and cinematic images are encouraging suspicion and hatred, many immigrant Arabs/Muslims all over the world are reported victims of racist attacks and murder by people who know nothing about Arabs and Muslims except what they receive from TV screens.

The same accusation the Arabs get after any real or probable attack on the United States in fictional movies, became the feature of American authorities who target

the Arabs as the actors of any violent attack before giving any proves. Through automatic and heavy portraying Arabs and Muslims as threat to the security of the world, and especially America, people started to believe seriously in this idea. So, killing the Arabs and Muslims anywhere in the world means killing the enemy. Many people in Western countries started to react coldly if massacres are committed against Muslims or Arabs. Hence, because of Hollywood's mostly "depictions of Arabs are bad ones (...) Repetitious and negative images of the reel Arab literally sustain adverse portraits across generations. The fact is that for more than a century producers have tarred an entire group of people with the same sinister brush" (Shaheen "Reel" 176). The Western people look at Arabs and Muslims as one entity, all Arabs and Muslims are enemies. Besides,

> One conceptual step in the process of accentuating fear relies on the dehumanization of villainous characters, particularly focusing on their "animalistic" nature, …. Characters appear less human when not named, and appearing in groups, such that viewers are less likely to connect and identify with them. It's rare to find films in which viewers suggest they are able to identify with the villains. (Wilkins 14)

Moreover, Jarmakani argues by saying that: "Rather than looking at the sheikh characters imply as one version of a common […] hero, I understand him as a complex signifier of the productive fantasies of freedom and of an ambivalent engagement with the rhetoric of freedom and equality that structures popular and official discourse surrounding the U, S, -led war on terror" (995).

In fact, the "Arab problem is with the media that perpetuate misunderstanding through misrepresentation. Arabs have asserted their rights to question their portrayals by writers, artists, and others who have unfairly associated their images with aggression,

villainy, and brutality" (Palmer 139). The Arabs now have to assert their rights again to challenge media and cinematic caricatures.

3.2.2. The impact of Arabs' Image in the American Media and Cinema on Arab-Americans.

The Arab-Americans are other victims of the politicized cinema and the circulated stereotypes. As a result, the Arab-Americans' suffering is increasing on a daily basis being the close representatives of the enemy/terrorist: the Arab. Generally, the Arabs are known to the American people through the cinema's lenses most of the time. No clear vision is provided by the media in general and movies in particular about the real and human common place Arab. The absence of reasonable objective presentation of Arabs gives the way for the fanciful unreasonable conception to paint the identity of Arabs. The Arab-Americans are the direct receivers of the consequences of the American policy in the Middle East or any revengeful action by people angered by violent attacks on the United States. As a result, the first victims of the mobilized public opinion are the Arab-Americans. At the same target the finger is always pointed, in considering "the aftermath of the 19 April 1995 bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. Though no American of Arab descent was involved, they were instantly targeted as suspects. Speculative reporting, combined with decades of harmful stereotyping, resulted in more than 300 hate crimes against them" (Shaheen "Reel" 175). The relationship between hate crimes and stereotypes became a fact and not just speculations or fantasies, and the impact of the "terrorist Arab" image is the most harmful one. Samhan explains that ther is a clear relationship between:

> pervasiveness of negative images and stereotypes in the media and anti-Arab prejudice. Several studies have documented the ways in which the popular image of the Arab as villainous, greedy, blood-thirsty, or dangerous influences public opinion. What is key in this relationship is that bias and misinformation in public opinion is nearly always traceable to a political or ideological impetus. One of the reasons for the pervasiveness of such anti-Arab bias in public information is the ability of some pro-Israel activists in the U.S. to silence the debate about the Arab-Israeli conflict. (18)

In a direct impact on Arab-Americans, American movies raise fear from the Arab and Muslim communities in the United States and this leads to a critical situation the Arabs live. The movie "*Under the Siege* […] 'conveys the warning that the Arabs are coming to terrorize the U.S. and Arab-Americans are going to help them' […] one of the ideological assumptions found in the made-for-television, motion picture genre is that an Arab is a terrorist" (Mousa 78). It is in fact a direct call to accuse and scare the viewers who will look with an eye of doubt and hate towards Arabs and especially Arab-Americans, and consider them a constant threat.

Hence, in spite of being a small minority in the Unites States, many circles are targeting the Arab-Americans, especially "the Jewish community who started (…) warning about the 'imminent threat' of Muslim presence in America" (Haddad Y. 2). In addition to such allegations about the threatening presence of Muslims in the United States, stereotyping helped such allegations to surpassing daily bias to legislations of immigration. Stereotyping then does not only affect Arabs' and Muslims' image all over the world, but it directly harms their existence and tranquillity in the American

community on both near and far scales putting on stake the future of a whole posterity of Arab-Americans.

Targeting Islamic symbols and icons reflects the deep hatred to all what is Islamic and Arabic, as a direct impact of the demonized Arab and Muslim image and misrepresentation, and transformed into violent attacks on Arab-Americans' properties, religious sites, and innocent citizens. Therefore, this leads to "a recurrence of nativism, with the Muslim community experiencing the legal and social discrimination Japanese-Americans suffered during World War II when they were interned for the sake of 'public safety'" (Moore 104). Besides,

> FBI initiated a surveillance campaign. Typically, FBI agents would visit Arabs and Arab-Americans during the early morning hours, and often would initiate questioning by stating that they had reason to believe that the person was a member of a subversive organization. While it is perfectly legal within the United States to refuse to answer such questions, many went along with the agents out of ignorance or out of the feeling that they had nothing to hide. According to the lawyers of many of those harassed, the FBI agents would demand answers and often told the individuals that they did not need a lawyer to answer questions. Neighbours, employers, and friends of such individuals were often interrogated as well, creating webs of suspicion within Arab communities. (Fischbach 90)

The author Ali, testifies about being himself a victim of prejudgments intensified by media. He was accused of terrorism immediately after hearing the news of the attacks by his schoolmate: The "newscaster quickly began speculating on international terrorism when suddenly the boy to my right turned toward me and

shouted, '*You knew this was going to happen, didn't you*?' Shocked, I did not even know how to respond, and I waited for one of my peers—or my teacher—to come to my defense. But nobody did" (Ali 1035). Ali adds explaining his shock and convictions about this deeply ingrained hate and revengeful reaction of his "fellow" Americans:

> I have often wondered how this latent distrust existed within my classmate and potentially, by virtue of their acquiescence, within the rest of my class. The boy's instantaneous response to the shocking and horrific images was to assume that I, because I was a Muslim, must have had something to do with the attacks. We had been friends for years, but the emotional outrage he expressed at that moment was not reflective of his previous interactions with me. Rather, it was most likely the product of years of stereotypical media depictions of Muslims—and before that, Arabs—as violent, uncivilized, and inherently opposed to Western ideals. (Ali 1035)

Despite the humiliating, falsely fabricated, and unfair non-stop vilifying pictures about Arabs and Muslims in both Arab and Western worlds, this complete and incomprehensive silence is total and deserves questioning. Blame should not be put on Hollywood movie-producers but on Arab public opinion and officials. Because of lack of any sort of pressure by the Arabs, Hollywood portrayal of Arabs never stops or changes into a positive one without efforts and pressures by Arabs, and mainly Arab-Americans.

Another reason for the perpetuation of such stereotyping is lack of presence of Arab-Americans in Hollywood neither in performance nor in production. So, the invisibility of Arab-Americans in public life is coupled with their invisibility in popular culture's industry. Such absence is contributing to the continuous vulgar and insidious

representation while no counterpart is found to provide a true and different picture of that of Hollywood. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) growing efforts to communicate with film-producers on the subject of stereotyping is among the "ongoing informal and formal meetings with movie executives (…) Such sessions enable community members to more readily explain to producers the negative effects misperceptions of Arabs have on their children as well as on American public opinion and policy" (Shaheen "Reel" 191). However, such efforts are not enough.

To conclude with, being the target of misrepresentations touching Arab people and their culture, traditions and what concerns their life and civilizations, especially through news media and cinema, the Arabs either inside or outside the United States, underwent all kinds of discrimination and rejection. As a reaction, Arab-Americans have been engaged in a cultural, political and literary activism to face misrepresentation.

Part Two: The Rise of an Arab-American Cultural, Political and Literary Activism

Chapter One

Chapter One: The Development of Arab-American Cultural and Political Activism

The presence of Arabs in America was difficult and full of challenges, but their cultural and political activism has started as early as their presence in the United States. Their pioneer activists in different cultural and political domains have paved the way for many political and cultural movements that contributed to the shaping of an active life in the United States through reflecting their community's cultural and political preoccupations, in the face of their distorted image and the multiple facets of segregation.

Despite the variety and divergence within the Arab-American society, the Arab-Americans tried to contribute to the general mood of exulting cultural belonging by reviving the refined Arab cultural traits like music and food, and showing political interest in homeland matters and community's political requirements for survival. They founded a variety of political organizations and tried to have an active role inside the most effective political institutions.

With the larger numbers and "imported tastes of more recent waves of immigrants, a new pan-Arab identity emerged. Storefront mosques, neat shops, and Muslim bakeries began appearing alongside liquor stores and nightclubs" (Qazwini 111). Being a distinctive ethnic group in its attachment and great affection by the home country events, this contributes to the Arab-American dilemma while attempting to survive in America. Perhaps "no other American ethnic group is so affected by political and military events abroad. This is both a boon and a bane to Arab Americans-a boon because it can draw attention to them despite their small size and lack of cohesiveness, a bane because it can make them suffer repercussions for events they had absolutely no

role in shaping" (Pulcini 51). Hence, a part of being Arab-American according to a historically spread belief, is "to think in a more sustained and in a different way about American foreign policy in the Middle East. For better or worse, this is a major source of Arab-American identity for many, and it is this historically unique aspect of Arab American identity" (Aboul-Ela 21).

1.1. Arab-American Cultural Matters

Arabs' culture in the United States in general, and in Detroit in particular, being America's largest and highly concentrated population by Arab immigrants, flourished within a complex relationship between the multi-nationality community that develops a unique identity which swayed between many nationalities, places of belonging and tradition. The national discourse, however, was strong in keeping each Arab faithful to his nation of origin. Such a sense of nationalism hindered the total fusion of Arabs into one Arab culture, it kept the individual sticking to the traditions left behind. On the other hand, the need for a stable existence within a foreign culture forced the Arab-Americans to develop ways and strategies to maintain and at the same time adopt the surrounding conditions of life to their own needs. Sometimes it was conducted by self-representation to the outer world and other times by analyzing the usefulness and profitability of the surrounding American life. The tradition of "self-representation" was visibly found in the profitable trading in the various Arab cultural products. Detroit, for instance was flooded by Arabic language videos, television and radio programs, restaurants and many other commodities. Non-Arab Detroiters became familiar with different styles of Arab cooking (Shryock 34-5). Self- representation, then, was reflected in different ways based on daily life activities and social and economic details. Generally, "they maintained their Arab culture through food and its presentation, the

Arabic language, religion (Christianity and Islam), dance, music, literature, philosophy, poetry, and storytelling" (Boosahda xii).

Self-representing and belonging was smoothly reflected in preserving such cultural traits. The Arab Christians were more open to the mainstream through Arab culture representation in the different cultural manifestation like American national ceremonies and holidays, by presenting Arab music and dancing like the case of festivals of nationalities, where each group tried to well-represent his culture of origin. On the other hand, though their presence was recent, their involvement in the various social and humanitarian activities was pioneer, especially in the 1950s. Arab girls were smoothly inscribing as the Red Cross members -as illustrated by pictures -in (Boosahda 161-70). Being part of the social and cultural life enhanced their contribution to the American communal life in general. However, this contribution and active life were rarely mentioned or brought to light outside the Arab-American tribunes and sources. This exclusion led to the invisibility of Arab-Americans in the American society.

Food is always among the distinguishable cultural attributes of Arab-Americans that marks their community. For Arab-Americans food is a way of life and more than just a tool for survival. Inviting people for dinner, and the way they are received, in addition to the careful way of choice and preparation of recipes are a matter of know-how. Moreover, the renowned hospitality of Arabs over food attracts even non-Arabs to accept invitations and enjoy Arab recipes. Furthermore, thanks to the distinguishable deliciousness of the Arab recipes are adopted by the American restaurants like falafel, Baba Ghannuj, Tabbuli and many others (Boosahda 172), in other words it is an early Americanization of Arab food.

Mt. Lebanon to Vermont: Autobiography of George Haddad (1916) is filled with Syrian recipes. The author did not just talk about the food traditions or presented the Arab food culture to the American people in the early times of involvement in the mainstream society, but he even gave a very detailed description of the major Syrian recipes with the exact measures and ingredients. This pioneer initiative reflects the active role played by early immigrants such as George Haddad and many others, and their commitment and awareness to preserve and revive the Arab culture, especially food as an important cultural trait for the Arab people and family traditions. In the whole Part II *"Syrian Recipes"* of his autobiography, he gave plenty of recipes and the following is an example of a *Meat Balls a la Beyrouth* recipe:

> Beef: 2 pounds. Potatoes: 4. Eggs 4. Parsley: 2 brunches. Parmesan Cheese: 2 tablespoons. Butter 4 tablespoons.
>
> Boil and mash the potatoes and mix with the minced meat, adding the eggs, cheese and parsley, and onions for a change. Season up to taste, then make into flat balls. Soak two slices of bread (no crust) and crumble it in the hand, then dip into it the balls of meat, and fry in butter. Serve hot. (Haddad G. 158)

Maintaining tradition and family records, on the other hand, was a strategy to keep links to origins. The elders usually encourage children to keep family records and history, diaries, food traditions from disappearance amidst the huge and rich American cultural pool. The descendants of the early Arab-American are generally were proud and they loved to celebrate Arab as well as American holidays. Holidays "are often an opportunity to get together as a family and to reinforce shared cultural and religious values with food, dance, music and conversation. The choice of how, when, and which

holidays to celebrate can identify the degree of assimilation, religion, and cultural traditions that a family follows" (Kayyali 115).

On another side, Arab-Americans could be divided into two categories according to the linguistic distinctions. There is the English speaking category that is known for its attraction to the American life. On the other hand, there is second part which consists of the Arab speaking category. This latter is traditionally bound to sticking to the old ways, among which Arabic is cherished and preserved. However, despite the different styles of life between the Arab and English speaking Arab styles of cultural productions, these both styles are strongly attached to the idea of national communities. The English speaking category, still, is deliberately adjusted to the idea of the ethnicity multiculturalism and cultural diversity that denotes the American mainstream society. Its objective is the formation of a new identity that equates being 'Arab' and 'American.' The result is in fact a double rather than unique/ hybrid culture, as it is intended in the first place, leading to a kind of contradiction in a way of one's identity reception, being attached, on one hand, to the public culture while having the impression of preserving the Arab one, on the other hand. Additionally, the place of origin is always present in the social concerns of Arab-Americans; the idea of nostalgia to the ancestral place, estrangement in the new environment, and the enduring obligations being the leitmotiv of the Arab immigrant experience. Ironically, the trans-nationalism, that threatens such sense of belonging, leads in fact to wash the minor and diverse cultural fragmentations (Shryock 35-7).

Arab-American beliefs and style of life are different from that of the mainstream society. At the same time, Arab-American were easily "immersed in the in modern institutions: nation-states, public schools" (Shryock 39). By contributing to and adopting from surrounding environment, Arab-Americans are steadily taking part in

rebuilding and becoming full-fledged part of the larger and changing mainstream community. As a result, energetic circles to reflect and represent the various Arab cultures and discuss Arab-American identity are spread all over the United States, both in big cities and small and distant towns. College students "with half or quarter Arab blood, some three or four generations removed from the Middle East (usually Syria or Lebanon), suddenly found value in being Arab American and reclaimed their ethnicity by visiting the Middle East to learn Arabic" (Salaita "Anti-Arab" 76).

A great importance has been given to language learning mainly for English and Arabic within the Arab-American community. Sometimes knowing the language, was a condition for being accepted as wife or husband. At the early years of immigration, the children used to get English in the regular American schools while Arabic was passed smoothly and privately at home in the form of small groups of pupils. However, with the growth of their numbers, there was an urgent need for creating Arabic schools that were held after the American school time. The love for Arabic was great and the family wedding and other social gatherings were a great opportunity in which colloquial Arabic and proverbs were exchanged, in addition to the revival of the story telling tradition and the homeland's myths and news. Social gatherings and activities like the preparation of cakes for weddings and helping each other in the preparation of some food ingredients that need the group effort to be achieved, helps the strengthening of the family ties in addition to the surviving of Arabic as the first sign of their unity. Dancing, music, poetry reciting are frequent activities that go with such occasions, too. Such occasions are also a special moment for what is known as the arranged marriage while the families, friends and acquaintances help in choosing husbands and wives for their children (Boosahda 104-5, 108**)**.

Besides, the awareness and the eagerness for reviving the Arab culture are embodied in many cultural manifestations and activities. Arab-American awareness of the necessity of preserving Arabic language and culture urged some Arab businessmen to produce some local audio-visual programs and magazines to promote Arabic language and be the tunnel of defusing news and matters concerning the Arab-American community (Shryock 39). The Arabic language has been and seen as the strongest indicator of Arab ethnic identity and the common binding tie between Arab-Americans. However, the variety of Arabic accents created a little difficulty in communication, especially between Arabs coming from the Arab Mashreq (inhabitants of Arabian Peninsula) and the Arab Maghreb (inhabitants of North Africa). Consequently, and in many cases, English became the favorite means of communication to avoid confusion and embarrassment (Haddad Y. 7).

Before the 1967 Arab-Israeli War, Arab-Americans, who were overwhelmingly Christian and who had the tendency to assimilate and accept integration, they used to maintain the minimum of Arab cultural traits and traditions like the Arab cuisine and raising children, and family ties. Yet, after 1967, many Arab-Americans returned to, and reclaimed a sense of nationalism, especially with the increasing number of Muslims and new Christian arrivals who showed more awareness of keeping a distance from total assimilation (Salaita “Anti-Arab” 75). Participating in the various ceremonies held in streets and wedding occasions is accompanied by dance. Many musical groups participated in different national and regional ceremonies such as the Syrian-Lebanese Folk Dance group that participated in the 1959 Independence Day ceremony. Arab dancing was a favorite entertainment not only for Arab-Americans but it attracts even non-Arabs who enjoy also the famous Syrian and Lebanese “debbka” that is considered as a cultural trait and a facet of the richness of Arab music and its transcending national

nature leading to its fusion in the American culture of mainstream society. Non Arabs dare to dance at the attraction of "debbka" rhythms. American musician have reached worldwide fame like the jazz musician Emil Haddad and Maxine George as an Orchestra based songs performer while Anthony J. 'Tony' Agbay (1925–88) forty years, or more, musician in bands throughout New England. He had an 18-piece band called *Tony Agbay and the Continentals*, and played for charitable benefits (Boosahda 154, 185-6). Musical representation of Arab rich and flexible culture proves the ability and willingness of Arab-Americans for integration, especially for Christian families who showed an openness to adopt Western culture and adapt to the surrounding culture.

Arab-American culture remained far from academic research and analysis and handling for a long time prior to 9/11, and left invisible like the Arab community itself. By 9/11, things changed and more interest was focused on Arab cultural production as a result of domestic and foreign policies following the need for knowing more about the 'enemy within.' Nevertheless, this recent interest about the "Arab American cultural production continues to sit largely beyond the scope of cultural criticism" (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 3) hampering its chance to reach more public and academic interest that might give it a recognized position on the general cultural sphere.

2.1.1. Arab-American Women's Position in Arab-American Society

Though the general public opinion about the Arab and Muslim women is deeply rooted in the old stereotype of being submissive, home-closed and deprived from the right of contribution to the work market; statistics reformulates this stigma proving that Arab women in America are among the most active ethnic groups in the field of work, especially highly educated category who benefit from larger opportunities for employment. Despite the Arab cultural and religious factors that limit, even slightly, the

freedom of women in widening their work ambitions (Boosahda184), Arab women in America have been and still are luckier if compared to other minorities in advancing the rates of working women. Conversely, Arab women represent a rival to the white mainstream women rates about highly educated and highly professional posts, while Black and Hispanic women workers did not do much to improve their labor opportunities and overcome discrimination (Read 13, 14). A part of this advancement is due to the educational achievements they gradually obtained, in parallel to their white counterparts, and the holdover from the traditional and cultural norms that held women away off out-door labor for centuries. Additionally, there is a rapid growth of Arab-American women's role in economic activity.

As early as the existence of Arabs in America, women have actively participated in the various community activities, and took part in the voluntary work through subscription in social clubs and societies. They were helping in practical work for public good and contributing softly both to partial integration and the presentation of Arab culture like food, hospitality and other cultural traditions to the mainstream society. Such activity was partly present through fine sewing, lacework, and bead work. Handkerchief tatting was the main bead work to be best sold. Moreover, the role of women in the Arab-American family was strong enough to the extent that the woman controls the family earnings and the major family matters. Their role in fact, contradicted with the general spread idea in the American society that the Arab woman was considered inferior to man. The woman was at the same time a caring mother, a devoted wife while hardly contributing to the increasing and administrating family budget. Many husbands used to handle their wives all their earnings to manage according to the daily needs of the family. Moreover, the majority of women used to work out of the house as peddlers or teachers to help the family raise the family's

financing. Hence, the women had a leading role in enhancing both the family and community's economic development. Women involved themselves also in the different decisive matters as choosing wives and husbands for children, deciding which child stops studying and handle the family's business…children on the other hand were early involved in the raise of family earnings by leaving school for the purpose of carrying the family business or working outside after school time (Boosahda 86-7, 99, 141-3).

As early as 1930's not only men graduated from great universities but even women were by their sides competing with the other ethnic groups , and

> Among the early local women who graduated from college in the early to middle 1930s—when nationwide it was not popular for women to attend college—were teachers Martha Abdella (now Bates), Mary Saba, Malvina Mitchell, and, as a registered nurse, Bertha Peters (now Najemy). Nora Antoun graduated from the Fine Arts School at Carnegie Tech (now Carnegie Mellon University) in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, and transferred to New York University in New York City in the late 1930s and early 1940s. She, Nora Antoun Hakim, served on the Shrewsbury School Committee (1968–74) and on the Finance Committee (1976–88). (Boosahda 184)

Despite the vilified picture of the oppressed Arab woman soaked the mainstream media and popular culture in the United States, she proved herself as a wife, hard worker and ambitious competitor in all fields of work, education, social, literary and even political domains.

2.3. The Emergence of a Political Awareness

Political activism in its pure meaning surpasses the commitment to elections and expressing political opinions, but rather it is a crucial factor in uniting the small communities, trying to be visible and influencing the foreign policy. Though politically aware, but very few of them, the early arriving Arab immigrants did not reach the position of effective political position in the high organized American political machinery. It was partly due to their retarded coming and limited number, in addition to social and economic backwardness having as primary goal gaining a living and for many sending money home and even returning back. Their beginnings in politics were described as a mere political involvement rather than real political activism, in addition to the fact that their aim of activity was rather for social and economic ends. Yet these activities stress their awareness of issues that concerned them which "were mix of those pertaining to conditions in the US (such as immigration, naturalization, and citizenship) and events occurring in the old country (such as involuntary conscription under the Ottomans […] They founded organizations and clubs to deal with these issues, as well as to maintain social bonds within the community" (David 848-9).

The fact that they were dispersed throughout the country, in addition to the linguistic differences, and the factor of coming from different countries of origin, adding to the division and non-unity between Arab-Americans who were usually influenced by the political and social differences they brought with them. This factor affected the interests of Arab-Americans who used to compete to work for, and prefer to fight for the political social interests like national security of their countries rather than being united to defend one cause. Consequently, in time of crises the Arabs from one county used to gather to protest against the foreign attacks on their country rather than

gathering to defend other Arab countries' interests. So, many of those emigrated after the Second World War brought with them "diverse national identities, developed by the nation state to inspire their loyal citizens so they would defend national security against outside enemies. For immigrants, their attachments to these national identities are continually tested by events in their home countries and by American foreign policy towards these countries" (Haddad Y. 7). This reality may be considered a factor that stressed the disunity of the Arab community and the political invisibility added to the already invisible Arab culture and community as a whole.

Nevertheless, there were successful ones, though being a rarity, like in the case of political activists that should not be neglected and have to be granted acknowledgement for fighting for the Arab existence in the United States, despite the unbearable peddling life hardships that faced the majority of early arrivals. Some of the Arab-American social, political and cultural activist cases started as early as the beginning of the twentieth century. Early emigrants from Syria, Lebanon and Palestine though adapted to the American social life, have maintained loyalty to their Arab origin with its culture and feeling of belonging. For instance, Wadi' Said, Edward Said' father was one of the early Arabs to contribute to the flourishing of Arab-American culture in the United States. He even helped in the publishing of the early two major Arab journals edited by the Levantine immigrants at the turn of the twentieth century (Hafez 77).

For instance, Said's political activism in favor of Palestinian cause is primarily nourished by his personal experience as an expelled Palestinian of the 1948 Israeli invasion. As a Palestinian refugee in the United States, Said's political attachment to his country of origin has greatly influenced his intellectual carrier in favor of emphasizing grievances against his people and criticizing the American foreign policy's favoritism of Israel (Aboul-Ela 27), and this "illustrates a typically Arab American dissident

relationship to dominate American perceptions of Palestinian dispossession" (Aboul-Ela 27). On the other hand, the events in the Middle East influence immediately the social, intellectual, and political life of Arab-Americans being the direct subjects of the American ethnic policies of surveillance concerning national security being linked to the Arab people. Therefore, "the physical presence of the Arab body in America creates a conflict that the individual can only resolve either by 'mentally dividing' or by living in 'unresolved sorrow'" (Aboul-Ela 29) towards what is happening in the home country and its relation to the United States.

Though not visible, and the majority of whom were Christians, Arab-American personalities were present at the various political institutions. The political involvement in parties and nominations for elections developed widely through the short history of immigration. So, they often worked as mayors, members of the House of Representatives and their involvement developed to become members of the presidents' cabinets as Boosahda states, a number of Arab origin politicians and journalists who reached higher positions in different posts among which Helen Thomas who repeatedly embarrassed the American politicians by questioning them about the foreign policy in the Middle East:

> Donna Shalala, former secretary of health and human services, who served under President William J. Clinton; and Rep. John Elias Baldacci (Maine), Rep. Pat Danner (Missouri), Rep. Chris John (Louisiana), Rep. Ray LaHood (Illinois), Toby Moffett (Connecticut), Rep. Nick Rahall (West Virginia), Darrel Issa (California), and former Rep. Mary Rose Oakar (Ohio), who served sixteen years in the House of Representatives. Helen Thomas, dean of the White House press corps, has covered eight presidents since 1961. (184)

However, despite the inherited loyalty to America that is passed from one generation to another, yet by the occupation of Palestine by Israeli forces and the 1967 War, Arab-Americans, Muslims and Christians, were outraged by the tragedies and atrocities that have befallen their home relatives. What was even shocking was not only the abrupt victory by Israel, but the support given to Israel by their government, mass media, and ordinary people. Concomitant with "this support was the vilification of the Arabs […] Arab Americans felt a shock and revulsion that their country would depict them, their relatives and ancestors, in such a way. The feeling of belonging to American society was shattered as Arab-Americans were cast as the vilified 'Other'" (David 843). The dehumanization, demonization and denigration which were associated with Arabs, appalled the Arab-Americans and led them to question the American foreign policy and even call for reforms in this policy which sides unconditionally with Israel. They became more sensitive to the Arab heritage and embarrassed by the stereotypes that deform the Arabs' history and culture.

Intellectuals, also, were active in defending almost the only and unique cause by excellence that unites all the Arabs which is the Palestinian issue. Since the occupation of Palestine by Israeli forces many Arab- American voices emerged to explain the point of view of the Arab side about the right of Palestinians to get a fair recognition in the midst of over-exaggerated image of victimization of Jews and Israelis spread in the United States by the Zionist activists. For instance, during the foundation of the *AAUG* as a reaction to the 1967 war, their founding members expressed their aim by saying: "We believed there was an overwhelming need for the 'dissemination of accurate and scientific knowledge about the Arab world' and that providing the public with the necessary information for an informed assessment of critical Arab and US relations would have a positive effect on American public opinion" (Aruri 34-5). Such

declaration stresses the active role of Arab-American intellectuals to keep abreast with the surrounding circles that work hard to manipulate the American public opinion and turn it against the Arabs. Many cultural and political activities were held by this vibrant association such as annual conventions, publishing books and sheets in addition to the special reports and finally the publication of the widely spread journal, *The Arab Studies Quarterly*. One of the goals expected from this association was informing of the American public about the unbalanced policies of their government towards the Arab world. However, these attempts did not reach a lobby formation unless the founders adapt the elite and mainstream view of the world which is not the case of the Arab-American activists. Therefore, their efforts did not achieve any influence on the public policies of American government that was a strong ally of Israel. The publishing activities of the association were in fact addressing more the local Arab community and academic and larger readership with no real impact on public opinion or foreign policies (Aruri 36).

Though the association did not really have a great impact on mainstream intellectual and political sphere, it succeeded to a certain extent to unite intellectuals and activists, helped by its foundation in the middle of the decades of civil rights and anti – war movements, and gave a shape and apparatus to the Arab-American activism. Moreover, this organized forum seemed to attract the largest grouping of Arab intellectuals and activists to be created almost anywhere. Active groups such as Third World Progressive activists and anti-war and civil rights leaders were frequently invited to attend and participate in the *AAUG* conventions (Aruri 39). Besides, "ethno-political activism has become a central element in defining who is and is not a 'real' Arab American" (David 835). To be involved in issues concerning the Arab community, is a key factor in defining who the person is and to what extent he is committed and proud

of being Arab and American. On one hand, by defending issues of the Arab nations, he is an Arab, and by defending the community's matters and trying to direct and contribute to reforming the foreign policies of America, he is a successful American citizen. By staying, on the other hand, far away from that struggle, this leads to the disunity and loss of community's rights and individual's freedoms.

Moreover, many themes of the *AAUG* focus generally on analyzing and questioning the American media coverage and depiction of the 1967 War and the Middle East at large from a typical Western view. Other focus was put on the general stereotyping enriched by the Orientalist advocates, which spread in the American circles of academia. Other AAUG active role is the publishing works devoted to cause defense and injustice revelation to counteract the huge machinery of propaganda against Arabs and their Palestinian cause embodied in the 1974, *The Civil Rights of Arab-Americans: The Special Measures*, which attacks the unfair policies towards Arab-Americans and their culture during the Nixon administration by using special measures to deal with Arab-Americans either temporary visitors, or permanent residents. Measures may include the FBI surveillance, and gathering information about them as 'potential terrorists' or the restriction of immigrants' quota of Arab origin, in addition to the intended restriction of permanent residence status, given especially to the active organizations' leaders who are showing rejection of American policies towards the Arabs and the obvious bias towards Israel (Pulcini 35-6-8). These "frontal criticisms of 'Operation Arab' revealed a new willingness on the part of many well-educated and articulate Arab Americans to adopt a more militant stance vis-à-vis the federal government and to engage in confrontational 'minority rights' political activism" (Pulcini 38). Arab-Americans "have started to organize themselves in a mass-based membership organization to promote their rights and raise their voices on issues of

concern to them. They have had some successes. They have mobilized a number of Arab-Americans and raised their consciousness" (Jabara and Stork 36). Put simply:

> Perhaps the most salutary response is to challenge ethnic exclusion and nullify the political source of prejudice by using the existing strengths of the Arab American community. One such strength is the human resource potential of the Arab American community, including high levels of achievement and the integration into business, academia, the professions, and elected office of individuals of calibre and respectability, who can help build political strength on the local level, where ethnic constituencies count. (Samhan 27)

By the turn of the twenty first century, and with the 9/11 aftermath, as the *Patriot Act* (2001), that restricts the civil rights and facilitates the detention of any suspected Arab on the American soil, and such "domestic environment, then, is one that terrifies many Arab Americans and keeps them from politics, especially Palestinian politics, because the fear of being harassed or arrested is more than mere paranoia" (Salaita "Anti-Arab" 79-80). No Arab-American could loudly criticize what is called "war on terror" or any American foreign policy measures against Arab and Islamic countries without being accused of siding with the enemy, as the Bush's administration "overreacted to any suspicion of a Muslim-associated threat" (Ahmed Akbar, 215). Any intolerable reaction not in favor of foreign policy, in free intervention in Afghanistan and Iraq or the unconditioned bias towards Israel is pointed at as inimical to America or rather anti-Semitic. Detention, or more serious measures like losing the right for citizenship, could be the result of those who dare showing their discontent with American policies taken against any organizations or country accused of "terrorism" even the Palestinian party, Hamas. Hence, after living for a long time, invisible but have

at least some free space for expression, the Arab-Americans became voiceless but visible. The close restriction imposed on Arab-American life freedoms, has led to a further restriction on the political activist role the Arab-Americans may be devoted to in order to improve their social and political rights and position, or to argue against the repeated intervention of the United States in the Middle East. As the case of all other ethnic groups, race is linked to a particular group "depending on the political moment, Arab- and Muslim-American face comparable derogatory tropes as have African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos, and Asian-Americans as various historical moments and similar discourses of national crisis have been mobilized to legitimize the enactment to criminalize and deport Arabs and Muslims" (Alsultany 6). However, in contrast to other minorities, "Arab-Americans are often racialized primarily according to religion and politics" (Alsultany 19).

Hence, to be active, necessitates the direct involvement in any political novelty on the national and international level that affects directly or indirectly the Arab-Americans, Arabs in general or even humanity in general. While siding with other people's issues one would have the same support if he is in trouble. Political and more precisely, ethno-political, activism is a crucial preventive attitude to make one's voice heard before falling a vulnerable victim in a country where powers and interests survive through constant struggle. In the case of Arab-Americans, issue of Palestinians could have united the Arab-Americans long since the beginning of the Palestinian/Israeli conflict. Despite the efforts of the few organizations working for that end, division and slow reactions still shape the political involvement of Arab- Americans in the political harsh game. Activism "as defined by in this construction of Arab American primarily focuses issues such as the Palestinian-Israeli conflict, the events in Iraq and issues surrounding civil liberties in the post-September 11th era" (David 835).

The reaction of Arab-Americans and Muslims in general towards the American foreign policy in the Middle East, especially after the 9/11, differs from one individual to another. Yet, there are three broad categories; one category completely denounces the military intervention in both Afghanistan and Iraq, and accuses the government of creating excuses to raid on innocent people's homes for economic and strategic interests. Another category allies with the governments' attitudes and puts the blame completely on the Arabs and Muslim extremists for what is happening to their countries, as a counterattack by the United States as a self-defense reaction. The third category is posed in a middle position by criticizing both the American government and Arab and Muslim countries for such violent attacks on both American and Middle Eastern peoples. They believe that foreign policy leaders should be careful about their violent overreaction towards actions done by individual that lead to the punishment of the whole region (Yenigun 58-59).

As a matter of fact, division did and still does mark the political life of Arab-Americans. While the descendants of early immigrants accuse the politically active new immigrant comers, of giving more interest in their activities to the old country matters at the expense of day-to-day problems of present Arab-American community, the new arrivals accuse the descendants of the early immigrants of becoming apolitical and deeply immersed in the American way of life and denying the Arab cultural heritage, and consequently excluded from being "real" Arab-American. These distinctions do not work in favor of strong political union that meets the expectation of a highly marginalized community. Therefore, the "absence of a shared sense of commitment has proven to be enough to cause large divides in the community" (David 855-6).

The pioneer cultural and political activists, though divided in opinion and political views, have contributed to establishing a voice that reflects the Arab and Arab-

American issues. This cultural activism has been accompanied with a nascent literary activism, consequently paved the way for many contemporary literary productions that represented and contributed to the development of a very distinguished literary trends presenting the Arab-American community and their cultural preoccupations.

Chapter Two

Chapter Two: The Development of Arab-American Literature

The literary production of Arab-Americans varies and differs as long as the Arab community varies according its cultural, religious and ideologist groups. There is no unified genre for writing but rather it is famed with plurality. Literature being the expressive facet of the Arab community, it reflects the rich and multiple preoccupations and ambitions of elements of society. The evolution of Arab-American society witnesses a side by side evolution of its literature. This latter keeps abreast with the community issues and changes which occur in the surrounding environment and influences gradually, and undoubtedly, the literary productions of the very writers of the community. Literature, being a text cannot be looked at as mere words composing novels and poems, but rather a reflection of everyday experience, especially for minority communities. In other words, the development of Arab-American literature mirrors and pursues the steps of the changing community with all its ups and downs.

2.1. The Arab-American Literary Beginnings

From the beginning, the Arab-Americans struggled to create a voice for them through publishing newspapers in Arabic language between 1890 and 1940, which are considered as a very significant archive of American literature (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 6). Unfortunately, though being a fertile and a source of records about the early immigration experiences, the first anthology to collect these pioneer poetry writing has not been published till 1988 (Naaman 266), missing a huge opportunity to be introduced to the general public. However, women were among the first contributors in the development of the Arab-American literary movements, Afifa Karam (1883-1925) was the first Arab woman immigrant to write a book and to write about Arab-American matters in the Journal *El Hoda* published in New York (Hoyt 9).

The Mahjar [or place of immigration in Arabic] movement refers generally to the literary works produced both in South and North of the American continent during the early years of the twentieth century. The branch of the Mahjar situated in the South was founded in Brazil. This branch was reluctant in producing innovations in literature if compared to the Northern one. Conversely, writers of the Northern branch, who were situated in New York, were more eager to challenge the Arab cultural norms and were helped by the surrounding liberal ideals nourishing the cultural life at that era of Romantic and Transcendentalist influences. This "avant-guarde" movement was culminated by the foundation of *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* (The Pen Association) in early 1920's (Ludescher 95).

By the turn of the twentieth century, corresponding with the second major wave of Arab immigrant to the United States, a growing literary grouping started to achieve literary space among the huge development of literary achievements within both the Arab and American spheres. The cultural scene in their home country influenced the Levantine intellectuals in America, around the 1920's, in founding *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah* which became later the most important, influential and innovative Arab literary movement in the modern Arab literary history. This association that was under the leadership of the renowned author Gibran Khalil Gibran, and was founded at the same year of founding the Diwan group in Egypt in 1920, had a major effect on the Arab literary achievements in the Arab world, concerning thematic and literary choices of that era that were heading towards the romantic tendency, as the general reaction against the neo-classicism trend in the Arab literary scene. Moreover, its influence was regarded as a leading role in shaping literary era in the general Arab writings for many years later. The reasons behind its impact can be linked to the fact that it discussed matters were wider than those of the local Arab literary works, focusing on national and

patriotic themes, in addition to large chances of the Mahjar writers who had a close and direct contact with the Western literary circles mainly romantic works and authors. The great and durable influence of the association continued to shape the literary Arab works in and outside the United States, till reaching the foundation of the Appolo Group in 1932, and beyond, which is considered as the first pan-Arab Romantic Movement (Hafez 77, 78).

Though, the majority of Mahjar writers, on the other hand, used Arabic as the language of expressing their literary talents, three of them preferred to utilize English in order to reach a wider readership; Ameen Rihani, Gibran Khalil Gibran, and Mikhail Naimy. Ameen Rihani wrote many collections of poetry and essays, translations, travelogues and a novel titled *The Book of Khalid* (1911) (Ludescher 96). In Chapter II "*The City of Baalbek*," Rihani mentions the failure of Arabs who return home after being tired of peddling life in the Unites States:

> On the meadows near the stream, is always to be found a group of Baalbekians bibbing a drink and swaying languidly to the mellow strains of the lute and the monotonous melancholy of Arabic song. Among such, one occasionally meets with a native who, failing as peddler or merchant in America, returns to his native town, and, utilising the chips of English he picked up in the streets of the New-World cities, becomes an interpreter and guide to English and American tourists. (38)

The Book of Khalid is the first Arab-American novel in English, which deals the peddling life of early Arab immigrants and their struggling with the lack of communication due to the language difficulty. It is a novel "not about an Arab American, but an Arab immigrant's misadventures in turn-of-the-century New York"

(Orfalea 122). Gibran, on the other hand, has published seven works in English among them *The Prophet* (1923) (Ludescher 96-7). This work gave Gibran a voice and fame amongst the American literary arena. Though not too much, Gibran became noticeable for his English written works if compared to many other pioneers in Arab-American writing. Nevertheless, he was not given the merits he deserved, as such a great writer, by the mainstream academic and literary circles. These are some lines from the beginning of his masterpiece *The Prophet* which faithfully depicts the homesickness of early immigrants leaving Lebanon and other Arab countries to America:

> But as he descended the hill, a sadness came upon him, and he thought in his heart: How shall I go in peace and without sorrow? Nay, not without a wound in the spirit shall I leave this city. Long were the days of pain I have spent within its walls, and long were the nights of aloneness; and who can depart from his pain and his aloneness without regret? (*Gibran* 65)

Naimy, on the other hand, wrote solely one work in English; the religious parable *The Book of Mirdad* (1948) (Ludescher 97). In this book which is full of religious connotations and biblical references, he compares the dilemmas of assimilation into the American mainstream society to stories in the Bible:

> In the course of centuries, however, the Ark began, by and by, to accept donations from the faithful far in excess of its needs. As a result it grew richer and richer every year in lands, in silver and gold, and in precious stones. A few generations ago when one of the Nine had just passed away a stranger came to the gates and asked to be admitted into the community. (Naimy 6)

Here, he compares the Arabs who ask for assimilation and integration into the racist mainstream society to the stranger who was not accepted for greedy reasons:

> According to the ancient traditions of the Ark, which had never been violated, the stranger should have been accepted at once, being the first to ask for admittance immediately following upon a companion's death. But the Senior, as the abbot of the Ark was called, chanced at the time to be a willful, worldly-minded and hard-hearted man. He did not like the stranger's appearance who was naked, famished and covered with wounds; and he told him that he was unworthy of admittance into the community. (Naimy 6)

Many of these early literary works has been written in English, while majority were written in Arabic. In fact, early achievements remained obscure to and hidden from the general public, and reached only a limited readership (Naaman 266). Furthermore, it somehow contributed to keeping the misleading stereotypical image spread in the Western culture about the Arab culture as backward and ambiguous.

By the end of the WWI, the literary works began to deal with issues of assimilation process that shaped the first and second phases of immigrations. Works like George Haddad's *Mt. Lebanon to Vermont* (1916) which is about an immigrant success story, but in fact it reflects the author's love for the new country (Ludescher 98-9). Throughout a great share of his autobiography, Haddad praises the city of Rutland from its organized streets to its highly advanced factories as in Chapter V, "*The New Home in America*" where he gives a detailed description of daily life activities and business matters. It seems he liked every corner of Rutland:

> The business section of Rutland is very good. As it is on a level, in the Otter Creek valley, the traveler arriving in Rutland can see from the station wide streets, well paved and so brilliantly lighted as to remind me of Paris. There are many large stores, especially the ones on Merchants Row, Center and West streets, and the clerks are for the most part good-natured and cheerful. (Haddad G. 122)

At the end of his book, Haddad shows his pride and happiness of being a successful man and a citizen of Rutland and having the opportunity to live the United States: "All this is why I liked Rutland and settled here and I thank God my children were born here and are getting their education in Rutland" (Haddad G. 133).

The Rainbow Ends (1942), as an autobiography, recounts the experience of its writer Ashad Hawie in the American army in WWI. *Syrian Yankee* (1943) by Salom Rizk is another striking autobiography dealing with Rizk's eagerness to get the American citizenship though being born in Syria but has an American mother. After surviving the hardships of the Great Depression (1929) and the WWII he proved to himself and to the world that he merits citizenship as any American ideal hard worker. Types of these writings hoped as a result to show the worthiness of obtaining the American citizenship after the great sacrifices in WWI, and fighting side by side with other citizens. Another goal is to convince the Arab-Americans to be Americans and be proud of it. Nevertheless, the efforts of convincing other community members to try assimilation, some writers themselves, as many other Arabs were denied citizenship like the case of George Dow. These matters frequently appear in their works (Ludescher 99).

By the beginning of the 1990's, various independent organizations and periodicals contributed to the collection and publication of an important amount of literary production. *Al Jadid: A Review and Record of Arab Culture and Arts* is an illustration of prominent publication that shed light on many literary works and criticism. The journal *Mizna: Prose, Poetry and Art Exploring Arab America* (1999) is another contribution by the playwright Kathryn Haddad to publicize both established and emerging writers. Many years before, RAWI (1992), *Radius of Arab American Writers Incorporated*, the anagrams "rawi" also means storyteller in Arabic, while creating a professional writers network, it creates by the end, a community for Arab-American writers (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 7). Such organisms succeeded, even partly, to unify and keep back some of the isolation and invisibility of Arab-Americans within their invisible community.

Themes about nostalgia, Arab culture and Arab identity were the early ones to be tackled in past Arab-American writing (Naaman 266). Besides the recurring themes of immigration stories that have shaped the Arab-American writing, food had a big share, too, in the Arab-American culture and was represented consequently in literature. In works collected in anthologies like *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry* (1988) by edited by Gregory Orfalea and Sharif Elmusa and Joanna Kadi's *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (1994), unite both ancient and new Arab-American writers from Gibran and Rihani to D. H. Melhem to Laila Halaby and others of the new generation writers (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 7).

These anthologies rely upon food imagery in presenting their works. In other words, "food can be seen as a trope of accommodation, as these anthologies seek to make accessible an Arab culture that is generally approached in an adversarial manner

in the US" (Hassan and Knopf-Newman, 8). Food, actually, load the works of multi-ethnic literatures in the Unites States. In other words, "Food tropes, metaphors, and images serve as figures of speech which depict celebrations of families and communities, portray identity crises, create usable histories to establish ancestral connections, subvert ideology and practices of assimilation, and critique global capitalism" (Gardaphé and Xu 5). Consequently, further works, old and new, embrace the food technique to express identity dilemmas of the Arab-Americans who maintain food traditions as self-fulfillment and a sign of existence and resistance. Such resistance is clearly expressed in the prominent work of Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent* (1993) by means of a language of food, she tells a lot about Arab culture and ancestry. This language "forms a gastronomic contact zone situated in cafés, kitchens, and homes where displaced individuals meet and reestablish identities and communities. Through this language of food Abu-Jaber establishes the theme of the world-as-home" (Gardaphé and Xu 7). Creating home is a current quest of Arab-American individuals, in *Crescent*, like students, workers and even intellectual who gather in Nadia's café, where Sirine (the main character) works as a cook:

> Nadia's café is like other places—crowded at meals and quite in between-- but somehow there is also usually a lingering conversation, currents of Arabic that ebb around Sirine, fill her head with mellifluous voices. Always there are students from the big universities up the street, always so lonely, the sadness like blue hollows in their throats, blue motes for their wives and children back home. (7)

There, they discuss homeland matters, meet for dates, and even look at Sirine as a flavor of home they long for:

> the men spend their time arguing and being lonely, drinking tea and trying to talk to Um-Nadia, Mireille, and Sirine. Especially Sirine. They love her food—the flavors that remind them of their homes. (7)

Post Gibran (1999) and *Scheherazade's Legacy* anthologies, containing an elegant election of Arab and Arab-American writers "do more than merely humanize the Arab American experience. They reflect how important the act of writing is to any community of any generation and just how moving this finding of voice can be" (Naaman 271). These literary achievements have and still contribute to the American cultural life for more than a century (Salaita "Arab" 14). However, more work has to be done by the emerging still energetic writers to clean the long standing distorted face of the Arabs and their culture.

2.2. The Rise of an Activist Literature

As early as the Mahjar movement, or even earlier, the political commitment started to shape the literary works of these pioneer writers embracing the renewed and fashionable genres of writing of the era, and the thematic concerns were not cut off the homeland cultural and social dilemmas and political turmoil. Many issues were heavily and constantly discussed like identity and the challenging question of adapting to the new country. A great interest is shown, on the other hand, towards the international politics, especially those concerning the Middle East. Ludescher states that: The "*Mahjar* writers viewed themselves as cultural middlemen straddling the great divide between East and West. As they saw it, their mission was twofold: to promote cultural, social and political reform in the East, based on the Western model, and to encourage a spiritual awakening in the West, based on the Eastern model" (Ludescher 97-8).

After the great success by *Al-Rabitah al-Qalamiyyah*, there was a period of slowdown in the pace of Arab–American literary achievements. However, by the 1970's, as a manifestation of cultural pride the return to Arab-American cultural heritage was among the varied activities and books written, both proudly and nostalgically, focusing on the literary achievements by the major icons of Arab-American literature. So, the Arab-Americans "came to a new appreciation of the literary contributions of their ethnic community. In this period interest in Kahlil Gibran intensified" (Pulcini 43). Even mainstream academic circles witnessed a growing interest in Arab-American literature translated in publications by universities such as the 1975 publication by Indiana University under the title *Modern Arabic Literature: A Bibliography of Articles, Books, Dissertations, and Translations in English* and an anthology of poems covering the 20th century's achievements by Arab-Americans entitled *Grape Leaves* (Pulcini 43, 44). Gradually, Arab-American literature started to gain some recognition and ground at wider spheres after a long term of neglect.

Both anthologies, *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry* (1988) and *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (1994) contain works that show the early tackling of political preoccupations. They "offered politically astute writings by Arab Americans, yet many of the poems and short stories reflected a relatively young literary consciousness, still experimenting with language, and at times resorting to clichéd imagery and the overtly sentimental language of nostalgia" (Naaman 267). The anthology *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (1999) by Munir Akash and Khaled Mattawa, contains writing reflecting "rich interior worlds and complex subjectivities articulated with new degree of literary and political sophistication" (Naaman 267).

By the 1990s, a "thoroughly Arab consciousness existed in Arab immigrants and American-born Arabs, who rapidly were expressing that consciousness intellectually and creatively" (Salaita "Anti-Arab" 75). This consciousness is translated in the publication of Michael Suleiman's volume *Arabs in America: Building a New Future* (1999), Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash's *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing* (1999), and a many articles by Lisa Suhair Majaj while writers Diana Abu-Jaber and Rabih Alamedine received wide acclaim for their works in the form of novels (Salaita "Anti-Arab" 76).

Due to the diversity of the Arab-American community, the literature which flourishes from such diversity "does not quite bespeak a unified tradition, but rather a communal grouping, a point made evident by the sub-traditions that have developed in Arab American fiction according to various Middle Eastern Calamities" (Salaita "Arab" 57). Issues as the dispossession of Palestine, the Lebanese Civil War and other dictatorships matters have been a fertile ground to inspire the Arab-American fiction for a long time.

The Palestinian Cause that has been a central focus for Arabs and Arab-American entity has kept its core position and centrality within the literary production. While politics in literature is still debatable, John Whalen Bridge writes: "if we assume that a literary work has both aesthetic and political capacities, we may respect the differences between political and aesthetic motivations and at the same time allow for their intermingling within a work of art" (Qtd. in Salaita "Arab" 61). Albeit, some critics may reject linking literature to politics focusing more on the aesthetic side, politics is part of culture and a daily concern for minority people as the case of Arab community in America. Salaita explains this point by insisting that in the Arab-American community "the thing that happen oversees in the so-called Old World very

much influence how we carry ourselves as Americans, a fact that has been more than the peripheral in the maturation of the Arab American Novel" ("Arab" 55). One of the writers who enthusiastically discuss the exile suffering is the poet Naomi Shihab Nye, a daughter of an exiled Palestinian, tackles the dilemmas and painful feeling of loss because of displacement (Gómez-Vega "The Art" 246). Her travelling back to Palestine was a reviving trip of nostalgia and a quest of identity. All combination of emotions is embodied in her poem "*Brushing Lives*" where she describes a meeting between her father and another Palestinian in Alexandria in unexpected coincidence:

> In a shop so dark he had to blink twice
>
> An ancient man sunk low on a stool and said,
>
> 'You talk like the men who lived in the world
>
> When I was young.' Wouldn't say more,
>
> Till my father mentioned Palestine
>
> And the gentleman rose, both arms out, streaming
>
> Cheeks, 'I have stopped saying it. So many years.'
>
> My father held him there, held Palestine, in the dark,
>
> (Qtd in Gómez-Vega "The Art" 246)

A more deeper illustration of the hard longing any displaced Palestinian, is reflected in the description of the poet's father of eating a fig that revives the memory of Palestinian past linked forcefully to the land and the fruits it provides. Nye here, at age of six "fails to understand her Palestinian father's appreciation for the fruit, even if the taste of figs functions in the poem like Proust's Madeleine to bring back the past. The father's longing for the memory of the fig's taste reiterates the poet's concern with her father's displacement" (Gómez-Vega "The Art"248), in *"My Father and the Figtree"*:

‘That’s not what I’m talking about!’ he said,

‘I’m talking about a fig straight from the earth—

Gift of Allah!—on a branch so heavy it touches the ground.

I’m talking about picking the largest fattest sweetest fig

In the world and putting it in my mouth.’

(Here he’d stop and close his eyes). (Qtd. in Gómez-

Vega “The Art” 247)

Both poems reflect clearly the commitment of this Palestinian poet, from Palestinian father and European mother, to the political Palestinian cause while enjoying the birth and life in the United States, where her roots and awareness of her people painful experience of displacement are brushing her taste of free verse.

2.3. The Post-9/11 Arab-American Literature

In the late decades of the twenties and beginning of the twenty first centuries, there was a remarkable rising interest in what becomes increasingly called an immigrant ‘Muslim literature’ in the United States. Such growth is usually due to the rising hatred against Muslims. This is “undoubtedly a result of a cultural climate that hungers for insight into Muslim communities and Islam. Because Islam is currently still considered foreign to America, much of the literature can be considered immigrant fiction” (Abdurraqib 55). For instance, literature written by Muslim women tries to shed light and combat the tendency to talk in the names of Muslim women without actually listening to their opinions and experiences, especially about the question of the veil. This issue of the veil is generally treated in Western media and literature with clear hint that the veil is a symbol of oppressed women and that is imposed by men, to show their superiority and that women should submit. Maryam Qudrat Aseel, an Afghan

American, is a Muslim woman voice through her memoir, *Torn Between Two Cultures*, in which she does "construct herself as culturally hybrid, yet her narrative follows the same trajectory as most immigrant novels: she realizes the conflict her two cultures pose, and she navigates between them, disposing of whatever cultural/religious practices do not fit. One such religious practice is veiling" (Abdurraqib 60).

Generally, pre-9/11 attacks, a literary interest was focused on Middle East historical developments and the Israeli/ Palestine conflict and its consequences on the Arab world and Arab-Americans, either on societies or individuals. Consequently, the literary field was devoted to discuss reasons and effects of invisibility within a very large community in which the Arabs are unseen, marginalized or even ignored.

In addition, the rise of ethnic literatures gave push to enhance the Arab-American literary attempts to discuss the socio-cultural and political events surrounding the Arab-American community in late decades linked to the changes on both the domestic and foreign levels. Therefore, the recent ascendance of ethnic literatures has heightened and enriched "longstanding debates about the uses and usefulness of literature, which, before the rise of multiculturalism, focused almost exclusively on white authors of the traditional canon. That ascendance is especially resonant after 9/11, an event whose socio-political implications scholars and philosophers are only beginning to understand" (Salaita "Anti-Arab" 73).

The aftermath of 9/11 became an urgent factor in looking for ways of expression for Arab-Americans to take part in the crowded field of mainstream literature discussing the events linked to the Arabs in general, and Arab-Americans in particular which immediately affects their freedom and daily life. Arab-American invisibility which is abruptly turned into dazzling visibility in the mainstream media, literature, and

community, became more than an inspiring but an urging factor to look for more tools of self-expression. In the post 9/11 era, Arab-American writers become more than just translators of their culture, but got the status of ambassadors of all Arab people to the American public, and the whole world.

The major issues related to the 9/11 matter, appeared often in the literary productions by Arab-American authors reflecting their own feeling of ambivalence towards the events, partly because of being of the same origin of the accused hijackers, and partly because of being American citizens. Their works show such a confusion, and identity dilemma in time of crisis. Hammad, for instance, considers herself an activist. She "has employed her poetic art in the name of political and social activism, writing and performing pieces in response to events …Though Hammad was a poet and activist before September 11, 2001, her poetic and political engagement has since increased" (Hoyt 101). Her poem "*First Writing Since*" reflects her engagement:

> thank you to the woman who saw me brinking my cool and blinking back
>
> tears. She opened her arms before she asked "do you want a hug?" a
>
> big white woman, and her embrace was the kind only people with the
>
> warmth of flesh can offer. I wasn't about to say no to any comfort.
>
> "My brother's in the navy," I said. "and we" re Arabs". "wow, you
>
> got double trouble." word.
>
> one more person ask me if I knew the hijackers. (Hammad)

In the same poem, she questions the aftermath of the tragic events on Arab and Muslim Americans, being both victims and suspects:

> both my brothers - my heart stops when I try to pray - not a beat to disturb my fear. One a rock god, the other a sergeant, and both Palestinian, practicing Muslim, gentlemen. Both born in Brooklyn and their faces are of the archetypal Arab man, all eyelashes and nose and beautiful color and stubborn hair.
> what will their lives be like now? (Hammad)

In the same poem, she blames both the hijackers and, at the same time, the American foreign policy in the world, accusing the American government of the wide world atrocities, resulting in genocides of other people as innocent as the twin tower victims. She uses a violent language to express both anger and regret of being American citizen and victim/suspect Arab, in the middle of a sea of injustice, and having no means but pen and harsh words, and no one to blame but oneself:

> in America, it will be those amongst us who refuse blanket attacks on the shivering. Those of us who work toward social justice, in support of civil liberties, in opposition to hateful foreign policies. […]
> there is no poetry in this. There are causes and effects. There are symbols and ideologies. Mad conspiracy here, and information we will never know. There is death here, and there are promises of more.
>
> (Hammad)

Some literary magazines adopted as frequent issues, the question of 9/11 effects on Arab-American life like *Mizna*, by defusing many poems and short stories discussing the doubtful relation of Arab-American to their non-Arab/Muslim neighbors. When it comes to community and identity matters, it is the Arab-Americans duty to play such a

role in expressing oneself instead for giving a free space for non-Arabs to represent them.

Though the sudden interest in Arab-American literature was pushed up to satisfy political goals, an authentic and beneficial analysis of these literary productions remains humble and laying far away from the expected results. It seems that focus and interest in Arab-American literary works are momentary, and just resulting from major political and historical circumstances. Contemporary Arab-American writing by some authors "may be achieving a certain degree of public attention, but such attention has done little to produce a broader sense of contemporary Arab-American cultural production and the politics that have contributed to its growth since the 1960's" (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 3). However, more interesting issues and themes require attention from both writers and critics to consider, through more literary production and analysis, in addition to the urgent need for publicity, and wider and varied readership both local and on global levels.

To sum up, the history of Arab-American immigration to the United States and their struggle for adaptation has been challenging. However, their literary activism was present as early as their presence in the United States. To face the huge racist and restricting policies towards Arab immigration, Arab-Americans were pioneer to find strategies and method for activism and participation in public culture and life. They tried to create their own means of expression to express their daily preoccupation and their moments of despair and joy. Moreover, Arab-American women's contribution to the literary field is considerable and seems more interesting, especially in contemporary novel writing, being the majority compared to their fellow men writers, as Salaita puts it: "the majority of Arab American fiction writers are women (the same is true, by the way, of Arab American playwrights, poets, and critics)" (Salaita "Modern" 125), who

seem more interested to tackle the question of image portraying, and hence, contributing largely and effectively in the human and activist mission of self-representation. This mission is just in its beginning, considering the hampering circumstances and obstacles within the American mainstream environment.

Chapter Three

Chapter Three: The Arab-American Novel and Thematic Concerns

Self- representation by Arab-American novelists as a post-colonial reaction to the stereotyped media and literature in the West is a strategy to counteract the mainstream culture and literature via various literary and linguistic techniques. Arab-American literature, in its contribution to combating stereotypes, is dealing with different thematic concerns adopted by the Arab-Americans novelists to react to the spread stereotypes and to describe the position and situation of Arab-Americans in their attempt to deal with the mainstream society. Arab-American novels analyzed here, as a case study are: Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescent* (2003), Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000), and Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007). The novels are an illustration of postcolonial reaction to the representation of the Arabs' image in the public culture as Ashcroft et all. explains:

> [P]ost-colonial texts may signify difference in their representations of place, in nomenclature, and through the deployment of themes. But it is in the language that the curious tension of cultural 'revelation' and cultural 'silence' is most evident. Significantly, most of these strategies, in which difference is constructed and English appropriated, are shared by all the post-colonial societies. (59)

The novels studied below differ from one another in their tackling of representation matters in using strategies as themes, and language deployment either by "revealing" or "silencing" their texts via untranslated words in Arabic, code switching and others. Besides, the Arab-American writers are still struggling with their own identity quest, literary-orientations, and political and literary activism to rebuilt a self-image and representation.

3.1. Who is an Arab-American Writer?

Among the debatable issues of the Arab-American writers are the constituents of their own literature. This issue raises the question of how to define Arab-American writers and what concerns would be dealt with as priority or spot light of their literary production. No real agreement is found to unite the diverse views and various trends, in addition to the diversity of the Arab-American community, and its widely divergent interests and aspirations. Ludescher questions, in the same sense, the nature of Arab-Americans and their literature by saying:

> Should Arab Jews and non-Arabic speakers be included in this group? What about writers like Sam Hazo, who do not identify as Arab Americans, or writers like Mona Simpson, who choose not to write about their ethnicity, or writers like Naomi Shihab Nye, who write about it only some of the time? Should they be considered Arab American writers?... Furthermore, should Arab American writers focus on the Arab side of experience, emphasizing the traditions and values of the Arab world, or should they focus on the American side of experience, emphasizing American immigrant experience in the context of multiculturalism. (Ludescher 106)

Arab-American writers tried to respond to many issues affecting Arabs in and outsides the United States like Western perception of Arabs, and Arab-American literary concerns and political events influencing American policies towards the Arabs (Hoyt 16). Arab-American writers, men and women are still struggling to settle the question of "who they are," what are their origin and way of thinking. They are caught between being boosters of their culture, and mirror of their community, in front of the

huge machine of stereotyping targeting their community. At the same time, Arab-American women writers are partly rejected by their own community in being charged of reflecting an imperialistic Western feminism. They are often "accused of cultural betrayal…women of Arab descent in the United States still face obstacles created by specific stereotypes projected from within and outside their communities" (Hoyt 15).

As Ludester puts it, "[f]eminism is an emotionally fraught issue in the Arab world. Because the treatment of women is often used as a weapon to attack Arabs, any criticism of patriarchy is viewed as a reinforcement of negative anti-Arab stereotypes and an attack on the community" (Ludescher 107). Consequently, Arab-American women writers feel double pressure to prove oneself, on one side to fulfill their mission as community advocates and at the same moment to ensure a position in the literary production within a jungle-like publication market.

This double pressure on Arab-American women writers hampers their creation and ambition to change and work side by side with their fellow men writers in the face of the huge machinery of stereotyping and racism. Instead of handling these issues, Arab-American women find themselves dealing with a more problematic issue of self-defense against diverse accusations from society and critics. Moreover, "works by Arab women are often 'marketed' and 'manipulated' by publishers 'to meet the expectations and assumptions of Western readers'" (Ludescher 107).

Besides, the position of Arab-American women, especially writers do not really gain support, in mainstream American feminists who "tend to foreground the gender experience. In their exclusive preoccupation with subverting the dominant patriarchal discourse, mainstream American feminists fail to regard differences of female experiences dictated by race and ethnicity and endorse an alternative hegemonic

discourse" (Chérif 208). These feminists ironically follow racist stereotypes boosted by popular culture that focus on painting Arab women as victims of forced marriage and the general assumptions of men as terrorists, and religious fanatics. As a consequence, Arab-American women writers are loaded with additional mission of combating these images within the feminist circles (Chérif 208-9) instead of getting support from their fellow mainstream feminists.

However, the Arab-American writers, either men or women, tend to focus on reflecting the Arab-American daily struggles in facing racism and defamation through discussing different themes concerning the community's ways of survival in front of a very stereotypically-oriented public opinion. Besides, the readership level and publication matters add to the already hard task of writing.

3.2. Thematic Concerns

Arab-American writing as any other kind of literature produced outside the Arab world, tended to be nostalgic (Ludescher 108). For many decades, the notion of home, land of ancestors, and origin have painted the thematic considerations of Arab-American writing, in addition to identity quest and other communal matters. This task is usually considered as a reaction to the felt racism and discrimination lived in the mainstream society. This concern is often reflected in Hammad's interviews where she is "speaking engagement, and introductions to her works, on the importance of writing and other arts as means for voicing concerns and garnering support for peaceful change in local and global contexts" (Hoyt 115). For giving a voice to internal conflicts concerning integration and identity turmoil, racism, immigration and cultural double-ness are the recurrent themes shaping the Arab-American novel since the early attempts of novel writing.

3.2.1. The Theme of Identity and Culture

The early literary concerns were focused partly on the revelation of neglecting the Arab-American culture and identity by early Arab immigrants, especially the changing names of Arab-American immigrants that started as early as the first immigration waves. The example of the poem "Dying with the Wrong Name" (1980), by Sam Hamod, reflects such deep concern about the distortion of the Arab identity:

> These men died with the wrong names,
> Na'aim Jazeeny, from the beautiful valley of Jezzine,
> died as Nephew Sam, Sine Hussin,
> died without relatives and because they cut away his last name at Ellis Island,
> there was no way to trace him back even to Lebanon,
> and Im'a Brahim had no other name than mother of Brahim,
> even my own father lost his,
> went from Hussein Hamode Subh' to Sam Hamod. (Qtd. in Pulcini 44)

The poem tragically expresses the loss of names that hints directly to loss of identity. As soon as first immigrants arrived to the United States, they immediately lost their identity in a completely alien environment that shuns all names look different from European ones. So, these immigrants accepted to compromise names for getting a living or a privilege, like changing the name from "Hamode" to "Hamod."

Joseph Geha's interest in the question of origin is found in many occasions in his stories *Through and Through* where his characters "feel caught between Arab cultural expectations and American norms of behavior. Many of the characters born in the United States also have a difficult time convincing their peers that they are properly

American" (Salaita "Arab" 124). In spite of being a country originated from the coming of immigrants, the United States facilitate the racist attitudes that reject the Arab element and consider it exotic that is not deserving a normal citizenship. Like his characters, Geha pauses in front of the question of origin of his own when he was asked by his follow Americans about his identity. In one of his essays "Where I'm From—Originally," he tackles the over-asked question and its philosophical implications. Geha "starts his essay with a quote: 'You're not from around here, are you,' in which he shows annoyance, at a conversation piece" (Salaita "Arab" 124):

> The man puts it like a statement, but I recognize the question that's being implied. Having lived "around here" [Iowa] for nearly a dozen years, I also know that if I don't answer as expected, I'll be leaving the door open for the outright questions that are certain to follow: "Where are you from?" and "No, but I mean, where originally?" Asked openly, I ought to add, in a friendly spirit. Even so, I'm still not used to it. I try a smile. (Qtd. in Salaita "Arab" 124)

On the other hand, Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* with its rich flavors and recipes, sheds light on the variety of Arab-Americans within America who came from different countries of the Arab world. Nadia's Café gathers students, workers and clients from different Arab nationalities and "even though most of the Arab café regulars remain in the novel's background and do not play an active role in the plot, the careful delineation of their individual national differences negates simplistic representations of Arab identity" Fadda-Conrey (195) as the following extract from *Crescent* shows their variety:

> At Nadia's Café, there is a TV tilted in the corner above the cash register, permanently tuned to the all-Arabic station, with news from Qatar, variety shows and shopping channel from Kuwait, endless Egyptian movies, Bedouin soap operas in Arabic, and American soap operas with Arabic subtitles. (10)

The names of the Arab students from "Egypt and Kuwait-Schmaal, Jenoob, Shark, and Gharb, which in Arabic mean North, South, East, and West, respectively-signify distinct geographical entities that can be interpreted as individualized characteristics challenging the reductive attributes the term Arab often generates" (Fadda-Conrey 195) as the novel further explains:

> There is a group of regulars who each have their favorite shows and dishes and who sit at the same tables as consistently as if they were assigned. There are Jenoob, Gharb, and Schamaal—engineering students from Egypt; Shark, a math student from Kuwait…(10)

The novel also presents the delicious recipes of Arab cuisine throughout the story, displaying the detailed description of food cooked by the heroine Sirine as translation of what Gardaphé and Xu describe the concept of food as a crucial element in ethnic literatures [as mentioned earlier in this work] that "[f]ood tropes, metaphors, and images serve as figures of speech which depict celebrations of families and communities, portray identity crises, create usable histories to establish ancestral connections" (Gardaphé and Xu 5): in the following extract the female heroine prepares many of finest and very tasty Arab dishes that takes the characters back to the flavors of the past:

> Sirine finishes deskewering six plates of lamb shish kabobs and three plates of chicken, drizzling oil over ground beef and hummus, over smoky puréed egg-plant, over a bowl of olives, and splashing four tabbouleh salads with lemon. (122)

Though the majority of themes treated by the Arab-American novelist turn around the identity matters and the life and division between two worlds, and all that consequences on the social and psychological life of the groups and individuals, there are other themes conveyed, either explicitly or implicitly, about the duty of promoting the distorted image of Arabs which is largely polluted by the long standing stereotypes and systematic distortion.

3.2.2. The Theme of Immigration

The theme immigration is a prominent concern of Arab-American writers since their early immigration movement to the United States. Troubles of adaption, internal identity conflicts, and racism dilemmas as a result of immigration status, painted and still paint the literary creations by both first and late generations writing either in Arabic or English. However, many Arab-American writers refuse to be named immigrants, being descendants and no longer immigrants, as Salaita argues about his own identity:

> Take me, for instance. Although I am a literary critic, I occasionally write a creative essay, which transforms me into an "author." I would further self-identify as an "Arab American author"—fair enough, I imagine, since my father emigrated from Jordan and since I grew up surrounded by Arab immigrants and Arab Americans. I would never, however, self-identify as an "immigrant," because I'm not one (Salaita "Arab" 122).

Though the theme of immigration is prominent in the Arab-American fiction, the argument is that this "immigration" quality is wished not to be an excluding pretext to marginalize Arab-Americans, and deny them an American citizenship rights. Immigration themes then are utilized to emphasize the special segregation these Arab-Americans are facing if compared to other immigrants' conditions of living, and the way they easily find a place while gaining an American citizenship. Arabs, on the other hand, are distinctly labeled and treated as aliens or just as "immigrants."

Despite the prominence of immigration theme, it seems that it is not necessary to limit Arab-American fiction to it. So, many writers, especially the recent among them, have varied their themes and even stopped focusing on it as their major theme, while other Arab-American writers keep stressing such theme in their works as Salaita emphasizes:

> One of the more conspicuous themes to be employed in Arab American fiction is immigration, which has a long-standing relationship with racism in the United States. Joseph Geha and Laila Halaby both explore the movement of people from the Arab world to North America and in so doing they recreate the tensions that come into existence when supposedly alien cultures encounter those established through a nationalistic imagination. As a result, their fiction taps into some of the most fundamental components of how *America* is invented as a national entity and how, in turn, Americanness often is defined (Salaita "Arab" 121).

Arabian jazz, on the other hand, symbolizes the loss of home as a result of immigration through referring to Nora's death as more than a simple "parallel thematic

of lost home and lost mother, the novel models its representation of the latter on the refugee's sense of the former. That is, the lost mother signals the lost home and country, and just as the central characters query the meaning of home, so too do they endlessly circle the issue of the meaning of Nora's life and death" (McCullough 807). The novel then, emphasizes the feeling of loss for Palestinians immigrants.

Immigration theme traces the Arab-American story of immigration and the racist attitudes they get from the society that does not distinguish between first generation of Arab immigrants and their posterity. Americanness is often denied Arab–Americans despite their attempts to assimilate into the mainstream society. Consequently, tackling homeland matters usually rebind the Arab-Americans/writers to their origin to escape the agony felt in the American society.

3.2.3. The Theme of Homeland Matters

The homeland political and social matters often fill the thematic concerns of the Arab-American writers due to the immediate effect of such problems and political affairs on the daily life of Arab-American people, and sometimes being the cause of their immigration or the immigration of their parents in the first place. Sometimes it is merely a question of talking about home and identity, and sometimes it is a link and loyalty to the country of origin.

In *Crescent,* and due to the fact that the main characters, Sirine and Hanif, are of Iraqi origin, the First Gulf War then was present at the very beginning of the novel in dramatic description of the effect of war on daily life in Iraq and on characters even in exile:

> The sky is white.
>
> The sky should not be white because it's midnight and the moon has not yet appeared and nothing is as black and as ancient as the night in Baghdad. It is dark and fragrant as the hanging gardens of the extinct city of Chaldea, as dark and still as the night in the uppermost chamber of the spiraling Tower of Babel.
>
> But it's white because white is the color of an exploding rocket. The ones that come from over the river, across the fields, from the other side of an invisible border, from another country called Iran. (3)

The Second Gulf War is also a prominent event in *Crescent*, the writer describes the attack on Bagdad and the effect of the war on Iraqi immigrants and students who are seen as suspects and spies and were spied at by the CIA. Nadia' Café witnesses many spying scenes where the policemen watch Sirine's clients of Iraqi origin who are seen as potential terrorists:

> The Americans began firing on Iraq in1991 when Iraqi president Saddam Hussein advanced into Kuwait…there were two grown men in business suits sitting at the counter every day writing things in pads. All they did was glance at the Middle Eastern students and take notes…people started whispering CIA…One day, after a month of sitting at the counter, the two men took the cook aside and asked if he knew of any terrorist schemes developing in the Arab-American community. (08)

In *The Cairo House* by Samia Serageldin, the political changes brought by the arrival of President Nasser had a great role in orienting the events in the novel with its immediate shocking impact on the life of the heroine, Gigi, herself and her family, as a

result of the policy of sequestration that touched a huge amount of properties of the Pashas and Aristocratic families, where many of their houses, lands and other goods were confiscated in the name of revolution. Gigi describes her childhood memories about that event:

> Later that year, when the blow fell, when the storm broke, it started with a speech broadcast over the radio. That was the first time I became aware that my life was susceptible to being caught in the slipstream of history, that a speech broadcast over the radio could change my life forever. The year I first became aware of the burden of belonging: to a name, a past. (20)

The novel describes the complete change that had radically altered the history of Egypt and changing consequently, the social and cultural life forever. Gigi describes the innocent moment of childhood where she was not aware of the political speech that would affect her entire life:

> One day that summer I came to find my parents sitting in front of the television set in the living room. President Nasser's oversized features dominated the screen, the intense eyes smoky under the think eyebrows. I remembered that it was Revolution Day, July 23, 1961. Nasser was giving a speech […] I started to say something and Mama put her finger to her lips. It was then that I became aware of the tension in the air. I turned to the television set. I couldn't understand every word that was being said, but the virulence in the tone was unmistakable. There were repeated references to "the enemies of the people." (20)

The statement of the "enemies of the people" was addressing aristocratic families like Gigi's, who were considered as owners of properties that should be confiscated as a result of the policy of sequestration, which had a considerable impact on Gigi's character and her future choices and views of life leading her to leave Egypt for the United States.

Like Gigi and other characters, exile is the immediate consequence of homeland inconveniences, while the host countries turn into an environment of double exile at the end, as a result of the already spread stereotypes about the Arabs and their culture.

3.2.4. The Theme of Exile

The theme of exile often reoccurs in the Arab-American fiction, especially by writers of Palestinian background. Palestinian heartbreaking exile reality, either in the Arab world or outside, represents a motivating subject for writing for these writers. On one perspective, this could be a publicity and introductory way to inform the world readers of the exile condition that shapes the daily life of Palestinians who are prevented even from a simple visit to their mother country. On another perspective, this could be an unconscious feeling that places itself into the creative and artistic works by such writers. In addition to the forced exile of Palestinian, other kinds of exile, like exiling by choice, in case of political exile from countries and oppressed political activists in the Arab world, is also prevailing in the Arab-American writing. Exiled Iraqis, Syrians and Lebanese and many other nationalities, are represented by the main characters in the Arab-American novels.

The deep sense of exile in Laila Halaby's novel *West of the Jordan* is evicted through a recompensing strategy of recreating home; Palestine. In other words, instead of returning home she brings home to the West or any place of exile. Halaby's

> [P]ortrayal of the lives of three generations of Palestinian women creates a different kind of social history that reflects the diversity of Palestinian women. Halaby is intent on re-envisioning Palestine through the realm of domesticity. The lives of the four cousins are deeply enmeshed in their Palestinian origins and only when they acknowledge and accept their Palestinian heritage and identity can they move towards self-fulfillment. The women in the novel are thus both the facilitators and recipients of change (Sarkar 265).

In her other novel *Once in a Promised Land*, she openly discusses the exile problem and its effect on Palestinians in many occasions in her novel, and stresses their rights for the land and mentioning Israeli State by name:

> "Where are you from?" asked the woman.
>
> "I am Palestinian from Jordan."
>
> The woman continued to look at her. Chewed it over. Spat it back out. "What does that mean?" she asked, her thin lips pursed.
>
> Salwa's perfect eyebrows lifted. "What does what mean?"
>
> "What do you mean that you are Palestinian from Jordan?"
>
> *Does it mean you will steal my money and blow up my world?*
>
> "It means that my parents are Palestinian but that I was born and raised in Jordan, because my parents were refugees. They were kicked out of their homes in 1948 when the state of Israel was established. Where are you from?" Salwa smiled her sweetest smile, the one that would force her to believe that this woman was only asking out of curiosity, would force her racing heart to speak with professionalism instead of anger. (113)

The main character in *Crescent*, Hanif is a victim and exiled Iraqi character as a result of Sadam Hussein's regime. The novel depicts the nostalgia and loss this latter feels as escaping to the Unites States and his longing to the places of childhood with all memories related to them. His education and teaching at the American universities did not erase his deep desire for risking his life returning to Iraq at the end of the story. His forced exile made him come closer to Sirine whose dead father came from Iraq earlier. She was as link that reminds him of Iraq in spite of her white skin. Hanif also reminds her of a home she has never been to, Hanif is a souvenir, a cherished flavor that takes her to a country from which she exiled from before birth. In other words, "Sirine has the promise of uniting his disparate worlds. He offers her linkage to a land and traditions she hardly knew (her parents are relief workers killed abroad when she was a girl)" (Orfalea 123). Sirine on the other hand, tries to find in him home, being both orphan and being too far from her father's homeland. Both characters find a kind of consolation in being together each in his own form of exile.

The lost home then, is "the emblem of exile and alienation. *Crescent* illustrates what happens when people are displaced, whether by death, politics, or misunderstandings" (Mercer and Storm 42). Hanif's political exile is duplicated by Sirine's exile in the mainstream alien environment and when "Han tells Sirine about crossing the desert to escape from Iraq, she tells him about the loss of her parents and the abandonment she felt during their long absences from home […] Sirine and Han's shared stories of exile are parallel" (Mercer and Storm 42-3).

In *Arabian Jazz* while Jemorah, as well, felt herself exiled in her birthplace country; America, she started thinking for going back to her father's original home-country. The novel "insistently foregrounds exile from Palestine as the originary loss, a loss that provokes on the level of the story's events both subsequent displacements and

the characters' understanding of them. Unable to move forward with her life and haunted by the feeling that she does not belong in her own town, for instance, Jem considers moving back to Jordan" (McCullough 808).

Exile remains a permanent theme in Arab-American writers' thematic concerns interpreting the Arab-American alienation and loss within, outside or even because of political turmoil in their homeland. Nostalgic past and memories remain a consolation theme to the loss and exile felt by Arab-Americans, Arab-American writers themselves, and their fictional characters.

3.2.5. The Theme of Memories and Nostalgic Past

The feeling of the impact of the heavy past that is deeply haunts the present of Arab- Americans, acts as a reminder of their identity and origin; sometimes it works as source of relief and consolation and more precisely as a method of resistance, and other times as an incurable wound that awakes the feeling of loss and exile. Another strategic quest for identity is reflected through the journey to the past and memory.

Serageldin's *The Cairo House* represents a vivid picture of nostalgic past and the longing to the homeland, as the title indicates, where she places the majority of the events in Cairo as setting for her story instead of America. The story is taken back to the nostalgic days of pre-President Nasser then Nasser's era with all its political and social changes, in which the writer herself longs to her childhood in Egypt before leaving to the Unites States. This going back move shadows the nostalgia to old times in the homeland, and the sense of belonging, with all those traditions and ceremonies used to paint the life of ordinary immigrants and characters before switching to a completely different environment in the United States. She shares and dedicates her novel to other

exiled people who are haunted by their home-memories while wandering to find new homes, she states in the prologue:

> For those who have more than one skin, there are places where the secret act of metamorphosis takes place, an imperceptible shading into a hint of a different gait, a softening or a crispening of an accent. For those whose past and present belong to different worlds, there are places and times that mark passage from one to the other, a transitional limbo; like airport. (1)

The novel opens with a memory-evoking scene that stresses the effect of the past on the main character Gigi's feeling:

> The muezzin's call from the minaret wakes me at dawn my first morning in Cairo. I listen to the drawn-out echoes rising and falling in the stillness. I try to go back to sleep but the layers of the noise start to build up outside the wooden shutters: first the birds twittering, then dogs barking, voices raised in greeting; finally the first car will set off the incessant honking that punctuates every minute of the day on the streets of Cairo […]
>
> As a child I used to sleep right through all this. I even used to sleep through the Bayram Feast sacrifice. (9)

The novel keeps tracing the memories of the childhood of Gigi as Mikhail describes it: "Throughout the novel, the 'heroine' attempts to reconstitute what was irretrievably lost-an era and her secure childhood of privilege" (515).

On the other hand, as Chérif explains that Diana Abu-Jaber has contributed "to the genre of the journey to the past, recurrently adopted in contemporary minority group writings and meant to restore that past for the assertion of a distinctive ethnic self" (207) and resisting both the marginalization in America and the confining construction of Arab-ness. She uses memory and the journey to the past of her female fictional characters to devise a constructive way of dealing with the present (Chérif 207).

The *Crescent* and through food description, reflects the characters display of their longing to the origin and home by reproducing context and similar condition and ceremonies and gatherings over food parties, and restaurants. The "partaking of food in the present is often portrayed as a 'restorative' or 'reconstituting' process, as a gesture that aims to restore the (past) whole through partaking of a (present) fragment—an integrated and 'happy' if compromised ending, that seems to heal and remove the previous tensions of displacement, or being 'of two worlds.'" (Bardenstein 161). Put simply, Nadia's Café represents a perfect corner for such cozy space:

> The men spend their time arguing and being lonely, drinking tea and trying to talk to Um-Nadia, Mireille, and Sirine. Especially Sirine. They love her food—the flavors that remind them of their home (7).

The protagonist, as a cook, tried many kinds of world food but at the end she switched to the early dishes brought by her father from his homeland. It seems an indication of the return of the Arab-Americans to their Arab roots and culture. In one way or another, it remains Sirine's favorite if not the best culture and a source of pride; Arab food remains the best, for her, after trying other cuisines and feeling the necessity to turn back to her father's culinary preferences:

> Sirine learned how to cook professionally working as a line cook and then a sous chef in the kitchens of French, Italian, and "Californian" restaurants. But when she moved to Nadia's Café, she went through her parents' old recipes and began cooking the favorite—but almost forgotten—dishes of her childhood. She felt as if she were returning to her parents' tiny kitchen and her earliest memories. (9)

The food she cooks, "is not so much a conduit to a lost homeland as much as a physical replication of the culture that her Iraqi father tried to retrieve by cooking the food of his native land and passing on his culinary knowledge to his American wife" (Fadda-Conrey 200). Thus, Sirine's longing and imagining of lost country "replicate those of her deceased father, so much so that her food is an attempt to over-come a mediated, rather than a direct, loss of a homeland" (Fadda-Conrey 200). Food as a substitute and duplication of a cherished home, is the only link between her and the world of her father that she has never seen; Iraq. It is the most prominent theme in *Crescent* that focuses on this cultural trait that Sirine wants to identify with as a link to the past, to the lost country, and to being Arab. Besides, in the novel, "the exile's foodways have the capacity to function as a cushion from displacement and homelessness, as comfort food that momentarily transports the exile to the ever-elusive home" (Gardaphé and Xu 7).

Being so far from Iraq, the heroine could master the cooking of such Middle Eastern recipes as if by intuition, and with the help of memories of childhood where her mother learnt the Middle Eastern cuisine from her Arab husband; her Arab blood has tutored her taste:

> Sirine learned about food from her parents. Even through her mother was American, her father always said his wife thought about food like an Arab. Sirine's mother strained the salted yogurt through cheesecloth to make creamy Labneh, stirred the onion and lentils together in a heavy iron pan to make mjeddrah, and studded joints of lamb with fat cloves of garlic to make roasted kharuf. (39-40)

Through food, the main character "explores her identity and her legacy. She has learned about food from her parents and…[i]n the absence of her parents, Sirine attempts to use food and cooking to establish her own narrative of origin…The kitchen is where she attempts to clarify her origins and forge her identity" (Mercer and Storm 41-2). She explains this link with her past and origin by saying "I think food should taste like where it came from. I mean good food especially. You can sort of trace it back. You know, so the best butter tastes a little like pastures and flowers, that sort of stuff. Things show their origins" (59). The following extract shows the vivid memories of the heroine taking her back to the cherished moments in the kitchen with her mother while taking part in the preparation of their favorite recipes:

> Sirine's earliest memory was of sitting on a phone book on a kitchen chair, the sour-tart smell of picked grape leaves in the air. Her mother spread the leaves flat on the table like little floating hands, placed the spoonful of rice and meat at the center of each one, and Sirine with her tiny fingers rolled the leaves up tighter and neater than anyone else could—tender, garlicky, meaty packages that burst in the mouth. (40)

She also remembers her father's attraction to the Arab food prepared by his wife while learning it from him:

> The smell of the food cooking always brought her father into the kitchen. It was a magic spell that could conjure him from the next room, the basement, the garage. No matter where he was, he would appear, smiling and hungry. (40)

Fatima, Mutassem's sister in *Arabian Jazz* shows the pride and longing to the Arab culture and way of life through food, while thinking: "Americans had the money, but Arabs, ah! They had the food, the culture, the etiquette, the ways of being and seeing and understanding how life was meant to be lived" (360). Moreover, Thanatoulos Bakery which Fatima visits, represents a contact zone where the Arabs mingle with other minorities and create a safe place and intimate space. The "original Thanatoulos family gets replaced by other families and races (Asian Indians, Albanians, and Lithuanians) so that the bakery feels like a gateway for immigrants" (Kaldas 182). This bakery shop also takes Fatima back to the cherished memories of the homeland:

> Fatima was comfortable there; they lived and communicated in the same way her family in Jordan had, jostling, deliberately following each other around. They screamed at each other in a torrent of words that was their regular tone of voice… The place allowed her to visit home without feeling the pain that it had held for her. (365)

Besides, Fatima's struggle with and via "memory in its traumatic manifestations is the most complex and multilayered. As the novel develops, the political and social dimensions informing this struggle unravel, showing how the personal and the political are inseparable for subjects whose nation and people have been scarred by displacement, genocide, and exile" (El Hajj and Harb 138).

Once in a Promised Land, also, reflects the food effect on characters by taking them far away from the present to taste and regret the past during the harsh moments of the present. The main character Salwa while tasting fennel seeds, she felt a sudden awakening that reminded her of her Arab husband, and her Arab identity when she went far away in betraying her husband with the white American, Jake:

> "Here, have some of these." Jake held out a small plastic container with tiny seeds coated in pink and white and yellow.
>
> "This is shumur! Sorry. I don't know how you say that in English."
>
> "Is that what they are? I found them at the Arabic grocery store. It says 'candy-coated fennel.'"
>
> "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. (208-9)

Salwa's husband, Jassim, also remembers the taste of the past through food when he vividly remembers the lunch he ate at his uncle's farm: "The wrinkle unfolded at lunch, over lamb that had been roasted with garlic in the outdoor stove. For years to come Jassim could taste it, the garlic having left a pleasing taste in the recesses of his mouth and, later, in his years of being away, a taste of home" (39). This memory came as an escape from a moment of turmoil just after the 9/11 events:

> Jassim slid into the water at the end of lane #2, the tension of the past two weeks detaching itself in clumps, the wreckage of four planes cluttering the space around him, ash filling his lungs…As he swam steadily, Jassim's thoughts tiptoed away from this picture and down a dusty path leading to his youth, to an early summer afternoon spent with his uncle Abu Jalal. (39)

Both Salwa and Jassim turned to their origin through food memories as a reaction to the unbearable moments in their new home America, that provides an uneasy environment. So, the couple found a comfortable escape through travelling through food flavor to take them home temporarily.

This quest of identity and origin is based on the "characters' perception of their present as a result of the acknowledgement and articulation of that past" (Chérif 209). In fact, this journey to the painful past, embodied in the death of Nora, mother of main female characters in *Arabian Jazz* by typhus while visiting Jordan, in addition to the long homeless feeling by these characters being of Palestinian origin, reflects a "persistence rather than a resolution of the experience of ambivalence among female characters, Melvina and Jemorah, towards their dual cultural belonging" (Chérif 209). Jemorah also "uses memory to negotiate her identity against American racialization and patronage, a process that helps her define her situation as an ethnic subject in America. This articulation of Jemorah's memory, based on the amalgamation of her Arab background and American existence, allows for a more complex and subtle definition of her identity" (El Hajj and Harb 138).

Storytelling, also, plays a role of taking the character from their identity-dilemma to their roots, and establishing a special effect on the narration that is typically

Arabic and inspired by the *Arabian Nights*. This technique shows the richness of Arab culture and the writers' pride of the oral tradition legacy. It is at the same time an attempt to represent a different and special technique to defy the Western techniques of narration. Abu-Jaber has her own vision towards storytelling technique in her novels. She explains:

> And that storytelling, along with food, was one of the great pillars of my own cultural education. Thus, it was really important to me to try to bring some of that format into *Crescent*. I wanted the uncle to be telling Sirine, his niece, a story throughout the course of the book. I wanted the story to have the flavor of the oral narrative, and the surprises and the nuances of the spoken voice. And I wanted it to function as a kind of looking glass for the characters, that would in some way reflect upon the motifs of their reality in an indirect way. (Qtd in Field 221)

Crescent, then is positioning Sirine's "uncle as a teacher and instiller of hope to his Arab American audience" (Michael 315). It highpoints the "teaching and healing aspects of storytelling in the vein of *Nights* […] a fantastic tale that highlights the wanderings of an Arab hero and his incredible adaptability and survival skills as he travels the world, skills that the uncle's Arab American listeners need to develop to live full lives within the context of the United States" (Michael 315). Storytelling is more than a simple a technique of writing usually linked to the Arab oral tradition for Abu Jaber, but rather a personal and family tradition, and a reminder of her childhood family gatherings. Abu Jaber (DAJ) in an interview by Field (RF), further explains her family's talent of storytelling, especially her own uncles who are duplicated in the story in Sirine's uncle who competes with the narrator in her novel:

> RF: […] The frame story feels like it has an omniscient narrator, even though we know it's the uncle. Is it that the less specific the uncle is, the more he can be this narrator?
>
> DAJ: Exactly. It's uncle slash omniscient. There's really a kind of fluidity between the two of them […] Storytelling was very important when I grew up. My father and my uncles are all great storytellers, and they regaled us with jokes, fables, and reminiscences about their growing-up years. (Qtd. in field 221)

The novel is full of scenes of storytelling realized by the Abdelrahman Salahdin the adventurer who tells his story in the typical *Arabian Nights* style and context:

> Bear in mind, of course, that this is a form of love story in disguise. And who does love stories better than the Bedu anyway? Remember that Bedouin love poem in which the Bedouin is so in love that he says that his he-camel is in love with her she-camel? A classic.
>
> The latest purchaser of Abdelrahman Salahdin—the Covered Man—moves with charm of birdsong; Abdelrahman watches his slight gestures as they walk together through the crowded souk and he becomes entangled in his own thoughts and snaggled in his emotions. He suspects the man is a jinn of some sort, come to steal him from the water—which is exactly what his mother always told him would happen. He believes that this man has looped a bit of the thread-leash through a corner of his soul. (47)

In *Arabian Jazz*, Matussem "uses his own cultural memory of childhood stories, legends, and fairy tales to translate Arabian culture to his daughters and American

culture for himself. These stories become the only way he can understand the real America so that he can translate it for his children as they also engage in the process of defining who they are as Arabs in America" (Gómez-Vega "The Memory" 27-28). These stories, though not always understood or appreciated by his daughters, who think that they contain no logic, "represent Matussem's cultural memory, his only way of preserving what remains of his culture" (Gómez-Vega "The Memory" 29). In the next extract, Matussem explains the longing to the storytelling moments of his childhood by retelling the story of "Za' enti da'ar," who refuses to leave her house on fire:

> I am beauty of these house. I don't care if it is on fire, you don't get me out in the street.' And so, because she Za'enti da'ar, she burned up completely. They could hear her screaming out in the streets, aieeehhaaa!" The girls would already have their hands over their ears. "There nothing left of her after that but a gaddamn golden doorknob." (97)

Melvie usually wishes a different ending to the story, but Matussem answers her by saying: "That is just how these old-time stories are: there is no reason" (98). In this story, there is a hint for the choices could be made by some people, to stay in the motherland in spite of all the harsh conditions of life instead of daring to leave to the unknown.

The dilemma is well reflected, as well, through confusion and shock of the characters in Laila Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) because of the unexpected events of 9/11. However, pride and escape are translated in the art of storytelling which imitates the old ways of grandmother's style of oral tradition and storytelling, starting with the famous Arab introductory phrase while narrating,

transliterated in English letters, “Kan ya ma kan fee qadeem az-zamaan,” instead of the English version “once upon time”. This technique again reflects that the writer is showing a deliberate pride of the Arab cultural legacy as a subversive technique to challenge the language of the American mainstream:

> *Kan*
>
> *ya ma kan*
>
> *fee qadeem az-zamaan*
>
> *They say there was or there wasn’t in olden times* a story as old as life, as young this moment, a story that is yours and is mine. It happened during half a blink in the lifetime of the earth, a time when Man walked frayed tightrope on large, broken feet over an impossible pit of his greatest fears. (vii)

Food and memory are often interrelated in the question of identity quest; food takes characters back to memorable souvenirs such as childhood and happy family meetings which in turn revive the nostalgic past related to the motherland. Food “is clearly a link among generations of immigrants and exiles; those who cook and write about food are ‘culture-tenders’ and at the same time teach people outside the cultural community about that community’s values, rituals, beliefs” (Waxman 363).

Writers as Abu-Jaber, Halaby and Serageldin “skillfully depict this struggle of their immigrant parents and themselves. Understanding such struggles helps American readers to move toward more tolerance of the immigrant who does not desire total assimilation into American culture” (Waxman 370). Through food and memorable moments of the past and storytelling, the characters found an instant refuge and a

window through which they breathe and taste the Arab culture, and escape the burden of identity in-between-ness.

3.2.6. The Theme of Identity in-Between-ness and Cultural Double-ness

This theme is a major tradition and concern in almost all Arab-American writing. There are various perceptions by Arab-American immigrants and writers towards identity. There are among them who accept remaining Arab and gain American citizenship, while there are who prefer to completely integrate and compromise all their background and ancestry links for the sake of being "accepted," or in other words, becoming fully "American."

In *Arabian Jazz*, Abu-Jaber overtly tackles the question of cultural and identity double-ness. In this novel, the main characters, being, Arab-American immigrant family from Jordan, Matussem and his daughters Jemorah and Melvina are caught between two worlds. They live in a racist New York environment while feeling a deep longing to their home-country Jordan. The dilemma of identity is prominent throughout the novel, where the two characters (and sisters) struggle to identify either with the Arab world or America. Both sides require certain conformity and relinquishing of the other side to be fully integrated within their values and meet their demands. In one of the conversations, Melvina reminds her sister Jemorah about a famous Arab Badouin saying from the rich oral tradition:

> Just stick with me," Melvie said. "And remember the Bedouin saying: 'In the book of life, every page has two sides. (6)

This proverb has many connotations about the conditions of Arab-Americans who are caught between two worlds, and the "'two sides' are in fact multiple sets of two sides (two cultures, two families, and two languages) that culminate the term Arab American" (Naous 61-2). Besides, Code Switching as a technique (switching from English to Arabic or from Arabic to English) used by the writer to symbolize double identity, and cultural situation. In *Once in a Promised Land,* the characters switch between Arabic and English and sometimes use them both at the same time, as in the case when Salwa is regretting kissing Jake, she speaks in English while talking internally in Arabic: "'What have I done?' Salwa demanded herself in English, this being an American problem, an American situation. She promised herself to think about it only in English, even as her brain shouted at her in Arabic, cursed her with her mother' s words" (175). Jassim also seems losing his English when he accidently hit an American boy by his car. This situation made him confused and he starts to doubt his identity and translating his words to Arabic: "For all the years his tongue had been using English to communicate, he now found it difficult to work through, standing at the end of each sentence and translating it back to make sure he said what he had wanted to say" (120).

Arabian Jazz, on the other hand, is full of examples of code switching by using Arabic words through transliteration side by side with English. This code switch reflects the confusion and dilemma of characters in their quest for identity, and at the same time acts as a sign of distinctiveness. Such technique is usually used by writers to challenge and appropriate the mainstream language by manipulating the language, here English and using it to serve some literary and postcolonial goals, in order to show the distinctiveness of the marginal culture and language, here Arabic, as Ashcroft et al. explains:

> Perhaps the most common method of inscribing alterity by the process of appropriation is the technique of code switching between two or more codes…The techniques employed by the polydialectical writer include variable orthography to make dialect more accessible, double glossing and code switching to act as interweaving interpretative mode, and the selection of certain words which remain untranslated in the text. All these are common ways of installing cultural distinctiveness in the writing. (Ashcroft et al. 72)

There are plenty of examples of code switching in *Arabian Jazz*: "Atini kahk"(81) [give me cake], "Ya' Allah" (149) [Oh God], "Ah'lan wa sah'lan, keef ha'lick! (254) [Welcome, how are you]. Many other words are left without translation in *Crescent*, especially names of recipes and ingredients like this recipe description: "Sirine's mother strained the salted yogurt through cheesecloth to make creamy Labneh, stirred the onion and lentils together in a heavy iron pan to make mjeddrah, and studded joints of lamb with fat cloves of garlic to make roasted kharuf" (40). In this part of the description no Arab food name or ingredient is accompanied with English explanation, for instance, "labneh" [sore milk] and "Kharuf" [mutton] are not clear here and are known only to the Arabs, however, they are deliberately left untranslated as if the text is addressing an Arab audience or that other readers are simply ignored. Usually, these Arabic words in transliteration are left without translation in both novels, *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*. This practice focuses on "the improvisational/importational technique of *selective lexical fidelity*, or untranslated words" (Naous 63) which serve the aim of the writers to challenge both readers and the mainstream culture. This postcolonial technique is identified by Ashcroft et al. as:

> The technique of selective lexical fidelity which leaves some words untranslated in the text is a more widely used device for conveying the sense of cultural distinctiveness. Such a device not only acts to signify the difference between cultures, but also illustrates the importance of discourse in interpreting cultural concepts […] the use here of untranslated words is a clear signifier of the fact that the language which actually informs the novel is an/Other language. (Ashcroft et al. 64)

As an example of such manipulation of the language is when the moments of musical, linguistic, or "translational improvisation enter a condition of dialectic density: the blue note. Like the musical blue note, which inflects a musical […] scale of play by reaching for a note from outside the scale, the linguistic blue note forces a dominant language to enter into dialogue with a word imported from another language" (Naous 61). This play with the language by improvising new words that exist neither in Arabic nor in English like the word "Naima" (both means happiness and sleeping in Arabic) emphasizes the idea of Otherness of the Arab entity within the American context. Arabic words transliterated in English letters shows the dubious situation of Arab-Americans in America (Naous 64). According to Naous:

> The linguistic blue note in this novel, with its musical implications, is in fact many notes. As an importation from another language (Arabic) into English, the linguistic blue note extends a dialogic bridge to the dominant language by adopting the English letter form while insisting on Arabic content. At some level, the blue note challenges the adequacy of English to represent linguistic, cultural, and political Arabic issues. (78)

Challenging the dominant society by challenging its culture is shown here by defying the linguistic repertoire, and at the same time presenting the richness of Arabic language. This point is further explained by Naous as follows:

> The curtailed transliterated words find possible resonances and retranslations in Arabic words other than the originals. Origin modulates to myth of origin and yields multiple origins; the Arabic blue note enters a mode of self-reflexivity in its ontological search as it challenges the English linguistic system. The challenge comes from necessity, because the blue note manifests strategically across the novel. Symbolic of Arab underrepresentation in the United States, the blue note speaks back (78-9).

Besides, the hyphenation of the combination (one English word with an Arabic one) is widely used as in the following extract where Jemorah is being investigated by a supposed mother- in -law of an Arab origin, checking her teeth:

> "How can I know my daughter- in –law before I know her teeth? You told me was a good, obedient girl, sweet as a chicken."
>
> "Bach off, lady" Melvie raised a fist. "I'm warning you."
>
> "Allah the merciful and the munificent! A Demon- *Ifrit*". (64)

The combination "Demon-Ifrit" (64) clearly imitates the hyphen in Arab-American, and hence represents the double-ness of their identity, along with the early usage of such combination in the title itself that reflects this double-ness by combining the term Arabian with the typically American cultural trait; jazz music. It also "refers directly to jazz, both in its title and as a metaphor which permeates the novel" (Hartman

153). According to Hartman Abu-Jaber's use of jazz in this novel "must be read in relation to Arab American identity negotiations in the United States in the early 1990s. *Arabian Jazz* is firmly rooted in local US issues and politics" (Hartman 153).

Arabian Jazz female characters, especially Jemorah is linked to jazz symbolism, being more colored and having an Arab name, reflecting the double-ness of her characters and showing some tolerance to the Arab culture if compared to Melvina, who looks more close in color to her dead white Irish mother and having a white European Irish name. This choice of the writer's usage of Black music as part of the title "Arabian" and "Jazz" has many connotations as double-ness and more symbolic interpretation:

> These symbols reinforce the supposed incongruity of the title's two simple words-one of which (Arabian) refers clearly to Arabs, the community explored in the novel, and the other (jazz) which metonymically refers to African America. Abu-Jaber's title therefore alerts the reader that this work is defining a new sort of jazz, one which is Arabian. It also implies that Arabs can somehow be understood through jazz, or more broadly, in relation to African American culture. (Hartman 154)

This appropriation of jazz, an element which is typically American, reinforces the legitimacy of the Arab existence in America and stressing the belonging, and having the other American hyphen and hence the cultural double-ness.

However, *Arabian Jazz* reflects in a focused way the identity dilemma and confusion of Arab-Americans who are caught between too opposing if not conflicting cultures. The Arab culture, with all its pride evoking values and its controversial

traditions, is often rejected by the characters who feel that these traditions are "backward," like the case of the arranged marriages. Jemorah was even haunted by the idea of accepting or rejecting an Arab husband as an arranged marriage matter; on the other side, the mainstream culture pushes these characters to be so open to adopt the white way of life instead. Abu-Jaber's novel "confronts issues which occupy the works of many Arab American writers of the 1980s and 1990s, such as identity politics, and the fault lines between being Arab and American […] This theme is reinforced through […] discussing the racial indeterminacy of the protagonist, Jemorah Ramoud, as she struggles to understand her own identity" (Hartman 153-4).

The cultural switch is present, also in *Once in a Promised Land*, when Randa is moving between Arabic and American cultures via her switch in using both Arab and American cultural elements, when Salwa arrived at her house:

> "I' m cleaning the kitchen, folding laundry, and watching a Lebanese game show." And then in English she added, "*I am Randa, Mistress of Multitasking*. I' ll make tea"
>
> "No. I'm fine."
>
> "Coffee, then. I'll make you Arabic coffee. You can't come over here unannounced and not have tea or coffee. That would be too
>
> American." (282)

In *The Cairo House*, Gigi is wandering in many places in the world looking for a satisfying identity as any women of a "generation of highly educated professionals who forged careers for themselves in foreign lands while breaking away from time-honored tradition […] the women who 'have more than one skin' enrich this narrative of

displaced and 'out of place' women-expatriate-intellectuals both spiritually and physically" (Mikhail 515-16).

Either adopting the host culture and rejecting the original one or adopting the hyphenated identity, all characters are victims of an unmerciful racism that does not distinguish between all these categories.

3.2.7. The Theme of Racism

Racism and antiracism conflict is duplicated in the Arab-American literary sphere. The daily racist blurs and maltreatment towards the Arab-Americans finds an echo within the pages of novels carried by fictional characters representing, in fact, voices given to the hidden grievances accumulated for generation of immigration, to come out.

Within the racist social and cultural context, where the Arab-American writers along with their fellow African-Americans, struggle to find a space for their literary expression, "black music offers a powerful and positive symbolic site for Arab Americans to invoke connections between these two groups […] underlining a shared understanding through culture rather than establishing a bond between the two groups which is only based on shared oppression" (Hartman 148).

Some Arab-American writings like Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and Etel Adnan's "Beirut Hell Express" an Suheir Hammad's "Daddy's Song," invoke musical items like jazz and blues (Hartman 148-9) in order to emphasize the common struggle and resistance against the same racist machinery. The use of jazz music, here in *Arabian Jazz*, is a form of resistance if not a sign of challenge to the dominant culture. Using a black cultural trait, the jazz music, is a kind of solidarity among minorities, here Arab and African, against the dominant culture. Jazz that has been seen and stereotyped as

inferiority sign by the mainstream thought, has become a tool of resistance and even a challenging symbol of existence by the black community. Hence, the use of jazz, in this novel, is more a reflection of the existence of an/Other identity, or rather a new identity, not just Other in a defying manner against invisibility and marginalization. Besides, "[r]epetition of 'discriminatory identities,' can create identities of resistance; shame created by discrimination becomes a marker of pride and presence. Repetition of 'discriminatory identities' can also create identification by inferiority to the dominant culture" (Naous 71-2). Such intermingling results in the "transformation of ethnic relations, so much so that instead of existing as closed enclaves, minority groups can thrive in relating to each other, thus transforming and widening the ethnic framework" (Fadda-Conrey 201).

The association with blacks in *Arabian Jazz* is replaced with another ethnic group this time the Hispanic in Abu-Jaber's other novel *Crescent*. The Mexican flavor here is food. In other words, this particular "expression of self-loathing is often engendered by the racist culture that degrades ethnic foodways as filthy and unhealthful… An exploration of foodways in ethnic American literature reveals much about the way cultural superiority and inferiority have been measured by native and ethnic groups" (Gradaphé and Xu 06). As a result, the resistance of Arabs, here, is embodied in showing pride in the Arab culture through food. Sirine's usage of a lot spices in her food makes her look more Mexican than American. This comparison in an indication of the common situation they live both as ethnic groups, and consequently they need to come closer and somehow unite like the spices in Sirine's food as Victor, a Mexican friend, describes it:

> [Aziz] turns and smiles suavely at Sirine. "You've got the soul of a poet! Cooking and tasting is a metaphor for seeing. Your cooking reveals America to us non-Americans. And vice versa."
>
> "Chef isn't an American cook," Victor Hernandez says. "Not like the way Americans do food-just dumping salt into the pot. All the flavors go in the same direction. Chef cooks like we do. In Mexico, we put cinnamon in with the chocolate and pepper in the sweetcakes, so things pull apart, you know, make it bigger?" (187)

The parallel between Mexican and Arab food results into a combination that leads at the end to a fragrant visibility and presence of both groups. The "'pull[ing] apart' of ingredients in cooking enriches the result by bringing out the individual taste of each ingredient. In a similar manner, while widening the ethnic borderland blurs the border limits between one ethnic group and another" (Fadda-Conrey 201). Fadda-Conrey concludes that *Crescent*,

> [C]reates a physical and psychological ethnic borderland in which different ethnic communities coexist and communicate. The basis of such acts of interethnic bridging, however, encourages a search for commonality that is anti-essentialist, since it is engaged in an informed understanding of the inherent differences within and between ethnic communities. Only through such strategies can the ethnic borderland transcend exclusionary limitations and become a transformative site extending beyond what Castillo describes as "the refused other." (Fadda-Corey 203)

In a recurrent scene for the Arab-American daily encounter, characters in *West of the Jordan* live a hard experience in a bar where they are treated harshly, verbally and even physically, when they were taken for Mexicans. Soraya and her boyfriend Walid were insulted and asked to go back to Mexico by a drunkard white man and Walid was beaten. When the policewomen arrived to file a report she asked them:

> "So they beat you up for being Mexican?" the policewoman asked.
>
> "We're not Mexican."
>
> "You got beaten up for being Mexican and you're not Mexican?
>
> What are you?"
>
> "Palestinian."
>
> "Well you got off pretty lucky then." The policewoman was quiet
>
> for a minute. "That jacket sure makes you look Mexican." (59, 60)

The unspoken reaction of the policewoman indicates the better situation of Mexicans compared to Palestinians or Arabs in general, while experiencing the process of Americanization. This brief conversation explains the pre-established vision towards Arabs and their marginalization within the American context. The invisibility of Arabs in such milieu stresses their unexpected presence in public spaces, or rather causes strange reactions and abusing attitudes, if not acceptable they are comprehensible by the white majority. This is shown clearly through the reaction of the policewoman to congratulate him for not going through harder situation in being Palestinian. This incident in the novel tries to attract the readers' attention to the daily unjust racial verbal and physical attitudes the Arabs may encounter everywhere across the country. It shows that the Arabs are least respected and tolerated.

Jemorah in *Arabian Jazz,* and because she is not identified as "white" or "black," but in between, many characters take her for an African-American or more than that, she is usually mocked as "dirty" by her mother's family for her brown skin. This annoying identification is often transformed into a racist attitude by white people in her neighborhood and work environment. Her boss Portia overtly blames Jemorah's mother, Nora, for marrying to the Arab Matussem:

> Your mother could have made such beautiful children—they could have been so lovely like she was, like a white rose. Still, it could definitely have been worse for you, what with *his* skin […] I'm telling you this for love of your mother. I'll feel forever I might have saved her when that Arab man took her and you kids back to that horrible country of his over there. It's a wonder any of you survived that place, so evil, primitive, filled with disease! I should've spoken up twenty years ago. (294)

Moreover, Portia keeps blaming Jermorah for her colored skin that she inherited from her father, when she "declares her racist logic about Matussem, Jemorah's Jordanian/Palestinian father" (Hartman 155) in the following passage:

> I'm telling you Jemorah Ramoud, your father and all his kind aren't any better than Negroes, that's why he hasn't got any ambition and why he'll be stuck in that same job in the basement for the rest of his life. They'd never promote him any higher. He only got where he is now on my say-so, because I feel for you kids. And now you can go that way, too, or you can come under my wing and let *me* educate you, really get you somewhere. We'll try putting some pink lipstick on you, maybe lighting you're hair, make *American* (294)

Portia's emphasis on making her "*American*" stresses clearly the rejection by the American white society of Jemorah to be American if she had another skin but white. Hence, to be American she should be white; to be American she should get any physical or cultural criteria but the only accepted one; white. This requires compromising her Arab side for the American. Yet, the reaction of Jemorah was immediate and harsh and sarcastic to counter Portia's racist blurt. In this response, Jemorah shows her overwhelmed feeling of grievance received from the surrounding racist society that annoys her on a daily basis:

> "My father's mother *was* black." The statement came from the back of her throat, so sudden she hadn't known she was going to say it, the words like iron. Jem leaned back on her elbows, locking them against her shaking. "Yeah, a former slave. She married her master who had twenty-six other wives. They were black, brown, and yellow, and some did not *have* skin." (295)

The association with black race recurrent is in this novel, where she describes situations similar to the black people in the face of racism rather than "negotiate an in-between status, Jemorah here claims a black identity. Jemorah does not try to explain the complexities of who she is as an Arab American to her racist and ignorant boss, but rather proudly declares her heritage as 'black'" (Hartman 155). Again, Abu-Jaber uses the solidarity between ethnic groups to emphasize the great effect of racism. The impact on Arabs is no less than that applied on the Black people but they take them for Black people most of time. Besides, Jemorah evokes the stereotype of polygamy linked to Arabs in the American mind when she insists that "grandmother' married her master who had already "twenty six-wives," adding by this to the provocation of Portia's

ignorance and prejudgment towards Arabs and her failure to distinguish between Arabs and Africans.

Jemorah, in most scenes in the novel, is siding with the black side of her father. She has even thought of accepting to marry her Jordanian cousin as reaction to the segregation by her mother's family, and the mainstream in general towards her, and as a kind of loyalty to her Arab origin. On the other side, at the end of novel Jemorah ironically accepts a white man for a boyfriend instead of the Arab husband; an attitude in fact reveals her acceptance of the white culture and way of life. Hence, she represents the real ambivalence of Arabs towards their identity. By defining her own "Arabness as connected to blackness, Jemorah negotiates a different kind of position for herself in a racially stratified town in upstate New York. This reading proposes new directions for the development of Arab-American identity and for solidarity between groups in the complex and multilayered racial hierarchies of the United States" (Hartman 156).

Racist statements and attitudes which harass the Arab-Americans in the street is mentioned in *Once in a Promised Land*, with the scene while Salwa was driving and suddenly hears someone shouting at her with very harsh words:

> as she was driving home, Salwa stopped at a red light with her windows closed against the unbearable heat, which seemed as though it would never, ever end. 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. They just want . . ." (56)

The daily slogans and harsh words as a racist intolerance towards Muslims and Arabs becomes unbearable reality lived by the regular Arab-American in a country they consider home. The novel addresses the ordinary readers to consider the daily suffering of their fellow-citizens.

The novelists tried to use the literary techniques, and thematic matters in their novels as a strategy to counteract the distorted image. This became an urgent mission for Arab-American writers to represent themselves and their culture in the face of being badly represented adopt a challenging mission of literary activism to handle the image reformulation task.

Chapter Four

Chapter Four: The Arab-American Activist Novel and Self-representation

Self-representation that becomes more than a necessity but a form of resistance and self-assertion within the literary and social constant changing trends and tastes which are influenced by political and ideological orientations. Arab-American novelist could not avoid such mission of counteraction of presenting a better picture of the Arab character and culture. The concept strongly believed, "that fiction had the power to change reality" (Sironval 232) is made a motive for utilizing fiction to change the belief and image about the Arab people and hence provide them with more welcome and tolerance in the Western societies. The Arab-American novelist became activists using a soft but effective weapon to write back to the dominant culture, using the same language and means of expression.

4.1. Representing One-self in the Face of Being Represented

A growing need for a voice that expresses the Arab community's needs and concerns has been doubled in the beginning of the twenty first century. This growth is accompanied with an increase of readership and interest among the American critics and ordinary readers towards Arab-American literary production. It is reflecting an increasing curiosity to know more about the longstanding invisibility of the Arab community. This factor is promising and encouraging to provide an alternative literature that reflects the Arab culture without distortion or misrepresentation as Ludescher explains: "Two factors spurred the growth of Arab-American literature. The first was the search for voices outside the traditional canon of Anglo-American male literature, a search which led to the burgeoning interest in ethnic American writers" (106). Besides, she adds that other factor is completely different:

> The second factor, like so many things in the Arab American community, was political. Recent events in the Arab world combined to raise the political consciousness and solidarity of the Arab American community. In order to combat the proliferation of anti-Arab stereotypes, writers dedicated themselves to putting a human face on the Arab American immigrant population. Paradoxically, the events of 9/11 increased the public's interest in this heretofore ignored community. (Ludescher 106)

However, not until the publication of recent novels, especially *Arabian Jazz*, almost literary productions have nearly avoided talking about the self –representation. Before Diana Abu-Jaber publication of *Arabian Jazz* in 1993, Arab-American writers had produced a considerable amount of poetry, autobiographies, works, and short stories. Even though some of them had written novels, these writings did not particularly deal with self-representation and image matters (Kaldas 167),

> Although some writers had written novels, their work did not specifically address Arab American themes. The publication of novels that explored the lives of Arab Americans seemed to be the next step in the growth of the literature. Perhaps the literary anticipation as well as the need of Arab Americans to represent themselves in a positive light raised the expectations that preceded Abu-Jaber's novel to an unrealistic degree. (Kaldas 167)

In such a context, the writers find themselves translators more than mere writers of fiction. Abu –Jaber (DAJ), explains this in an answer in her interview with Field (RF):

> **RF**: Do you find yourself in the role of cultural translator or interpreter of Arabs for the non-Arab reader? If so, what methods do you use? And does this task ever impinge upon your creative instincts?
>
> **DAJ**: It is true-but completely inadvertent. I think that just setting myself the task of writing about this specific community has transformed into cultural translation and interpretation. I never meant for that to be. When I write, I just try to tell a really small personal story, nothing that's meant to be global and representative of something bigger. After the experience with *Arabian Jazz*, I knew that *Crescent* was going to be read in that way, and so I just said, "All right, I want to write about Iraq. I want to write about this wonderful legacy." (Field 211-2)

The representation of Arabs in the media never deals with any kind of development or knowledge in their intellectual life either in the Arab world or even in America. The representation is always devoid of any allusion to the educational and culture intelligence, or contribution to the academic or intellectual life ever. Hanif, the hero in *Crescent,* represents a radical and different image than that the public used to know, about the intellectual Arab individual who competes with his fellow Americans by working as a university teacher. It is an initiative act by the writer to normalize and show that the Arab is not what is painted all time as lacking intellect and human potentials. This representation provides another dimension to the Arab image in a deliberate defiance to the distorted image manipulated by media and stereotyping literature. The hero is socially and intellectually acceptable prototype in the mainstream society. The writer describes the hero by saying:

> Han is meant to be representative of a specific kind of very literate, sophisticated Arab man. He is someone who has studied and traveled. He is a man that I have known among my family, among friends, but that I never see represented in our media. I very deliberately set myself that task, to see this profile come forth-we needed to see this other man. Definitely he is a bit idealized, but not that idealized. (Qtd. In Field 219)

In the novel, Hanif, or Han as he is called sometimes, is described as a legendary figure with a charismatic character and an attractive physical nature. In the following scene Sirine's uncle is trying to present them to each other thinking that he is the one who suits her best being intelligent, attractive and he represents what an Arab character should be:

> Once again, her uncle is speaking of Hanif Al Eyad, the new hire in the Near Eastern Studies Department at the university. Hanif has come into the restaurant four times since arriving in town several weeks ago and her uncle keeps introducing him to Sirine, saying their names over and over, "Sirine, Hanif, Hanif, Sirine."
>
> Sirine leans over the cutting board she has balanced on her knees and steadies the lemon. "I really don't know who you're referring to."
>
> Her uncle gestures with both arms. "He is tremendous, covered with muscles, and shoulders like this—like Cadillac—and a face like I don't know what." "Well if you don't know, I certainly don't," Sirine says as she slices the lemon.
>
> Her uncle lounges back in his big blue chair. "No, really, you can't believe it, I'm telling you, he looks like a hero. Like Ulysses." (06)

The image of "angry" Arab in the public culture is replaced in the *Arabian Jazz* by humorous characters who present jokes and enjoy moments of laughter and relaxation. It shows the happy nature of the Arab who adores funny and joyful moments and likes entraining spaces and instruments, and music is among the element that presents the artistic and joyful taste. The novel is funny, and Arabs are portrayed as human (Kaldas 169). The novel is full of joking and funny scenes and the sense of humor typify the majority of characters, especially Matussem who is portrayed as comic and clumsy in most scenes:

> Matussem couldn't get the sound check right; nearly every time he touched the mike it sent piercing feedback through the hall. Diners would drop their forks, clutch their ears, and send forth Arabic curses involving drought blight, and leprosy. "May God strike you with lightning." (57)

Moments of joy and laughter are deliberately filling the novel making it entertaining and attractive as critic "Yasmine Khooli argues that the novel 'is funny. It's lively and wild and for once, Arabs are portrayed as genuinely human, poignant, goofy [-] charming, and light-hearted as everybody else'" (Kaldas 169).

Similarly, other well-known stereotype dealt with repeatedly in popular culture which is the "Evil Arab" is discussed in *Once in the Promised Land*. The writer attempts to provide the readers with a clearer idea about the humanity of Arabs and erase the monster-like image that Hollywood is regularly painting. The next passage describes the Arabs as good people by witness of a white American character who has visited Jordan:

> "My daughter, Cinda, met a fellow from Jordan back when we were living in Ohio. They got into drugs. Cinda was no angel, so it's hard to tell who started it. She ran off with him. I went all over the place trying to find them, even flew to Jordan and went to his godforsaken village. Never found them, but I did travel around your country looking, and it was very beautiful. The people were kind to me as much as I wanted to hate every last one.… " (34)

This testimony shows the correction of the character's pre-established image of "wicked Arab" and he insists that people were nicer than he thought. The novel creates a kind contact and communication between Arab and American communities, as a message asking for more dialogue and mutual understanding between the two cultures and peoples.

Besides, representing the cultural richness of the Arab world plays a central role in combating the long-lived stereotypes which are promoting the idea of the "ignorance" and "backwardness" about the Arabs. In that sense, Abu-Jaber confirms that view of trying hard to present the real and nice side about the Arab culture and history, or rather lighten and erase the ignorance of the public about the ancient legacy of Iraq and its people: "In terms of cultural representation, I really wanted to convey the richness and the depth of the cultural wealth of Iraq" (Qtd. in Field 212). She insists on the nobleness of her mission by saying: "I wanted to talk about all the things that I am obsessed with and that are important to me, and I hoped it would be important to other people. And as I was writing this story, I would think, 'let's talk about the ancient Islamic poets now.' The whole idea of representing the literacy and the richness of the culture was so crucial to me" (Qtd. in Field 212).

The Arab-American writers try to liberate Arab-Americans from the prejudgments that shaped their history of existence in the United States. Some writers try to shed light on the limitations imposed on the Arab-American community as a result of the long history of distorted image and unfair perceptions. These writers, "write fiction whose mere existence challenges the fictions about Arab America that allow commentators in American society to reinvent the limited space to which Arab Americans frequently are confined" (Salaita "Arab" 109). For instance, 9/11 events repercussions have created a very limited space for Arab-Americans by enclosing them in a very close circle by calling them "terrorists."

4.1.1. Post 9/11 Dilemma

Arab-American writers were confused in showing their true opinion about 9/11 events. Feeling directly concerned to face such a moment of shock and thrill, Arab-American writers were divided in their reaction to the events. Some writers adopted an ethical responsibility towards the world and their community by criticizing the attacks and their planners. For instance, editor Elie Chalala argues "that explanations are required to prevent a racist backlash [...] Similarly thoughtful responses to the terrorist attacks have been expressed in literature by writers Elmaz Abinader, Suheir Hammad, Lawrence Joseph, and D. H. Melhem" (Ludescher 107). Other writers did not interfere in such endless debate about the real actors in such political dilemma.

Arabs' dilemma was already intense given the successive political tensions even before the 9/11 attacks. Hence, "identity for Arabs and Arab Americans within the U.S. context has been particularly vexed at the end of the twentieth and beginning of the twenty-first century given the heightened global political tensions between the United

States and the Arab world, which have served to intensify the American tendency to demonize Arabs and devalue Arab cultures" (Michael 314). The Arab-American writers had to adopt their characters to the events and tensions, and stereotypes acting as a background for their stories. For instance, Abu Jaber's *Crescent* "counters such xenophobic stereotypes not only thematically but also structurally. *Crescent* offers characters who face different forms of exile and have to work through fractured, destabilized identities marked by loss, negativity, and otherness to create for themselves new identities that remain in-process" (Michael 314).

Moreover, Abu-Jaber, for instance, was put into a difficult situation when she was not sure of publishing her novel *Crescent* that deals with terrorist matters in the period just after 11/9. The novel manuscript was accomplished just before the attacks. Here again rises the dilemma of the Arab-American writers either to speak or to keep silent in moments like that; either to criticize both sides of the conflict (the American government and the so-called "terrorists"), or to side with one of them. Abu-Jaber confesses her fear and embarrassment as follows:

> When 9/11 happened, I had just turned in the manuscript. I did ask my agent if we should cancel it, because it seemed as if people weren't going to be open to this kind of story. The timing seemed awful, but she said, "No, I think that people are going to want to hear stories like this. I think that we need to insist that this kind of thing get told, and we've got to stay with it." Luckily, she prevailed. (Qtd. in Field 222)

This internal conflict and dilemma of the Arabs in general, and with special emphasis on Arab-Americans, and those other ethnic groups who are confounded with them because of the color of the skin, after the 9/11 "all are suspects." This situation is well expressed in *Crescent* as follows:

> No one ever wants to be the Arab—it's too old and too tragic and too mysterious and too exasperating and too lonely for anyone but an actual Arab to put up with for very long. Essentially, it's an image problem. Ask anyone, Persians, Turks, even Lebanese and Egyptians—none of them want to be the Arab. They say things like, well, really we're Indo-Russian-Asian-European-Chaldeans. So in the end the only one who gets to be the Arab is the same little old Bedouin with his goats and his sheep and his poetry about his goats and his sheep, because he doesn't know that he's the Arab and what he doesn't know won't hurt him. (38-9)

The dilemma is also reflected and well expressed with confusion and shock of their characters as unexpected and unexplainable events of 9/11, as the case of the hero Jassim in *Once in the Promised Land* where his vision was not clear:

> He walked through the dim house, relishing the embrace of darkness. He had been so distracted by the news on Tuesday that he had forgotten to empty the contents of his gym bag, which he found in the family room. (19)

Salwa and her friends and family were not less anxious about the events and their effect on people and their life and future in that country:

> Both his and Salwa's families had telephoned shortly after it happened, which was also beyond his comprehension. They were all intelligent human beings and knew that America was a large country and that New York was on the East Coast, and yet they had called to see if he and Salwa were safe. It was ridiculous, and he had told his father so. "Baba, we are so far away, there is nothing to worry about."
>
> "You are far away from me, and I always worry." (21)

Such anxiety was in fact pointing to the ambiguous and doubtful situation of the Arab- Americans, just after the events had happened, expecting an unjust treatment by the government and ordinary people towards them and waiting for any kind of retaliation:

> 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. (21)

The novelist is also reflecting such situation through Salwa's words in her conversation with Jassim, foreshadowing the uneasy situation Jassim had to face:

> Only it doesn't matter to them if they get the people who did whatever it is that they are angry about, just as long as they've done something large and loud. I hate to think what sort of retaliation there is going to be on a governmental level for what happened. Jassim, it's not going to be easy, especially for you. (21)

"Terrorist" actions, and their results and causes, are visibly dealt with in Abu-Jabers' *Crescent*. Nevertheless, the novel, that coincided by chance with the 9/11 events, does not deny the responsibility of the Unites States in receiving such attacks due to the oppressive economic and political policies abroad, especially in the Middle East. One of the characters, Rana puts the blame on the American people who do not care and learn about their governmental policies towards the other people, in a direct accusation of the American public of lack of interest about others' lives while accusing everyone else of being terrorist if their lives are targeted. This egoist and self-centered behavior of common people is clearly mentioned in the novel via Rana's question of the passivity of the Americans, and their part responsibility in what is going on in the world around:

> Rana points at Suha: "Do you see? This is exactly the attitude that's the problem! You want to know where the terrorists come from? They come from passivity—from well-meaning people! Americans want big cars, big houses—they don't care what their government does to put cheap gasoline in their cars, to make these big things happen. Fine, but don't be surprised when the terrorism ends up right back here." (160)

Abu-Jaber in *Crescent* sheds light on the over-generalized idea of terror to the point that distinction is no longer being made between Arabs and other people of color, especially Mexicans in this novel. The general ignorance and neglect by American people towards Arabs, are due the Arabs' invisibility to general public for long time. This confusion makes some colored minorities suspected or described as "terrorists":

> "They think we're all terrorists anyway," Aziz says carefully, scooping up forkful of mashed potatoes.
>
> "Who's 'they'?" Victor says. He clicks the tines of his fork against the plate to make a dangerous ticking sound. "*I* do not think that."
>
> "You? Oh, big deal. If you and I were out shopping at the mall do you think any of the white guys there could tell the difference between us?
>
> They think you were one of my terrorist buddies." (187)

The same idea is shared and dealt with in *Once in the Promised Land*, where characters are astonished with overreaction of people towards any person who looks like Arabs. This reaction could reach individual either young or old, Arab or Muslim or not. Even other minorities, like Latin Americans, Indians, Sikhs and many others are source of suspicion. Retaliation might create a varied category of victims by burning their properties or even shooting them:

> "Randa is worried about her kids, thinks someone might try to hurt them," she told him later.
>
> "Why would anyone hurt Randa's kids? People are not so ignorant as to take revenge on a Lebanese family for the act of a few extremist Saudis who destroyed those buildings." He had promptly been proved wrong when a Sikh gas station attendant in Phoenix was killed *in retaliation.*
>
> Salwa's outrage and sadness was immense. "What does a Sikh have to do with anything? People are stupid …" (21)

This extract tries to address the American public about the overgeneralization they usually react with against all the Arabs, or any one has similar physical traits, as a form of retaliation and out of suspicion. The passage here points to the idea that the whole ethnic group or nationality is unjustly being blamed for an act by individuals or extremists or groups. The fear and rage resulted from the horror of the attacks, and nourished by media analysis, made the public haunted by the question of security expecting bombs everywhere, that all Arabs are ready to blow up building and themselves. The following example is addressing the idea of security paranoia that became an exaggerated request by people. While Jassim and Salwa were shopping, a girl called the security guard just because she suspected Jassim, the Arab looking man could do anything to harm people or steal their goods. Salwa's reaction was full of anger. In a way the writer attracts readers' attention to the sufferance innocent people, who have nothing to do 9/11, get just because they are Arabs:

> 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? (30)

Salwa continues pouring her rage by pointing to the act of the girl by calling security guards as showing off patriotism:

> 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 about in school. You can say you saw a real live Arab and had to call security on him."
>
> The other girl had tears at the edge of her eyelids, ready to fall, but Salwa's rage was still full and red and she showed no mercy.
>
> "So you looked at my husband, a professional man in his forties staring at the motorcycle, and you thought that was suspicious?" (30)

The reaction of the girl was the same people usually show, and it is always linked to the excuse and pretext of the 9/11 effect on their lives and families:

> "Okay, Amber. Please call your manager. What you two just did is illegal." Salwa stared at them, gigantic in her anger.
>
> Amber's face changed in blotches. Something seemed to be building up in her, and she blurted, "My uncle died in the Twin Towers." (30)

Besides, the security obsession is not only haunting individuals but even enterprises and institutions both public and private. Many people lost their jobs and lives as a result of minor suspicion or call from someone or any FBI report. The novel's main character Jassim, lost his job as direct effect of 9/11 attacks. His story points the hurried decisions against Arab-Americans while their colleagues spy and conspire against them. Accordingly, "[t]he guiltiest party, however, is the collection of media and politicians who have worked hard to make certain that imagined Middle Eastern features are perceived as inherently threatening and thus worthy of suspicion" (Salaita "Modern" 88).

Consequently, one's own means of representation are the best and only way to change the images and prejudgments long lived to distort the Arab portrayal, or in other words there is no better than one's hand washing one's face.

4.2. The Arab-American Novelist: An Artist or an Activist

Within the game of representation by others and self-representation, the Arab-American writing is seen as a suitable ground for such debate. In the complicated social, political American context, no view can deny the interrelated and mutual influence of fiction on people and the impact of society on writers and their writing.

The rise of Arab-American writing with its artistic and political role in combating marginalization became more than necessary. However, it needs encouragement and recognition to gain ground within the growing ethnic writing and literatures of the margin. Hence, the political role of Arab-American writers may be hidden, or secondary but rather fundamental to keep with the mainstream policies inherited from the old political and cultural Orientalism.

The idea of "terrorist-image" combating is clearly discussed in *Crescent* through a conversation between characters, among them permanent and contemporary immigrant Arabs of different origins, whites, Mexicans, and others. These conversations are an allusion to the necessarily negotiations and communication between the different ethnic groups and the mainstream people in general, to clarify the wrong and over-exaggerated descriptions and racist attitudes resulted from the ongoing distorted image fabricated byliterature; the media and movies. The following passage points toward the urgent and critical situation that faces all characters being victims of the racist behavior that urges Aziz, a poet in *Crescent*, to think of writing about the distorted image of Arabs in the literary sphere:

> "… The Americans need to hear our poetry and stories and this and that sort of stuff," Gharb says, then turns to Aziz. "Why don't you ever write political poems?" …
>
> "Of course," Jenoob says. "All we see on the TV or movies about Arabs is they're shooting someone, bombing someone, or kidnapping someone." He counts them off on his fingers. "Those are the choices. The only lines they get to say are: '*Shut up and sit down!*" he shouts, fingers cocked like a gun. (188)

The passage indicates the need for pushing towards the establishment and foundation of a trend of writing by Arab-American writers to counterpart the huge machinery of stereotypes and racism. Abu-Jaber, in other words, points to the need for a new tendency of writing that works at making self-portrayal and self-defense against stereotypes a cause that should be fought by Arab-Americans each at his position, through discussing this matters in the shape of conversation between the fictional characters in the novel. This "committed" literature needs to be taken seriously in real literary domains by Arab-American poets and novelists and each one with his own means of expression. However, the mission is full of challenge by readers and critics within the mainstream society and even by the Arabs themselves. Too much disagreement and controversies are expected to accompany such innovative enthusiastic and daring literary production.

The reaction of the character Aziz to the question about his writing of politics, which is not an easy task to get the satisfaction by a category of readers, even Arab readers. Some prefer to follow the old Western romantic representation of Arabs in the Orientalist style. In other words, they want Arabs to be shown in coherence with the romantic painting of the Arab as the dreaming creatures that live in a world of fantasy

and exotic life with all its fragrances and adventure stories. Their argument probably is to keep that dreamy image, and refuse to discuss and show the real political degradation, social backward situation and cultural matters of Arabs in general and Arab-Americans in particular, who are in the hot spot as a consequence of all political and social attitudes in the Arab world, with its dual and reciprocal effect on American foreign and domestic policies. For this reason, the task of any writing that dares to deal with such subject is challenging, and the writers struggle against a hard reception and doubtful readership by public and Arab readers mainly those prefer to be just Americans and ignore what belongs to the Old World, as it is discussed in *Crescent*:

> "Why does it always have to be politics and fighting with you people!" Um Nadia cries…
>
> "Why don't you ever write political poems?"
>
> "That's not what I mean!" Um-Nadia says.
>
> "She means Americans need to know about the big, dark, romantic soul of the Arab?" Sirine's uncle says, a bit intensely…
>
> "… listen I got fed up with all the harassments. Do you think I got nice letters in the mail when I read my political poetry? I did not. I got calls saying, no, don't tell such unhappy stories about the Arabs. I got calls saying, no more bad news, write about hearts and flowers and happy, happy Arabs being nice to each other. And from who I did I get these letters? From the Arabs who are always complaining that there's not enough truth about Arabs in the magazines and TV." (188)

However, many Arab-American writers, majority of whom accidently are women, continue to challenge the discouraging environment of writing and "address a variety of subjects and, negative Western stereotypes of Arab and Muslims continue to

be a significant problem to which their writing respond" (Hoyt 16). They may follow the example and be encouraged by their fellow Arab women writers in England in creating what Abou El Naga calls "of this place" literature concerning the local and everyday life concerns, as she argues that the attitude of these women writers towards common themes:

> [L]ike Hijab, Islamic teachings, political turbulence, childhood experiences, and even culinary tradition is what makes their writings 'of this place' i.e. their native culture. However, the fact that these women are trying to establish a different discourse that would engage the Other makes their writings 'out of place'. So, these writings emanate from the Arabic culture, yet they employ different strategies and techniques. This is why I consider these 'new writings' a challenge to the metropolitan claim of possessing an exclusive canon and a universal theory of narrative. (63)

Abou El Naga explains the stories of *Translator* (1999) by Leila Abul Ela and Sabiha Khemir's *Waiting in the Future for the Past to Come* (1993): "I believe that more writings such as these will surely lead to a path where each agency could display itself fully and justly. This path, where exchange of views and correction of mistaken images takes place, could re-set the feminist agenda locally and internationally" (71).

The writing of such literature will not be so easy without much courage and commitment, to lead the double fight against the other view of mainstream criticism. This latter shuns the writing that does not fit into the general Western tendency of the pre-established distorted image of the "backward Arab," and later the "terrorist Arab," on one hand. On the other hand, it has to cope with the Arab conservative attitudes and views by some Arabs and Arab-American writers who prefer to follow the mainstream

trend, to gain the privilege of mainstream publication houses and readership. In an interview with Abu-Jaber, she complains about the difficulty of publication as follows:

> It can feel confining, absolutely. I have the sense that a lot of it is sort of the machinations of publicity and marketing. You write from a kind of cultural perspective, and then your publisher, or the powers that be, decide that is the angle that gives them the handle on who you are. And it seems to mark you as different. In a way it's good because it gives you a kind of specificity, which is always helpful; but it only helps in the beginning, and it only takes you so far. (Qtd. in Field 213)

Facing publication hampering conditions by the mainstream and Arab-American publishers is another discouraging factor in writing about Arab matters, especially political ones. Abu-Jaber was facing both categories of publishers. While trying to publish *Crescent*, she was asked "to rewrite her characters again and again, remove references to Israel, and provide historical evidence of the war crimes committed against Palestinians in 1948, Abu-Jaber said she finally reached a point – five years after beginning the book – when she had to put it aside" (Shalal-Esa). She was refused publication for fear for prompting stereotypes when sent one of her stories to the Arab-American journal *Mizna*[8]:

> Ah, *Mizna*. I sent them an excerpt from "Memories of Birth." It was a story about a girl who is discovered outside a refugee camp. She's mysterious, and she doesn't sleep well at night. It comes out that she's been tortured by the Israeli army, and she's suppressed the memory of the torture. So, I sent that to *Mizna* … One of the editors told me that they'd given it to somebody to read after they'd already accepted it, and that she was violently opposed to it. (Qtd.in Shalal-Esa)

Abu Jaber expresses her astonishment because of the story's rejection: "I had them talking about the evil eye. She didn't like that, because she thought it made the Arabs look superstitious and old-fashioned" (Qtd.in Shalal-Esa).

The mission of writing in such context seems full of obstacles and challenges provided by both American and Arab circumstances and tastes, and even the desires of some Arab-Americans to feel fully American and deny their Arab side. In one of the conversations in *Crescent* Suha behaviors in a careless way towards the Arab image or homeland politics, in a way that reflects the ignorance and the intended denial of the Arab origin and culture:

> "Rana, I'm sorry, but do you always have to be at the top of your lungs all the time? People like you make the Amerkees think Muslims are always angry." She adds something in Arabic so a number of the other women shout, "English, English"
>
> Rana looks dazed. "How can you talk like that, Suha?" she demands. "Do you know the effect of an American rocket on an Iraqi tank?" She lifts her hand. "The Americans were firing after the Iraqis had already *surrendered,* they were retreating."
>
> Suha sniffs. "I don't even know why you expect us to know about all these political things," she says. "We just want to be Americans like every-one else." (160)

The Arab-American writers' role is more important than just pleasing the readers. So, their work has to transcend the merely artistic mission into a committed one, that is linked to the whole Arab ethnic group's present and future existence in the United States; many social and cultural interests are at stake. Abu-Jaber argues in the same token by declaring:

> I was thinking about how that's all we ever get-the idea of the terrorist. And I realized that people are so afraid of difference; they're so afraid of people who look different or sound different. If there's any social agenda in what I do, that is probably the number one thing: trying to counteract the media portrayals-the terrorist for the Arab man and the oppressed, hidden, exotic Arab woman. I talk about them in terms of diversity and humanity. I think the best way that comes through is by addressing vulnerability. (Qtd. in Field 219)

As long as the racist novels are kept being published, while they are full with stereotypes against the Arabs, the mission of self-defense and pen-wars need to be waged with all possible literary weapons as Orfalea puts it:

> Because humanness has been so lacking in American novels that treat Arabs in English-I'm thinking of Leon Uris, James Michener, and Ken Follett, to name the more famous stereotypers (famous not for their stereotyping, unfortunately)-the Arab American novelist has indeed a mission beyond the normal one of making moving art. (117)

The mission of the Arab-American novelists is complicated, with the risks of losing the chance for publishing their works. However, more things are at skate if security, dignity and life are not respected by the American mainstream society. The Arab-American novelist becomes no just an artist, but rather a humanist, he "is giving birth to images of humanness, or to 'figures of the human,'... The closer he gets to what is real, the closer he gets to justice and redemption. The novelist's aim is revelation, the ultimate clarity of the real; the stereotyper wants to blur" (Orfalea 117).

The human mission is crucial because of the bad effect of stereotypes on the public who ignores the real Arab nature and culture. Reading novels full of stereotypes

gives the mainstream readers one side of the story, for this very reason substitute novels in English written by Arab- Americans give them the advantage of knowing the other version of the story. The sudden rise of interest by American readers about the Arab culture, as a result of the 9/11 effect, is a fortune opportunity to catch. Americans became curious readers, and the Arab-American novel could be the saving tool to satisfy their curiosity, by providing them with truth deliberately hidden and deformed by popular culture:

> Stereotypers shoot for contempt. Their greatest damage is that they achieve it often with no perception of their effect on the reader until it has happened-the contempt has been taken, whole, into the body and the life-view, not only of an individual, but a country. The gifted novelist aims if not for love, for understanding, at least. (Orfalea 117)

Stereotypes that affect the ordinary people never miss the Arab-American writers as individuals or their families, the reason that such reaction against them are often sensed within the narrative of the fictional characters reflecting the conscious and subconscious injuries the writers once felt and experienced as individuals, or as members of their acquaintances. Abu-Jaber, in her interview with Field, makes aware and publicizes for such hurting attitudes and requests the readers to feel the huge harm such racist manners could cause, and have as an effect, on their fellow citizens:

> RF: *Arabian Jazz* contains some incredibly painful scenes of racism and cultural intolerance towards Arabs. Have you or your family members had to deal with such prejudice yourselves? How do you hope for these scenes to affect your readers? (Field 214)

She responds that her father has been always a target:

> DAJ: Definitely. That was something that I can remember from childhood. My dad at various times worked as a supervisor at a hospital. He had union people under him that were always going on strike. I can remember at times during a strike people would call the house and yell racial epithets on the phone. And every now and then he'd come home and tell us about something that some-one had said to him. He'd say, "I told them that they should all come with me to visit Jordan sometime." And one of his colleagues said, "Oh, I'd like to, but I like to take baths." Just nasty, weird, creepy little jabs and jibes that came out of all these media representations. (Qtd. in Field 214)

Opening dialog between Arab citizens and the American public to discuss critical matters and know about the Arab culture like what happens between fictional characters in Nadia's Café, is a window through which both sides can discuss and settle conflicts peacefully in real life. It is another job the Arab-American writer is already doing either deliberately or not. Abu-Jaber admits this after publishing *Crescent*:

> …a lot of people also came up to me personally and were very open and really emotionally supportive. People wrote to me after *Crescent* came out, saying things like, "I'm so glad that you wrote this book." One woman wrote, "I never thought of Iraqis as having mothers." So basic! And so on that level, I'm really happy to have participated in helping start a conversation. (Qtd. in Field 223)

Though the novels and their writers in a part are combating stereotypes, but sometimes they promote them either deliberately or indirectly. This could happen approximately at the readership level. The average American readers are simple receivers who absorb the stories as entertainment, without much criticism or analysis or

not even trying to associate them to reality. Hence, their reception of the events usually are spontaneous if not naïve. The stereotypes and descriptions of Arabs presented in the novel perhaps presented deliberately by the writer aiming to subvert, erase, or mock them could have an opposite effect. The readers immersed in public culture painted by Orientalist pictures of Arabs', may considers the images in fictitious stories as real. The writer, then, who is committed to change the distorted images should be aware of such minor detail that could destroy his objective and lead to opposite results. This of course depends on the writer's commitment and seriousness in his writing. In consequence, Abu-Jaber admits the criticism she got from family and friends after playing with some stereotypical scenes:

> DAJ: I remember at one reading somebody asking me, "Why you make us talk like this?" I grew up around a family of people who spoke with a very thick accent. I didn't even really hear it in a way. I heard it as almost as another language-that was the third language.
>
> RF: Arablish, you've called it.
>
> DAJ: Yes! To me it's musical, it's colorful, it's strange, it's fascinating. But a lot of non-native speakers felt that portraying characters with a heavy accent, a dialect, somehow made them lesser. I didn't realize how powerfully people felt that; and I came to appreciate it more after *Arabian Jazz* came out. I then read other works that used dialect with different cultural backgrounds, and it became clear to me that it's a tricky thing to do-a hard thing to pull off convincingly without looking mocking. So I finally decided that I just wasn't going to do it anymore. (Qtd.in Field 214)

In fact, *Arabian Jazz* had received a sharp criticism concerning this point. Many critics were aware of the impact of the novel on the general public opinion and knowledge. Some Arab-American critics "tore it to shreds. One reviewer accused Abu-Jaber of falling into a naïve liberal feminism and perpetuating clichéd representations of Arabs. Another Arab-American reader–enraged by her inclusion of a discussion of female infanticide – said Arabs 'don't do these things. And even when they do, you don't write about it'" (Shalal-Esa). The characters'

> [A]ctions are unrealistic and can therefore distort the reader's understanding of Arab culture... Certainly Arab Americans were right to be concerned that the novel might be read as an accurate portrayal of Arab culture. I recall one American reader who raved about how much she enjoyed the novel, ending with the statement that now she felt she truly understood Arab culture. (Kaldas 167-8)

Concerning the novel's reception and its immediate impact on readers and their reaction towards the Arabs, Arab-Americans and Arab culture in general, some other critics think that the work is fictional and should not be criticized realistically in direct link with culture and society. The "focus on the inaccuracies in the novel leaves little room for looking at *Arabian Jazz* as a fictional work" (Kaldas 167). But this in fact is the opinion of narrow group of people who have academic interests, whereas the ordinary people, who represent majority of readers, are not aware of such fiction/reality controversies. They represent a majority that votes and chooses politicians, who meet at a daily basis with other Arab-American citizens, and have an impact on domestic and foreign policies of the United States dealing with the Arab world and all Arab matters. Abu Jaber, as response to these fears, confesses:

> I was very taken aback by some of that response. There's also the sense that … Arab-Americans have been so maltreated by the media, their image has been so dark, that I think there's a real anxiety about the artistic representations that are out there. "Is this just going to make us look worse? You're exposing us, you're making us even more vulnerable. What we need to do is be quiet, we need to close ranks. We need to really control what's being said about us." I think a lot of that fearfulness was stirred up by the novel. I understand it, I really do. (Qtd. in Shalal-Esa)

Nevertheless, "*Arabian Jazz* makes the Arab American voice engagingly at home in fiction, and marks a strong debut by Abu -Jaber" (Grossman 23). On the other side, though the West worked at representing the Arabs in a way to go with its political agenda, the Arabs are not totally positive in representing themselves. In spite the fact that "the Western culture has a history of placing the East as the object of the gaze, but this does not deny the active role of the non-West in engaging in representing itself" (Khatib 9). It is a kind of perpetuation of the same Western myths and stereotypes about the Arabs, especially the image of terrorism. It seems this "Other" (Arabs) for the West contains many "Others" inside itself. The United States and some Arab countries "constructing Islamic fundamentalism as an enemy yet configuring this enemy differently… its Otherness status makes it not only an enemy to the West, but also a threat to national security [in the Arab countries. Thus, it shows that] the Orient's Others do not come only from outside, but the Orient can also exclude elements of 'itself' as Other as well" (Khatib 13). Some writers from that Arab or Islamic world have contributed to the misrepresentation. Ironically, some

> Muslim and Arab American literary and cultural productions have been […] charted not only by sanctioned racism and licensed visual and cultural vilification of Muslims and Arabs but also by a residual neo-Orientalist political economy of publishing and reception […] The works or oral diatribes of self-professed secular Muslims such as Ibn Warraq, Irshad Manji, Wafa Sultan [….] have become hot commodities in mainstream media. They cast a picture of Islam as patriarchal and tyrannical and of Muslim women submissive victims or rebellious escapees. (Gana 1577-8)

In the same token, *The Cairo House* promotes many stereotypes, especially about some Islamic traditions which somehow are mocked or criticized as disgusting. The Bayram Feast sacrifice for instance is presented as a moment of shock and horror which is usually linked by stereotypers to the image of Arabs and Muslims as hard-hearted and bloodthirsty. In the chapter *The Feast of the Sacrifice*, Gigi expresses her shock while seeing the act of sacrificing the sheep: "'Blood lust,' my mother called it." (12) Gigi goes on describing the event in her conversation with Madame Helene, a family's Frenchwomen friend: "'I wonder what happens, when they sacrifice the sheep, I mean. It would be interesting to watch just one time, what do you think?' '*Quelle horreur*,' Madame Helene shuddered. 'Do not even think about it. Your mother would never allow it'" (13).

After sneaking a look at the event, despite her mother's disapproval, Gigi expresses her everlasting disgust and shock caused by watching the sacrifice of the sheep. This event, she insists, has strongly affected her soul and altered her life forever, leaving her with a deep scar:

> Later that year, when the blow fell, when the storm clouds broke, l could not help believing, in the unreasoning, solipsistic way of guilty children, that there had been a connection. That some rituals-even *good* magic-should not be exposed to the eyes of the uninitiated, at the risk of incurring the wrath of the gods. Looking back, I realize that this experience left a deeper mark on me than anyone could have foreseen at the time: a fear of curiosity, a squeamishness, an avoidance of the messy, unsettling underside of life that left me singularly unprepared to deal with it as an adult. (19)

Even if the description seems innocent, however the effect on the already scared readers could be huge by stressing the pre-established image of Arabs as violent towards others and even towards animals, and especially as violent heartless, bloody "terrorists." The writer mentions the term "blood lust" which is highly connotative, and may cause a great harm to the Arabs' image instead. Furthermore, Salaita argues that Serageldin "intimates a dislike of those who articulate religiosity through dress or appearance in general […] Islamists are referred to as crazy and as terrorists. *The Cairo House* thus employs an ardently secular worldview, sometimes at the risk of totalizing religious Muslims or Egyptians who happen to dress conservatively as Islamists" ("Modern"122-3). For instance, Gigi expresses a disappointment reaction when her Tante (aunt) Zohra put *hijab* (head cover):

> Tante Zohra […] was, if not veiled, at least with her head covered: she wore a white turban all the time now. If it were only women of her age, with eternity looming close at hand, it would be understandable. But I had seen women of all ages and backgrounds in Islamic dress all over Cairo. (157)

Gigi was wondering why aunt changed her opinion about hijab wearing after she had been so active in her youth in manifesting against it:

> I wondered what led a woman like her back to the veil, when it had been her generation that had been the first never to have to wear it. She had told me proudly how, as a young schoolgirl, she had been one of the youngest to take part in a public demonstration against the veil. (156)

She has shown the same reaction towards Leila: "I have never seen Leila wear a scarf over her hair before. She must have noticed I was taken aback" (157). More other examples of such rejection of Islamic rituals are recurrent in the novel like Islamic marriage and others.

Consequently, the mission of self-representation seems tough enough, considering the major handicaps and obstacles presented against the committed writers who are fighting at different fronts. They are even facing their fellow Arab-American writers who are working in opposition to their cause of stereotype-combatting. But this latter category of writers seems to be a minority. As a result, the Arab-American novelists, with the contributions of other writers of other literary forms, find themselves political activists (either they like it or not) rather than mere writers playing with words or entertaining their readers, or just experimenting with any artistic form, and this is due to their engagement in counter parting a huge political mechanism, that is well organized and structured to target the Arab individual's and cultural existence.

To sum up, Arab-American writers are caught between representing their Arab culture and defending their American belonging. They are living an activist role to represent themselves and their culture instead of being represented. By focusing on discussing different themes concerning their Arab-American life like exile, racism and 9/11 repercussions, these writers are counter-painting the Arab image that has been long

tarnished, and explaining via English, the real culture of Arabs and their civilization. This activism could be direct or not, and it could be deliberate or not, either. The Arab-American writers are inside a huge battle in which they feel the need to take a side. The writer acts as a historian, a reference and interpreter of his era, he is influential at the end. Writers as Abu Jaber, Halaby and Serageldin contribute to extent to the reshaping of the Arab-American image in one way or another.

General Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I tried to focus on the development of the Arabs' image through different mediums, being either Western or Arab, competing with each other to represent the Arab character to the world reader or viewer. The Orientalist images of Arabs have been transmitted through generations and spread into diverse means of expressions starting from works of literature up until reaching the modern means of popular culture, like news media and cinema. The humble efforts by Arab reactions to such distortion seem insufficient. This thesis tried to analyze the attempts by a sample of Arab-American novelists to raise the question of self-representation as a reaction to the usual Western distortive manner of representation. A special focus was put on the following novels: Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescen*t (2003), Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000), and Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007).

Imaginative images, had originated from the Crusades' rage, have been perpetuated and rooted in different forms of expression like literature, media, cinema, etc. In fact, Western people's perception of the "Other" is often based on what they read see and hear in media and cinema. Consequently, more distorted portrayal of the Arabs is reflected in the cinematic productions, in Hollywood by the turn of the twentieth century. Besides, the representation of Arabs in the media and other means never deals with any kind of development or knowledge in their intellectual life either in the Arab world or even in America. The representation is always devoid of any allusion to the educational and culture intelligence, or contribution to the academic or intellectual life.

Bad representation and stereotyping oriented towards Arabs, have very devastating effects upon Arab and Arab-American people's life. Since the "Arabs are the only ethnic group that can be flagrantly and negatively stereotyped by the film and

television industry without fear of retribution in law or public opinion" (Hudson 98), American media/cinema are creative in creating phobia from Arabs and Muslims and making out of them monsters who are always planning to harm the American people. American public is increasingly Arabo-phobic and Islamo-phobic as a result of media description and vilification.

However, despite the discriminating and bad treatments got from official agencies and ordinary people, Arabs in America do not relinquish their duties towards the public good. They are among the first to hurry for help even raise money for the very victims of 9/11 attacks. They donated for the Red Cross and supplied and sponsored blood drives (Nydell 132). These contributions are rarely recognized by the Americans, yet, and as a sign of good will and recognition to America as home, Arabs continue to contribute to the good of the country. By contributing to and adopting from surrounding environment, Arab-Americans are steadily taking part in rebuilding and becoming full-fledged part of the larger and changing mainstream community. Furthermore, in spite of the vilified picture of the oppressed Arab woman soaked the mainstream media and popular culture in the United States, she proved herself as wife and hard worker and ambitious competitor in all fields of work and education.

On the other hand, the evolution of Arab-American society witnesses a side by side evolution of its literature. Literature is a reflection of everyday experience especially for minority communities. In other words, the development of Arab – American literature mirrors and pursues the steps of the changing community. For many decades, the notion of home, land of ancestors, and origin have painted the thematic considerations of Arab-American writing, including identity quest and other communal matters. Moreover, the Arab-American women's contribution to the literary field is considerable and seems more interesting, especially in contemporary novel writing,

being the majority compared to their fellow men writers, and contributing largely in the mission of self-representation.

Arab-American culture remained far from academic research and analysis interest prior 9/11 and was left invisible like the Arab community itself. By 9/11 things changed and more interest was focused on Arab cultural production as a result of domestic and foreign policies following the need for knowing more about the "enemy within." Though the sudden interest in Arab-American literature was pushed up to satisfy political goals, an authentic and beneficial analysis of these literary productions remains backward and laying far away from the expected results.

The aftermath of 9/11 became an urgent factor in looking for ways of expression by Arab-Americans to take part in the crowded field of mainstream literature discussing the events linked to the Arabs in general, and Arab-Americans in particular which immediately affects their freedom and daily life. Arab-American invisibility which is abruptly turned into dazzling visibility in the mainstream media, literature, and community became more than inspiring but urging factor to look for more tools of self-expression.

Though the majority of themes treated by the Arab-American novelist turn around the identity matters, and the life and division between two worlds and all that consequences on the social and psychological life of the groups and individuals, there are other themes conveyed, either explicitly or implicitly, about the duty of promoting the distorted image of Arabs which is largely polluted by the longstanding stereotypes and systematic distortion. As a result, the Arab-American novelists, with the contributions of other writers of other literary forms, find themselves, (either they like it or not) political activists rather mere writers playing with words or entertaining their

readers, or just experimenting with any artistic form. This is due to their engagement in counter-parting a huge political mechanism that is well organized and structured to target the Arab individual, cultural and existence. This activism could be direct or not and it could be deliberate or not, either. The Arab-American writers are inside a huge battle in which they feel the need to take a side. The writer acts as a historian, a reference and interpreter of his era, he is influential at the end.

Believing in the idea of using literature to voice the Arab characters who have been long remained voiceless, and just receiving distorted descriptions and voices who talk wrongly on their behalf, and if it happened to be given a voice, this voice mimics the Western intentions. The aim in the present research was to stress the need for a voice through fiction to counterpart the fictitious image unjustly linked to the Arab character either in real life or in a fictional work of art. Put simply, it could be an Arab fiction versus a Western fiction challenge.

The Arab-American writers try to liberate Arab-Americans from the pre-established perceptions and unfair prejudgments. These writers write fiction whose mission is to challenge the fictions about Arabs. The importance of this role is due to actual and misleading effect of stereotypes on the American public who ignore the real Arab nature and culture. Reading novels full of typecasts gives the mainstream readers one distorted side of the story, for this very reason, substitute novels in English written by Arab-Americans give these readers a chance of knowing the other version of the story. The Arab-American novel is expected to become the saving apparatus that provides the American readers with a clear truth which was deliberately hidden and deformed by popular culture.

However, as a constraint to the above idea, is the fact that the large number of the popular novel readers are passive (Manganaro 12), the challenge to the Arab-American novel is the misperception by the average American reader. This latter could passively receive the stereotypes provided by the media, as well as those included in American literature, or more dangerously is the misunderstanding of the efforts by Arab-American writers to erase such stereotypes, by challenging them through mentioning them frequently in their works.

From another perspective, the challenge is huge. Being the target of Western Orientalist and colonial ambitions, the Arab world underwent all kinds of distortion touching its people and their culture, traditions and what concerns their life and civilizations. Consequently, the Arab/Muslim image either in old and new Orientalist texts, literary works and media and cinematic means needs also huge efforts to stand as a counterpart in the face of the huge machinery of propaganda and stereotyping accumulated for centuries ago. It goes without saying that the anti-Arab stereotyping and misperception in America will continue as long as the Arab-Israeli conflict is not solved. The only way to overcome this situation is to face such anti -Arab attitudes (Samhan 27).

In order to counterpart the huge distortion by producing one hundred percent Arab-oriented movies, stressing the rich Arab culture and heritage share to with humanity, and challenge their image in media and cinema remains a far-reaching objective, since the media and cinematic production by Arab-Americans requires huge budget supply which is not likely attainable at the time being. In addition, such project requires army of actors, script-writers… Hence, the most likely feasible means of resistance is the novel.

The Arab-American writers' role is more than a pleasing tool to entertain the readers. So, their work should transcend the merely artistic mission into a committed one that is linked to the whole Arab ethnic group's present and future and existence in the United States. Much more work and literary production are required. The Arab-American literary field is a huge opportunity for investment that needs new, creative, and more recruited volunteers to keep abreast with the growing demand for Arab-American fiction, which is among the rare attainable means of self-representation.

As an illustration of Arab-American novels depicting Arabs' image, is Abu-Jaber's novels *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescen*t (2003) which have a deep interest in the questions of survival, identity and politics. In addition to Serageldin, first novel *The Cairo House* (2000). Besides, Halaby *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) is the recent concrete illustration of this type literary production. These are samples of the nascent Arab-American literature that, though some defects in them, act as peaceful weapons to stand for the awareness of the Arab community in an attempt to represent one-self and better face the violent assaults against the Arab identity, as individual, community and culture. They stand as thin light in a long tunnel of darkness, and tiny hope for more literary achievements that could stand as rival in competition with the mighty distortion at all levels of the Arabs' image and life.

Notes

1- “Even though these roles may be in fictitious stories for movies or TV shows, the public may become conditioned to seeing certain groups in these consistent roles and believe that these are the only jobs this group holds and that the characteristics they portray are seen in all people of their ethnic group. Therefore, these negative portrayals may cause the public to form judgmental or biased views of certain groups.” (Elayan 13)

2- In “1890, President Benjamin Harrison invited the world to participate in the commemoration of Columbus discovery of America, many countries provided shows reflecting their culture and technical developments. The Orient was also represented by groups from Turkey, Syria, Egypt, Tunisia and Algeria.” (Captan 75, 76)

3- “‘Plan Dalet’ or ‘Plan D’ was the name given by the Zionists High Command to the general plan for military operations within the framework of which the Zionist launched successive offensives in April and early May 1948 in various parts of Palestine. These offensives which entailed the destruction of the Palestinian Arab community and the expulsion and pauperization of the bulk of the Palestine Arabs, were calculated to achieve the military *fait accompli* upon which the state of Israel was to be based.” (Khalidi 8)

4- “By early 1948, the Zionist military had already created its two main terrorist organizations, the Irgun and the Stern, whose objectives of forcing a British withdrawal and terrorizing the Arab population are well documented. Even as early as 1940, Zionist leaders were calling for a nation without Arabs.” (Manganaro 9-10)

5- Holy Grail "is most commonly identified as the cup that Jesus drank from at the Last Supper and that Joseph of Arimathea used to collect Jesus's blood when he was crucified. Given the importance of Jesus's crucifixion and the eucharist in Christian beliefs, the search for the grail became the holiest of quests as it signified the pursuit of union with God." (Synan)

6- "The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee and the Muslim Public Affairs Council have accused *24* of representing Muslims in a manner that fuels intolerance and prejudice." (Halse 4)

7- habeas corpus: "an order requiring a person to be brought before a judge or into court, esp. to investigate whether or not he or she should be released from prison." ("habeas corpus." *Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary*)

8- *Mizna*, described by its web page as: "Mizna is a Twin Cities non-profit arts organization that promotes contemporary expressions of Arab American culture. We publish the literary journal *Mizna*: Prose, Poetry and Art Exploring Arab America, produce the *Twin Cities Arab Film Festival*, and offer varied other readings, performances, art projects, and community events involving an exceptionally talented and diverse range of local, national, and international Arab American artists." (Mizna)

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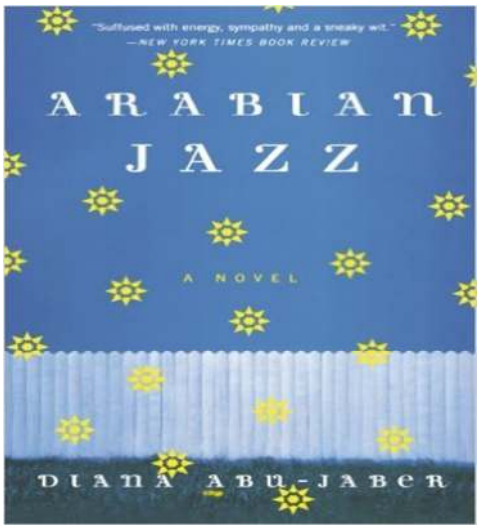
The Son of the Sheikh. Dir George Fitzmaurice. Perf. Rudolph Valentino, Vilma Banky. United Artists, 1926. *Youtube*. Web. 30 Jul. 2015

Transformers: Revenge of the Fallen. Dir Michael Bay. Perf. Shia LaBeouf, Megan Fox. Paramount Pictures, 2009. Film

Appendices

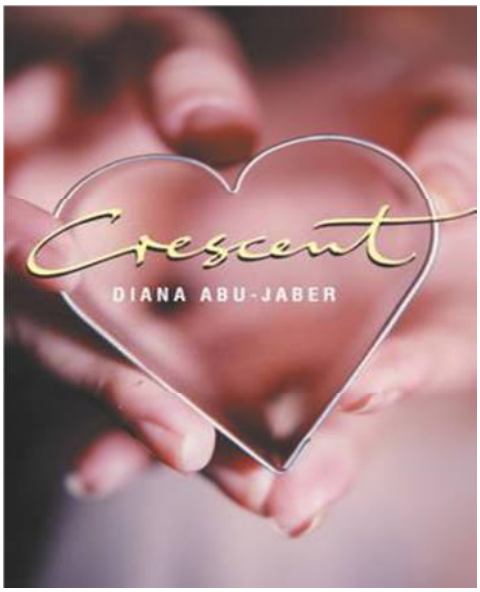
Annex 1



Cover of Dian Abu Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*

(www.amazon.com)

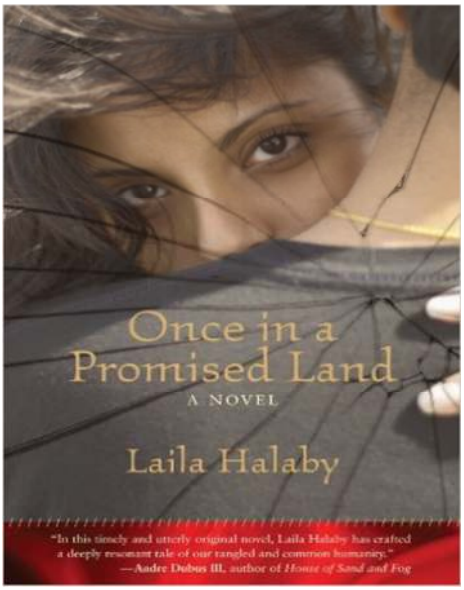
Annex 2



Cover of Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

(www. goodreads.com)

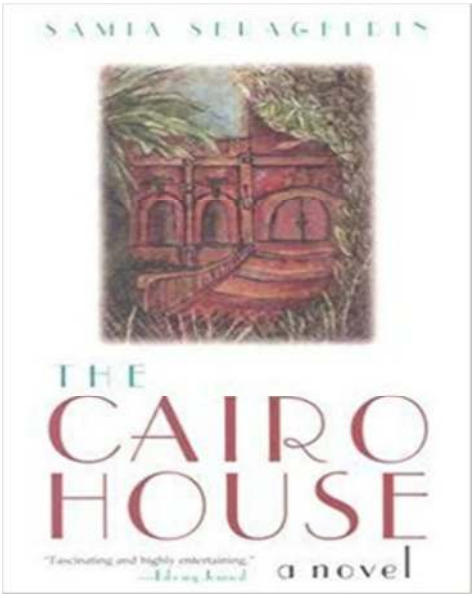
Annex 3



Cover of Laila Halaby's *Once in* a *Promised Land*

(www.amazon.com)

Annex 4



Cover of Samia Serageldin's *The Cairo House*

(www.amazon.com)

Abstract

This thesis tries to figure out how the Arabs are represented in contemporary Arab-American novels, and the extent to which Arab-American novels are reflecting or resisting the stereotyped image spread by media, cinema and literature. Through a historical, socio-cultural, and postcolonial approaches many examples of literary works will be discussed, but the major focus will be on four novels by Arab-American writers: Diana Abu-Jaber's novels *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and *Crescen*t (2003), Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007), and Samia Serageldin's *The Cairo House* (2000). The representation of Arab-Americans, and Arabs in general, in the Western, especially American, culture has a long history of distortion and falsification since Orientalism to the present time via means of entertainment and other forms of popular culture. While attention is given to the Arabs' picture as seen and produced by the West, this work tries to focus on the Arabs' reflection of their own picture in their literary productions. If the Western literature, mainly novels, were influential on culture and dominated the Orient, this paper questions the possibility of Arab–American writers to use the same -which is literature- to influence the mainstream culture in order to change the racist stereotypes, why not subvert Orientalism. Arab-American existence and survival in America is linked to a variety of political, social, and cultural conditions. Arabs' image in the world is shaped according to the changing political and economic interests and circumstances, as well, especially after the 9/11 where the image of the Arab is stressed as "terrorist Arab." Hence, the Arab-American writers find themselves activists who need to explain and defend their image and representation to the Western readers, through different literary and linguistic strategies.

Résumé

Cette thèse tente de comprendre comment les Arabes sont représentés dans les romans arabo-américains contemporains et dans quelle mesure les romans arabo-américains reflètent ou résistent à l'image stéréotypée diffusée par les médias, le cinéma et la littérature. Utilisant les d'approches historique, socio-culturel et postcoloniale, de nombreux exemples d'œuvres littéraires seront discutés, mais l'accent sera mis sur quatre romans d'auteurs arabo-américains *: Arabian Jazz* (1993) et *Crescent* (2003) par Diana Abu-Jaber, *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) par Laila Halaby, et *The Cairo House* par Samia Serageldin (2000). La représentation des Arabes-Américains et de l'Arabe en général dans la culture Occidentale, surtout américaine, a une longue histoire de distorsion et de falsification depuis l'orientalisme jusqu'aux moyens actuels de divertissement et autres formes de culture populaire. Bien que l'on prenne en considération l'image des Arabes telle qu'elle est vue et produite par l'Occident, ce travail tente de se concentrer sur la réflexion des Arabes sur leur image dans leurs productions littéraires. Si la littérature occidentale, principalement dans les romans, influençait la culture et dominait l'Orient, le présent travail de recherche s'interroge sur la possibilité pour les écrivains arabo-américains d'utiliser le même moyen pour influencer la culture traditionnelle afin de changer les stéréotypes racistes. L'existence et la survie arabo-américaines en Amérique sont liées à certain nombre de conditions politiques, sociales et culturelles. L'image des Arabes dans le monde est façonnée selon l'évolution des intérêts politiques et économiques et des circonstances, surtout après le 11 septembre où l'image de l'Arabe est soulignée comme «terroriste arabe». Ainsi, les écrivains arabo-américains deviennent des militants qui doivent combattre une image stéréotypée d'eux-mêmes et défendre leur véritable image auprès des lecteurs occidentaux à travers différentes stratégies littéraires et linguistiques.

ملخص

تحاول هذه المذكرة دراسة كيف يتم تمثيل العرب في الروايات العربية الأمريكية المعاصرة، وإلى أي مدى تعكس هذ الروايات أو تقاوم الصورة النمطية التي تنتشر عن طريق وسائل الإعلام والسينما والاعمال الأدبية. من خلال المنهج التاريخي والاجتماعي–الثقافي ومنهج ما بعد الاستعمار ستتم مناقشة العديد من الأمثلة من الأعمال الأدبية، ولكن التركيز الرئيسي سيكون على أربع روايات لكتاب عرب أمريكيين:

Arabian Jazz (1993) و*Crescent* (2003) لديانا أبو جابر و*Once in a Promised Land* (2007) لليلى حلبي و*The Cairo House* (2000) لسامية سراج الدين.

تمثيل العرب الأميركيين، والعرب بشكل عام، في الثقافة الغربية، خصوصا الأميركية، لديه تاريخ طويل من التشويه والتزوير منذ عهد الاستشراق حتى وسائل الترفيه الحالية وغيرها من أشكال الثقافة الشعبية. في حين يتم إيلاء اهتمام لصورة للعرب كما ترى وتنتج من قبل الغرب، تحاول هذه الدراسة التركيز على انعكاس صورة العرب في الاعمال الأدبية العربية الامريكية. إذا كان للأدب الغربي، لا سيما الروايات، تأثيرا على الثقافة والسيطرة على الشرق، فإن هذه الدراسة تتساءل عن إمكانية استخدام الكتاب العرب الأمريكيين نفس أداة للتأثير على الثقافة السائدة لتغيير الصور النمطية العنصرية ولمالا هدم الاستشراق.

يرتبط وجود وبقاء العرب الأمريكيين في أمريكا بمجموعة متنوعة من الظروف السياسية والاجتماعية والثقافية. تتشكل صورة العرب في العالم وفقا لتغير المصالح السياسية والاقتصادية خصوصا بعد احداث 11/9 حيث تم التشديد على صورة العرب كإرهابيين. وبالتالي، فإن الكتاب العرب الأميركيين يجدون أنفسهم نشطاء يحتاجون لشرح والدفاع عن صورتهم وتمثيلها للقراء الغربيين من خلال الاستراتيجيات الأدبية واللغوية المختلفة.