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The Question of Identity in the Anglophone Literatures of the Arab and Indian Diasporas in Australia

A Thesis Submitted to the University of Sultan Moulay Slimane in Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Doctorate Degree in Literary and Cultural Studies

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Dedication

I dedicate this thesis

To those who are displaced

To those who strive to know who they are

To migrants wherever they are

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Abstract

This thesis explores the various patterns of identity which crystallize in the writings of Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian authors. In fact, it principally intends to demonstrate that the process of identity formation in the Australian diasporic context is a heterogeneous experience which involves a myriad of dynamics. To fulfill its aim, this dissertation is predicated on the analysis of literary works by Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian authors, namely Randa Abdel-Fattah, Samah Sabawi, Chafic Ataya, Cecile Yazbek, Rashma Kalsie, Roanna Gonsalves, Kavita Ivy Nandan, Rashida Murphy, and Suneeta Peres da Costa. The choice of these two literary venues to be the core of analysis emanates from the academic marginalization to which both have been subjected despite their creative literary perspectives. Thus, the thesis is an attempt to fill this void in diaspora literature and to bring to light these sidelined literary realms. Through its recourse to the comparison of these two literatures and the interdisciplinary implementation of a variety of concepts, including exile, nation, space, history, memory, hybridity, culture, and transculture, it evinces that there are three paradigms of identity underlying both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures: exilic identity, diasporic identity, and transcultural identity. Exilic identity emerges as a form of anchoring resistance to the variegated manifestations of exile. It hinges on a close identification with space and nation in the Arab-Australian works and with nostalgia, culture, and religion in the Indian-Australian literature. Furthermore, the fluidity of identity is typified in the mutable forms which diasporic identity assumes. These incorporate a classical, bipolar model centered on the cultural, social, and racial configurations outlined by the dyad homeland/hostland, a contemporary pattern built on the concept of diaspora consciousness, and a triadic mode which crisscrosses various temporal, spatial, and cultural contexts. The thesis also unveils that the studied literature is a site where transcultural identity surfaces. The latter is a nascent paradigm of identity which entails the nullification of hegemonic centers and the fusion of cultures. The articulation of these identity patterns in Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures uncovers many similarities and differences between the two. Yet, there is no doubt that the comparison of both literatures reveals the dynamic, complex, and open-ended nature of the examined *identities*. It is the pluralistic nature of identity highlighted in this dissertation that may open future research prospects to further explore the marginalized Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literature and to tackle the vexed questions which rise from the reflections on identity incorporated here.

Keywords: identity, exile, nation, space, nostalgia, culture, religion, diaspora, memory, history, hybridity, transculture, transcultural continuum, feminism, (anti/post)-colonialism.

ملخص

تستجلي هذه الأطروحة مختلف أنماط الهوية التي تتبلور في كتابات المؤلفين العرب-الأستراليين والهنود-الأستراليين كما تسعى إلى إثبات أن عملية تشكيل الهوية في السياق المهجري الأسترالي هي تجربة غير متجانسة بحكم أنها تنطوي على عدد لا يحصى من الديناميات. ومن أجل بلوغ غايتها، تقوم هذه الأطروحة على تحليل الأعمال الأدبية التي أنتجها مؤلفون عرب-أستراليون وهنود-أستراليون وتحديدا رندة عبد الفتاح و سماح السبعاوي و شفيق عطية و سيسيل يزبك و راشما كالسي و روانا كونزالفيز و كافيتا ايفي ناندان و رشيدة مورفي و سونيتا بيريز داكوستا. ينبع اختيار هذين الوسطين الأدبيين ليكونا موضوع هذه الأطروحة من التهميش الأكاديمي الذي يتعرض له كلاهما رغم الإبداع المتجلي في أبعادهما الأدبية. وهكذا تبرز هذه الأطروحة كمحاولة لسد هذه الثغرة النقدية في الأدب المهجري وتسليط الضوء على هذه العوالم الأدبية المهمشة. وباللجوء إلى اعتماد مقارنة بين هذين الأدبين والتفعيل المتداخل معرفيا لمجموعة من المفاهيم، ومن ضمنها المنفى والأمة والفضاء والتاريخ والذاكرة والتهجين والثقافة والعبور التثاقفي، يتوضح أن هناك ثلاثة نماذج للهوية تُشكل أساسا لكل من الأدب العربي-الأسترالي والأدب الهندي-الأسترالي، ألا وهي هوية المنفى وهوية الشتات والهوية الدامجة للثقافات. تظهر هوية المنفى كشكل من أشكال الترسيخ لمقاومة مختلف مظاهر المنفى وتتوقف على الارتباط الوثيق بالفضاء والأمة في الأعمال العربية-الأسترالية وبالحنين والثقافة والدين في الأدب الهندي-الأسترالي. علاوة على ذلك، تتجسد انسيابية الهوية في الأشكال القابلة للتغيير التي تتخذها هوية الشتات والتي تتضمن نموذجًا كلاسيكيًا ثنائي القطب يركز على التكوينات الثقافية والاجتماعية والعرقية التي تحددها ثنائية الوطن الأم/الوطن الجديد، ونمطًا معاصرًا مبنيًا على مفهوم وعي الشتات، ونمطًا ثلاثيا يتقاطع مع سياقات زمنية ومكانية وثقافية مختلفة. تكشف الأطروحة كذلك أن الأدبين المدروسين هما موقعان تظهر فيهما جليا الهوية الدامجة للثقافات. هذه الأخيرة هي أنموذج ناشئ للهوية يستلزم إلغاء مراكز الهيمنة واندماج الثقافات. يكشف التعبير عن أنماط الهوية هذه في الأدبين العربي-الأسترالي والهندي-الأسترالي عن العديد من أوجه التشابه والاختلاف بين الاثنين. ومع ذلك، ليس هناك شك في أن مقارنة كلا الأدبين تكشف عن الطبيعة الديناميكية والمعقدة والمفتوحة للهويات المدروسة. إن الطبيعة التعددية للهوية التي تم تسليط الضوء عليها في هذه الأطروحة هي التي قد تفتح آفاق البحث المستقبلية لسبر أغوار الأدبين العربي-الأسترالي والهندي-الأسترالي المهمشين والتطرق إلى الإشكاليات التي تبرز خلال مدارستها لمسألة الهوية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، المنفى، الأمة، الفضاء، الحنين، الثقافة، الدين، الشتات، الذاكرة، التاريخ، التهجين الثقافي، العبور التثاقفي، الاستمرارية التثاقفية، النسوية، (ضد/ما بعد) -الاستعمار.

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Introduction

Predicated on the analysis of the diasporic literary arenas of Anglophone Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures in the 21st century – "the century of the migrant" as it has become known –, this thesis is an attempt to substantiate that this literary corpus does not typify a monolithic experience of identity. Rather, it is the cradle of a multifaceted, polyhedric discourse of identity which subsumes at once three paradigmatic modes of identity formation and which incarnates the principle of universal sameness and difference. That is to say, this dissertation purports to authenticate that albeit culturally, historically, and geo-politically discrepant, these two trends of Anglophone literature bear within the folds of their diasporic writings the same patterns of identity, to wit, the exilic identity, the diasporic identity, and the transcultural identity. Yet, through its examination of the intricacies and crystallizations of the dynamics and paraphernalia on which each mode of identification hinges, it unveils the differentials between these diasporas' approaches to identity. To fulfill its purport, this dissertation aggregates within its literary corpus, as far as its interest in Anglophone Arab-Australian literature is concerned, Randa Abdel-Fattah's two novels *Where the Streets Had a Name* and *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, Samah Sabawi's play *Tales of a City by the Sea*, Cecile Yazbek's historical novel *Voices on the Wind*, and Chafic Ataya's poetry collection *Empty Shell*. When it comes to Anglophone Indian-Australian literature, this research thesis zeroes in on Rashma Kalsie's play *Melbourne Talam*, Roanna Gonsalves's short story "The Dignity of Labor," Kavita Ivy Nandan's novel *Home after Dark*, Rashida Murphy's novel *The Historian's Daughter*, and Suneeta Peres da Costa's novel *Saudade*.

The academic significance of this thesis can be grasped through the contribution of its ideas and perspectives, in one way or another, to bridging some of the gaps which can be discerned in the field of Anglophone diaspora literature, in general, and in the context of

Anglophone diaspora literature in Australia, in particular. First, it is worth mentioning that a considerable number of viewpoints in the proliferating debates on the cultural vicissitudes within Australian literature tend to confine the multicultural or ethnic writings in Australia to the margins and indict them for being “not very good [given that] the author’s English simply doesn’t allow him or her to produce meaning at the same number of levels – to intersect with the same number of other texts and contexts as a native speaker’s” (Khan 4-5). Nevertheless, the fact that many cross-cultural authors have won internationally recognized literary awards like the Commonwealth Writers’ Prize and the Man Booker Prize rebuts this accusation and unveils that the latter is but a pretext to confer supremacy and centrality upon the “white” Australian literature and culture. Thus, there is a burgeoning exigency amongst the academia to give voice to the literatures of diasporic minorities in Australia, including Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures, so as to deconstruct what might be termed as “Australicentrism.” On this score, through its focus on the Anglophone literatures of the Arab and Indian diasporas in Australia, this dissertation is another academic seed to be added to the inchoate literary movement advocating minority and multicultural writings in Australia.

In addition, vexed queries can be raised as to why, despite the Australian racist policies and migration restrictions enacted with regard to Arab immigrants, Arab-Australian literature has not received its share of attention and recognition as its Arab-American counterpart to which two whole books are specially devoted – Steven Salaita’s *Modern Arab-American Fiction: A Reader’s Guide* and Carol Fadda-Conrey’s *Contemporary Arab-American Literature: Transnational Reconfigurations of Citizenship and Belonging*. Therefore, through the corpus of the Arab-Australian authors it garners, through the analytical approaches and perspectives to which it subjects the different studied Arab-Australian literary genres, and eventually through the polyphonous thematic gestalt it foregrounds in the Arab-Australian literary experiences, this thesis can be conceived of as giving credit to Arab-Australian literature within the field of Anglophone Arab diaspora literature.

To top it all, the significance of this dissertation can be pinpointed in its endeavor to comparatively bring together the literary products of two seemingly disparate cultures so as to demystify their analogous identity patterns which typify their diasporic, minority experience and which share, among other ontological features, exile, alienation, racial politics, hybridity, transnational mobility, othering ambivalence and transculturation. As such, it becomes a concrete exemplification of the contemporary called for approach: the new "comparative cultural studies" approach (Dagnino, "Comparative Literary Studies" 3).

Furthermore, all the selected oeuvres within the literary corpus which this thesis studies pertain to the literary genre of diaspora literature. Indeed, this genre can be envisaged as a turn in literature which has emerged as a literary response to the transnational vicissitudes and to the flux of mobility marking the contemporary world and accompanying the shift from the traditionalist conceptions of "migration" to the postmodern conceptualizations of the term as entailing "a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation" (Chambers 5). Alternatively labelled "migration literature," "migrant literature," "multicultural literature," and "minority literature," diaspora[1] literature, in its broadest sense that subsumes many sub-categories which differ according to a plethora of variables, including language, geography, and culture, is endowed with variegated distinctive features which define it. In this respect, diaspora literature can be regarded as an umbrella term which refers to the sum of the literary works produced by migrant authors in their diasporic outposts. However, such a definition is complicated by many controversial questions grounded in the authors' origins, ethnicity, language, and geography, which necessitates a delineation of the main distinctive features that pin down this literary realm.

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[1] The noun "diaspora" is purposefully used here instead of the adjective "diasporic" in order to distinguish diaspora in its broadest sense as an umbrella term or as this comprehensive literary genre from the diasporic identity and formations in the specific sense belabored in the second part of this thesis.

In *Writing Diaspora,* Hussain defines diaspora literature as a creative genre which thematizes the psychological and social ramifications of dispersal of whole generations. She goes further to aver that, through its creative vantage point, diaspora literature implements the concept of diaspora in social and political terms to bring into play an “intimate” concern with “identity and the quest for individuality” (3). It is the “conflict and tension” immanent in these loci of identity that transfigures this diasporic literary site into an enticing arena for conceptual negotiations and debates (13).

Another seminal endeavor to trace the contours of diaspora literature is that devised by Král who enumerates, in her critical book *Critical Identities in Contemporary Anglophone Diasporic Literature*, a number of cornerstones. She postulates that diaspora writing is marked by its celebration of its migrant characters’ individuality, its focus on the latter’s personal itineraries and their political detachment which stems from their peripheral position in the host country or from the “forced amnesia of the homeland,” its problematization of the concept of home and of “spatial continuity,” and its highlighting of the dichotomic nature of im/migrant existence (3, 37). Added to this, another trait which has become engrafted in diaspora literature since the turn of the century is the polyphony of voices. This “dissonant polyphony,” in Král’s view, originates, among other reasons, from the intersectional positionality of the migrant’s experience, one which interlaces the “gender, social category, cultural background” of its migrant figure (6). All these defining attributes induce Král to infer that the scope of diaspora is the “perfect” groundwork for the examination of the different dynamics and discursive strategies brought into play in the processes of “identity formation, self-representation and contextual redefinitions” (31).

In his seminal book *Migration and Literature,* Frank moves a step further to revolutionize the concept of diaspora literature by claiming that the essence of such a construct is no longer confined to the implications of the authorial migratory experience but transcends it to incorporate the life of the diasporic work itself, that is, its “intratextual features such as content and form as well as extratextual forces such as social processes” (3). Accordingly, he ideates a diasporic literary taxonomy which is thematically and stylistically delimited. On the thematic level, diaspora literature engrafts within its narratives the leitmotivs of human identity, including the characters’ dramatization of the experience of migration in either positive or negative terms, cultural identity, nation and nationalism – what he calls “a hybrid national identity” – , history and geography, and globalization (17-19). On the stylistic level, diaspora literature embraces an enunciatory strategy that hinges on “multiperspectivism, wandering consciousness […] as well as intratextual border crossings between story and discourse,” follows a narrative form which entails a multivocal discourse, and implements a language riveted on a Bakhtinian heteroglossia and on functional impurity (19-21). Yet, of the utmost momentum is Frank’s claim that this literary genre defined by these *sine qua nons* eventually “does not entail a totalizing and complete definition; instead, it must be imagined as having blurred edges and no absolute lines of demarcation” (21).

All these theorizations considered, it can be inferred that different as they are, they concur in the paramountcy of the topos of identity in all the literary productions in diaspora. However, one cannot assume the existence of an overarching, fixed mode of identity that underlies this very comprehensive genre. It is a *prima facie* fact that the polyphony of the authors’ voices and the multiperspectivism of the fictional members within a given diaspora transfigure diaspora literature, even if contrived by authors who share a common homeland, culture, and language, into a kaleidoscopic site of *identities*.

On this account, this thesis undertakes the task of underscoring that diaspora literature, specifically in the Australian context, has begun to flourish, unveiling new and jarring conceptions of identity which fluctuate between subaltern and agential protagonists, between a homing desire and a desired homelessness, between bipolar modes of identifications and multipolar patterns of self-identification, and between biased, liminal, or rampantly indeterminate positions. These are also (re)-configured and (re)-negotiated through an architectonic combination which selects from a whole gamut of identity markers, namely culture, space, nation, religion, race, history, memory, nostalgia, home, language, and gender. This multivocality makes of the entrenchment of a clear-cut definition of diaspora literature an elusive task. Hence emerges the exigency of delving into the specificities of the literary types that loom incrementally within this broad ambit of diaspora literature. Indeed, many critical works have been allocated for the study of the manifold variants of diaspora literature, but the narrow scope of their focus has resulted in an unbalanced canonization of some diaspora writings at the expense of others. When it comes to the Anglophone Arab diaspora literature, for instance, the latter has been classified by Gana into four categories: Arab-American, Arab-Australian, Arab-British, and Arab-Canadian. Yet, the critical approaches to this diasporic field place the Arab-American fiction in the academic limelight (Bayeh, “Anglophone Arab” 16-17) while pushing Arab-Australian literature to the margins of academia. In like manner, the Indian diaspora literature emerges as a fertile ground for scholarly contributions, yet while the diasporic voices of Indian authors academically reverberate in the American and British contexts, they are, for the most part, hardly heard in the Australian context.

In keeping with this, so as to rationalize the deliberate selection of these diasporic venues – Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures – to be the literary groundworks of this thesis and so as to pinpoint the academic newness that its research subject proffers within the field of Anglophone diaspora literature, it is of the essence to review the pioneering scholarly literature which has targeted its same framework.

On the one hand, when delving into the works produced in reference to Arab-Australian literature, which, nascent as it is, has been marked in the recent years by a burgeoning race for literary production, one finds that these are but a few. In *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, the most renowned and referenced book in any study on Arab diaspora literature, Layla Al-Maleh traces the historical and geographical itineraries of Anglophone Arab literary productions around the world. In her particular elaboration on Arab-Australian literature, she briefly lingers on the literary works of the leading Arab-Australian authors Jad El Hage, Abbas El-Zein, Nada Awar Jarrar, and Loubna Haikal, none of whom was born in Australia, pointing to the more or less "exilic" nature of their writings as they involve a thematic concern with displacement, inclusion and exclusion within the Australian landscape, and longing for the homeland. In addition to this, she claims that most of these works are significantly shaped and framed by the Lebanese civil war which inscribes these diasporic narratives in post-war Anglophone Lebanese fiction. Nevertheless, Al-Maleh asseverates that "[w]ith the exception of David Malouf, who is Arab (Lebanese) by descent though seemingly not by sentiment, no Arab-Australian author has gained any appreciable international or even national recognition" (45). Albeit Malouf has received the greatest share of the scarce interest in Arab-Australian authors, scholarly accounts on his literary works can be claimed to play no role in drawing academic attention to Arab-Australian literature, not only because of his alienation from Arabness but also because his works cannot be characterized as typifying diaspora writing given that they grapple with issues quite detached from the diasporic concerns of identity, home, and belonging. This again adds to Al-Maleh's proclamation of the marginal status of Arab-Australian literature.

Aside from Al-Maleh's contribution, most of the chapters which make up this volume are devoted to the study of Arab-American literature, which authenticates the canonical status which this literature occupies within Arab diaspora literature. This may be justified by the early Arab migratory movements to the USA starting from the turn of the last century as opposed to the more recent, proliferating mobility towards Australia which, though having been transpiring for over a century, did not become visible until the 1950s and also by the weighty American political and cultural encroachment in the Arab world. On the contrary, only two chapters, Syrine Hout's "*The Last Migration*: The First Contemporary Example of Lebanese Diasporic Literature" and Dawn Mirapuri's "Meditations on Memory and Belonging: Nada Awar Jarrar's *Somewhere, Home*," focus on two works of the Arab-Australian authors Jad El Hage and Nada Awar Jarrar.

In the same vein, in another voluminous contribution to the context of Arab diaspora literature, Nouri Gana's *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arab Novel in English: The Politics of Anglo Arab and Arab American Literature and Culture*, one is struck by the assignment of a single chapter to the Arab-Australian literature as opposed to the foregrounding of Arab-American literature in most chapters as adumbrated through the title *per se*. More particularly, Saadi Nikro's chapter entitled "The Arab-Australian Novel: Situating Diasporic and Multicultural Literature" pivots on his scrutiny of Jad EL Hage's novel *The Last Migration* and Loubna Haikal's *Seducing Mr Maclean*. He exudes a focal interest in approaching identity in reference to one's disposition towards the homeland and to the ethnicized experience in the Australian hostland. This enables him to pigeonhole the two novels into the categories of the "diasporic" and the "multicultural." Indeed, Nikro's perspective calls into question his reductionist inscription of the Arab-Australian *identities* within the problematic frames of "homeland" and "ethnicity" which, having become vexed identity markers in the recent accounts on diaspora literature, are not sufficient to represent the more fluid and dynamic Arab-Australian modes of identification.

Another academic article which targets Arab-Australian literature is Jumana Bayeh's "Arab-Australian Fiction: National Stories, Transnational Connections." In her article, Bayeh strives to define the literary status of the Arab-Australian literature and to substantiate the double positionality of the latter simultaneously within Australian literature and within Arab diaspora fiction. Adducing some of the works of Abbas El-Zein, Jad El Hage, Nada Awar Jarrar, Randa Abdel-Fattah, and Michael Mohammad Ahmad, she underscores the presence of three overarching themes in all these works: land, identity, and the violence of dispossession. Nonetheless, she criticizes the academic canonization of Arab-American literature at the expense of the Arab-Australian literature: "what constitutes Arab diaspora literature is still in the embryonic stages of definition, and the focus on Arab-American literature has overshadowed this field" (68). At the same time, she underlines that "Arab-Australian literature has not received as much attention from literary critics, Australian-based or otherwise" and that "no study of how Arab-Australian literature might apprehend or dramatize [the] particular relations" between Australia and Arab immigrants has been carried out (66).

Besides Syrine Hout's and Luma Balaa's few articles on Nada Awar Jarrar's early novels, the most recent seminal contribution to the literature produced on Arab-Australian fiction is Nijmeh Hajjar's article "The Arab Australian Novel: Concerns of Identity and Belonging" (Ar-Riwāyah al-Ustrāliyyah al-'arabiyyah: Humūm al-Huwwiyah wa al-Intimā') which consolidates her early critique on the Arab diasporic novel in Australia in *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*. Hajjar predicates her study on her focus on space, time, language, and theme while tracing the development of the Arab-Australian novel. More particularly, perusing these dynamics in selected Arab-Australian novels, she chronicles the development of the Arab-Australian novel, identifying three stages: the novels produced by

David Malouf, those generated by the first-generation Arab migrants, and those concocted by the second-generation Arab-Australian authors. Analyzing the most prominent literary works which prevail in these stages, she showcases the prerequisites that qualify each oeuvre to be affiliated to the Australian literature. All the same, she sides with Bayeh's stance vis-à-vis the academic marginalization of the Arab-Australian literary corpus: "Until the moment of the publication of my contribution in *The Oxford Handbook*, no single study that specially and intensively grapples with the Arab-Australian novel was to be found" (83). Her claim is, indeed, redolent of the Australian scholar Michael Jacklin's confusion in his article "The Transnational Turn in Australian Literary Studies" about the scantiness of critical attention directed towards works produced by Arabs in Australia (5).

On the other hand, it goes without saying that an initial encounter with the global diaspora literatures suffices to become familiar with literary echoes of Indian voices as Jhumpa Lahiri, Bharati Mukherjee, Indra Sinha, and Arundhati Roy. Likewise, the Indians have carved their presence in cultural theory so that anyone familiar with postcolonial or diaspora studies would *perforce* have come across such renowned figures as Gayatri Spivak, Homi Bhabha, Arjun Appadurai, Vijay Mishra, Avtar Brah, and Leela Gandhi. Having said that, when trying to dig for the Indian diaspora literature in Australia, one is nonplussed by the absence of a distinct academic corpus that identifies the contours and affiliations of this literature, especially when being cognizant of the fact that Indians constitute the second largest diaspora in Australia. Instead, Indian-Australian literature, or what Sissy Helff terms "Indo-Australian" fiction, is, without fail, ascertained in the extant scholarship on Asian-Australian writing or on South Asian-Australian literature, becoming, thus, problematically overshadowed by the labels "Asian-Australian" and "South Asian-Australian." Nonetheless, its inclusion within these discursive realm does by no means bring it to light, for while it remains eclipsed in the Asian-

Australian writing, being part of the South Asian literature in Australia grants it no acclaim as this latter corpus is, in its turn, a sidelined realm in the global academic sphere.

In this regard, in her doctoral thesis *The Asian Australian Migrant Experience in Australian Literature 1965-1995*, Catherine P. Bennett explores a number of literary works produced in the period between 1965 and 1995 by authors pertaining to the Asian "diasporas" in Australia, including the Indian, Chinese, Japanese, Sri Lankan, Indonesian, and Malaysian diasporas. She endeavors to identify the main themes that underlie this literature, ranging from the representation of the migrant experience to the inspection of the role of history and myths of authenticity in the studied novels. Following Bennett's lead, in their prefatory chapter to the special issue *Asian Australian Writing*, Wilson and Lokugé define the umbrella notion "Asian Australian" writing as a heterogeneous literary output ideated by multicultural authors from "China, Vietnam, Hong Kong, the Philippines, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Cambodia, Singapore and Malaysia" in Australia (527). Additionally, they define this type of diaspora writing in terms of the thematic issues it toys with, mainly its concern with the cultural encounter of migrants with the Australian community, with the minority status of these diasporic clusters, with queries of belonging, and with questioning Australian multiculturalism and claims of authenticity. Surprisingly, this academic volume categorically leaves out Indian-Australian authors which the very definition of "Asian Australian" ostensibly claims to encompass. In the light of this, it can be assumed that the assemblage of all these diasporas, the Indian diaspora included, under the label "Asian Australian" is infelicitous in that it problematically homogenizes and nullifies the discrete cultural and historical heterogeneity characteristic of each diasporic group. This concretizes chiefly when broaching the typical colonial history of South Asia and its ambivalent interplay with the British Empire.

For this reason, other scholars prefer to single out the works of the Indian Subcontinent and interpolate them within the more specific designation "South Asian" drawing on their widely explored South Asian counterparts in the US and in Canada. On this score, Tamara Mabbott Athique's thesis *Textual Migrations: South Asian-Australian Fiction* forms one of the preeminent contributions to the critical literature on South Asian-Australian fiction. Opening with the statement that "any survey of the extant critical work on the South Asian diaspora phenomenon would quickly prove that little attention has been paid to those who write from Australia" (2), Athique's work purveys an extensive textual analysis of selected works of fiction by South Asian authors in order to unearth the predicaments and peculiarities of the marginalized South Asian-Australian migrant experience. As far as her choice of Indian-Australian narratives is concerned, she opts for Christopher Cyrill's novels *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* (1993) and *Hymns for the Drowning* (1999), Da Costa Peres's debut novel *Homework* (1999), and Le Hunte's work *The Seduction of Silence* (2000) and emphasizes the cultural politics within these works and their status as a minority and new literature in Australia. However, sentient of the problematic nature of the category of "South Asian-Australian," Athique avers that "[t]his is a literary grouping to be questioned rather than assumed, to be explored critically rather than defined categorically" (5).

Much like Athique, Amit Sarwal deploys the "South Asian-Australian" designation to approach works by authors of South Asian descent in Australia in his articles and in his instrumental book *South Asian Diaspora Narratives: Roots and Routes*. His critical and analytical accounts are predominantly concerned with the analysis of miscellaneous themes affiliated to culture in South Asian-Australian short stories, to wit, short stories contrived by Sri-Lankan, Bangladeshi, Fijian and Indian authors, the latter including the established authors Mena Abdullah, Christopher Cyrill, and Chris Raja, which marginalizes, thence, the proliferating, proficient body of Indian-Australian fiction.

Once again, the characterization "South Asian-Australian" comes out as a thorny issue for two main reasons when endeavoring to position the Indian-Australian literary output in the scholarly scene. First, this epithet, much like "Asian," tends to reduce the socio-cultural differences between the various ethnic groups which make up the "South Asian" minority. This idea is corroborated by Hussain who elucidates the intricacy of the term:

> The term 'South Asian' […] functions as an umbrella term […] to unify diverse peoples against common obstacles, in the name of empowerment and coalition-building (Iyer, 1997). Yet the differences ethnically, culturally, religiously within the term 'South Asian' are vast […]. There are a number of differences within these ethnic groups, for instance lifestyles, dress, diet and language. Furthermore, their responses to new social and economic environments are also different, with diverse employment patterns and marriage practices for example. (2)

Second, disquisitions on South Asian-Australian literature come across as falling short in foregrounding the Indian-Australian experience given that they are *per se* scarce. In keeping with this, Sarwal himself avows at the very end of his book that "there is no exhaustive or authoritative account of the South Asian diaspora in Australia. The rarity and small number of critical material on South Asian diaspora and diasporic experience in literary criticism, both in South Asia and Australia, is daunting and yet a challenge for the new researcher at the same time" (153). In line with his assertion, Mridula Nath Chakraborty exclaims over this academic disinterest in South Asian-Australian literary production, a disposition which she intriguingly finds "difficult to fathom" (9).

Probably, the only critical work which addresses Indian-Australian literature as a distinct body of literature endued with its own features is Sissy Helff's chapter "Locating Indo-Australian Fiction in Multicultural Australia" wherein she examines the language, setting, and symbolism in two Indian-Australian works, Suneeta Peres da Costa's debut novel *Homework* and Bem Le Hunte's novel *There, Where the Pepper Grows*, so as to determine the extent to which Indo-Australian literature can be considered part of Australian literature, yet she adverts attention in the same account to the paucity of textual criticism centered on South Asian-Australian fiction. All the more, her claim is enhanced by a very recent post by the Australian

University of Wollongong which asseverates that “[t]here has been a lot published by and on Indian diasporic writers centered on the US and UK, but very little available on [literary] writing from Australia” notwithstanding the Indian immigrants’ arrival at Australia in the early nineteenth century (“Of Indian Origin”).

All these points considered, it can be extrapolated that there is, indeed, no actual scholarly body thoroughly committed to the conceptualization of the quintessential literature of the *Indian* diaspora in Australia, mainly when it comes to its variegated discourses of identity. Identically, it can be assumed that all the precursory analytical accounts on this category of literature have invariably addressed only few of its oeuvres and aggregated them inappropriately into the monolithic corpuses of Asian-Australian and South Asian-Australian literatures, which obliterates the peculiarities of its underlying cultural nuances and identities. Therefore, this thesis may be a new academic input which strives to advert scholarly attention to the momentous corpus of Anglophone Indian-Australian literary works as an independent Australian “sub-literature” and to delimit the multiplex identity patterns which define this unique cultural and literary experience.

In a nutshell, both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures rise, within diaspora literature, as peripheral realms which are seldom academically acknowledged. It is, therefore, this common marginality and this shared wide gap in the scholarly attention to which both literatures are subjected that nurtures the idea of bringing them side by side in this thesis for critical examination and close reading in an endeavor to give voice to their muted ideas and outlooks and to explore their more or less deserted universes.

Given the comprehensive scope of this thesis as it subsumes two discrepant literatures, each partaking of its own criteria and specificities, and given the complexity and reticulate texture of the thematic concern of identity, the problematic query which this thesis addresses can be synthesized in a composite question and further split into ancillary questions which pave the way for incremental strides towards the ultimate findings. As such, the major question which this research thesis seeks to answer concretizes in the following compound query: What are the different patterns in which identity crystallizes in the Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures? What are the similarities and differences that surface with regard to these literatures' conceptualizations of identity? Do the differences and/or similarities between the two literatures imply the dynamicity of the rendered identities or the fixity of a paradigmatic mode of identity that can be set as "the norm" for each literature? This problematic inquiry can be gradually resolved through the subsidiary queries which are thematically arrayed as follows: 1/ What is the degree of exilic anguish interpolated in each exilic work? What are the determinants that frame it? Are the markers of the ensuing exilic identity the same in both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures, or do the differentials of each exilic condition necessarily dictate a difference in the rhetoric of identity formation? 2/ How is diasporicity experienced in the two literary realms? Is it entrenched according to the logic of polarity or interstitiality? Put differently, does diasporic identity concretize in a dyadic or triadic model? 3/ Given its novelty and inchoate nature, how is transculturality conceived of and approached in both literary variants? More specifically, what are the discursive dynamics implemented to edify a transcultural condition? What are the stylistic and thematic elements that symptomatize transculturality and enable the characterization of the examined recent literary publications as "transcultural"?

The fiction enclosed in this dissertation is not haphazardly selected; rather, the choice of the literary works is conditioned by sundry considerations, including the choice of a diversified literary corpus as far as the genres of the selected works are concerned with an eye to transcending the minimalization of diaspora literature in Australia to problematically reductionist labels as "the Arab-Australian *novel*." Speaking of the Arab works that address the question of exilic identity within the Australian literary landscape, one cannot deny the existence of a considerable wealth of these. The most blatant of them are the Lebanese post-war narratives written by authors who have more or less worked their way to academic acknowledgement, though not quite extensively, like Jad El Hage, Abbas El-Zein, and Nada Awar Jarrar. Yet, the objective of this thesis is to evaluate the Palestinian-Australian authors' intensive preoccupation with exile in their Australian diasporic outpost. Hence, the thesis selects a work by an established Arab author of Palestinian descent, Randa Abdel-Fattah, and another by an emerging authorial voice with the same roots, Samah Sabawi. The latter is also favored given the genre through which she renders exilic concerns – drama. By the same token, favoring Chafic Ataya's work over the other abounding Lebanese-Australian exilic literary works, while addressing the remaining aspects of exile, stems from his poeticization rather than novelistic fictionalization of it.

Besides, this choice corresponds to the interest of this dissertation in bringing to the fore categorically marginalized or emerging voices, of which Ataya's surprisingly long sidelined work is an instance. Moreover, along with their academic invisibility, the choice of *Voices on the Wind* and *Home after Dark* owes to their deflection from the diasporic setting which marks most diasporic writings, one wherein the homeland would interface with the hostland. Instead, both novels intriguingly devise a tripolar spatial setting which problematizes and fluidifies the condition of diasporicity.

Finally, in the transcultural case, taking into account the embryonic nature of transcultural studies and transcultural literature and the fact that that very few authors have engaged in this literary activity, Abdel-Fattah, Murphy, and Peres da Costa are the only authors, or at least the most eminent ones, to surface when one searches for diaspora novels with transcultural concerns in Australia. Thus, they are chosen to fit within the literary material of this dissertation, and albeit Abdel-Fattah's particular novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?*

has been studied by some international scholars, it has never been approached in transcultural terms despite the exuberant markers of transculturality in its narrative.

The core purpose of this thesis can be buttressed by its division into three main parts on the basis of the enacted mode of identification. By way of explanation, depending on the identity rhetoric embraced in the studied works, exilic, diasporic, or transcultural, the thesis is thematically outlined into three major parts: “Mapping Exile and Identity,” “Locating the Interstice of Diasporic Identity,” and “The Transcultural Self: A Post-Postmodern Paradigm of Identity.” Each part is further divided into two prime chapters, one allotted for Arab-Australian literature, the other for its Indian-Australian counterpart. This juxtaposition is intended to compare and contrast these two variants of Australian diaspora literature, a process which transpires in the second chapter of each part, drawing conclusions in the second chapter after each aspect of comparison and/or contrast is belabored in both literary venues.

It is worth mentioning that the order according to which these parts are structured translates the discursive development of the identity paradigms incorporated in the three parts. In other words, being the most traditional paradigm of identity in diaspora literature, exilic identity comes first in the thesis outline, whereas, emerging as the most contemporary, postmodern model of self-definition, still in its embryonic stages, transcultural identity is encompassed in the last part of the thesis congruently with its temporal novelty. Occupying an in-between position is the diasporic identity whose development has been taking place between the emergence of both exilic and transcultural identities. Its location in the “interstitial” part of the thesis is also a symbolic reflection of the concepts of “interstitiality,” “in-betweenness,” and “liminality” epitomic of its discourse.

Accordingly, the first part features the processes of identity (re)-configuration catalyzed by the brunt of exile in manifold exilic settings. Drawing on the analysis of Abdel-Fattah’s novel *Where the Streets Had a Name*, Sabawi’s play *Tales of a City by the Sea*, and Ataya’s poetry collection *Empty Shell*, the first chapter of this part evinces that Arab-Australian literature exudes a proneness to probe into the psychological and psychic implications of two brands of exile, an “internal exile” epitomized in the Palestinian paradigm and an “external exile” embodied in the Lebanese migrants’ territorial and ontological placelessness as a result of the civil war. The chapter goes further to theorize that the scourges of exile are, nonetheless, eventually surmounted through the construction of an exilic identity which brings into play a cluster of concepts, to wit, space – both actual and imaginative – nation, memory, and history. It is worth mentioning that this chapter emerges as the most elaborate chapter in the thesis, and this owes much to the polyvocality of the exilic experience which it uncovers. For its part, the second chapter signals the scarcity of the Indian-Australian literature on exile despite the presence of a socio-cultural environment rife with the essentials of exile. In the light of this, it examines Rashma Kalsie’s play *Melbourne Talam* and Roanna Gonsalves’s short story “The Dignity of Labor” to shed light on the exilic displacement and disillusionment which Indian-Australians experience. It proposes that the psychic implications immanent in this exilic ground of being can be overcome through the configuration of an exilic identity which hinges on an enactment of nostalgia, culture, and religion. At last, the chapter moves beyond the view of exile as pain and envisages it as gain for the Indian-Australian subaltern and silenced categories, namely the Indian-Australian female and people with disability, which bestows on them a liberatory exilic identity that transvalues their agency.

Part two demystifies the convolutedness of diasporic identity and identifies the interstitiality and hybridity which inhere in this mode of identification through its centeredness on the analysis of Yazbek’s novel *Voices on the Wind* and Nandan’s *Home after Dark*, underscoring the uniqueness of the literary setting framing each novel in order to authenticate the diversity underlying the migrant experience in Australia. In this groundwork, the first chapter of this part, consigned to the study of the Arab-Australian *diasporic* identity, renders the differentials of diasporic identity by setting forth two distinguishable patterns of the Lebanese diasporic identity. On the one hand, the first manifestation of diasporic identity, negotiated in a migratory-colonial context, that of the Lebanese diasporic experience in colonial South Africa, emblematizes the classical bipolar model of diasporic consciousness. Correspondingly, it revolves around dialogic processes of social and cultural formations within the purview of the diasporized binary homeland/hostland and dovetails these socio-cultural dynamics with racial politics. On the other hand, the chapter expounds the concept of "double consciousness" which accounts for the second manifestation of diasporic identity, a modern, more fluid paradigm of identity which surfaces in the interplay between the constructs of the past and self-identificatory negotiation. On the Indian-Australian side, the second chapter in this part is concerned with the constitution, within the Fijindian-Australian frame of reference, of a diasporic identity which intermingles the loci of the grandmotherland, the homeland, and the hostland. This chapter evinces that while the Indian grandmotherland is edified as a milieu of cultural-religious identification and of rewriting an obliterated history, the Fijian homeland emerges synchronously as a psychological fountainhead of critical and nostalgic memories and as a catalyst of galvanizing yet identificatory alterity. Subsequently, the Australian host space enters into the equation to finalize this diasporic identity formation via the representation of the ambivalent experience of the host space and the dialogic site of cultural hybridity.

The last part of the thesis aims to propound and define a novel, intricate conceptualization of selfhood, that is, transcultural identity. Devoted to the close reading of Abdel-Fattah's novel *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, the first chapter negotiates the rudiments which lay the foundation for this dynamic, open-ended pattern of identity. It starts with theorizing that transcultural identity crystallizes first and foremost in a relentless display of agency which, in the Arab-Muslim-Australian state of affairs incarnated in the novel, concretizes in the deconstruction of the patriarchal and Islamophobic hegemonic centers via a number of discursive strategies, the polysemous signifier of the veil and transcultural humor included. Further, the chapter decodes the signification of the "full transcultural condition" by giving prominence to the amalgamation of the Arab, Muslim, and Aussie cultural identities. As for the Indian-Australian case, the subsequent and last chapter opts for the analysis of the Indian-Australian novels *The Historian's Daughter* by Murphy and *Saudade* by Peres da Costa respectively inscribed on the crossroads of the cultures outlining the hyphenated Indian-Iranian-Australian and Indiana-Angolan-Portuguese frames of reference. It posits that transcultural identity is occasioned through a palimpsestic discourse which, embedded in the two oeuvres, dismantles the colonial and patriarchal rhetoric. In addition, this chapter introduces the concept of the "transcultural continuum" that eventuates in a cultural flurry which, complemented and supplemented by the linguistic, religious, and spatial border-crossing movements, contributes to the entrenchment of an advanced stage of transculturality wherein the boundaries contouring the transcultural identity become blurred and permeable.

In order to answer its research questions and fulfill its purport, this thesis abides by a methodology which is based on textual analysis, on the scrutiny of extratextual parameters, on the consistent recourse to interdisciplinary approaches, and on the comparative study of the works subsumed in the literary corpus of the thesis. Initially, textual analysis entails an initiation of the discursive processes of interpretation and signification within each literary work and an emphasis on the close reading of the latter so as to unravel the linguistic, semiotic and stylistic devices which enable the enactment of the thematic concerns of the thesis. Indeed, the implementation of textual analysis implies that the literary texts are the starting point of this dissertation. In fact, the projection of diaspora-centered concepts on the texts would have detracted from the literary values of these texts by rendering them as mere illustrations of these theoretical conceptions. On the contrary, by subjecting them to a textual analysis which issues from their gist, these diaspora literatures are reckoned as harboring their own theorizations of identity. More significantly, at the core of this textual analysis is a thematic analysis which involves an in-depth exploration of the characters' inner worlds and behavior patterns so as to infer their dramatization of the themes in question. In other words, in the textual universe of the studied literature, characters have a life of their own in the sense that they personify distinct and specific patterns of identity through the way they define their selfhood, thus the necessity of the interpretive reading of their politics of location.

Besides, another methodological strategy followed in this thesis is the examination of the extratextual parameters, that is, the authorial backgrounds, the historical and political ethos which the narratives fictionalize, and the socio-cultural and ideological processes which inform the textual discourse. These parameters are indispensable in ushering in the interpretation of the literary works, for the text is not a self-contained universe but is rather a "worldly" locus as Edward Said envisions it. On this account, Said postulates that the text "can be reproduced for the benefit of the world and according to conditions set by and in the world .[…] any text […] is a network of often colliding forces, but also […] a text in its actually *being* a text is a being in the world" ("The World" 33). Correspondingly, it is of the essence to grasp the worldliness of the literary material of this thesis so as to fathom the identities it expounds.

Furthermore, it can be assumed that, in accordance with the aforementioned methodological strategy which presumes that the literature under study is an intersection of multifarious worldly realms of signification, the thesis aggregates within its methodological groundwork an interdisciplinary analysis which frames and reinforces the textual reading process and which combines several theoretical and critical frameworks, most significantly diaspora studies, social theory, spatial criticism, history, memory studies, cultural studies, postcolonialism, feminism, and transcultural studies.

Finally, the nature of the research subject prompts the deployment of a comparative method. Comparison here systematically consists of two analytical procedures. First, a given mode of identification is elaborated in the Arab-Australian literature on the basis of the formerly stated methodological procedures. Second, in a separate chapter, the same identity pattern is unearthed in the corresponding Indian-Australian literary works, and alongside this process, similarities to and/or differences from the findings incorporated in the Arab-Australian fiction are deduced. Additionally, it can be claimed that proceeding in research through a comparative method paves the way for the recognition of sameness and difference between the cultural and social matrices underlying the compared literatures and, thus, for the transcendence of any mode of identification which champions essentialist polarizations of cultures and societies.

Part One

Mapping Exile and Identity

Chapter 1: Exilic Identity in Anglophone Arab-Australian Literature

1. Internal Exile: The Palestinian Paradigm

> *"The Wall will soon be finished. Parts of Bethlehem will be fully deserted. Businesses closed, houses abandoned, streets emptied, schools sliced in half. I'm living in an open-air prison. But I won't live in despair."*
>
> – Randa Abdel-Fattah, *Where the Streets Had a Name,* 2008

> *"Are your loved ones trapped behind the wall*
> *Do they tell you stories*
> *Of how they survive*
> *The trees they've replanted*
> *The homes they've rebuilt*
> *Do they assure you life goes on"*
> – Samah Sabawi, "Defying the Universe," 2010

It is quite remarkable that there is a genuine commitment among Arab-Australian authors to approach the issue of exile. Intriguingly yet, most of them do not foreground it in the context of their diasporic positions but rather in the framework of the Palestinian experience. Such an exilic condition is typified in the writings of Arab-Australian authors both of Palestinian descent as Samah Sabawi, Sara Saleh and the Egyptian-Palestinian novelist Randa Abdel-Fattah, and of other Arab origins like the Egyptian author Mohammed Massoud Morsi. In fact, exile, as this "discontinuous state of being," to use Edward Said's phraseology ("Reflections" 140), has invariably figured in the binarism exile/return marking the existential status of the Palestinian diaspora. In other words, Palestinians living in the diaspora have always been associated with the excruciating experience of exile, the antidote of which, in most cases, is return to the land of Palestine or at least an eternal cherishment of this myth of return. If the condition of exile is quintessentially epitomized in the experience of the Palestinian diasporans and refugees abroad, what can be inferred with regard to the Palestinians who have been classified as "internally displaced people" (Weaver 5)? What is the existential status which can be attributed to these as they prevail on the soil of the Palestinian land and are yet subjected to a discontinuity which cuts off the threads that weave their identity and their bond to their homeland and bereaves them of the feeling of being-at-home? In an attempt to address these queries, drawing on the close reading of Randa Abdel-Fattah's novel *Where the Streets Had a Name* and on Samah Sabawi's play *Tales of a City by the Sea*, this chapter will substantiate that the experience of the "internally displaced" Palestinians is but another manifestation of the trauma of exile and will put forth the antidotal dynamics of identity (re)configuration requisite to overcome this ontological disorder. Both Randa Abdel-Fattah, "the most prolific Arab Australian novelist" (Hajjar, "Australia" 535), and Samah Sabawi emerge in the Arab-Australian scene as devout human rights activists, fierce advocates of the Palestinian cause and engagé, award-winning authors, which justifies the particular choice of these two writers among other Arab-Australian authors who have equally addressed the issue of exile in the Palestinian framework to be the subject of analysis in this chapter.

1.1. The Pathos of Exile:

No doubt, exile is, as Said describes it, "an unhealable rift" which breaks the unity of the self through the "crippling sorrow of estrangement" it generates ("Reflections" 137). Such a Saidian claim unveils the traumatic character of exile and implies alienation as an inherent psychic condition. In this regard, Abdel-Fattah's novel typically epitomizes these exilic ramifications, yet its typicality does not stem from its thematic content as much as it does from its genre *per se*. More particularly, albeit *Where the Streets Had a Name* pertains to exilic literature, its classification as children's literature is more significant to this elaboration on exile. In other words, the fact that the novel's protagonist, Hayaat, pertains to the delicate existential period of childhood entails that the exilic psychic crises in this context rise to a crescendo and that the Palestinian trauma is pictured in its most pathetic versions as childhood is the incarnation of human innocence and purity. Accordingly, through the lens of the thirteen-year-old narrator, Hayaat, Abdel-Fattah's novel authenticates the prevalent presence of the exilic condition in Palestine in the atmosphere of confinement and "trappedness," in the excruciating experience of the nostalgic and depersonalizing alienation, in temporal exile, in the alienation of childhood, and in Hayaat's uncompromising trauma as a particular prototype of this displaced childhood.

"Trappedness": Confining the Palestinian Freedom

As a matter of fact, exile as a condition that results "not from the loss of home per se but rather from the loss of being-at-home" (Burr 83) crystallizes initially in the Palestinian protagonists' sense of acute confinement which instigates this feeling of not *being-at-home* and materializes best in the metaphorical signs of curfews and the Wall. Correspondingly, the ubiquity of curfews in the novel transmutes these into a leitmotif of confinement. In this regard, the novel opens with an atmosphere of confinement as the child narrator articulates, "We were permitted to leave our houses for two hours" (Abdel-Fattah 1), a claim which reverberates differently later on through her mother's utterance: "Our feet can't even touch the street" (11). Both statements suggest that the Palestinians' mobility is not a choice which emanates from their free will but is rather restricted and controlled both temporally and spatially by the Israeli occupation, which compels them to be prisoners of their own abodes and divests them of their freedom. Besides, curfews do not only engender the sense of physical confinement but transcend it into a psychological confinement as well. This is illustrated in Hayaat's innocent reflection on curfews: "I think about the pros and cons of the curfew [...] there's the boredom. Always the boredom of being stuck at home. Home means chores and dealing with Mama and Baba's boredom" (7). In this instance, the boredom which haunts the whole family's psyche connotes the meaninglessness and purposelessness of their lives during curfew times, creating a psychic void which reduces their existence into a monotonous cycle. Such psychological confinement incarnated in the characters' existential monotony is further reinforced by the rift between them and social life as Hayaat's mother proclaims, "These wretched curfews [...]. Being trapped with family for longer than is humanly possible" (8-9), and as Hayaat herself utters: "For days I've only seen the faces of my family" (23-24). Here, the family emblematizes the smallest social unit and reflects the two protagonists' alienation and, hence, exile from the broader realm of community, a condition voiced through the mother's diction of "trapped" to convey her psychological state of confinement and "trappedness." To top it all, the confining nature of curfews culminates in the generation of a macabre atmosphere which marks an exilic disconnection from the essence of life *per se*: "There's a deathly ghost town kind of silence to the night. There are no cars or footsteps. No bats or owls or rustling of leaves. Perhaps bats and owls have curfew restrictions too. The soldiers' voices crash against the silent night" (23). Pondering on this curfew night, Hayaat finds herself psychically trapped in a deathly and sepulchral aura in which all life traces, be they human as footsteps, mechanical as cars, or even ecological as bats, owls and leaves, are absented by the repressive power of curfews and which concretizes either in silence as a symbol of absence and death or in the coercive, belligerent presence of the Israeli soldiers.

In the same vein, the language and symbolism implemented in Hayaat's narrative elevate the Wall into a prototypal sign of confinement in many ways. Indeed, what calls attention at first sight is the capitalization of the word "Wall," which suggests that the emphasis here is not on any wall but rather on the Wall erected by Zionist authorities to separate the Palestinian regions under Israeli occupation from the rest of Palestine. To begin with, the exilic character of the Wall stems from its confinement of the spirit of childhood as evinced through Hayaat's statement: "the Wall [...] circles part of our school" (30). The fact that this wall environs the school signifies that even the psychological world of discovery, of learning, of aspirations, of personality-building and most significantly of innocence embodied in the space of school is oppressed and destabilized by the perilous presence of such a highly politicized wall. Put differently, the Wall confines the freedom of Palestinian children by incarcerating their imagination of the world and narrowing their horizons and outlooks. In addition, though a mere child, Hayaat as a Palestinian seems to have developed an astute consciousness cognizant of the trapped condition in which her people prevail as her head-on encounter with the Wall mirrors: "As we approach, the concrete looms over us, absorbing us into an unnatural shade. The Wall snakes its way through the land, slicing through villages and cities, cutting families from each other, worshippers from their churches and mosques. The Wall scares me. I feel as though it will crush and suffocate me, even while it stands" (30). The presence of the Wall here is portrayed as a threatening stand which risks to obliterate and galvanize the Palestinian existence by dint of its "absorbing" power and of the intrusive encroachment of its "unnatural shade" in the Palestinian land, restricting and hampering as such the Palestinians' mobility and freedom across their own land. Even worse, while the verb "to snake" is symptomatic of the Wall's precarious and menacing manifestation in the Palestinian space, the implementation of the verbs "to slice" and "to cut" is purported to depict the intense and violent nature of the "unhealable rift," that is, exile, it brings about on the economic, social and religious levels. In other words, economically speaking, the Wall separates Palestinian villagers and city-dwellers from their livings incarnated respectively in their lands and in their urban poleis, whereas socially, it exiles family members all over Palestine from each other in the same fashion it does worshippers from their places of worship on the religious level. Worst of all, Hayaat's recourse to such verbs as "scares," "crush," and "suffocate" unleashes the fear, repression and agony which suffuse her psyche as symptoms of her feeling of being trapped in a continuously dwindling existential realm.

In a like manner, Hayaat reiterates the inexorable intrusion of the Wall in their daily lives: “No more than four meters across from the gates stands the Wall, cutting the once wide street in half. The only view the houses have on this side is a dark assembly of vertical concrete panels that tower eight meters high. A high circular watchtower is constructed at a section of the Wall and it aligns with the last house in the street” (54-55). Aside from the ominous number four which stands for crucifixion and, by implication, for the torturous and tormenting presence of the Wall, Hayaat initiates her claim with foregrounding that this oppressive structure has narrowed and reduced the magnitude of the street, which indicates that it has imposed severe boundaries and restraints on the mobility and freedom of Palestinians as a mode of confinement. Additionally, the darkness, verticality and towering length which the houses face as their only vista edify, even in the viewpoint of urbanism, a framework of confinement and imprisonment. Not only this, but this psychology of confinement is further exacerbated by the atmosphere of the panoptic surveillance prompted by the looming presence of the watchtower. This mood of “trappedness” brings forth a Palestinian collective feeling of “out-of-placeness” which corroborates the Palestinians’ internal exile. Probably, Hayaat’s most expressive articulation of the Palestinian exilic confinement remains her meditative utterance: “I can’t tell where the sky ends and where the Wall begins” (55). In this regard, her inability to separate the existence of the Wall from that of the sky attests to their merger into one existential unit of Zionist confinement. That is to say, the Palestinian sky which typifies the unhampered freedom and rampant aspirations and dreams of its Palestinian sons is disfigured and invaded by the Wall as a leitmotif of physical confinement and psychological incarceration. Therefore, this newly shaped combination of the sky and the Wall insinuates that the Palestinian physical and psychological freedom is trapped within the exilic boundaries of this encroaching edifice.

Nostalgia and Depersonalization: Becoming *Alien* at Home

The internally displaced Palestinians' exile is also concretized in their becoming alien in their homelands, which results in an experience of *unheimlichkeit* [2] – "not-at-home-ness." Such a psychic condition of alienation is enacted in the novel most crucially through the Palestinian protagonists' nostalgia and depersonalization. Conventionally, nostalgia is conceived of by many theorists as a bittersweet emotion (Sedikides et al., "Nostalgia" 204), that is, as an emotional construct which, though bitter in its longing for a *lost* cause, elates and reinvigorates one's psychological realm. However, the "bitterness" of such a feeling thoroughly overrides its "sweetness" in the case of Palestinians as it merely re-opens their wounds of loss and consistently reminds them of their present alienation. In this framework, Hayaat's narrative unravels the relentless nostalgia which overwhelms her father's and grandmother's innermost selves. This is illustrated as she contemplates one of her father's private moments of solitude: "Baba sits in his armchair, his eyes fixed on a piece of paper in his hand. I'm not close enough to see the writing but I don't have to. I know he's holding the title deeds to our land. He strokes the edges like a child stroking a kitten" (Abdel-Fattah 14). In this account, the fixedness of the father's eyes translates his idée fixe of the memory of his lost land, betraying, thus, his nostalgia. More importantly, the land deeds become a narrative trope which stands for his hopeless confirmation of his legitimate possession of the land and, hence, of his right of return, both of which reflect his nostalgic clinging to his usurped land. What is also of momentum here is Hayaat's emotional intelligence as she manages to discern her father's feelings and identify with him, for even though she cannot see what is in his hands, she *knows*, that is, she is certainly aware of his center of longing and of his psychological preoccupation. Indeed, her awareness of her father's exilic affects reaches a psychologically advanced level as she entrenches a meticulous simile between her father and "a child stroking a kitten." This simile actually points out that the father's yearning for his land is laden with the same profundity, eagerness and devotion that an innocent child would harbor vis-à-vis his kitten. Also, by stroking the edges of this legal piece of paper, he seeks to quench his longing for his lost land by transmuting this piece of paper, as an epitome of the land, into a psychological intermediary through which he conveys his identificatory feelings of affection and yearning to his idealized land. Further, the father's nostalgia, which can be suitably termed "exilic nostalgia" in accordance with its exilic nature, goes on ceaselessly to inhabit his self as he contemplates Abo Ghnaim Mountain: "Baba leaned his elbow on the railings and looked at the horizon in silence, like a man standing at a headstone in a cemetery. He stood there for half an hour, unnaturally still and barely moving" (19-20). In this distant encounter with his far-fetched native space, the father's silence bespeaks the stream of nostalgic thoughts and memories whirling inside his psyche given the irreconcilable discrepancy between the act of looking at his home landscape which is allowed and the act of return which seems an impossible end, which proves once again the nostalgia underlying his internal exile. More significantly, this exilic nostalgia is even more blatant through the simile which Hayaat contrives in that it is intended to reveal the bitter emotions of mourning, grief and affliction which, affiliated to the father's exile from his land, fill his agonizing psyche.

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[2] This term is a derivative of the German term "*unheimlich*" which signifies "un-homely" but which has been more accurately translated in the psychoanalytical framework as "uncanny." In point of fact, the uncanny is a convoluted concept which points to "the strangeness of the all-too-familiar" (Phillips et al. 20). In other words, the uncanny, or the *unheimlich*, is not an experience which is altogether alien. Rather, it is that which was once familiar but which has become concealed and alienated from one's psychological realm. When the uncanny situation, that is, this paradoxically "unfamiliar familiarity," is brought into play, feelings of anxiety and estrangement come to the surface, generating an exilic aura.

In a like manner, exiled in her own memories, Hayaat's grandmother, Sitti Zeynab, suffers from a trenchant nostalgia which makes her nights sleepless and traumatizing as she imparts to Hayaat: "Sleep would not come, my darling. [...] Your grandfather. I miss him" (35-36). Through her claim, Sitti Zeynab discloses, with a concomitant tone of loss, her longing for Hayaat's *absent* grandfather, a figure who represents deeper layers of nostalgia than what it seems to convey at first sight. More particularly, the figure of the grandfather "represents cultural and religious traditions; he is endowed with the strength to confront the invasion of the new order. In this light, the death of the grandfather may symbolize the loss of family and nation" (Ragaišiene 302). In this context, Sitti Zeynab's longing for her husband goes beyond its superficial denotative level to connote her poignant nostalgia for the once united Palestinian nation and harmonious community of an idyllic pastoral Palestine, disrupted neither by the Zionist occupation nor by the post-*nakba* repercussions. No wonder then that the ensuing symbolism implemented to depict Sitti Zeynab's psyche is one of cold. That is to say, after a feverish narration of her nostalgic and traumatic memories, "[d]espite the heat, [Sitti Zeynab] requests [Hayaat to] drape a blanket over her shoulders" (Abdel-Fattah 40). Such a symbolic act translates the cold that Sitti Zeynab senses, a cold which, in the presence of the heat, becomes endowed with a psychic signification, one which unveils the cold of alienation and exile that pervades the grandmother's psyche as a result of her awareness of the unappeasable loss of the objects of her warm, nostalgic memories.

Another manifestation of the exilic alienation which the Palestinian characters undergo can be noticed in the subtle instances of depersonalization embedded in the novel, especially through the personae of the mother and the father. As a matter of fact, depersonalization disorder, often resulting from a traumatic experience, indicates a state of mind wherein the individuals are estranged and detached from their own selves and usually from the external world and involves, among other symptoms, "a sense of being mechanical" (VandenBos 298). In *Where the Streets Had a Name,* what is quite provocative on the level of the symbology enmeshed with the depersonalized protagonists is the unignorable repetition of the two signifiers of smoking cigarettes and smoking argeela associated respectively with Hayaat's mother and father. The recurrence of these two symbols of smoking and argeela is not limited to Abdel-Fattah's novel, for they recur in many works of Palestinian literature, which absolves them from the character of randomness and transmutes them instead into producers of significant chains of signifieds. To enumerate few of these works, Samah Sabawi's play *Tales of a City by the Sea* subsumes the item of the argeela which figures with the protagonist's father, the wretched yet humorous fisherman, whereas Riyad Baydas's Palestinian Arabic short story "Kalima Wahida Bass" – "Only One Word" – displays the emblem of the cigarette in a dialogue as "[o]ne passenger lit a cigarette, which added to the generally oppressive mood" (Elad-Bouskila 75). Again, in Ghassan Kanafani's novel *Men in the Sun*, one of the protagonists lights a cigarette before uttering one of his most important claims in the novel (Zalman 60). Thus, the recourse to these signs becomes an expression of the typical Palestinian signification unraveled in Abdel-Fattah's novel.

On the one hand, Hayaat's portrayal of her mother is germane to this symbolism: "She's [...] a chain-smoker. When she's not eating, she's smoking. Sometimes she does both simultaneously" (Abdel-Fattah 7). In this respect, Hayaat's focus on such a seemingly common habit as smoking is not haphazard especially when taking into account the mother's prototypal care and responsibility vis-à-vis all of her family members, but it is rather meant to underline that her mother's excessive resort to cigarettes is but her own fashion of escape from the bitter reality they live as a traumatized community and of surviving the psychic disintegration ensuing from such a trauma. This is more endorsed through the parallelism between eating and smoking, which equates the latter to the former as a mechanism of survival, thereby corroborating her detachment and distantness from the world surrounding her. Added to this is Hayaat's diction of the compound noun "chain-smoker" to refer to her mother; in so doing, she attributes to her mother a mechanical existence, which consolidates again her alienation from reality and, hence, her depersonalization. Besides, this psychic dysfunction is further demystified through Hayaat's interplay with her mother:

> ‘We lived in fear for two years, Hayaat, wondering when the bulldozers would arrive.’ Her voice falters and her heavily kohled eyes fix on the vine leaf she’s been rolling.
>
> ‘Mama...?’
>
> I’m not accustomed to seeing Mama like this. She’s always had a *non-sense approach to emotions* […] Mama seems *too* busy to reflect on anything except managing the house and looking after us. (191; my emphasis)

In this passage, the mother’s depersonalization is more lucid through its symptomatic manifestations, the first of which is its emanation from traumatic events. More specifically, the mother’s depersonalization issues from her galvanizing apprehension of the Zionist usurpation of their land and ultimately from her loss of and dislocation from their home and land. Further, while the fixity of her eyes betrays her feeling that these past traumas “have a distant, dreamlike character” (VandenBos 298), her “non-sense approach” attests to her alienation and estrangement from the external world, and both psychic patterns inform her depersonalized state. Similarly, Hayaat’s emphasis on the intensity of her mother’s busyness through her insertion of the intensifier “too” and on its omnipresence in her existence bestows on her a mechanical existential status, which is again emblematic of her depersonalized psyche and, therefore, of her psychic exile.

On the other hand, Hayaat devotes a great share of her narrative to expatiate on her father’s depersonalization, opening it by elucidating the trauma of loss as the spark which has ignited his self-estrangement: “When we lost our land, he imploded” (Abdel-Fattah 18). As such, the implosion of the father’s psyche symbolizes a disintegration within himself and more significantly an alienation not only from the external world but from his innermost world as well. Following the link between her mother’s depersonalization and the emblem of smoking cigarettes, Hayaat unearths her father’s depersonalization disorder by elaborating extensively on his peculiar relation to his argeela:

> He eats breakfast with us, but his movements are those of a self-conscious guest because he has never known our house in the early hours of the morning. [...] He eats quickly

> and quietly. After that he collects a few pieces of coal from a bag in the laundry room and places them on the stove. Low heat, delicately balanced. He empties the head of the argeela and stuffs it with fresh apple tobacco that smells like sweets. He squashes the tobacco in and then covers it with a small piece of foil [...] He then pricks the foil with several openings. Next, he refills the glass with fresh water [...] every night he repeats the procedure in the kitchen and every night [Mama] scolds. (19)

Depersonalization is introduced from the very outset through Hayaat's comparison of her father's movements to those of "a self-conscious guest," which demonstrates his alienation from his external world, in general, and from his family, in particular. By the same token, his absolute ignorance of the details of their present house evidences his detachment from the new space and his abstraction from the present temporality as a result of his exile in his past memories and in the embrace of his lost land. Of considerable significance, here, is Hayaat's precise and fastidious description of her father's daily, routinary preparation of his argeela which lays bare a copious use of action verbs purported to shed light on his only deliberate and measured movements and careful procedures. Consequently, this process of his argeela preparation is transmogrified into a rite of psychological survival as it is the only moment of the father's existence during which he retrieves his self-awareness and sentience of his surrounding reality. It follows that his life becomes a fluctuation between two existential states, one of utter abstraction and alienation from his present settings, the other of mechanical survival, and both imply a depersonalized psyche generated by his inability to reconcile with the trauma of losing his land and nation. Even when Sitti Zeynab, his wife's mother, collapses, the father's depersonalization stubbornly persists, inhibiting him from consoling his wife as observed through Hayaat's attentive eyes: "Mama covers her face with her hands and starts to sob. Baba sighs but doesn't approach her. It's no longer the habit to be tender with each other" (52). Although his sigh initially bespeaks his emotions of anxiety and empathy vis-à-vis his wife, his physical exile from his cherished land has immersed him, like his wife, in a psychic exile wherein depersonalization represses the surfacing of any emotions and catalyzes no psychological reactions but indifference, nonchalance and language meaninglessness.

Reflections on Temporal Exile

Exile in many instances, as is the case with the Palestinian paradigm, transcends its physicality to emerge as an existential condition which entails discontinuity, disorientation and disconnection usually from a ground of Being, that is, from "the possibility for order, unity, and meaning for the individual in the world as that world is experienced through individual consciousness" (Burr 83). Such is the case of the internally displaced Palestinians as their individual consciousnesses are rendered disoriented and disconnected from their ordinary ground of Being through the disruption and destabilization of their temporal rationale of the world. Put differently, the exilic condition in Palestine transcends the human level to affect even the entity of time. More specifically, time becomes "exiled" in Palestine by subjecting it to a discrepant polarization, the extremities of which are acceleration and deceleration, and to what can be labelled "exilic dischronism."

On the one hand, time in Palestine becomes reified through its acceleration triggered by the Zionist colonialism. This phenomenon transpires during the lifting of the curfews in which time deflects from its ordinary time-line and develops a double-quick character as Hayaat's opening portrayal of the family's experience of time exhibits: "We were permitted to leave our houses for two hours. We raced to Abo Yusuf's grocery store. By Baba's calculations we had one hour and fifteen minutes to stock up, load the shopping into our car and return home. [...] Two hours don't cater for the Sitti Zeynabs of this world" (Abdel-Fattah 1-2). In this context, the choice of number two to quantify the time allotted to the fulfillment of the family's needs is deliberate in the sense that this number symbolizes binarism and contrast. Accordingly, it serves to highlight the disparity and disjuncture between the available short time and the family's wide array of basic needs and desiderata. As a result, all these sundry requirements become compressed within the narrow limits of this timespan, which frames an existential rhythm of acceleration. This idea is more reinforced through Hayaat's rendering of her family's experience of time as a “race.” That is to say, the Palestinians’ experience of time in these scarce moments of curfew lifting becomes a struggle for survival against this reified form of “exilic time.” That’s why, Hayaat discards her grandmother, not as an individual but as an epitome of the first generation of the internally displaced Palestinians since 1948, of such a life-or-death battle because she has been too burdened by her physical and psychological exile to endure this novel form of temporal exile. Added to this, the acceleration of time concretizes in the family’s approach to time, for the latter is not spontaneously lived but is rather calculated; that is to say, every single unit of time is rendered fateful, reifying life into a mechanical equation the extremities of which are time and survival. Consequently, the Palestinians’ affinity with time undergoes a radical alteration from an organic, instinctive relation to a mechanized one and, thus, marks a double ontological exile, of Palestinians from the natural order of Being and of time from its matter-of-course rhythm.

On the other hand, while the exilic acceleration of time occurs during the lifting of the curfews, its opposite counterpart, time deceleration, transpires during checkpoints intervals. This is best crystalized in the structure implemented in the construction of the chapter which draws a quintessential tableau of the Palestinian experience of checkpoints, for the structure *per se* assumes the form of a chronological record as the passages below show:

> *Fifteen minutes* pass. The man is pleased to announce that his cramps have gone. [...] We wait bottled up in the service cab like the bubbles in a shaken can of fizzy drink.
>
> *Twenty- five minutes*. Somebody remarks that it’s odd to experience cramps in this heat. [...]
>
> *Half an hour*. David and Mali’s heritage is discovered. (125; my emphasis)
>
> *An hour*. Could we not open the windows any further? No, that is as far as they open. [...]
>
> *One hour and ten minutes*. A signal. A soldier flicks his finger and our driver laughs and turns the ignition on. The service rolls forward a few meters, and then the driver is ordered to stop. The ignition is turned off. (126; my emphasis)
>
> *Two hours*. It’s now three o’clock.

> Marwan has dozed off. [...] There are no white or brown faces, just red ones. [...] We will ourselves to be patient [...]. (127; my emphasis)
>
> [...] The long queue moves slowly. Sometimes there's no action. (129; my emphasis)

Indeed, the chronological arrangement of this chapter's details is intended to underline the intensity of the slow motion of time and the monotony added to this overall mood. Accordingly, the lentissimo movement of time can be extrapolated from the hollow and monotonous actions paralleled to each time interval. More particularly, ten minutes after the man's recovery from his cramps, the passengers still broach this same topic, which points to their psychological emptiness provoked by their loss of the sense of time passage. Afterwards, after all the topics of conversation, including the exciting issue of the Israeli David and Mali's heritage, have been consumed, the thoughts of the passengers become centered on trivialities like their query whether they could open further the already open service window. As such, their psychologically hollow reactions seem to be mere pastimes and, therefore, evince that time is dragging rather than smoothly moving. Further, time becomes wasted on the process of pointless waiting. In this groundwork, it can be advanced that time is exiled through its subjection by the Zionist circumstances to a process of "temporal *différance*" in the sense that the temporal limits framing the actions of Palestinians are endlessly deferred and postponed and that the *absence* of action becomes the signified corresponding to the signifier of time so that the movement of the bus, as a microcosm of the Palestinian community, is persistently delayed until it reaches two whole hours of inertia. Another example which elucidates this exilic, temporal phenomenon can be grasped through Hayaat's subtle indication, when they arrive at the Container checkpoint, that "Ramallah is only about twenty-two kilometers away but it may as well be one hundred" (215). Albeit this hyperbolic statement seems to refer to the distance separating Hayaat and her family from Ramallah, it conceals within its folds a reference more directed towards the question of time. Put differently, Hayaat's hyperbole metaphorically exposes the inflation of distance which ensues from the deceleration and ongoing delay of time by the Zionist impediments in the unexpected and pervasive checkpoints on the way to Ramallah.

Above all, temporal exile in Palestine is to be found in what could be called “exilic dischronism.” Drawing on the definition of exile as a “longing for a lost center and a vagabond state” which “implies a deconstructive poetics with an absent center, floating signifier, simulacrum, and fragmentation” (Zeng 2), this thesis contrives the word “dischronism” from the Latin *dis-*, used to signify absence, separation, digression and departure from the main issue, and the Greek *khronos* denoting time and uses as such the phrase “exilic dischronism” to designate the phenomenon of the disjointedness and disconnection of temporal signification from its ordinary center of Being in such exilic conditions as the Palestinian prototype. In point of fact, Abdel-Fattah’s novel is teeming with paramount images which demystify the exilic condition of dischronism. Among these, there is the problematic incalculability of time in Palestine which Hayaat obliquely pinpoints through her claim that her journey to Al Quds “could take a couple of hours or the entire day” (Abdel-Fattah 75). Through Hayaat’s statement, the notion of temporality becomes disfigured in the Palestinian space, for the prevalence of checkpoints and the Zionist encroachment in the Palestinian territory reify the concept of time by transforming it into an immeasurable and unpredictable variable, an entity in a “*vagabond state*” somewhere in the continuum delineated by the two extremes a “couple of an hour” and “the entire day.” More importantly, the construct of exilic dischronism is best uncovered in the reply of Samy –Hayaat’s best friend and an orphan whose father, an inspiring political activist, is detained in one of the Israeli prisons – when Hayaat inquires if he exchanges letters with his imprisoned father: “Well, I usually receive letters late, so by the time I read them they’re outdated and I’ve already sent him several more letters in the meantime. He sent me a letter at Easter last year. But by the time I received it, months had gone past, including my birthday. Of course the birthday card was months late too” (94). This response lucidly exposes the temporal inconsistency between Samy's letters and his father's initiated by the coercive system of the Zionist colonial network. Indeed, this inconsistency can be construed as an anachronism wherein each one's letters become temporally exiled from their appropriate contexts as substantiated through Samy's reiteration of the adjective "late" and his recourse to the adjective "outdated." This anachronism is further mutated into a dischronic structure through the meaninglessness bestowed on these letters. That is to say, their temporal exile surpasses their belatedness to materialize in the discontinuity of their signification in the sense that their meaning becomes lost in their insertion within a new, irrelevant context as is the case with the father's celebratory letters of Easter and of his son's birthday.

In the same vein, the feature of inconsistency marking the exilic dischronism of the "Palestinian time" can be found in the incongruity between time and space as Hayaat's meditation on her journey from Bethlehem to Al Quds showcases: "It's odd. In reality we're less than ten kilometers away from home. For those with blue cards, a car ride of minutes. And yet I feel as though we've journeyed to another country" (135). The psychological oddness of the situation emanates from Hayaat's awareness of the paradoxical status quo wherein the spatio-temporal variables are reified. In more explanatory terms, on account of the Israeli authorities' creation of a discriminatory schism between Al-Quds citizens with blue identity card and the more traumatized West Bankers with green identity cards in terms of their mobility across Palestinian borders and checkpoints, a distortion and discontinuity of the logicality which conditions the nexus between time and space is engendered for West Bankers like Hayaat. As such, while the distance between Bethlehem and Al Quds is quite short in every Palestinian's consciousness, the time needed for this travel is excessively lengthened and subjected to an inordinate deferral, which displaces again the notion of temporality from its central axes of Being, that is, from its ordinary flow, on the one hand, and from its logical relation to the variable of spatiality, on the other.

Reifying the Concept of Childhood

Indeed, the novel's typicality rises from its tendency to advert the attention of the readership to the intricacies and meanings inherent in the Palestinian children's psychic, psychological and social lives. For this reason, Abdel-Fattah devotes an extensive part of her novel to expound the idea that Palestinian childhood is violated and tyrannized by the uncompromising trauma and alienation within which it is inhumanly immersed. In this respect, the alienation of childhood becomes itself a patent illustration of exile *in* Palestine. This abuse of Palestinian children is not haphazard in the politicized and militarized Palestinian context but is rather "central to the logic of the settler-colonial regime and its need to establish and maintain relations of racial domination and subordination" (Shalhoub-Kevorkian 20). Accordingly, this exilic abuse of Palestinian children is typified in *Where the Streets Had a Name* in which the discontinuity and disorientation integral to exile are brought forward through the children's alienation from the supposedly ordinary social and epistemic backgrounds quintessential to childhood.

To begin with, the novel's opening lines uncover the deplorable social conditions which have been inflicted on Hayaat in Bethlehem after her family's dislocation from their privileged life in Beit Sahur. More specifically, she has grown bereft even of the most basic facilities as she resignedly declares that, for the past weeks, she and her sister have been sharing the latter's toothbrush (Abdel-Fattah 1) and that albeit her father has forgotten to buy her a new one during the brief hours of the lifting of the curfew, she has not complained (2). Her social misery does not cease here as she even shares the same bed with her sister Jihan and her seven-year-old brother Tariq. While such wretchedness may seem to be tantamount to the conditions of poverty which many children endure all over the world, the difference in the case of Palestinian children like Hayaat lies in the fact that many of these children's lifestyle is brusquely reduced from a privileged status into a degraded one due to the Israeli demolition and usurping of their houses and lands, which makes of their misery a galvanizing trauma rather than a social condition. Subsequently, Hayaat's reaction of non-complaint authenticates her surrender and helpless resignation to these dehumanizing circumstances, becoming one of the wretched children of the earth. Nonetheless, her resignation is altered into a feeling of wrath as she stands in a psychological confrontation with the children of the intrusive colonizer in Al Quds:

> At the front of the house [an imposing sandstone villa] I spot three children, two boys and one girl [...] The boys wear black dress hats and suits. One has ginger curls dangling down the sides of his head. The other has shorter black curls. The girl wears a long skirt and long-sleeved shirt, buttoned to her neck [...].
>
> [...]
>
> I gaze upon these children and feel like a pot of simmering water into which Mama has sprinkled a mixture of spices. A pinch of resentment. A dash of curiosity. A sprinkle of jealousy. (156-157)

In this excerpt, Hayaat's psychological patterns are vital for the understanding of the convolutedness of the social encounter between the children of the colonized, rightful owners of the land and the children of the oppressive colonizers, especially that this is her first sight of her "other" peers. Indeed, being part of the discrepant juxtaposition between the traumatized Palestinian children whose lives are constantly shaken by a contingent peril and the privileged Israeli children whose lives are marked by all sorts of luxury and prerogatives, Hayaat exteriorizes her first response through her gaze. This latter is not a mere passive look but is rather a bodily language endowed with the power of interpretive and analytical scrutiny of the Israeli "child-other," whereby she manages to shape her psychology and to unleash the emotions of her child-ego. On this score, the metaphors which the protagonist utilizes transform her psychology into a "potpourri" of intense feelings, the first of which is the fury which arises from contemplating these Israeli children's easy and happy life while Samy's and hers are filled with curfews, danger and trauma and from witnessing the unjust loss of her land and its tragic ramifications, while the children of the occupiers live comfortably in their seized lands and houses. Comparably, her resentment is an innocent inquiry on why some children lead a privileged life, whereas others have to endure the tormenting bitterness of reality. And although she feels curiosity spring within her to discover the life of this otherness which is established at the expense of hers, this psychological reaction is swiftly substituted by jealousy at bearing witness to such uncompromising contrast between her gloomy, macabre life and their colorful existence. Correspondingly, the simile utilized by Hayaat reveals that, like the simmering water, her psyche is "boiling" with feelings that symptomatize the apex of her alienation from the supposedly idyllic world of childhood and mirror her awareness of the injustice perpetrated against Palestinian children.

In an analogous way, Palestinian childhood is climactically exiled from its unalienable right to a nonmilitarized educational environment. More particularly, the Palestinian children's dream to epistemologically grow and relish in a setting of knowledge is utterly ruined by the Israeli colonization which does not stop at the geo-political level but transcends it to the socio-cultural level. In this context, in her article "Clowns in Palestine Cry: The Occupied Bodies and Lives of Jerusalem's Children," Nadera Shalhoub-Kevorkian documents the daily violence committed on a daily basis against Palestinian children by the Israeli State, threatening their lives and destabilizing their sense of safety all the time. Critical to this analysis is her postulation that such threats are intended to "snuff out protest movements and erode resistance" (14) and, thence, to eradicate the future of the Palestinian nation given that children encapsulate the future and hope of every society. Of even more considerable importance is Shalhoub-Kevorkian's statement that "[l]ooking at the structure of violence targeting children in Al-Quds it is clear that children's rights are not merely violated by their arrest, kidnapping, and other assaults on their homes and living spaces but by their very access to and opportunity for education" (18), for education is an epistemic, discursive apparatus of nation-building. Thereby, through the disruption of the Palestinian educational system, the Israeli authorities aim at dismantling and extirpating the notions of national identity and resistance precepts from the consciousness of

Palestinian children. In line with this, Abdel-Fattah alludes to this epistemic colonial alienation of Palestinian children from their educational rights through her narrator Hayaat.

This is lucidly voiced in the didactic discourse of Sitti Zeynab directed to her granddaughter Hayaat: "'The State of Israel was declared soon after. [...] In 1950 they passed a new law. Anybody who was not in Israel on 1 September 1948 was declared a present absentee owner. Huh! Have your teachers taught you about that law?' 'No.' 'What they teach you, I don't understand!'" (Abdel-Fattah 40). By dint of her interrogation then exclamation, Sitti Zeynab alludes to the censorship imposed on Palestinian schools and curricula with the intention of breaking the bond between Palestinian children and their epistemic national discourse and of effacing the presence of Palestine from their inchoate consciousnesses. Analogously, the following dialogue between Sitti Zeynab and Hayaat, though humorous as it may seem, exudes the Palestinian children's intellectual exile from education:

> "[...] I was living in a tent, freezing in winter and sweating away with the flies in the summer [...]. It's like heartburn after a big meal. It burns inside and nothing you do takes the sensation away."
>
> I tilt my head to the side. "A glass of milk?"
>
> "Huh! They would even deny me that!"
>
> "You can buy it from any shop. Abo Yusuf sells it."
>
> Sitti Zeynab rolls her eyes and speaks to the ceiling. "This is why the constant closure of schools is such a crime. Metaphorical language is lost on our youth." (49)

While Sitti Zeynab deploys a metaphorical language to express the brunt of her trauma and loss, Hayaat fails to assimilate this language and answers instead in a purely literal language. Yet, what is most instrumental here is the reason Sitti Zeynab purveys as an explanation of Hayaat's intellectual narrow-mindedness, for she affiliates this to the perennial curfews which involve the closure of schools, thereby depriving Hayaat and her peers from extending the scope of their intellectual horizons and broadening their epistemic repertoire including their language. That's why Sitti Zeynab perceives the closure of school as a crime in that it persecutes childhood by exiling it from the world of learning, discovering, and dreaming and by alienating children's discourse from the language of metaphor, a language closely associated with imagination and creativity. Instead, these children become solely confined to the language of "reality," one which derives essentially from their lived experience and is, therefore, laden with more violence and tragedy than joy and hope as exemplified in Hayaat's sentence, "Mama yells out orders faster than the bullets released from a machine gun" (53), which echoes the language of the war and violence which she daily witnesses. In the light of this, it can be inferred that Palestinian children, as represented by Hayaat, are mercilessly shoved by the Zionist ideological and coercive apparatuses into the tragic world of exile where they are alienated from their innocent lives and robbed of their imagination, hope, and dreams.

***Hayaat:* The Traumatized Life of Palestinian Children**

Eventually, the Palestinian exilic condition, especially with regard to the alienation of Palestinian childhood, rises to a crescendo as the novel deftly undertakes the task of probing into the traumatized psyche of children living in Palestine as dramatized in the persona of Hayaat. It follows that it gradually unfolds Hayaat's traumatic story which crystallizes mostly in her identity crisis and in her experience of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). First, of all the torturous conditions inflicted on Hayaat as a Palestinian child, the past trauma in which she has lost her own self and her dearest friend remains her ontological turning point. Concisely, after Hayaat and her friend Maysaa, both children below the age of thirteen, join a crowd of Palestinian civilians protesting against the unjust Israeli demolition of a Palestinian house, the two children, like the other protesters, are chased by an Israeli military jeep. As they flee together, seeking a survival refuge, a soldier fires at them, killing Maysaa and filling Hayaat's face at once with the shattered glass of the window above her and with the horror and shame of witnessing her friend's atrocious death. Henceforth, Hayaat's existence becomes immersed in an acute identity crisis which prominently surfaces whenever she finds herself face-to-face with the mirror:

> As I brush my teeth with Jihan’s worn, bristly toothbrush I look in the mirror. It always seems as though a *stranger* is looking back at me. I stare at the twisted, contorted skin around my right cheek, the scarring that zigzags across my forehead. I raise a hand and cover the right side of my face. The left is mostly smooth. Normal. Slowly, I lower my hand and I am a *stranger to myself* again. (3; my emphasis)

In this pivotal excerpt, Hayaat’s examination of herself in the mirror is quite redolent of the Lacanian mirror stage, which informs her search for her absent self and her struggle to grapple with the conundrum of her identity. In this regard, Hayaat’s identity crisis is more noticeable in the fragmentation of her inner self as she emphatically acknowledges the haunting presence of “a stranger” within her. Such a psychic entity evokes the essence of Julia Kristeva’s *Strangers to Ourselves*, to wit, the concept of “the stranger” that inhabits the exiled self: “a stranger inhabits us: it is the hidden face of our identity, the space that ruins our resting place, the moment where understanding and instinctive fellow feeling become swallowed up [...]. A symptom which renders precisely the 'we' problematic, perhaps impossible, the stranger begins when the awareness of my difference arises” (9). In line with Kristeva’s claim, Hayaat’s insight of the depth of her trauma inhibits her ordinary ego, one ingrained in innocence, vivacity, joy and imagination, and gives rise instead to a new stranger within her, alien to the world of childhood: the wounded, the traumatized and the unjustly oppressed. On this account, the presence of this new unsettling strangeness undermines her sense of identity given that it problematizes the “we,” that is, the unity and wholeness of her self, thereby fragmenting her selfhood as a symptom of the postmodern condition of exile, and singles her out as a *different* child, with her *difference* embodied not only in her being an internally exiled Palestinian child but also in her being a girl with a distorted face. What’s more, Kristeva goes further to underline the painful aspect of this inner strangeness through her description of it as an “uncanny strangeness.” This psychic process is one which Hayaat excruciatingly undergoes as the uncanniness of her strangeness is instantiated in the invasion of this stranger within her. The latter resists to remain concealed in the dark recesses of her unconscious, overwhelming instead her present identity reflected in her mirror image, and is vehemently exteriorized in her facial discourse. By way of explanation, Hayaat's body is reified to give way to the stranger within her, that is, to the second fragment of her split self which estranges her from her childhood world and bespeaks the dark complexities of Palestine. In this respect, "the twisted contorted" layers of Hayaat's skin are symptomatic of her stranger as they lay bare to her another facet of the buried Palestinian trauma, for they symbolically point to the layers of the Palestinian history which have been disfigured and twisted to fit the Zionist project. Likewise, Hayaat's specific choice of the word "zigzag" to characterize her scars metamorphoses her body in the fashion of geographical mapping in the sense that her face becomes a personification of the Palestinian map, the zigzagging borders of which are all the time altered by the Israeli state, leaving deep psychological scars in the Palestinian collective unconscious. All these points considered, the stranger within Hayaat, set in dualistic contradistinction to her child-self, turns out to be the traumatized, repressed Palestinian child whose immaculate innocence has been violated by the collective trauma of her nation. It is this uncanny presence within her which breaks the unity of her self. As a result, it initiates an uncompromising crisis of identity that exiles Hayaat not only from her childhood but from her ordinary selfhood as well, which endorses both her sense of existential exile and her depersonalization.

Finally, as "a disorder that may result when an individual lives through or witnesses an event in which he or she believes that there is a threat to life or physical integrity and safety and experiences fear, terror, or helplessness" (VanenBos 815), post-traumatic stress disorder seems a psychic dysfunction too agonizing to be undergone by a child. Yet, such a disorder is the shadow which haunts the lives of many Palestinian children because of the bombings they hear every day near their homes, the corpses and blood they see before their eyes, and the soldiers and military vehicles they flee. This is the case of Hayaat whose fatal encounter with the Israeli soldier in company of her friend Maysaa has engulfed her psyche with the bitterness of post-traumatic stress disorder. In this framework, this psychic syndrome is discerned in several symptoms, the most significant of which are re-experiencing the trauma by way of “painful recollections, flashbacks, or recurrent dreams or nightmares” and feeling “detachment and estrangement from others” (815). This is best exemplified in Hayaat’s persistent nightmares as she herself mentions, “I wet the bed the other night, after another nightmare” (Abdel-Fattah 4), and goes further to explain with reference to the traumatic day which has reversed her life, “From that day I’ve been the one who occasionally wets the bed” (22). Her insertion of the word “another” in her first statement and the adverb of frequency “occasionally” in the second attests to the recurrent and persistent character of her nightmares, which corroborates their post-traumatic context. Besides, these dreams do not only represent the nightmarish and horrifying existence which Hayaat leads in the heart of occupied Palestine, but they also mirror her chaotic and disoriented psyche, reflecting as such the disorientation and discontinuity typical of exile. Equally, they translate her inability to surmount her ordeal which, though having occurred in the past, vehemently invades her present existence. It is also worth mentioning that since dreams disclose one’s identity, Hayaat’s dreams, being of a nightmarish nature, points out that her identity is in a profound state of crisis and disintegration.

Still, the nucleus of her nightmares is only unearthed as she imparts: “On the last night of the curfew, I wake with a start from a familiar nightmare [...] Maysaa’s face had filled my dreams. She’s like a faulty tap that won’t stop dripping. You don’t notice it until the stillness of the night” (22). What is striking here is that Hayaat’s post-traumatic disorder is reinvigorated whenever the military imbroglio worsens in Palestine, as exemplified in the curfews, since it reminds her of the military setting wherein her friend has been fiercely killed. Again, the brunt and intensity of Hayaat’s inexorable trauma is feeding on the ghostly presence of Maysaa’s image in her nightmares in "the stillness of the night," a setting perfectly authenticating the pinnacle of psychic activities and turmoil, which dislocates her from her comfort zone of identity-fulfillment and exacerbates her sense of internal exile. Hayaat's disorder does not cease here but goes on to concretize in her obtrusive memories, mainly her recollection of Maysaa: "I remember Maysaa but that memory makes me sick because I also remember the day everything changed" (22). Following this reminiscence, the sickness which Hayaat feels is of a psychological nature, that is, one of discomfort and dread, for this memory is an epitome of the trauma which has categorically altered her in that her ordinariness has been substituted by "strangeness" and her identity absented. Worst of all, Hayaat's post-traumatic stress disorder culminates in what is termed in trauma theory as "acting out" wherein "one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes-scenes in which the past returns" (LaCapra 21). Subjected to the trenchant stare of a soldier in a checkpoint, Hayaat finds herself on the verge of acting out her trauma: "I'm in danger of falling back into the dark pool of my memories; the sound of bullets whistling past my ears is so real" (115). In this respect, Hayaat's past is projected onto the present as she feels herself about to be transposed from the present into the past encapsulated in "the dark pool of [her] memories." Additionally, given the fact that her auditory sense is suffused with the sounds of her past trauma and that these sounds become vested in a sense of reality, it can be deduced that Hayaat does not merely evoke the past psychologically, but she gets involved in a psychic "performativity" of its incidents. Thereby, her post-trauma impels her to grow estranged from the present and results in a discontinuity with its scope, which deepens her existential exile.

Tales of a City by the Sea: A Tragic Performance of Exile

Following Randa Abdel-Fattah's steps, Samah Sabawi chooses to devote her authorial voice as well for the Palestinian cause but in her own fashion. More particularly, the singularity of her writing from her diasporic outpost on Palestine emanates from her choice to "perform" the Palestinian experience by dint of her award-winning play *Tales of a City by the Sea* (2016). Her inclination towards the drama genre adds at once a functional effect of verisimilitude to her dramatization and rendering of the Palestinian plight and empathically involves the Australian audience in the heart of the Palestinian image, especially that Liz Jones, the artistic director of La Mama Theatre where the play was first performed, underlines the fact that "very little is known in Australia about the real Palestine [and] the real Palestinian situation" ("La Mama Artistic Director on staging *Tales of a City by the Sea*" 0:29-0:38). More significantly, being the daughter of the Gazan novelist and poet Abdul-Karim Sabawi, whose poetry mirrors the experience of exile and dislocation (Sabawi, "Poetry, Palestine and the Language of Resistance"), and of a family who was forced out of Palestine in 1967 and into Jordan refugee camp life before eventually settling in Australia (Sabawi, "Pain of Gaza exile endures after 43 years"), Sabawi develops an inextricable affinity with Palestine which nurtures her writings, including her play. Apropos of this identificatory bond, she proclaims:

> No matter where I was, or how vast the world appeared around me, I always felt as though I remained trapped in my place of birth Gaza. The war torn besieged and isolated strip shaped my understanding of my identity and my humanity. So what else could I do but to indulge in Palestine's overwhelming presence and to succumb to telling its stories of humanity's triumphs and tribulations through my art and my poetry? (qtd in Polya)

Accordingly, Sabawi's play, *Tales of a City by the Sea*, weaves together dialogue, poetry, songs, humor and tragedy to draw a palimpsestic tableau of daily life in Gaza camps, a tableau which superimposes love and war, hope and exile, joy and grief, resistance and oppression, and life and death. Yet, before probing into these polarities, the play zeroes in on closely familiarizing its audience with the experience of internal exile in Palestine which crystallizes in the state of confinement and in the colonial reification of the Palestinian existential and psychological realms.

Before dissecting the intricacies of the topos of exile in the play, it is of the essence to point out to the dramatic devices which the playwright implements at the opening of the play to frame the perspective of the audience so that the latter would assimilate the integral prevalence of the exilic condition in Palestine. In other words, the play's opening stage directions foreshadow the anguish inherent in the Palestinian internal exile: "*Gaza beach. The singer stands outside of the parameters of the stage, preferably to the side where she can watch and bear witness to events. [...] She sings the opening song.* 'Nialak ma ahda balak' *('Lucky you have peace of mind') as the audience walks into the theatre. The sound of the waves is heard in the background throughout this scene*" (Sabawi, *Tales of a City by the Sea* 1). In these stage directions, it is quite lucid that the most prominent sign is that of the off-stage song as the first sound effect with which the audience is acquainted. The choice of the song itself is by no means arbitrary, for it is a typical Palestinian folk song which bespeaks the anguish and affliction of the Palestinian soul. As such, this tragic, lyrical song is intended to contextualize the play against the Palestinian backdrop and to condense from the very outset the mood of grief so as to position the audience in the heart of the Palestinian collective plight. In the same vein, it is true that the song's title is articulated in the Palestinian dialect in a text wholly written in English so as to underline its cultural typicality and its Palestinian roots; yet, of all the song titles evoked in the play, this very title remains the only one translated into English so that any Western audience could grasp its meaning. This is but to confirm that the song *per se*, "Lucky you have peace of mind" ('Nialak ma ahda balak'), functions at once as a catalyst of a pathetic mood and as a speech which frames the Western audience's collective unconscious by reminding it that while it is lucky to enjoy peace of mind and to exult in life, Palestinians are invariably afflicted by their daily ordeal and struggle of survival. This latter condition is even more reinforced by dint of the dramatic overlap of sound effects indicated through the adverbial phrase "throughout this scene" which points to the synchrony of the sound of the waves and the song scene. In other words, the waves heighten the mournful tune of the song given that they echo an anguished longing for the existential normalcy incarnated in the ups and downs of life and emblematized by the ebb and flow movement and for cross-border escape symbolized by their free movement across seas. Besides, the spatio-temporal setting introduced in the exposition psychologically prepares the audience for the culmination of the Palestinian trauma in the sense that the first words which the main protagonist Jomana – a Palestinian journalist and activist raised in a refugee camp in Gaza – utters are, "Gaza, August 2008" (1). In fact, the mere mention of Gaza implies an overarching discourse of exile. Such an extrapolation is not inferred out of the blue; rather, history has it that "[f]or Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, the occupation restricts life to such an extent that the metaphor of the prison is often found to be the most appropriate symbol of how life is controlled, checked and coerced" (Schulz and Hammer 91). Thereby, Gaza is transmuted into "an open-air prison" for its denizens, deepening their alienation and exile. Likewise, the time in which the playwright chooses to situate the story is quite significant as it alludes to the apex of the Palestinian loss. More particularly, the ominous year 2008 narrates a story of collective suffering and of massive calamity in Palestine as it is historically redolent of Israel's brutal assault on Gaza in 2008-2009 in which 1400 Palestinians were killed (Portya). Added to this, the choice of August, the pinnacle of summer, to be the temporal starting point of the play is not random but rather bears a symbolic meaning. In his *Anatomy of Criticism*, Northrop Frye associates summer with romance as an archetypal narrative of adventures intended for the fulfillment of a quest and goes further to postulate that "*agon* or conflict is the basis or archetypal theme of romance" (192), therefore, establishing a nexus between summer and *agon* or conflict. Correspondingly, locating the play's beginning in summer prognosticates the multiplex conflicts it aggregates, to wit, the protagonists' conflicts with their demoralizing environment and with their exiled selves.

Having enacted all these devices to psychologically usher its audience, the play is further suffused with tenets and literary patterns that corroborate its thematic gestalt of exile. The first of these is confinement, a backdrop against which much of Palestinian literature is quintessentially set, including Abdel-Fattah's novel, and crystallizes in the protagonists' longing for escape and in the rigidity of boundaries within their Palestinian land. To begin with, the protagonists' exilic condition of *not-being-at-home* materializes in their desire to escape their "prison-land" as blatantly echoed in Jomana and her cousin's dialogue as they contemplate the sea:

> LAMA. I love coming here.
>
> JOMANA. I know.
>
> LAMA. If you stand with your back to Gaza, facing the sea, you can easily imagine you are someplace else: Beirut... Alexandria...Tripoli...Santorini...
>
> JOMANA. Countries...continents...the whole world is out there.
>
> *Lama sits next to Jomana. They stare silently into the sea.* (Sabawi, *Tales of a City by the Sea* 2)

In this regard, Lama's initial claim elevates the sea into a safe haven wherein she seeks refuge from her hellish life in the camp and where hope seems to reside in the horizon. Accordingly, her enumeration of other places translates her yearning to dwell somewhere else, far from Gaza, which substantiates her feeling of confinement. In the same fashion, Jomana's movement from the particular – countries – to the general – the world – and her emphatic use of "whole" to modify the "world" unleash her feeling that worldly life prevails in any other space but Gaza which rather encapsulates the nightmarish existence of exile. Further, the stage direction subsequent to the two protagonists' dialogue incorporates physical actions which, indeed, mirror the psychological workings of their minds. That is to say, Lama's physical closeness to her cousin connotes the two's psychological closeness and intimacy, that is, their sharing of the same psychological preoccupation: the feeling of exilic confinement. Likewise, their ensuing silence reflects the psychological vortex of exile transpiring in their minds, whereas their stare is one of longing, a longing to be carried by the sea to another land, and one of extending their psychological scope beyond the realm of Palestinian borders. This is further confirmed through the poetic, correlated utterances which Jomana and Lama articulate so as to release their yearning for freedom and escape:

> LAMA. If only we could ride the sea.
> JOMANA. If only our bodies were bulletproof.
> LAMA. If only our boats were made of steel.
> JOMANA. If only our dreams were real.
> *Pause.*
> Look! You can see the Free Gaza boats from here. (2)

In this instance, being part of Sabawi's poem bearing the play's same title and dedicated to the Free Gaza Movement (Sabawi, "Poetry, Palestine and the Language of Resistance"), the "if-only" utterances are, indeed, suffused with a strongly lyrical language which goes hand in hand with the two protagonists' poignant hope of freedom and longing for liberation from their exilic situation. It follows that the anaphoric recourse to "if only" attests to the intensity of their dreams yet adds to the impossibility of these wishful desires in such a place as Gaza. While Lama's emphasis on riding the sea and on boats emblematizes a dream-like psychological journey away from Palestine and an unbridled migratory mobility, Jomana's wish to render their bodies bulletproof symbolizes her aspiration for an unconditional becoming free and unhampered. Thus, Jomana's and Lama's fantasies unveil the Palestinian collective dream of freedom and escape as a compensation for the inexorable confinement wherein they prevail.

Moreover, the state of confinement and trappedness is further enhanced by the rigidity of borders in Palestine as Said postulates: "Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons" ("Reflections" 147). This is mostly elucidated in Jomana's fiery disclosure to Rami, a Palestinian-American doctor and activist and her suitor: "Don't you get it? Over here, every time we say goodbye to someone, we say it like it is the last time, and most often this turns out to be the case. No-one can get in ... *We can't get out!*" (Sabawi, *Tales of a City by the Sea* 7). Here, writing the last statement in italics on the part of the playwright is intended to add an emphatic effect and to underscore the fervent tone underlying Jomana's claim, which corroborates her profound feeling of incarceration and trappedness within the boundaries of Palestine. Put differently, through her focus on the rigidity of borders epitomized in the irreconcilable schism established by the Israeli state between the "inside" and the "outside," Jomana transmogrifies Palestine into a space of captivity where Palestinians are repressively separated from the rest of the world and where their mobility is restricted in the extreme, which adds to their existential solitude and, hence, to their internal exile. Besides, the rigor of borders in Palestine does not merely limit external border-crossing, but it transcends it to hold sway over the mobility of Palestinians inside their own homeland, confining as such the scope of their freedom and mobility to their narrow, immediate spaces. Such an exilic matter of course is lucidly exemplified as Jomana's father, Abu Ahmed, reminds her: "Your sister lives in the West Bank, a stone's throw away, but she may as well be living in the moon [...] We have tried for years to get permission from Israel to allow us to visit each other and you know what that's like" (16). The moon, on the one hand, and the stone's throw, on the other, are contrastively evoked as metaphorical images to foreground the uncompromising distance between Jomana's sister and her family, despite their geographical closeness, and the impossibility of their reunion. Therefore, Abu Ahmed substantiates that borders are so sharply drawn within Palestine that the Palestinians' movement becomes contingent not on their free will but rather on the will of the Israeli colonizer. This pathetic vista of helplessness before the inexorability of the Israeli-established borders is more buttressed by Abu Ahmed's further reply when Jomana assures him that Rami will cross into Gaza: "Even the president of the Palestinian Authority needs permission from Israel and at times it can be denied" (17). Through this claim, he evinces that even the politically supreme power in

Palestine, embodied in the president, is denied the freedom of mobility and is subjected to the immobilizing force of the Israeli borders, which annexes the feelings of surrender and helplessness to the Palestinian people's sense of confinement. Thus, the ubiquitous borders established within the Palestinian land by the Israeli occupation become a discursive weapon that ensnares Palestinians in the firm grip of exile, for "[b]order procedures are often situated within a discourse of life as 'prison'" (Schulz and Hammer 91).

In addition, as has been expounded in the analysis of Abdel-Fattah's novel *Where the Streets Had a Name*, exile in the Palestinian paradigm is not merely a physical condition but moves beyond this concrete purview to crystallize in psychological and existential terms. In this framework, existential exile as an alienation and a disconnection from "a feeling of intrinsic connection with others or with the world, from the possibility of meaning or purpose, or even as a sense of separation from oneself" (Burr 82) can be associated with another concept which also entails a deflection from the ordinary flow of signification: the construct of reification. In its most basic meaning, deriving from the Latin *res* which translates into English as "thing" or "object," reification "metaphorically refers to the transformation of human properties, relations, processes, actions, concepts, etc. into *res*, into things that act as pseudopersons, endowed with a life of their own. [It is a] material transmogrification of persons, relations, processes, concepts, etc. into thing-like entities" (Vandenberghe 12993). In point of fact, reification has always been grounded in Marxist thought and in sociology. More specifically, Marx adduces such a concept to refer to the process whereby workers in the capitalist system are transmuted into mere instruments of production, resigning as such to a "thinglike identity," and the social relations between them into "thinglike relations between persons and social relations between things" (Bray 601). In the same context of capitalism, Georg Lukács goes further to define reification as an ideological phenomenon wherein people become divested of their own agency as "[their] own activity, their own labor confronts them as something objective, independent of them, dominating them through an autonomy alien to human beings" (Pitkin 265). Aside from the Marxist groundwork, reification is conceived of by sociologists as Peter L. Berger and Thomas Luckmann as the failure to recognize that the social order, products and institutions are generated by humans rather than by natural laws, resulting in what they term the "reification of identity," a sense of identity wherein creativity, independence and agency are absented (271-272). In this respect, one may wonder what the relevance of this kaleidoscopic notion for the thematic concern of exile in the Palestinian case is. In response to such a possible query, the germaneness of these aforementioned accounts on reification stems from their common underlying concern, that is, their focus on the latent psychological ramifications of reification, namely its dehumanizing and crippling aspects as well as its inhibition of human agency. As such, on account of the postcolonial concepts annexed to its overall gestalt like "agency" and "alienation," reification can be inserted within the postcolonial framework as a seminal, autonomous notion under the label of "colonial reification." The latter can be defined as the subjection of the colonial subject's human processes and relations, psychological properties and manifestations, and existential understandings and views to the colonial order and power as if they were material *res*. Correspondingly, these become displaced from their ordinary course of signification and are rendered, by implication, symptomatic of the exilic condition. Such exilic manifestation of the postcolonial version of reification is instantiated in one of the very few territories wherein the movement of decolonization has never been fulfilled, to wit, Palestine.

In this regard, Sabawi devotes much of her play to the demystification of such a colonial discursive strategy through her dramatization of the Israeli colonial reification of the Palestinians' humanity, of their imagination, and of their emotional relationships as existential-psychological properties. Initially, as Lama strives to convince Jomana to accompany her to the celebratory welcoming of the Free Gaza activists, she states: "Maybe we'll be lucky and make it on the news tonight [...] the politicians have stolen the show a long time ago, with all the speeches and photo ops. Come on! We are the people... we too deserve our share of the spotlight" (Sabawi, *Tales of a City by the Sea* 3). What is conveyed in Lama's utterance is her profound resentment of the bitter fact that the political colonial landscape in Palestine is foregrounded and prioritized over the Palestinians' human existence, that is, over their tribulations and triumphs, over their agony and survival, and over their oppression and resistance. In other words, the politics underlying the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has overridden the humanity of the Palestinians, depriving it, hence, of its ontological agency and reifying it into a plenary political and ideological discourse which overwhelms national and international media. This is again consolidated by Jomana's claim: "Our entire life seems to be one long news story" (3). By depicting the Palestinian collective life as "one long news story," Jomana authenticates that the Palestinian existence has been robbed of its human aura encapsulated in its difference, history, memories, and culture and has been instead reduced into a clichéd political discursive venue, into a whole of propagandist fragments disseminated to the world by dint of media. Thereby, Palestinians become devoid of any human agency and are transmogrified into politicized objects, which reifies their humanity and exiles it from its existential ground of being.

What's more, the colonial reification of Palestinians goes even further to encroach on their subjective realm through the Zionist invasion of their imagination. This is typified in Lama's dismantled fantasies:

> LAMA. [...] You know, I stayed up all night fantasizing about sneaking on board these boats. Imagine me... an adventurous stowaway sailing off to see the world.
>
> JOMANA. Sure...on what passport?
>
> LAMA. I said stowaway...must you ruin every fantasy?
>
> JOMANA. Fantasies get stuck at the borders; they never make it past the checkpoints. (2)

In her desperate endeavor to escape, though psychologically, her exilic confinement, Lama's final resort, imagination, is subjected to reification as corroborated in Jomana's realistic replies. More particularly, Jomana's diction of the key words "passport," "borders," and "checkpoints" is purported to conjure up the Israeli colonial presence by laying stress on the inexorable Zionist surveillance of the Palestinian space. Yet, what is of utmost importance in Jomana's speech is her insinuation that the Israeli occupation transcends its territorial ground to wield its appropriative power over the imaginative site as well, subjecting it, as a result, to a reificatory materialization. Put differently, the omnipresence of the Israeli boundaries in both physical and psychological loci does not only enact a rigorous geo-political control of the Palestinians' movement across their land but goes beyond it to reify their imaginative mobility as well. That is to say, these borders exert their reificatory effect through the reductionist mutation of the Palestinian subjective orbit into a phenomenal realm divested of its focal sine qua non, that is, of the agency to imagine, to trace a psychological resistant line of flight, and to deconstruct the actual colonization of the Palestinian body through a virtual liberation of the Palestinian soul. By the same token, the colonial reification of the Palestinians' imagination is carried out through the impingement of the circumstances generated by the Zionist occupation on their faculty of aspirations as revealed through the mouthpieces of the two female protagonists:

> JOMANA. Fascinating! Girls your age dream of being discovered by film producers or modelling agencies and you dream of being discovered by news networks.
>
> LAMA. This is Gaza; we make do with whatever we have. (3)

The resort to the verb "to dream" in two discrepant contexts – entertainment networks and political networks – insinuates that the psychological potential for dreaming as an existential, instinctive approach to the future is radically disfigured. In fact, the colonial occupation in Palestine distorts the horizons of aspirations and dreams the same way it distorts the territorial borders of the Palestinian land. In other words, the ubiquity of the Israeli violence and oppression represses at once the Palestinian subjects' mobility and voice and their aspirational agency, which reifies their psychological outlook on their future dreams. It follows that the dreams typical to each generational group in Palestine deflect from their predictable patterns. Like Abdel-Fattah's thirteen-year-old protagonist Samy who, unlike his peers, abstains from dreaming what he will become in the future on account of his belief that dreams are never fulfilled in Palestine, Lama withdraws from the youthful world of feminine dreams of fame and stardom and resigns to the inescapable brunt of politics and politicization in Palestine. Thereby, not only is her body incarcerated in the confines of Gaza, but so are her dreams and aspirations within the confines of the colonial political discourse.

At last, the hegemonic presence of the Zionist occupation projects its reificatory power even on the emotional level by "exiling" the construct of relationships from its human context of being. The most conspicuous illustration of this in Sabawi's play is the reification of the emotional family bond between Jomana's father and his West Banker grandchildren as he anxiously discloses to his daughter: "[Your sister] has three children who only know me as a virtual grandfather that speaks to them from inside a computer screen" (17). In this respect, Abu Ahmed's statement unearths the excruciating loss which he experiences as a result of the impossibility of conveying his grandfatherly affection and empathy to his grandchildren due to the uncompromising borders established by the colonial system. That is to say, not only can he not physically identify with them, but his emotional interplay with them remains an impossible end as well. As such, Palestinians become dehumanized and objectified as they are deprived of their emotional nucleus and alienated from their visceral enactment of their psychological bonds, which congruously matches the implications of reification expounded by Pitkin: "What would constitute the mental converting of a person into a *res* [...]? Presumably it would mean something like depersonalization or dehumanization: regarding or mentally treating persons as if they were objects" (277-278). Over and above, the affinity between Abu Ahmed and his grandchildren is further reified through the transmogrification of their emotional relationship by means of technology into a virtual encounter, into a Baudrillardian simulacrum. By way of explanation, the children’s emotional feedback vis-à-vis their grandfather is no longer an assemblage of psychological processes ranging from love and affection to empathy and intimacy, as would be the case of a conventional grandchild-grandfather bond in the ordinary world outside the bounds of Palestine, but is rather reduced into a mechanized encounter with the image of Abu Ahmed on the computer screen. On this account, in accordance with Jean Baudrillard’s postulation that “a simulacrum creates a passive subject who takes the simulation as the only necessary reality” (Klages 171), it can be inferred that the rigor of the Israeli borders and the protagonists’ desperate attempt to surmount these through their recourse to technological media have disfigured their relationship into one wherein the grandchildren are bereft of their emotional agency as they psychologically identify with the simulacrum of their grandfather and envision his hyperreal simulation as their *real* grandfather. Therefore, it can be extrapolated that these Palestinian protagonists’ psychological processes become subjected to a reification which exiles them from and disrupts their actual, innately organic relation with their own humanity and selfhood and with alterity.

In the same context, Sabawi’s resentment with regard to the dehumanizing ramifications of this colonial reification rises to a crescendo as she endues the voice of her main persona, Jomana, with a poetic pitch laden with agony and anguish: “Are your loved ones trapped behind the wall/ Do they need the army’s permission/ For their prayers to reach the sky/ For their love to cross the ocean/ And to touch your thirsty heart/ Are your loved ones trapped?” (Sabawi, *Tales of a City by the Sea* 19). In these poetic rhetorical questions, the recurrence of the word “love” and the choice of the metaphor of the “heart” unveil the prominent presence and centrality of the emotional discourse in Jomana’s poem. Indeed, what Jomana laments is the reificatory effect of colonization, for not only does the Israeli occupation overpower the Palestinians’ physical lives, but it inhumanly subdues their spiritual existence, epitomized in their “prayers,” and their emotional communion, mostly their love. It is this latter feeling which Jomana peculiarly highlights, especially that, like her father and nephews’ broken emotional bond, her and Rami’s love is impeded by the borders and constraints imposed by the occupation. Through her mournful lyricism, she exudes that the feeling of love is displaced from its existential signification as a convoluted psychological affect ingrained in the human nature and is altered into an object of the military hegemony and surveillance of the Israeli army and into a victimized subject of the relentless boundaries. It might be worth mentioning here that the ubiquitous borders which obstruct the mobility of love, much like the mobility of Palestinians themselves, are obliquely embedded in Jomana’s poem. On the one hand, “the sky” and “the ocean” are inserted in her verses as tropes to connote the external borders which separate Palestine from the outer world but are appropriated by the Zionist occupier, making the process of border-crossing an impossible end not only for Palestinians but for their love as well. On the other hand, the use of the definite article “the” before “wall” recalls “the Wall” that has been construed, in the analysis of Abdel-Fattah’s novel, as a typical leitmotif of confinement and trappedness in Palestine, which corroborates that love as a psychological attribute is not spared the brunt of both internal and external borders entrenched by the Israeli apparatuses. Thus, love, not unlike Palestinians themselves, is subjected to the exilic condition of confinement and typifies as such the colonial reification of the Palestinian psychological dimension. All these points considered, the passive voice opening and sealing Jomana’s poem becomes an eminent declaration of the outcome of the process of reification, that is, the deprivation of agency in the sense that the colonial encroachment upon the Palestinians’ emotions depersonalizes them and undermines their human essence.

In the light of this account on the pathos of exile, it can be theorized that both Abdel-Fattah and Sabawi devote a great share of their literary works to this thematic concern on account of its centrality in the construction of the Palestinian identity. More particularly, the two authors’ choice to broach at length the suffering inherent in the Palestinian internal exile emanates from their desire to acquaint their Western audiences, especially the Australian one, with the *real* Palestinian collective plight and struggle far from the distorted representation of the propagandist media. Additionally, the two writers focus on such a topos on account of their awareness that it catalyzes their protagonists’ identity crisis and, therefore, instigates a process of identity construction, in the case of Hayaat, and of identity confirmation, for Sabawi’s personae. Yet, probably the utmost momentum of their common emphasis on the psychological implications of the Palestinian internal exile stems from the latter’s being *per se* part of the quintessential identity of those *inside* Palestine. In other words, throughout the history of Palestinian exile, the Palestinians who did not leave their homeland and so witnessed and were part of the daily ordeal and struggle of survival and resistance, especially West Bankers like Hayaat and Gazans like Jomana and Lama, believe that “Palestinian identity was so profoundly embedded in the notions of suffering and struggle that the national identity of those who did not share that experience was questioned” (Schulz and Hammer 221). Drawing on this stance, the emphatic authorial propensity of Abdel-Fattah and Sabawi for a meticulous elaboration on the pathos of exile *inside* Palestine is to be interpreted as a tribute to and a recognition of the typical Palestinian identity of “inside” Palestinians with whom they identify through their family history of exile and through their writings and representational characters.

1.2. The Dynamics of Identity (Re)-Configuration:

If the pathos of exile was the only pivotal topos represented in Abdel-Fattah’s novel and Sabawi’s play, both literary works would be accused of falling in the clichéd trap of victimizing Palestinians. Nonetheless, the two authors, being aware of such a predicament, do not choose to engage their fellow-nationals, dramatized by their personae, in an existential situation which divests them of their agency. It is true that, on the surface level, Abdel-Fattah and Sabawi purvey a scrupulous account on the ordeal and trauma inherent in the Palestinian internal exilic condition with the purpose of familiarizing their Western audiences, mostly the Australian audience, with the Palestinian plight from an apolitical lens. However, on a deeper level, this demystification of the Palestinian internal exile is meant to further underscore the features of resistance and resilience immanent in the Palestinian existence. In other words, *Where the Streets Had a Name* and *Tales of a City by the Sea* are at heart two discourses that unravel the concept of the "Palestinian identity" as an agential voice articulated by the subaltern Palestinian protagonists and surmounting the plight of exile through the dynamics which outline the process of its formation. In this regard, speaking again of the peculiarity of *Where the Streets Had a Name* as pertaining to children's literature, this novel emerges as a Palestinian bildungsroman that traces the process of identity formation which accompanies the coming-of-age of the traumatized Palestinian child protagonist Hayaat. Not only does Abdel-Fattah foreground the intricacies of the Palestinian identity by dint of her choice of the typical period of childhood to be the age bracket of her protagonist, inserting as such her novel within the framework of bildungsroman, but she does so as well by way of her deployment of the concept of "travel" in her narrative discourse, which turns her protagonist's mobility inside Palestine into a "quest" for her identity. Indeed, "travel" "is a way of making and remaking the self and one's social identity" (Higonnet 235) and, when engrafted in children's literature, this construct becomes laden with more signification in the sense that "[f]or a child protagonist, travel may offer [...] liberation from the symbolic ogre of physical imprisonment" and "enables a series of encounters that open up knowledge of the world and knowledge of one's own capacities" (235). This is the case of Hayaat for whom the "ogre of physical imprisonment" corresponds to the confinement and to the other psychological complications symptomatic of her internal exile in Palestine. On this account, her journey becomes at once a liberation from the physical and psychological shackles of exile and a quest for her selfhood. Most significantly, Abdel-Fattah does not limit her protagonist's journey to the physical realm; rather, Hayaat embarks on two synchronous and parallelly intertwined travels, the first of a physical nature while the second of a psychological one, and both contribute to her overcoming of the pathos of exile to which she has been subjected and to the process of her Palestinian identity formation.

Hayaat's Physical journey: A Movement Within Nation and Space

In a brief glimpse of the impetus that triggers Hayaat's journey, following the collapse of her beloved grandmother Sitti Zeynab, Hayaat sincerely believes that the only cure for her ill grandmother is a handful of soil from the latter's cherished motherland, Al-Quds. Unwaveringly convinced by this idea, she embarks, along with her friend Samy and without her family's knowledge, on a perilous journey from Bethlehem to Al-Quds. Correspondingly, in the course of this travel, Hayaat is involved in the processes of observation at times and of internalization at others of the national and the spatial patterns that make up the architectonic network of the Palestinian identity.

In point of fact, among the pivotal tenets affiliated to travel in children's literature, there are the youthful protagonists' "recogni[tion] and explor[ation] [of] similarities and differences among peoples" and their "invention of a national family" in the process (Higonnet 235, 237), which reinforces their sense of nationhood and shapes their social identity. In order to examine the gradual and meticulous construction of national identity in the case of a Palestinian child as Hayaat, it is useful first to examine some of the definitions attributed to "nation" and, by implication, to "national identity" as scholarly concepts. In this context, in his seminal book *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* Benedict Anderson conceives of the nation as "an imagined political community – and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign," wherein, in the mind of each member, an image of communion with the other fellow-members is imagined and "a deep, horizontal comradeship" is shared (6-7). In a similar groundwork, Anthony D. Smith advances that a nation is "a named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths and historical memories, a mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (14). He goes further to expatiate on the concept of national identity by pinpointing it as a "fundamentally multi-dimensional" type of collective identity (14). For Guibernau, national identity "reflects the sentiment of belonging to the nation regardless of whether it has or does not have a state of its own" and entails five dimensions shared amongst fellow-nationals within the nation, i.e. the psychological, cultural, territorial, historical, and political dimensions (135).

Nevertheless, it is of the essence to point out that a number of recent discourses on identity undermine and destabilize the concepts of "nation" and "national identity" given the surfacing of transnational communities and diasporas, the emergence of hybrid sites of identification, and the question of the porousness of borders which contest the homogeneity and uniformity underlying the nation. Apropos of this, Stuart Hall, James Clifford and Arjun Appadurai "valorize diaspora as the site and privileged strategy for the subversion of the nationalist order of things" (Weaver 14). In the same vein, Tölölyan assumes that "[t]his vision of a homogeneous nation is now being replaced by a vision of the world as a 'space' continually reshaped by forces [...] whose varying intersections in real estate constitute every 'place' as a heterogeneous and disequilibrated site of production, appropriation, and consumption, of negotiated identity and affect" (6), adding that the bond that once linked the image of personal identity to national identity is "no longer plausible" (7). All the same, these two notions remain of considerable significance despite the transnational and global vicissitudes as Tölölyan himself asserts their long-term competitiveness and persistence (7). More important is the centrality of these constructs from a postcolonial perspective in the sense that the myth of the nation has been a fountainhead of anti-colonial movements and national identity, of prospective independence, and of political liberation (McLeod 75). Even though the wave of decolonization has long drawn talks on anti-colonial foundations to the background, such precepts remain of weighty magnitude for the peoples still subjugated to the colonial rule as is the case with the

Palestinian people. In this regard, Hammer claims that "[d]enying Palestinians a national identity and character as a people means delegitimizing their claims to a Palestinian state" (23). As such, any attempt to downplay the discourse of national identity within the Palestinian context would be a subversion of the Palestinians' identity of resistance and of their collective struggle for political freedom as an imagined community. This explains the emphatic concern of both Abdel-Fattah and Sabawi with the prevalent interpolation of the discourse of national identity in the narrative confines of their works. Accordingly, with each further step Hayaat takes in her journey, she garners, either through observation or performance, a plethora of nationalistic attributes which incite her to recognize Palestine as a *nation* and to entrench a nationalistic affiliation with it. These crystallize namely in her encounter with otherness and in the dauntless spirit of resistance she discerns within her social surrounding.

As a matter of fact, Higonnet posits that children, in their Odyssean journeys, predicate their selfhood on a series of encounters with an otherness that is eventually elevated into "a larger social 'family'" (235), a claim which echoes the concept of the "imagined community." In this respect, the first features of Hayaat's national identity take shape through her encounter with Wassim, a Palestinian child refugee. Albeit Wassim is a Palestinian like Hayaat, his envisagement as an alterity owes to Hayaat's recognition for the first time of the disparate social differences which prevail amongst Palestinians themselves as the encounter between the two unfolds at the very onset of Hayaat's journey:

> "Where are you from?" I ask. [...]
>
> "My uncle and I are from Aida refugee camp. Are you from there too?"
>
> "Certainly not!" I cry with indignation. That Mama was born in a refugee camp and lived there until she was married isn't something I like to advertise. For some reason, looking at that scruffy, starved-looking boy makes me look angry. "Why don't you wash?" I ask scornfully. "I'm sure there's soap in the camp. You smell! And your clothes are filthy." [...]
>
> "Why is your face like that? What happened to you? Does it hurt?"

> [...] “Shut up! Leave me alone, you filthy, stinking refugee!”
>
> His eyes suddenly moisten. He makes as if to tie his shoelace. But his shoes don’t have laces. The shame I feel in that moment floods my body with such force I feel as though I might topple over. To think that somebody has to protect their self-respect and dignity from *me*. After all the teasing I’ve endured at school. After all the times I’ve looked in the mirror and felt embarrassed by my reflection.
>
> I buy his entire bag of tissues. (Abdel-Fattah 67- 68)

In this encounter, Hayaat’s psychological approach vis-à-vis Wassim undergoes a plenary transition which is at the core of her national identity formation. That is to say, her attitude radically changes from an unintelligible antipathy to an identificatory empathy. At the very outset, Hayaat’s demonstration of antagonism is lucidly embodied in her indignation at being mistakenly pigeonholed as a camp refugee although her mother and grandmother have experienced the plight of camp refugeeism much like Wassim. Such a surge of anger translates Hayaat’s enactment of the discriminatory and vilifying character symptomatic of social othering. Indeed, this latter process is Hayaat’s subconscious answer to her first *actual* discovery of a social reality different from hers and epitomic of class differences amongst Palestinians, for while she leads a relatively privileged life with her family in their small Bethlehem house, Wassim lives miserably amidst the dilapidated walls of the camp. This antipathetic process of othering ascends to materialize in Hayaat’s articulation of a psychological position of superiority and of a mood of demotion and denigration with regard to the child-refugee as her implementation of a pejorative language and a dehumanizing discourse and as Wassim’s feigned indifference and concealed tears substantiate. Overall, these behavioral patterns on the part of Hayaat are of a psychic nature since they are beyond her psychological grasp as she herself confesses through her recourse to the adverbial phrase, “For some reason.” When taking into account Hayaat’s exilic anguish, the wrath and ensuing othering which wells from her psyche towards Wassim can be deciphered. More particularly, Wassim’s pathetic presence can be construed as a consistent reminder not only of the unsettling traumatized stranger within her that she is striving to shun away but also of the traumatic tales she has always heard about her mother and grandmother's experience of camp refugeeism. As a result, her inability to reconcile with the trauma inherent in her personal and familial selfhood is transmuted into an existential anger directed at Wassim as an "other" redolent of the plight of her own self.

However, Hayaat's psychological disposition is categorically shaken as she becomes sentient of Wassim's endeavor to save his face and dignity. In this regard, her drastic feeling of shame is generated by her awareness that Palestinians attempt to protect their "self-respect" and "dignity" typically from Zionists, from other Arabs, from the world, but not from their Palestinian fellows, hence the italicization of "*me*" as she notices her humiliation of Wassim. Additionally, her remorse results from her realization that Wassim's ordeal is tantamount to that of her physically and psychically injured self. Correspondingly, Hayaat's sense of shame corroborates the transmogrification of her antipathy towards Wassim into an empathy which authenticates her psychological identification with him. It follows that her empathy is more than a humane feeling but is rather a psychological enactment of the first seeds of her national identity as Guibernau states: "The psychological dimension of national identity arises from the consciousness of forming a group based on the 'felt' closeness uniting those who belong to the nation" (135). On this score, Hayaat elevates Wassim from an archetype of inferior otherness into a fellow-national with whom she nationally identifies. Eventually, this psychological identification with her Palestinian fellow-nationals extends to aggregate the Palestinians of Al-Quds whom she encounters in her journey – metonymically represented by their blue identity cards as opposed to Hayaat and her West Banker fellows' green cards – as she lingers on their very being: "I [...] examine the faces of Palestinians walking along the street [in Al-Quds]. [...]. The distinction between blue and green has never seemed so artificial" (Abdel-Fattah 155). Through this reflection, she consolidates her national identity by transmuting the Al-Quds "same others" into an imagined community that lays the foundation of her newly constructed in-group.

Moreover, as the young protagonist's journey proceeds, her narrative becomes teeming with vivid images of the Palestinian nationalist agency as she observes in the course of her travel variegated acts of Palestinian resistance that eventually mold her national identity. Indeed, resistance is a requisite feature which permanently outlines the collective nationalistic portrait of the Palestinian imagined community in the sense that the many political imbroglios that have marked Palestinian history have made struggle a key component of the Palestinian nation-building (Schulz and Hammer 118). Most significantly, resistance in the Palestinian case goes beyond its being a response to the Israeli colonialism to become a "loud" voicing of Palestianness and of the Palestinian identity: "Resistance was a strategy to be launched not only against Israel, but against exile, against being defined as refugees, against landlessness and uprootedness [...] against the kind of life that was offered the Palestinians as refugees" (120). In the novel, Hayaat notices that the Palestinian nationalist resistance crystallizes in the experience of checkpoints and in the insurgent discourse of the camp.

In fact, the experience of checkpoints is of the utmost significance in the Palestinian context, mostly in the construction and confirmation of the identity of the Palestinian people as an imagined community as Khalidi posits:

> The quintessential Palestinian experience [...] takes place at [...] a checkpoint [...]. What happens to Palestinians at these crossing points brings home to them how much they share in common as a people. For it is at these borders and barriers that the six million Palestinians are singled out for "special treatment," and are forcefully reminded of their identity: of who they are, and of why they are different from others. (1)

It follows that what takes place in these borders reveals much about the Palestinian national identity. In this respect, Hayaat witnesses the humiliation and dehumanization to which Palestinians are subjected in this space, for, as she muses, they are at the mercy of heartless

Israeli soldiers and are compelled to wait pointlessly for hours in the overcrowded buses, not to mention the intentional indifference of the soldiers who reduce them into invisible entities (Abdel-Fattah 129). Yet, she discerns a far more prominent action which overrides the torture of checkpoints and disrupts, as such, the denigration of her fellow-nationals:

> An old man on board a service directly in front of us suddenly disembarks. His tall, thin frame is supported by a walking stick. [...]
>
> The old man walks purposefully towards the huddle of soldiers [...].We all watch nervously [...]. (129)
>
> A young soldier orders him back into the van. The old man stops, fixes the soldier with a stare and, to our astonishment, refuses.
>
> [...]
>
> The soldier appears startled. The two other soldiers look on in confusion. The old man *demands* that the passengers be granted permission to disembark. The soldier again orders the old man to return to the service [...]. The old man stands *defiantly* and refuses. The tension is palpable. David and Mali step in, raising their cameras at the soldiers.
>
> [...]
>
> After a few tense moments, the soldier relents [...]. I look in disbelief as [the old man] makes his way back to the service and motions for those on board to disembark [...]. The three soldiers run over crying out: “Only women and children!” [...] The old man ignores the orders and stands leaning against the service. The soldiers don’t approach him. (130; my emphasis)

In this scene, every action carried out by the old man can be construed as an act of resistance or, to use the Palestinian phraseology, an act of *sumud* which deconstructs the Israeli colonial hegemony. *Sumud*, in the framework of the Palestinian geopolitical landscape, “represents staying put despite continuous assault. It is, hence, not merely a reflection of passively enduring but an act of unyielding resistance and defiance” (Schulz and Hammer 105). Such signification of the concept of *sumud* applies to the old man whom Hayaat singles out for scrutiny. Indeed, the mere demeanor of the old man portrays him as a hero of resistance, for the image of his tall frame set in contradistinction to his walking stick entrenches a symbolic portrait of a being who transcends his physical frailty to psychologically assume the dignity, boldness, and grandeur which enable him to fearlessly confront the Israeli military system. Besides, by taking the daring initiative among all his fellows to contest the Israeli repressive orders and disembark from the service, the old man dismantles the Zionist discourse of passivity and inexistence associated with Palestinians and declares his agency and being. Additionally, while the purposefulness which suffuses his movement towards the soldiers mirrors his determination and will to resist the Israeli torture, his fixed stare represents a non-verbal act of *sumud* in the sense that the steadfastness of his gaze typifies a resistant counterdiscourse which deconstructs the Israeli attempts to inflict a status of marginality and invisibility on Palestinians. Not only this, but the old man also refuses to abide by the soldiers' orders and goes further to demand that the other passengers disembark. Here, the old man's refusal of orders recurs in this passage and, thus, acquires a connotative signification; this refusal is transformed into a discursive act of rebellion and defiance against the disparaging control exerted by the Israeli soldiers. Further, the specific use of the verb "to demand" lucidly evinces that the old man does not "ask," "request," or "beg" the soldiers to give permission to the passengers; rather, he lays claims to his and his fellow-nationals' right of disembarking with an assertive and determined tone that reflects his dignified self-esteem and authoritativeness. What is more intriguing in this scene is the old man's concern with the imagined community to which he belongs despite the tension and delicacy of his confrontation with the soldiers. Put differently, he is not satisfied with his mere freedom but rather strives to absolve his fellows from the torture to which they are subjected in the jammed buses. Such a deed of *sumud* translates the national scope of his resistance as it aims at liberating not only himself but the members of his social in-group as well. Finally, the old man's resistant defiance and agency and his assumed indifference immerse the soldiers into a state of confusion and eventual surrender, subverting their initial indifference vis-à-vis the Palestinian passengers and their hubris and colonial superiority. This outcome substantiates the triumph not only of the old man but of all the Palestinian paragons of resistance whom he represents. Probably, among the most germane tenets in the passage to the discussion of national identity is Hayaat's psychological reaction, that is, her disbelief, which marks a transition in her psychological position from mere observation into an agential expression of admiration and awe vis-à-vis the old man, feelings which imply her involvement in the construction of the psychological dimension of her national identity.

The resistance inherent in the Palestinian national identity does not cease at this level but goes further to culminate in the setting of the camp which Hayaat dissects during her visit to the Aida refugee camp. In her visit to the camp, the now relatively mature Hayaat is able to discern the subtle discourse of resistance which prevails in the camp locale. An illustration of this can be perceived in her examination of the camp walls: "Bullet holes decorate some of the graffiti-covered walls" (Abdel-Fattah 193). In this depiction, walls become metaphorical discourses of the Palestinian existence. That is to say, the bullet holes are metaphors of the tyrannical and oppressive language of Zionist wars, whereas the graffiti is a national emblem of the Palestinian resistance and defiance. Therefore, the camp walls are elevated into a metaphorical discourse that narrates the story of a people resisting and struggling against the Israeli occupation and despotism. Identically, Hayaat lingers on the camp buildings: "There is an enduring quality to the camp; the matrix of solid buildings seems starkly permanent" (194). By dint of her claim, she pinpoints two qualities of Palestinian resistance: endurance and permanence. First, the buildings in the camp are but metonymic epitomes of their denizens. Thus, the character of these structures is but a metonymic translation of the camp refugees' endurance, as a collective social trait of the Palestinian in-group, which enables their survival and resilience and which, more significantly, substantiates their *sumud*. When broaching the issue of Palestinian camp refugees, *sumud* can be regarded as their quintessential experience in the sense that "[r]efugees often describe their ability both to resist and to endure camp life as *sumud*" (Schulz and Hammer 105). It follows that the refugees' mere adaptation to and endurance of the misery so conspicuous in the camp from Hayaat's eyes is itself an act of resistance. Second, as opposed to existential ephemerality which conveys the ideas of displacement and alienation, permanence here emblematizes a sense of existential firmness and solidity, that is, of rootedness and settlement. This insinuates that despite the demoralizing and dehumanizing exilic conditions of Aida refugee camp, its denizens harbor the collective social trait of resilience which enables them to surmount and resist the disintegration and displacement characteristic of exile by deeply rooting their national identity in Palestianness.

Over and above, Hayaat magnifies camp resistance as she becomes intrigued by the mystic presence that fills the camp: "Posters of people killed by the occupation are on poles and in shop windows. Posters with men, women, children and babies stare at me, frozen in time" (Abdel-Fattah 194). These temporally "frozen" posters are symbolic of the eternalization and celebration of the Palestinian, resistant martyrdom, whereas their spatial prevalence connotes the ubiquity of the Palestinian resistance and struggle. Hayaat goes further to idealize the Palestinian social in-group. In other words, her language shifts from "people" to specific categories – men, women, children and babies – so as to heroize the Palestinian people by depicting all of its members, regardless of their age and gender, as resistance agents. Hayaat even includes "babies" among agential voices in order to go beyond the image of "stone children" and contrive a more heroic one, that is, the image of "resistance babies," which connotes that Palestinians are born to resist and to struggle against their oppression.

In addition, the elaboration on the Palestinian identity cannot be fulfilled without the emphasis on the centrality of the Palestinian space in its formation, for there has always been an inextricable bond that marks the relationship between Palestinians and their land or space. This can be best perceived in the 1988 Palestinian Declaration of Independence where the affinity between Palestine and its people is depicted as "undying," "ancient," and "everlasting" (Schulz and Hammer 98). Yet, this bond is not without complications as Zionism continuously endeavors to impose its colonial hegemony over the Palestinian space and break this bond through the processes of "naming, mapping and representation to the extent that the Palestinian part of the past is effectively erased" (98). Such processes can be noticed in Abdel-Fattah's novel as is the case with the Wall which reifies the Palestinian landscape and disfigures its boundaries or with the erasure of the names of Palestinian streets as implied through the recourse to the past tense in the novel's title, *Where the Streets Had a Name,* and through Hayaat's remark that "[s]plit in half [by the Wall], there is no street name visible on this side. Perhaps it has fallen on the other side. The name and named are now divorced" (Abdel-Fattah 55). Nonetheless, as has been substantiated, the Palestinian identity is one which subsumes at its core resistance. It follows that in narrativizing the process of her protagonist's identity formation, Abdel-Fattah does not only lay stress on Hayaat's bond with the Palestinian space but equally annexes the concept of resistance to that of space through the attribution of agency and voice to it.

First, as Hayaat progresses in her journey, a change in the mode of transport transpires, which triggers a simultaneous change in Hayaat's psychological approach to space as she herself observes: "It feels so strange to walk rather than drive down a main road. In the bus I stared out at the dusty surface; one long, mundane stretch. On foot, the road has character: stones, rocks, twigs, potholes, tyre tracks. Our shoes blacken within moments. Each car and bus that zooms past us throws up a cloud of dust that tickles our eyes and makes us sneeze" (92-93). In accordance with Higonnet's postulation that "[m]ovement through space suggests the possibility of mental shifts and growth" (239), the transition of Hayaat's mode of transport from the bus to traveling on foot, which signals her deeper bodily movement in space, engenders the development and growth of her psychic spatial outlook as indicated by the "strangeness" she suddenly senses upon this transition. That is to say, this psychic strangeness emanates from the fact that, while walking, Hayaat is engaged in a direct bodily contact with the Palestinian space, which initiates her psychological and psychic connection with it. More importantly, Hayaat's reflection communicates her self-conscious juxtaposition between the bus perspective and the foot perspective she embraces in her observation of space. On the one hand, from her bus position, the surrounding space seems an empty, homogenous and deserted zone as expressed through its traceless, dusty surface. On the other hand, on foot, the road is endowed with "character," that is, with a life and activity of its own. This is typified through the various elements on which Hayaat zooms in. While the "stones" and "rocks" embody the traces of the cosmic life as storms, winds and floods, and the "twigs" the traces of the ecological life of trees and bushes, the "potholes" and "tyre tracks" bear the traces of the human life. It can be inferred, then, that the more bodily contact Hayaat engages in with the Palestinian space, the more able she becomes of delving into and decoding the traces its folds bear and, thus, of grasping its ontological character. As such, she develops an identificatory nexus with her native space, a nexus which is symbolically acknowledged and reciprocated by space itself through its blackening of Hayaat's shoes with its soil and its provocation of her senses with its dust. Hence, Hayaat manages to internalize the first attributes of her Palestinian spatial identity within her selfhood, especially through the bodily bond she develops with the Palestinian space**.** This is in line with Lefebvre's statement, in his call to subvert and dismantle what he labels the "abstract space" which is constructed by the hegemonic powers within a given society, that space should be approached not only with the intellect but significantly with the *body* as well (Conley 22); the body, in his own viewpoint, is "at the very heart of space and of the discourse of power" and is subversive in hegemonic contexts (Lefebvre, *The Survival* 89).

Moreover, as her journey reaches its climactic locus, Al-Quds, Hayaat transcends the physical, bodily level to the more advanced psychological level as she exudes in her ponderings before and after her arrival at Al-Quds. As she gets closer to Al-Quds, Hayaat's "heart skips a beat as [she] realize[s] how close [they] are" (Abdel-Fattah 142). Long before her journey, Al-

Quds has always been virtually present as an ancestral space in Hayaat’s existence through her grandmother’s retrospective narratives, but it is only now that her identification with this ancestral space is actualized as her heartbeat connotes; indeed, this physical feedback is but a translation of the psychological life which transpires within Hayaat’s self, that is, of the enactment of the actualized affinity with her ancestral space. Hayaat goes further to confirm this identificatory relationship as she leaves Al-Quds: “I desperately want to peek out of the window and see Jerusalem as we leave it” (170). In this statement, the implementation of the adverb “desperately” confers on Hayaat’s desire a nostalgic and yearning tone. Put differently, even if still on the outskirts of Al-Quds, Hayaat has already begun to feel an emotion of longing to this ancestral space, which authenticates that this quintessential Palestinian space has become an intrinsic component of her selfhood as it does not only concretize in her identification with her grandmother’s spatial memories but in her experienced psychological closeness and attachment to this holy space as well.

Over and above, when delving more profoundly into the signification of space, one initially encounters the classical conceptualization of space in the Western tradition as a dead, empty, fixed, and undialectical receptacle (Wegner 179) as is the case with the Cartesian perception of space as “an objective homogeneous extension (res extensa), distinct from the subject (res cogitans)” and with the Kantian approach to space as a mere “empty container in which human activities unfold” (181). However, a plethora of theories in various disciplines including, among others, history, social theory, cultural criticism, philosophy, and anthropology have emerged, making up an interdisciplinary, consensual conceptualization of space which utterly repudiates what Foucault terms “the devaluation of space” (179). Instead, such a discourse edifies space as a “*production*” which is shaped by human activities and processes and as a “*force*” which itself shapes, affects, and delineates human existence (181). One of the most momentous precepts which typify this spatial turn in theory is that propounded by Henri

Lefebvre. The latter rejects the conceptualization of space as "a preexisting void, endowed with formal properties alone [...], a container waiting to be filled by a content – i.e. matter, or bodies" (Lefebvre, *Production of Space* 170). More significantly, he expatiates on the politicization of space by hegemonic regimes of power, and albeit he focuses on capitalist nation-states, his tenets can be transposed to any political or ideological system of domination as he overall "argues that those in power, together with those in collusion with governmental agencies, impose spatial constraints that regiment the lived experience of entire populations" (Conley 11). Accordingly, in his attempt to disrupt this hegemonic, controlled and repressive space which he terms "abstract space," he calls for experiencing space through "the total body," that is, through the construction of a body-space bond. Such a relationship, he posits, will lead to "the explosion of abstract space and the production of a space that is *other*" (Lefebvre, *Production of Space* 391), i.e. a new smooth space erected by the dominated other and which contests the hegemonic, abstract space.

This theoretical groundwork is reproduced in Abdel-Fattah's novel wherein the Israeli occupation imposes its hegemonic constraints and reification on the Palestinian spatial landscape, yet in a resistant response to this hegemonic process, Hayaat, as has been elucidated, builds an identificatory bodily bond with the Palestinian space. This act of resistance, in accordance with Lefebvre's claim, results in the production of an "*other*" space, a *smooth* space of resistance. By way of explanation, after her identification with her native land through her body, Hayaat becomes equipped with a new spatial lens that enables her to narrativize the Palestinian space as an agential and resistant space *per se*. This is best illustrated in her depiction of olive trees, as requisite components of the Palestinian space, in the course of her travel: "The trunks of the olive trees are like thick wrists, some more slender and feminine than others. Their branches caress the ground like somebody drumming their fingers on a table" (Abdel-Fattah 92). In Palestinian literature, the olive tree is in essence an emblem of "roots" and of

"Palestinian ancient (and unflinching) connection to the land" (Schulz and Hammer 102). Still and all, the olive tree in this passage transcends its stereotypical symbolic signification as a token of the Palestinian land to be elevated into a paradigm of the Palestinians themselves. Put differently, as Deleuze and Guattari put forward, smooth space paves the way for possible becomings (486); so does this resistant Palestinian space enable the olive trees to undergo a rhizomatic process of *becoming-human*, or more specifically *becoming-Palestinian*, which attests to their transformation into a symbol of the internally exiled and subaltern Palestinians. This is exemplified in the simile between the trunks of the olive trees and the thick wrists which are but an allusion to the wrists of the Palestinian peasants or *fellahs* who, in Palestinian history, devote their lives to the land and struggle against Zionism, becoming as such "an icon of the Palestinian past" and "a potent nationalist symbol" (Schulz and Hammer 102). The "more slender and feminine" trunks embody the Palestinian women who, like the trunks, have born and raised the fruits of resistance – martyrs and nationalist fighters. Aside from the trunks metaphor, the branches are likened to "fingers," subjecting the olive trees again to becoming a humanized bodily entity. Unlike the naturally vertical extension of trees, these branches expand horizontally as they caress the ground, that is, as they touch the Palestinian soil. Such a horizontal spread represents the rhizomatic resistance of the Palestinian space to the vertical Zionism incarnated in the Wall. All in all, when considering the olive tree as a whole as becoming *one* Palestinian figure whose wrists are its trunks and whose fingers its branches, it can be extrapolated that the olive tree is transmuted, through the process of becoming, into a spatial emblematization of the resistant Palestinian whose central ontological aim is the liberation and retrieval of the Palestinian land. All these points considered, it can be confirmed that the Palestinian space exudes considerable agency by dint of becoming-Palestinian, which endows it with the identity of resistance inherent in every Palestinian soul.

The *sumud* of the Palestinian space does not cease here but goes on to materialize in its voice as well. This is instantiated through Hayaat's psychological viewpoint as she reminisces her grandmother's village in her way to Al-Quds: "Sitti Zeynab's village has never stopped calling her, beckoning her to return home. Her soul is stamped into these hills and I felt her presence as strongly as if she had been standing on the peak of one of the mountains" (Abdel-Fattah 135-136). In this speculation of Hayaat, her ancestral space is personified by allotting it an unwavering voice to call its legitimate Palestinian denizens and to speak its longing for their return. Indeed, granting this colonized village the voice to choose its owners does not merely liberate it but bestows upon it agency and gives it an identity of its own, one which does not necessitate a whole ideological discourse to decide the legitimacy of its proprietors but which firmly proclaims justice and freedom, countering the Zionist intentions. Even more important is the outcome of this spatial voice of resistance, for it deconstructs the Zionist pretext of *terra nullius* expressed in the mythical representation of Palestine as a "land without people for a people without a land." Specifically, the Israeli colonial system has long carried out, in both discursive and non-discursive fashions, the absenting of Palestinians from their space. However, the voice attributed to Sitti Zeynab's village conjures up her timeless and deeply rooted "presence" in the space despite her long exile from it, which deconstructs the Zionist intents in this Palestinian space.

Hayaat's Psychological Journey: Travel in Temporal and Psychic Realms

Growing Palestinian is never finalized without ingesting the history of the country, a legacy which has been erased from Palestinian academic chronicles and school curricula by the Israeli apparatuses as much as the spatial landscape itself has been territorially re-drawn and disfigured. Growing Palestinian is also never complete without breaking the shackles of internal exile and surmounting its pathetic effects. These two identificatory criteria are what Abdel-Fattah annexes to her novel by subjecting Hayaat to another type of travel which complements and intermingles with her Odyssean journey to Al-Quds. More particularly, Hayaat is at once psychologically transported to the Palestinian past through her grandmother's "historical memories" and psychologically moving alongside her physical travel from a mere traumatized, desperate and naive child to a typical Palestinian, fulfilling as such her Palestinian identity.

To begin with, when broaching the issue of the past as a vital marker of both personal and collective identities, two key concepts come to mind: history and memory. These two concepts have been approached by many scholars, among whom Maurice Halbwachs and Pierre Nora remain very influential, as neatly distinct constructs in the field of memory studies. In this context, drawing on the association of memory with the traditional premodern society and history with the nineteenth-century modern society, Halbwachs posits that history is "a scientific rendition of the past" while memory is "a malleable one" (Confino 42). Concurring with Halbwachs's same association, Pierre Nora conceives of history as "an intellectual practice rooted in the evidence derived from the study of empirical reality" and of memory as "the totality of forms through which cultural communities imagine themselves in diverse representational modes" (Goodbody 61). However, subsequent research in studies of memory has shaped a different relation between memory and history. Not only have the two become related, convergent, and commingling (Confino 42), but the notion of memory has also been transmuted into an "essential, empirical, analytical, and theoretical tool" for historians to grasp the "social, political, cultural, even economic phenomena" that govern the past (44). In fact, the close interplay between memory and history is more evident in contexts where the hegemony of a given authoritarian system entails the erasure of the subaltern history. In such backgrounds, memories "of individuals and small communities" become "antidotes to the [historical] narrative of dominant groups and oppressive states" (Goodbody 61). In other words, memory, in such frameworks, is transformed into a substitute history, a performance of the past which endeavors to rewrite and reconstruct the palimpsestic subaltern history. Such is the case with

Palestinian historiography wherein, as a counterdiscourse to the Israeli erasure of the written records of Palestinian history, memories and narratives of the past of the older generations of Palestinians have become the foundation of the Palestinian oral history, proving, hence, to be of utmost importance in the construction of the Palestinian identity especially for young Palestinians (Hammer 44). In the light of this elaboration on memory and history, the memories of Sitti Zeynab in Abdel-Fattah's novel can be construed as a narrative-historical discourse which targets Hayaat and affiliates her to the past of her nation, fostering her national identity and roots. Most significantly, this discourse consists of four thematic mnemonic periods, each of which metaphorically corresponds to a stage of Palestinian history.

First, the initial period of Sitti Zeynab's memories pictures the golden, idyllic past lived in pre-*nakba* Palestine. This pastoral, free existence is mirrored in the *first* memory which Sitti Zeynab relates to Hayaat:

> "Your grandfather. I miss him. [...] He loved children. And his garden. And me."
>
> "One day I caught him in our garden with your uncle Saleem, God rest his soul. Saleem was young. I saw them through the kitchen window [...] Your grandfather's voice was loud and excitable. [...] Your silly grandfather, God rest his soul, had been conducting an experiment with Saleem [...]." (Abdel-Fattah 36)
>
> "The stupid mixture exploded and the funnel hit Saleem in the forehead leaving a bloody mark. They both dared to laugh hysterically! I chased Saleem all around the garden and when I caught him I gave him a big smack [...] [He] had given me a good fright! He could have been killed!"
>
> "But it wasn't his fault! Sidi was helping him."
>
> "Yes, I know," she says, her eyes twinkling. "So I chased him too and gave him a taste of a thrashing. But he could only laugh and declare that he was making a scientist out of Saleem!" (37)

Disclosing her nostalgia to her granddaughter, Sitti Zeynab conjures up this specific memory of her husband and son's experiment as it encompasses all her existential feelings of the colorful past: humor, fear, happiness, love, and warmth. Simple as it may seem to be, this memory is an incarnation of the blessed life which Palestinians used to lead in their peaceful houses and land, one which is suffused with motherly affection and care, with fatherly enthusiasm and aspirations, and with family harmony and joy as connoted by Sitti Zeynab's "twinkling eyes." Such a memory can also be assumed to dismantle the patriarchal clichés associated with the traditional Palestinian family. More particularly, Sitti Zeynab's and her husband's love for each other and their humorous reactions to the experiment transmute this latter incident into an unforgettable reminiscence deeply ingrained in Sitti Zeynab's memory. All in all, this blissful memory of Sitti Zeynab reproduces the simple and idyllic life Palestinians used to lead in the pre-*nakba* era, an existence with nothing to blemish its peace and wherein the only explosions they can closely hear are ones of entertainment and play. Also, Hayaat's claim is of considerable significance, for her deep interest in the events of the memory translates her identification with and reliving of the recollected past. In the same vein, Sitti Zeynab's pre-*nakba* memories are transfigured into a historical proof of the Palestinian legitimate claim to the land:

> "I can smell my jasmine and almond trees and remember the olive trees I harvested. [...] My olive trees, Hayaat. Oh, how I miss them! We had eleven, dotting the grounds around our house. [...]"
>
> "What did it look like?"
>
> "It was a two-storey villa, made of beige limestone. Your grandfather and his father and his father's father were rich. The land had been in the family for generations. It was truly majestic. At the front was a small courtyard paved with a mosaic of black, green and white tiles. [...]." (38)

Here, Sitti Zeynab's vivid imagery and recollection of the trees surrounding her house do not only epitomize her ingrained connection to and identification with the Palestinian space, especially with her knowledge of such a meticulous detail as the number of the planted olive trees, but they also transfigure her and her husband, along with his ancestral family, into "peasants" or what is called in the Palestinian imaginary "*fellahs*." This mere occupation with the land proffers a historical evidence of the Palestinian legitimate claim to the land in the sense that the *fellah* "as an icon of the Palestinian past is a counter-argument to Zionism and its presentation of Palestine as a 'land without people for a people without a land' [...], the peasant is a potent nationalist symbol since he/she signifies [...] deep historical attachment to the land" (Schulz and Hammer 102). In addition to its depiction of the prosperous social status which Sitti Zeynab's family members enjoy, as indicated through the majestic two-storey villa where they live, Sitti Zeynab's memory of their house and land affiliates the land to several ancestral generations. This is purported to legitimize the Palestinians' right to the land and confirm their territorial and spatial *presence* in history in the Palestinian space, which deconstructs the discourse of the Absentees' Property Law[3] that the Israelis have implemented in their Zionist writing of history. Symbolically speaking, the space itself in Sitti Zeynab's memory voices its Palestinianness through its colors. These are, indeed, redolent of the colors of the Palestinian flag and, thus, corroborate the historical Palestianness of this now usurped space, while the absence of its red color which connotes blood is intended to foreground the peaceful and idealized golden past of the Palestinian nation.

Second, Sitti Zeynab's memories rise to a crescendo in a narrative representation of the turning point in Palestinian history and existence: the *nakba*. It is exactly in these memories that Sitti Zeynab's individual memories assume a collective historical dimension which incorporates her Palestinian fellow-nationals as metaphorically instantiated in her recollective overview of her family's existence: "In that house [in Al-Quds] I gave birth to Saleem [...]; and to Hany, God protect him and [...] his Syrian wife [...] to Ibtisam [...] who left our country to live in America [...]. In the refugee camp I gave birth to Sharif [...] living in Australia at the end of the earth! [...]" (Abdel-Fattah 38-39). This motherly recollective account of Sitti Zeynab on her children goes beyond its superficial signification to acquire a metaphorical value, for it becomes the Palestinian motherland's chronicle of its Palestinian sons. That is to say, this memory account veers from the individual realm to the range of the Palestinian collective experience in the sense that its narrativity of the past path of Sitti Zeynab's children becomes a record of the lives of many Palestinians like them. To elucidate this point, the memory's movement from giving birth in the house to giving birth in the camp marks the displacement of many Palestinians from their homes and their refugeeism in their own homeland from 1948 onwards. Additionally, the Syrian wife of Hayaat's uncle Hany insinuates the Palestinians' historical interaction and coexistence with the neighboring Arab countries in the period between 1948 and 1967, while her other children's migration to America and Australia matches the emergence of the Palestinian diaspora in this same historical period. Accordingly, this memory metaphorically becomes a brief historiographic discourse.

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[3] This law, contrived in 1950, was designed by Israel to impose its colonial hegemony over the Palestinian land and political landscape. It implies that "[e]ven if one left one's village only for a brief time during the war, one was labelled an 'absentee' and one's property was termed 'absentee property', meaning that rights to home and land were lost" (Schulz and Hammer 73).

Furthermore, laden with bitterness, Sitti Zeynab's memories proffer an elaborate rendering of the critical year 1948 and its ensuing corollaries:

> Although I've heard her stories many times I never tire of them.
>
> [...]
>
> "It was 1948. We had heard of the acts committed by the Irgun and Haganan." These were Zionist organizations that terrorized villages and towns to frighten Palestinians into fleeing their homes. "[...] We heard of the nearby village of Deir Yassin. [...] Can you *imagine* our fear? [...] We took what we could carry on our backs. [...] We locked the doors. *Imagine* that... " (39-40; my emphasis)
>
> I'm hooked and beg her to continue.
>
> "The State of Israel was declared soon after. I didn't see my home again until after 1967. [...] In 1950 they passed a new law. Anybody who was not in Israel on 1 September 1948 was declared a *present absentee* owner. Huh! Have your teachers taught you about that law?"
>
> "No."
>
> "What they teach you, I don't understand! [...]"
>
> "The law says that all our property could now be leased or sold."
>
> [...]
>
> I frown. "But it's not fair." (40)

Despite having heard her grandmother's narratives of the past numerous times, Hayaat still harbors the same interest in and passion for them, which translates her identification with them as they are not mere individual narratives of the past but are rather a record of the collective history of her homeland. Analogously, the intervention of her narrative voice in the novelistic discourse to explain what the Irgun and Haganan are evinces that, having listened to her grandmother's stories many times, Hayaat has managed to internalize the historical and national markers of identity embedded in these memories, developing as such a postmemory[4] of the Palestinian past with all the layers of identity it conveys. In this passage, the presence of the years 1948 and 1950 and of historical names as those of the two Zionist organizations and "Deir Yassin" makes it clear once again that Sitti Zeynab's memories are not a mere narrative of her past individual experience but are rather "figurations of memory." This latter concept, introduced by Aleida and Jan Assmann, denotes "a constantly evolving archive of narratives and images" which derives from religious, mythical, or historical resources, and which "blend factual and textual recall with imagination," evoking as such "established memory patterns and interpretations of the past, and actualiz[ing] them" (Goodbody 59). This is to demonstrate that despite their individual character, Sitti Zeynab's memories transcend this fictitious realm to *record* and *re-write* the erased past of a nation, that is, the history of Palestine. For instance, by mentioning Deir Yassin, Sitti Zeynab acquaints Hayaat with the atrocities perpetrated by the Israeli authorities against Palestinians in 1948, with the past traumas of genocide, and with the Palestinians' forced exodus from their home towns and villages. Similarly, through her reference to the acts of carrying a minimal luggage and locking the doors of their houses, she exudes to her granddaughter the historical fact that the Palestinians' flight, in the narrated period, is not a choice but rather a brusque fate propelled by the horror of the Zionist inhumanity and that their displacement from their homes is mistakenly believed to be an ephemeral condition (Schulz and Hammer 26-27). Notably, with every narrated fact, Sitti Zeynab incites Hayaat to "imagine," which is, in fact, a call for Hayaat to vicariously relive the defining past of her people so as to psychically internalize the history of her own nation and the Palestinian collective national identity. In response to this call, Hayaat becomes "hooked" and "beg[s] her to continue," which authenticates her psychological transportation into the narrated past of her people and, therefore, her identification with it. Further, by dint of her memories, Sitti Zeynab establishes a parallelism between the declaration of Israel as a "state" and the loss of her home after the *nakba*; such a linking of the two incidents is intended to reveal that the loss of Palestinians is at once of an individual nature, the loss of their homes, and of a national nature, the downfall of their state. To top it all, Sitti Zeynab's memories uncover the Zionist policies enacted by the Israeli authorities for the cartographic and historical erasure of the Palestinian existence, for they unravel to Hayaat the Israeli attempt to efface the Palestinian presence by absenting them through the Absentees' Property Law. More importantly, by means of her query addressed to Hayaat and the latter's negative answer, Sitti Zeynab insinuates another Israeli hegemonic policy: the censorship imposed on Palestinian schools and curricula, which purveys the Palestinian children with "a history bereft of Palestinian elements" (Hammer 43) in an attempt to break their bond with their national past. Again, Sitti Zeynab's memories prove to be of a didactic, historiographic nature as they are elevated to a substitute history course through which Hayaat learns the past of her nation and becomes closely enlightened about her Palestinian roots and plight as her resentful reply in the passage, "But it's not fair," echoes.

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[4] The concept of postmemory is introduced by Marianne Hirsch and is itself intrinsically associated with trauma as it points to "'the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events' that cannot be accessed or apprehended directly (Hirsch 23)" (Bardenstein 30).

Third, psychologically travelling further into her grandmother's memories, Hayaat is confronted with the history of the aftermaths of another pivotal date which brings no hope to Palestinians but rather exacerbates their wounds and reinforces their apprehended fears: 1967 or what is termed "*naksa*" – the setback. The first historical implication which Sitti Zeynab unfolds consists of the Zionist policies of spaciocide[5] of the Palestinians' native space. This is exemplified when, in response to Hayaat's question, "Did you ever see your home again, Sitti?" (Abdel-Fattah 42), Sitti Zeynab recollects the day of her quite fleeting "return" to her home: "Sometime in 1967 we returned. What was once my village was now classified as *West* Jerusalem. Many of the homes were now occupied by Israeli families. Some parts had changed, so much so that they were unrecognizable to us. [...]" (42). Here, the word "West" is italicized so as to advert attention to the renaming of Palestinian spaces and the annexation of these to Israel in an attempt to carry out a cartographic erasure of the spaces of identification of the Palestinian people. In this same reminiscence, Sitti Zeynab alludes to the Israelis' colonial expansion by turning the Palestinian homes into Israeli property and by changing the spatial features in an endeavor to efface the slightest Palestinian trace from space and to break the identificatory bond between Palestinians and their motherland. Another instance of the Zionist encroachment in the history of Palestinian spaces is portrayed in Sitti Zeynab's retrospective contemplation of her home village: "We walked past the site of the village mosque, which was also used as a club. Houses for the new Israeli population had been built over it" (43). The devastation of the mosque and its substitution by Israeli houses is not merely a blasphemy of the religious site of Muslim Palestinians. Rather, it transcends this to become a manifestation of the Zionist colonial appropriation of the Palestinian space and of the utter erasure of the Palestinian presence given that the mosque is a repository of the Palestinian religious, cultural and social identities as evidenced in its nature as a site of worship and as a club for social and cultural gatherings.

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[5] Spaciocide refers to the Zionist spatial hegemonic encroachment in and remodeling of the Palestinian space through the recourse to a number of spatial strategies including the confiscation of Palestinian lands, the construction of Jewish settlements in Palestinian spaces, the demolition of Palestinian houses, "space annihilation" (Hanafi 191), as well as "the construction of bypass roads, walls, fences, and checkpoints" (Weaver 6).

However, Palestinian history is not a past without resistance; that's why, Sitti Zeynab's memories metaphorically exhibit signs of resistance. An illustration of this is to be found in Sitti Zeynab's reminiscence of her psychological deportment upon her entrance to her occupied, native village: "We walked through the village and I *heard* the silence of my people, Hayaat. They were like ghosts, hovering around us" (43). The "silence" pervading this scene refers to the voicelessness emblematic of the trope of "absence" which the Zionist policies impose on Palestinians, yet, as the italicization of "heard" and its oxymoronic combination with silence imply, this Palestinian silence *speaks* as it is heard by Sitti Zeynab, forming a deconstructionist counterdiscourse to the Zionists intents. Added to this, the simile between Sitti Zeynab's people, i.e. her ancestors and fellow-nationals, and ghosts foregrounds the former's latent presence in their motherland in a refusal of being reduced into "silent absentees" and of relinquishing their native space. Therefore, Sitti Zeynab's memories concretize a history of Palestinian resistance which dismantles the Zionist hegemonic motif of "absence." Within the same context, Palestinian agency crystallizes in Sitti Zeynab's psychological feedback vis-à-vis the blasphemy and spaciocide of the mosque space: "I remembered how we congregated at the mosque's entrance during *Eid*, parading ourselves in our new *Eid* clothes, the children comparing how much money they had been given from their families. Sheep would be slaughtered to commemorate Prophet Abraham's sacrifice and the feast would last through the evening" (43). The verb "to remember" is in the past tense, which points out that this act of remembering is carried out by Sitti Zeynab in the past setting of her visit as an immediate process of psychological liberation of her conquered native space and as a deconstruction of the Zionist attempts to efface the Palestinian identity of this religious, socio-cultural site. This past remembrance is a resistant revival of the mosque not only as a religious site but as a "lieu de mémoire"[6] which embodies the religious, social and cultural identities of the Palestinian past. While the religious identity is represented in the "lieu" itself as the space of Muslims' prayers and in the celebration of the religious feast, the social identity is typified in the gathering of the village community, which shows the harmony and empathy extant in their local society. Aside from these two manifestations of the Palestinian identity, the cultural facet of the latter materializes in the village members' desire to display their best appearance so as to reflect to their surrounding their prosperity and well-being and in giving the children money in an act of bringing delight to their hearts in this celebrated occasion. Thereby, this memory embedded within the present memory serves to re-create the religious, social and cultural identities rooted in Palestinian history in an agential effort to perpetuate the continuity of the Palestinian identity and to disrupt plans of its erasure. Of paramount significance here is Hayaat's psychological disposition as she carefully listens to the tale of her grandmother's return to her conquered native space: "As Sitti Zeynab speaks I feel myself there, perched in an almond tree in the courtyard, watching the scene unfold" (44). Through her grandmother's figurations of memory, Hayaat vicariously relives the Palestinian past. Her resort to the verb "to feel," the contact of her body with the almond tree as a metonymic fragment of the Palestinian space, and the suffusion of her visual sense with the setting of Al-Quds all showcase that she is psychologically transposed to another time, 1967, one which is decisive in Palestinian history, and to another space, Al-Quds, which is equally central in the Palestinian collective consciousness. Such a spatio-temporal travel enables Hayaat to grasp, feel, and relive the typical Palestinian collective experience and to assimilate the Palestinian history she has never learnt at school. All in all, this psychological, spatio-temporal journey allows Hayaat to construct a quintessential Palestinian identity ingrained not only in her ancestral spatial identity and in the collective experience of trauma and exile but also in the history of her nation.

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[6] Coined by Pierre Nora in his masterpiece *Lieux de Mémoire*, this concept, beside denoting "memory places" or "sites of memory," refers to "any significant entity, whether material or nonmaterial in nature, which by dint of

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human will or the work of time has become a symbolic element of the memorial heritage of any community" (Nora, "From *Lieux de Mémoire*" xvii). Nora goes further to emphasize that *lieux de mémoire* broadly emerge as sites wherein national and cultural identity "crystallizes and secretes itself" ("Between Memory and Histroy" 7).

At Last, Hayaat continues her psychological journey through the past by following Sitti Zeynab's tracing of the fourth stage of the history of Palestine. In the latter, Sitti Zeynab recounts that after their awareness that return is a forbidden end since their houses are occupied by the Jewish population, Palestinians, as epitomized by Sitti Zeynab, become sentient of the permanence of refugeeism and forced to live under its brunt. Apropos of this, she discloses to Hayaat through her memories, "We tried, *ya habibti*, but it was no good, our fate was sealed. The camp was the only home we had now" (46), and corroborates further her claim, "The tent was our new home. Eventually, when we realized we would never be allowed to return or even be compensated, we understood that the camp was permanent" (47). Both utterances denote that, after the 1948 and 1967 cataclysms, refugeeism has become an inevitable fate for many Palestinians, transmuting them into strangers in their own homelands and immersing them in a state of fleetingness, instability, and nomadism as indicated by the leitmotif of the "tent." Even worse, this state of uncertainty and alienation becomes realized as permanent, which results in the impediment of their identity confirmation and in the indefinite deferral of the dream of return to their homes. Worst of all, this condition of refugeeism is exacerbated by the dissemination of Israeli propagandist statements intended to vilify Palestinians and to deprive them of their identity and dignity as Sitti Zeynab retrospectively narrates: "I was in the refugee camp when I heard their woman prime minister, I can't remember her name, say: 'There were no such *things* as Palestinians. They did not exist.' [...] Her words poisoned me, Hayaat. I existed, ya Hayaat. I exist!" (46; my emphasis). This claim on the part of the Israeli prime minister is, indeed, a politico-ideological manifestation of Zionism, for it purports to erase Palestinians from any ontological form of being. Put differently, it seeks to transform them into existential "absentees" by denying their belonging to the humankind as their objectifying categorization as "things" proves. Added to this, the implementation of the past tense when broaching the Palestinians' existence, as in "There were no such things" and "They did not exist," is meant to erase and extirpate Palestinians from history. By so doing, not only is the Palestinian existence effaced from history but so is it uprooted from space and absented from the land map, which promotes the Zionist claim of the *terra nullius* – a land without a people for a people without a land. Further, subjecting Palestinians to a status of ahistoricity denies them any form of identity, including a national identity, and inhibits their laying claim to the Palestinian land. Such existential denial goes hand in hand with Sitti Zeynab's feelings, for she feels "poisoned," which symbolically points to her bereavement of her identity and of the essence of her being. Having said that, Sitti Zeynab refuses to surrender despite the brunt of refugeeism, forming a paragon of the unwavering Palestinians. This is echoed in her recourse to the Arabic structure "ya Hayaat" which conveys a double signification. That is to say, this linguistic expression is not only a call addressed to her granddaughter, but it goes beyond this primary level to be elevated into an appeal for *the Hayaat*, i.e. life itself, to be a witness of the Palestinians' existence, of their being *here* now and once. This is why she shifts from the past tense in "existed" to the present tense in "exist" so as to validate her and her fellow-nationals' existence in history as well as in the present, which contravenes the prime minister's discourse, especially that life *per se* is a witness and a proponent of their cause and ontological position. Therefore, through her recollective discourse which seems at first sight individual but is, indeed, a carrier of the Palestinian collective experience, Sitti Zeynab narrates the bitterness of the experience of refugeeism which Palestinians have endured yet goes further to relate their assertion of their presence and identity and their defiance of the Zionist attempts at absenting them. All in all, these memories of Sitti Zeynab bear a symbolic function which concretizes in their historicality; that is to say, these memories' combination of the experience of Sitti Zeynab as a Palestinian paradigm and of historical facts transfigures them into media of the Palestinian collective past experience and, by implication, of Palestinian history.

Furthermore, the brunt of Hayaat's exilic existence enwraps her in a deep crisis of identity which triggers a psychological journey that entails her psychic surmounting of this disorder, leading her to the fulfillment of her Palestinian identity as she transitions from the fragmented, traumatized selfhood to the steadfast Palestinian identity. As a matter of fact, Hayaat's deeper psychological journey, which is involved in a reciprocal relation of influence with the physical journey, consists of three fundamental junctures outlined as follows: the initiation, the culmination, and the reconciliation of her identity crisis.

Initially, it goes without saying that Hayaat is subjected to an excruciating pathos of exile in her Palestinian background, including the fragmentation of her inner self as symbolized by the trope of the "stranger within her," yet it is only when she realizes the striking disparity between her family's idealized past in Beit Sahur and their lamentable present in Bethlehem and is galvanized by the collapse of the soul with whom she identifies most, Sitti Zeynab, that her personal identity crisis is initiated. To begin with, in the first chapters of the novel, Hayaat engages in a comparative juxtaposition of her family's former life in Beit Sahur and their present existence in Bethlehem:

> [M]y memories of Mama there [Beit Sahur] are the brightest and most colorful. [...] She never stopped. She made new upholstery for the lounge room, quilts for our beds, shawls for Sitti Zeynab to wear in winter, baby blankets for friends. She rose early with Baba and cooked hot breakfasts of fried beans, eggs, minced meat encircled by creamy hummus, and warm bread drizzled with olive oil and thyme. [...]
>
> When that old life was gone, crushed under the new settler road, I wondered if Mama would change. We moved to Bethlehem where Baba hoped he might find work, and Mama cried and cursed and then, one day, stopped [...]. (17-18)

Hayaat's statement that her mother "never stopped" is a hyperbolic indication of the vivacity and vigor that used to fill her in Beit Sahur. Besides, the mother's weaving of manifold products symbolizes her exhaustive care which expansively subsumes her own self and children, her mother, and finally her friends, marking her as a caring housewife, mother, daughter, and friend. Added to this, her culinary practice becomes a cultural and spatial praxis in the sense that such foods as "hummus" and olive oil and thyme are respectively metonymic fragments of the Palestinian culture and of the fertile land. Along with the "hot" and "warm" character of food which connotes the warmth suffusing Hayaat's harmonious family, this culinary tableau drawn by her mother expresses the warm existence imbued with the markers of the Palestinian identity which the family, especially the mother, used to enjoy in their Beit Sahur home. Contrariwise, Hayaat's depiction of this past life as "crushed" attests to the vehemence of loss and displacement which her family members have undergone. With her cherished life lost, the crying and cursing of Hayaat's mother translates her resentment of their social decline and her mourning of her alienation from all that which used to define her very existence and selfhood. It follows that the cessation of her mourning is not an acceptance of her fate of exile but is rather a proof of her hopelessness, helplessness, and shock at the realization of the permanence of her exile and displacement.

Identically, Hayaat juxtaposes her father's former self in Beit Sahur and his present being in Bethlehem so as to pinpoint the radical change which he has gone through:

> Baba, on the other hand, did change. He mourned the loss of his olive grove like a parent mourning a child. In Beit Sahur, he was loud and jocular. Working on his land made him happy and we felt that happiness when he came home to us in the evening. But in our apartment in Bethlehem, Baba sits in silence, sucking on his argeela or flicking through the news channels.
>
> When we lost our land, he imploded. (18)

At the outset of this passage, Hayaat's implementation of the structure "did change" to delineate the psychological and psychic change of her father underlines the radicalness and intensity of such a change and, thus, of his alienation and exile. In Beit Sahur, the father is full of life and of a joy which stems from his connection and identification with his venerated land. The latter does not only inspire happiness to the father but spreads this feeling among the whole family as well, which reflects its existential centrality in their life. However, with the loss of the land and their movement to Bethlehem, the father does not suffer merely from his unemployment which shakes the bases of his masculinity and dignity, but he also experiences an inexorable sorrow and grief instigated by the loss of his land as the implemented simile indicates. Not only this, but the persistent silence to which he withdraws, as opposed to his past vigor, bespeaks his alienation from the surrounding world and, therefore, symptomatizes his physical and psychological exiles. The latter are even more corroborated through the parallelism established between the loss of his land and his psychic implosion; that is, the loss of the space with which he identifies has resulted in his psychic downfall and alienation which materialize in his desperate attempts to create rites of survival through his monotonous resort to the *argeela* and to news channels. Consequently, Hayaat's awareness of this conspicuous discrepancy between the past and the present and her insightful discernment of the exilic physical and psychological situation of her family mark, indeed, the inception of her understanding of the signification of her family's alienation and displacement, of the intricacies of their exile, and, thus, of their identity crises, including hers. This inchoate form of identity crisis remains a virtual presence in Hayaat's psyche and only wells up inside her when catalyzed by the collapse of her grandmother. More particularly, when Sitti Zeynab is taken to the hospital, Hayaat is overwhelmed again by her traumatic nightmares: "I dream of tanks chasing me down the streets of Jerusalem. I dream I've been buried alive [...]. I look over at Sitti Zeynab's empty bed and realize just how much I need her" (59). Given that dreams are subconscious manifestations of identity, Hayaat's nightmarish dreams can be construed as a revelation of her identity crisis, one which specifically escalates with the absence of her grandmother as exuded in the unrelenting character of her nightmares. Additionally, Hayaat's need for Sitti Zeynab attests to her identification with her grandmother and to her elevation into an existential anchor for Hayaat. Most significantly, the urgency of this need demonstrates that Sitti Zeynab is not a mere narrative persona but is rather a significant paradigm of Palestinianness, for, as has been elaborated, she is a personification of the Palestinian collective memory and a discursive repository of the Palestinian historical identity. It follows that when Hayaat declares her prospective physical journey through her utterance, “I’m on a mission now” (53), she also announces the progress of her psychological journey towards the fulfillment of her Palestinianness and the reconciliation with the stranger within her.

Over and above, the culmination of Hayaat’s psychological journey synchronizes with her arrival at the climactic locus of her physical journey, i.e. Al-Quds. At this phase, Hayaat confronts the surfacing of all that which has been buried within her, of all the apprehended past pathos which has given birth to the stranger within her and which she has been unable to surmount. Environed by a Palestinian protest, Israeli military jeeps, sound grenades, and tear gas, Hayaat finds herself before a reproduction of the day which has marked her ontological turning point and which has immersed her in an existential exile, that is, the traumatic day when her face has been distorted and her intimate friend, Maysaa, killed. Such a setting results in the present revival of her trauma: “I drop to the ground on my knees [...] I try to feel my way forward, touching the cobbled stone streets of Jerusalem. [...] And that’s when she visits me. Maysaa, who has swooped out of the shadows of my bedroom at night to haunt me. [...] She visits me as I lie on the streets of Jerusalem and I feel as though Judgment Day has arrived” (164). Maysaa has so far been the embodiment of trauma and loss which Hayaat has never succeeded to overcome, which shakes the ground of her very selfhood, and which divests her of the presence of certainty and of identity and imposes instead a haunting absence. Correspondingly, Hayaat’s description of Maysaa’s apparition in Al-Quds as “Judgment Day” can be construed as a prognostication of her imminent psychic breakdown. Immediately after this, Hayaat exudes the most precarious symptom of her post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) which is the present reliving of the last moments with Maysaa as the narration of these past events in the present tense evidences. These restored occurrences mainly consist of Maysaa’s insistence on joining her and Hayaat’s voices to the protest against the demolition of a

Palestinian home, their escape from an Israeli jeep, and finally their confrontation with their ultimate fates, i.e. death for Maysaa and facial distortion for Hayaat. As a result of this brusque encounter with her traumatic past, Hayaat reaches the point of breakdown: "'I... everything came back to me and I lost control...' I'm worn out. I start to weep, covering my face with my shaking hands. 'Maysaa... Sitti Zeynab...' I say between gasps of breath" (168). By disclosing her loss of control, Hayaat implies that her trauma has generated an existential rift within her, disrupting her psychic equilibrium and marking, hence, the apex of her identity crisis. Still, the ensuing climactic outburst of her psyche is a vital step for the liberation and psychic resurrection of her own self. In other words, Hayaat's statement that the past has returned evinces her head-on confrontation with her most dreaded fears and, hence, her psychic triumph over these, whereas her tears translate the release of all the exilic angst which has been submerged in the recesses of her psyche. This psychic resuscitation which Hayaat undergoes in Al-Quds brings about a process of innermost reconciliation as underpinned by her psychological transition from Maysaa, who used to emblematize all that is traumatic in her existence, to Sitti Zeynab who represents the fountainhead of identification and solace.

Last of all, after her return from Al-Quds, Hayaat fulfills her quest for identity and reaches, thus, an ontological condition of anagnorisis wherein she reconciles with her inner self. In this groundwork, the essence of this work which pertains to children's literature can be pinpointed in Abdel-Fattah's involvement in underscoring the power and agency of Palestinian children as they, typified by Hayaat as a paragon, actively manage to overcome their wounds and to build a solid Palestinian identity. In this regard, after her physical journey, Hayaat attains the final stage of her psychological journey, for she is no longer that person with whom the novel opens. She is now elevated into an archetype of resistance and agency, despite her precocious age, as can be seen in the four statements, "Your soul is strong, Hayaat [...] I look up to you" (174-175), "I look up to you, Hayaat" (188), "It was very brave, Hayaat" (190), and

"I wish I had your courage, Hayaat" (204), uttered respectively by Hayaat's grandmother, her sister, her mother, and her father. Additionally, Hayaat's psychological development concretizes quite blatantly in her reconciliation with her friend Maysaa. Indeed, while Maysaa has always been rooted in her self as the epitome of trauma and psychic crisis, she is now attributed a new signification which consists of Hayaat's approach to her as a heroine of resistance and struggle. That's why, when asked by her father, in front of Maysaa's grave, if she is ready to say goodbye to her friend, Hayaat responds smilingly: "No [...]. Never" (205). This answer symptomatizes that Hayaat, aware of the values and precepts embodied in Maysaa as a paradigm, starts to construe her friend as a permanent constituent of her memories and of her very Palestinian selfhood.

Yet, the pinnacle of Hayaat's reconciliation with her own self and the gist of her identity are essentially verbalized in the discourse with which she seals the novelistic narrative:

> I am thirteen years old and I know what blood is. I know what loss is. I know the smell of a corpse. I know the shape of a body flattened under a tank. I know the dusty clouds left behind a frenzied bulldozer. The Wall will soon be finished. Parts of Bethlehem will be fully deserted. Businesses closed, houses abandoned, streets emptied, schools slice in half. I'm living in an open-air prison.
>
> But I won't live in despair. Because I'm thirteen years old and this is what I also know.
>
> That so long as there is life there'll be love. That I'll learn to love the mirror as surely as I have learned to think of Maysaa and smile. That the past can both torment and heal. That I'll do more than survive. That in the end we are all of us only human beings who laugh the same and that one day the world will realize that we simply want to live as a free people, with hope and dignity and purpose. That is all. (227)

This passage, teeming with variegated significations, traces Hayaat's journey of identity formation. It is noticeable here that she repeatedly uses "I know" so as to emphasize the process of her psychological development and epistemic growth and to tacitly point to the construction of her identity. Added to this, the structure of this passage, which consists of two main parts, informs Hayaat's existence and identity. While the first part of the passage is an articulation of her experience of exile, the second part indicates the different layers underlying her newly fulfilled Palestinian identity. In fact, the lexicon which Hayaat implements in the first part and which incorporates such leitmotifs as “blood,” “loss,” “corpse,” “bulldozer,” and “tank” translates her exilic experiences of trauma, of bereavement, of displacement, and of death, briefly of suffering and exile as typical components of what it means to be Palestinian. In the same context, Hayaat’s mention of the Wall as a symbol of the Palestinians’ internal exile in conjunction with the future tense denotes her anticipation of the intensification of the Palestinian exilic condition and plight. This is corroborated by her ensuing predictions which foreshadow new forms of exile and refugeeism that will be inflicted upon Palestinians. All these manifestations of the Palestinian exilic condition, albeit heartlessly arduous for a child to endure, are acknowledged by Hayaat through her concise summary, “I am living in an open-air prison,” wherein the prison becomes a euphemistic metaphor of the exile which Hayaat, along with her fellow-nationals, bears. However, as has been adduced earlier, Abdel-Fattah does not victimize her protagonist but rather endows her with agency and resistance. As a result, Hayaat’s narrative does not end merely with the experience of exile but goes further to outline her identity’s components. First, Hayaat’s rejection of despair is an adoption of the philosophy of hope, which is actually a trait of the Palestinian in-group. Second, she parallels love to life, choosing as such “love” to be the antidote of despair and trauma given that it is the apex of psychological life and to represent, therefore, an involvement in life. Third, Hayaat’s forthcoming triumph over her mirror complex betokens her resilience and her reconciliation, despite her deep-seated traumatic past, with the stranger within her incarnated in her scars. Also, being the sign of identity, Hayaat’s reconnection with the mirror connotes her pride of her selfhood, including her traumatized self as it has shaped the person she is now. Fourth, the past which Hayaat brings to the forth is an allusion to the history of her nation, for it torments as it narrates the suffering of her people, yet it heals as well since it writes the story of the resistance and *presence* of her Palestinian ancestors. Fifth, Hayaat embraces a further life philosophy through her choice to transcend survival. That is to say, she is moving beyond survival as a "hollow" form of life that inheres depersonalization and derealization of the surrounding space and is, instead, involved in a purposeful life as a social attribute of her in-group. Ultimately, Hayaat marks a transition from the pronoun "I" to the pronoun "we," which insinuates her nationalist spirit and situates her alongside her fellow-nationals within the Palestinian imagined community. Importantly, she has grown mature enough as far as her national identity is concerned to become conscious that the Palestinians as a subaltern group do *speak*, but the world turns a blind eye and a deaf ear to their cause. Yet, she strongly believes, as expressed through her use of "will," that the Palestinians' hope and rights of return, freedom, and justice will be achieved. In so doing, Hayaat builds for herself a Palestinian nationalistic dream which she annexes to her now fulfilled selfhood and which gives her an ontological purpose for living rather than merely surviving.

The Confirmation of the Palestinian *Within* in *Tales of a City by the Sea*

If Abdel-Fattah's bildungsroman traces the itinerary which the protagonist follows in the formation of her Palestinian identity, Sabawi's play proceeds similarly but with a different end, i.e. the confirmation rather than the formation of the Palestinian identity. In other words, in her full adulthood, the main protagonist of *Tales of a City by the Sea* already harbors in her veins typical Palestianness, yet galvanized as they are by the trenchant exilic conditions prevalent in Gaza and those concomitant to the 2008 Gaza war, her ground of identity and the foundations of her very being are vehemently shaken and questioned. Such a crisis of identity compels her to shun away the psychic and psychological scourges of exile by seeking the confirmation of who she is and where she belongs through her psychic reinstatement of the same dynamics of identity formation which Hayaat carries out in her physical journey, that is, of the spatial and national manifestations of Palestianness.

In Sabawi's play, the magnitude of space is strikingly obvious even before probing into the discourse of the play in the sense that, aside from the title which is itself made up of the linguistic elements "city" and "sea" pertaining to the spatial lexicon, the paratext conveys much about the paramountcy of the Palestinian space in the play and its existential significance for the protagonist, Jomana. Indeed, Jomana confirms her Palestinianness throughout the play through her rootedness in the Palestinian space, through her perception of the latter as agential and powerful, and through her discursive endowment of it with a timeless historicality. To begin with, afflicted by the exilic state of affairs in Palestine yet proffered the prerogative to leave all behind for America with her husband-to-be Rami, Jomana proves pertinacious in her attachment to her motherland. This is exemplified in her reply to her father's premonition of her departure to America: "Don't worry, *Baba,* I told him I would never leave you. He promised me he would stay in Gaza" (Sabawi, *Tales of a City by the Sea* 17). This indicates that her acceptance of Rami as a future husband is thoroughly conditioned by the latter's settlement in her native soil, which reflects that even her most intimate existence and her decisive choices are deep-seated in the Palestinian space. Likewise, Jomana voices this same rootedness when, in her conversation with Rami about their future, she insists: "But my life is right here. My life is right here" (37). By dint of her anaphoric expression, Jomana desires to vocalize her relentless clinging to her Palestinian spatial roots and to make her ontological fate intertwined and merged with the immediate "here," that is, with her Gazan land. To top it all, confronted by the duality of choosing one of two extremes, her love for Rami or her love for her homeland, Jomana's speech reveals the essence of her selfhood:

> JOMANA. I would have never allowed myself to get so close to you if I knew you planned to uproot me. You promised...
>
> RAMI. I did. But that was before I knew what it was like to live here. Now I know.
>
> [...]

> JOMANA. [...] Rami, my life is here. My family is here. I was raised here. This place is my home. (35, 36)

In this conversation, Jomana's opening utterance evinces that she castigates Rami's plans to "uproot" her and that she is poised to forsake and sacrifice her love for the sake of her homeland. This implies at once that her existence is inextricably rooted in the Palestinian soil and that her utmost love for her homeland overrides any other sort of love. In the same vein, even when Rami strives to convince her to leave her motherland on account of the deplorable and nightmarish status quo, she remains adamant in her clinging to her native land as she transmutes, in her ensuing statement, the Palestinian space into an axis around which revolves her whole existence. Put differently, she tacitly voices that Palestine is not a mere geographical zone; rather, it is a psychological receptacle which encapsulates her family bonds, a spatial chronicle which traces her life memories and experiences, and most significantly her *home,* her only worldly home, which ingrains her selfhood solely in Palestine and confirms her devoted affiliation to it. Dissecting the paratext in the light of these precepts enables the inference, as pointed earlier, of its symbolic illustration of the inextricable identificatory affinity between Jomana and her native space. More particularly, the paratextual image of the play consists chiefly of two parts: the image of a woman and the image of a space constituted of a series of buildings, engulfed with a fiery, yellow color which probably symbolizes the fire triggered by war weapons, along with a blurred landscape of a hill – on the left – and of the sea – on the right – portrayed in the background wherein the blue color alluding to the color of the sea pervades. While the image of the woman corresponds to the play's heroine Jomana, the pictured space cannot be but the city of Gaza. By and large, the protagonist's image overlaps with that of the city in an act of identification and fusion; she is becoming the city itself as part of her body merges with the buildings. Also, the left and right parts of her body overlap respectively with the backgrounding land and sea, which authenticates her confirmation of her

Palestinianness through her bodily re-territorialization and rootedness in the Palestinian landscape.

Moreover, as has been unveiled in the aforementioned analytical account on space in *Where the Streets Had a Name*, Abdel-Fattah lays stress on the spatial landscape of the "land" and endows it with an agential voice and power. In *Tales of a City by the Sea*, Sabawi enacts the same thematic device yet transcends it by resorting in lieu of the "land" to the "sea" as a metonymic fragment of the Palestinian space and by bestowing on it the potential to fight back its people's oppressors. In point of fact, the agency of the Palestinian space in Sabawi's play can be best ascertained in Jomana's contrived poems in the opening and the ending scenes of the play. Thus, a thorough insight into the power of space necessitates a close study of the poems inserted in the dramatic discourse of the play. In the first scene of the play, the first verbal action to which the audience is introduced through stage directions is Jomana's reading of her poem from her diary. It is worth mentioning, in this regard, that the diary is the first theatrical property that the audience descries, which underscores its symbolic momentousness in the sense that it translates the most intimate psychological musings of Jomana. Put differently, the diary is a textual translation of Jomana's psyche and a discursive voice of her identity. It follows that the poem recorded in this diary, being on space, is a revelation of Jomana's approach to her motherland:

> The landscape constantly changes
> Only the sea remains
> Salty
> Fluid
> Mysterious
> Moody
> A consistent presence amid the chaos –
> ……………………………………….

Its whooshing waves whisper tales
Of occupiers that have come and gone
....
Only the sea remains. (1-2)

The landscape, which alludes to the geopolitical, national, and social landscapes extant in Palestine, is transmuted into a deferred signifier, for it becomes subjected to a process of différance as implied through the adverb "constantly" which emphasizes the continuity of its change. Nevertheless, the sea as a metonymy of the Palestinian space is seen as a fixed "trace" which, no matter how much the landscape changes, it invariably *remains* present, intact, and ineffaceable as underlined through the recurrent expression "Only the sea remains." Symbolically speaking, this connotes that all types of identity, social, political, or national, are "constantly changing," that is, deferred, dynamic and in ongoing flux, yet there is one identity which always remains ontologically steadfast, one and the same: the Palestinian spatial identity. This points to the unwavering character of the Palestinian space despite the multifarious Israeli attempts of spaciocide and of erasing and politicizing it. Additionally, the series of adjectives used in this poem are intended to enumerate the facets of power of this space. Taking into account that the substance of "salt" is the essence of the sea in general, the adjective "salty" suggests that the sea, as an emblem of the Palestinian spatial identity, is timelessly preserving its essence and purity, never tarnished by the upheavals of the contiguous landscape. The insertion of the adjective "fluid" alongside the fixedness and permanence of the sea may seem at first sight contradictory, but it is, indeed, a paradoxical statement that, in spite of its permanent character, the sea epitomizes an anti-essentialist identity in the sense that it features the traces of the past tribulations, encompasses the vicissitudes of the present, and bears hope in a future liberation. Added to this, while the "mysterious" feature of the sea reveals its intriguing depth and, therefore, the impossibility of accessing it by external power, the "moody" character confers on it the trait of unpredictability and, by implication, the trait of unreachability. As a result, all of these modifiers attribute to the space of the sea agency and resistance. Analogously, through her poetic line, “A consistent presence amid the chaos,” Jomana asserts anew the presence and permanence of the sea and subverts all the colonial military and political encroachments implied by the word “chaos,” which renders the Palestinian space as a stage of mythic resistance and defiance. Further, associating the action of whispering with the sea waves points to the personification of the Palestinian sea so as to showcase that although this space is under the Israeli colonial occupation, it still possesses the power to break the silence of its subjugation. Thereby, the sea becomes a spatial epitome of its people, which assigns them the power to speak, even if in a “whisper,” and to break through their silence. In other words, by means of her poetry, Jomana subjects the sea to a process of becoming-Palestinian, identifying with it as an agent of resistance and as a catalyst of resilience paradigmatic of the Palestinian people.

In a like manner, Jomana seals the play with a last poem which serves as an ultimate assertion of the power of space unearthed in the first poem:

> The landscape constantly changes
> Only the sea remains
> A cure for the trail of broken lives left behind
> A landmark untouched by human greed and destruction
> Oblivious to war, occupation and aggression
> Defiant to the rules of man.
> There is no end to the sea’s audacity
> ....
> The landscape will change
> Only the sea will remain
> Its whooshing waves will whisper new tales
> Of occupiers that have come

And gone. (40)

It is of the essence to mention here that the spatial parameter in which this poem and the former are concocted is the same: Gaza beach. This spatial atmosphere of fixity corroborates that the Palestinian space is the origin and the end and that Jomana's selfhood, as is the case with every typical Palestinian, is fixedly implanted in the one and only space she identifies with, that is, her native space. In this poem, Jomana endows the sea as a metonymic fragment of Palestine with a curative power which nurtures the Palestinians' resilience. That is to say, her reference to the "broken lives" is an allusion to the Palestinians who, broken by the pathos of trauma, exile, and identity crisis, manage to survive their alienation and to heal their identity crisis through the resilience they derive from the panacean Palestinian space. Besides, the agential feature of "untouched-ness" which Jomana bestows on the sea communicates a polysemous signification which goes beyond insinuating the sea's resistance to the Zionist encroachment and expansion symbolized by "greed and destruction." On the one hand, being "untouched" confers on the sea the characters of unreachability and impenetrability which, classically functioning as colonial tropes, are appropriated here via language to picture the sea as the locus of resistance and *sumud*. On the other hand, the "untouched-ness" of the sea conveys its purity and essence, which entrenches a kind of spatial essentialism predicated on the fixed presence of the Palestinian sea in the Palestinian identity. As such, these poetic lines become a lyrical voicing on the part of Jomana of her quintessential Palestinian identity. Also, represented as "oblivious to war, occupation and aggression," the sea is rendered as "indifferent" to the Israeli colonialism. Such indifference and detachment attest to the invulnerability of the sea and disrupt the hegemonic coercive attempts of Zionism, which constructs the sea again as a spatial emblem of Palestinian resistance. This is buttressed by its defiant spirit to the rules of man which suggests its untamable, wild, and free nature that stands in sheer contradistinction to the imperial endeavors to colonize it. Further, the sea, just as in the opening poem, is personified by according it the human property of "audacity." Such a personification reflects again that the

Palestinian space becomes an epitome of its own people. Put differently, space becomes a mirror of the social collective trait of audacity harbored by Palestinians in their unwavering fight against the Israeli occupation. Thus, taking into account the curative power of the Palestinian space and the Palestinians' endless audacity, it can be assumed that Palestinian agency and power is in a constant flux between the space and its denizens, which unfolds the identificatory nexus tying the two together. Finally, an examination of the play's opening and ending poem unveils a transition from "The landscape [...] changes" (1) to "The landscape will change" (40). This movement towards the future is symptomatic of Jomana's prediction of the future of Palestine. That is to say, she is certain that the socio-geopolitical landscape of this war will indubitably change but that there is one thing which will *be* and will remain one and the same: the Palestinian identity and spirit incarnated in the sea. Jomana goes even further beyond resistance to foretell its outcome which is the absolute triumph of Palestinians and the defeat of the Israeli colonialism, for she closes her poem with the action of "going," that is, of leaving which is, in actuality, a translation of the surrender and absence of the colonizers in the Palestinian space.

The power of the Palestinian sea does not cease at this point but goes beyond it to acquire a historicality of its own. That is to say, cognizant as every Palestinian is of the endless Zionist attempts to erase or disfigure Palestinian history, Jomana concocts another alternative which at once demystifies again the power of the Palestinian space and proposes a new model of Palestinian history. She does so through her elaborate poeticization of space, specifically of the sea, as a lyrical idealization of the Palestinian space in the Palestinian collective imaginary:

> Its whooshing waves whisper tales
> Of occupiers that have come and gone
> Crusaders, tyrants and warlords
> Riding on their horses

Riding on their tanks
Riding on their F-16 fighter jets
Always riding through
Leaving their footprints
And part of their history
Leaving their artefacts and ruins
Leaving fire and debris
Always leaving...
Only the sea remains. (1-2)

In this poetic passage, the waves narrate a historical movement resembling theirs, that is, one of coming and going. Put differently, there is a parallelism between the movement of the waves and the movement of the occupiers who have come and gone in Palestine, which establishes a congruity between Palestinian space and history. Besides, the sequence of conquerors, each armed with its corresponding weapon, witnessed by this Palestinian space presents a detailed historical account which ranges from the pre-modern crusades, to the modern times of the tyranny perpetrated against Palestinians, including but not limited to the *nakba* and *naksa*, just to continue throughout the postmodern era in which the military and ideological hegemony of the Zionist warlords has overridden its precursory war patterns. The spatial narrative of this historical chain is, indeed, an act of re-writing the history of Palestine which is being persistently subjected to erasure. Being the reliable witness of these historical waves, the sea is elevated by Jomana's language into a channel and a carrier of Palestinian history, which unearths the centrality of space in defining the Palestinian identity. Over and above, all of these colonialists leave some "trace" in space. This is exemplified in their "footprints" and "part of their history" which symbolize their reification of and encroachment in space and history. Similarly, the "artefacts and ruins" they introduce to the Palestinian space stand for the cultural and civilizational imperialism which they initiate, whereas their "fire and debris" imply the fire of anguish and loss they ignite in Palestinian hearts and the destruction they bring about. All the same, there is one verb which recurs in these paralleled lines: “to leave.” Therefore, it can be deduced that the emphasis here is, despite all these colonial traces embedded in space, on the action of “leaving” which emblematizes an act of withdrawal and defeat as well as a process of “absence.” This is juxtaposed to the timeless presence and permanence of the sea which enable it to transcend and outweigh spatially and temporally all these colonial powers. Thereby, the Palestinian sea is assigned power and agency as it *remains* in an act of resistance and rebuttal of surrender. At last, Jomana extricates herself from the exilic conditions imposed on Palestinians by way of her identification with space through upholding again its historicality. This is evidenced in Jomana’s speech during her last conversation with Rami:

> JOMANA. Here we are...we keep finding ourselves in the same place.
>
> RAMI. I can’t believe a year has passed since we first met.
>
> JOMANA. Don’t tell me a year has passed. You can’t measure our lives by a calendar. Time stands still *here*.
>
> RAMI. Frozen on the shores of this old battered city.
>
> JOMANA. One calendar year can never contain our lives, our sorrows, desires...
>
> RAMI. Then let us be lost in the absence of time [...]. (34; my emphasis)

Once more, the space acquires a temporal dimension of its own. As a matter of fact, while Rami’s focus is on the time that has passed since their meeting, Jomana’s utmost concern and criterion of measure is space *per se*. In this regard, time, for her, in Palestine is frozen, fixed as indicated in her reference to the “here,” that is, to the Palestinian space. In a sense, then, time in Palestine becomes reified and exiled from its normalcy. Such a reification is appropriated by Jomana as a tool of resistance in the sense that she emancipates Palestinians from the clasp of Zionist history by excluding their lives from the temporal realm and rule of the Israeli colonizer, which metamorphoses these lives into free products not of time but of the typical Palestinian space. In simpler terms, Palestinian life becomes a free ontological concept which is subjected not to the confining barriers of time – the latter being appropriated by Zionism to write a hegemonic, unitary history – but rather to the immediate shaping powers of space. By the same token, Jomana's last utterance deconstructs the hegemonic time of occupation as history becomes encapsulated solely in space. That is to say, space and only space becomes the narrator of the real history of Palestine, one laden with "lives, [...] sorrows, desires," which dismantles the history fabricated by Zionism. Subsequently, Rami's ensuing statement fosters the implications of Jomana's claim by underlining "the absence of time," alluding again to the fact that space is the only presence which upholds Palestinian history and conditions identity.

Furthermore, confronted by their existential exile which shakes the ground of their identity, Jomana and her Palestinian fellow-nationals strive to reconfigure their Palestinianness by confirming the essential components that delimit it. Beside space, these fundamentally incorporate their belonging to the Palestinian imagined community. That is to say, the deliberate reenactment of the features which pinpoint the social in-group wherein they are positioned permits Palestinians to assert their national identity and, therefore, their Palestinian selfhood. The structure of the play itself is emblematic of such a national identity. More particularly, as opposed to the Western classical dramatic convention of the five-act play, this play is made up of *one* act. This is not only meant to shed light on the peculiarity and singularity of the Palestinian plight and on the aloneness of Palestinians in facing their exilic condition, but this form is also implemented to mark the oneness of the Palestinian identity and of the Palestinian experience as one of an imagined community, of a united nation, of an architectonic whole. In the dramatic discourse of *Tales of a City by the Sea*, this one national identity is performed through the Palestinians' ontological involvement in life and through the dramatization of Palestinian agency.

In this regard, the most vivid imagery of the Palestinian involvement in life as a mode of resistance and as a manifestation of the Palestinian national identity is illustrated through the character of Lama whose psychological exile overrides that of Jomana given the sudden death of her parents and brothers all at once by a missile. Psychically traumatized by this loss, she resists alienation and disintegration by embracing life as she imparts to her cousin Jomana: "Jomana, I am sick of death. I want to live, I want to love [...]. I want to get married. I want to feel life growing inside of me. It is the only way I can defeat death...by making life... I want to have babies... [...] I want to fill the house with their cries and laughter" (31). Engulfed by a macabre atmosphere, Lama is drowning in a psychic emptiness as she has disclosed earlier to Jomana, "I feel so empty" (29), which aggravates her identity crisis already triggered by the exilic circumstances in Gaza. Correspondingly, she perceives no better way to spare herself an impending psychic disintegration but to commit herself to life as an ontological ground of being. In addition to her clinging to the emotional life incarnated in the feeling of love, Lama unleashes her desire to atone for her inner emptiness, engendered by the loss of those with whom she identifies, through founding a new affinity with life which is that of motherhood. Her desire to "fill" her house with babies is, indeed, a desire to fill the eternal absence of her family with a new presence and to suffuse the emptiness inside her with a new identity, that is, her identity as a Palestinian mother. Lama goes further to reinforce her attachment to life through her utterance, "I simply will not postpone living anymore" (32), which is a rendition of life in Palestine as an epitome of existential exile and as subjected to a process of temporal postponement, invariably consolidated by the Zionists' spread of death. Yet, Lama resists such an exilic deferral by means of her immediate, fixed involvement in life. This ontological quest of Lama does not consist of mere spoken words. Rather, she actualizes her commitment to life through her marriage which is dramatically accelerated in the sense that the stage directions following her speech mark no pause between the two girls' conversation about marriage as an act of life and Lama's wedding itself. It may seem at first sight that this involvement in life on the part of Lama is a mere choice she undertakes as an escape from her existential crisis of identity, but a further reading of the play demystifies its social dimension as a Palestinian in-group strategy. To elucidate this, Lama states that “[s]oon there will be weddings in every neighborhood in Gaza” (31). The insertion of such a statement by the playwright is not arbitrary; rather, it is intended to inform the audience about the Palestinian social in-group. In other words, this prevalent celebration of weddings which temporally comes only days after one of the worst 2008 massacres displays that the Palestinians as a community heal their wounds through the creation of happiness and the compensation for lost lives by new lives, which transforms this collective involvement and celebration of life into a distinctive feature of the resistant and resilient Palestinian in-group. By the same token, this national property is exposed when Rami, intrigued by the presence of the photos of those killed in Ali’s and Lama’s families in the couple’s wedding reception, verbalizes his astonishment just to be answered by Ali: “If I were to define Gaza in two words, it would be funerals and weddings” (32). This latter sentence summarizes, through the antithetical combination it subsumes – “funerals and weddings” –, one of the requisite features of the Palestinian social consciousness, to wit, the Palestinian involvement in life. That is to say, marked by paradoxes and dialecticized binaries, the social atmosphere in Gaza unearths the Palestinians’ unwavering resilience and resistance through their making up for deaths and losses, typified in the funerals, by the creation of new lives and gains as symbolized by the leitmotif of weddings. As such, the involvement in life transcends the individual level to acquire a social dimension which elevates it into a social attribute of the Palestinian imagined community.

Above all else, every work of Palestinian literature necessarily comprises the aspect of resistance as an underlying marker of the Palestinian national identity. This thematic concern is obviously present in Sabawi’s play and is specifically personified in her protagonist Jomana. As has been expounded so far, resistance is ubiquitously concretized in the play in every single spatial and social manifestation of the Palestinian identity, yet it remains best discerned in the agential identity which the Palestinian people enact despite the colonial attempts to subdue them. This feature intrinsic to the Palestinian national identity is strikingly highlighted and condensed in the play in Jomana's longest dramatic monologue:

> Yes, we are trapped behind a wall, but Rami, look around you. Open your eyes. See all the stories of how we survive; the trees we've replanted, the homes we've rebuilt. Inside these walls, Rami, old men still fiddle with their prayer beads. Mothers still bake *maamoul* on *Eid*. Families still gather under canopies with loaded bunches of grapes dangling above their heads, they nibble on watermelon seeds and drink *maramiah* tea. Women still perfect the art of matchmaking. Men still dream of freedom and democracy. Children climb on almond trees. Lovers woo in secrecy. And no matter how the conditions are adverse, over here we have learned to defy the universe! Every day inside these walls, Rami, we defy the universe! (36)

Jomana's discourse is an architectonic tableau of the Palestinian collective identity, and albeit addressed primarily to Rami, it is simultaneously a call to the audience to cogitate on the Palestinians' agency which takes over their exilic anguish. In actual fact, Jomana initiates her speech with concretizing agency in the Palestinians' ability to survive their exilic convolutions. This is typified in their replanting of trees, which instantiates an act of reinvigoration and endorsement of the sacred bond with their land that the Zionist policies incessantly strive to break and disrupt. In the same way, the Palestinians' efforts to rebuild homes translate an act of re-appropriation of their occupied homeland and of confirmation of their legitimate ownership of the space, surviving as such the Zionist spaciocide in the Palestinian territory. What's more, by opening her subsequent utterance with the adverbial expression "Inside these walls," Jomana desires to confirm the Palestinians' condition of exile through the metaphor of the "wall" just to repudiate this existential situation through her enumeration of the manifold agential identities carried out by her fellow-nationals. Accordingly, the imagery of the old men fiddling with their beads is an allusion to the Palestinians' preservation of faith and of religious identity no matter how many years go by. In this respect, it is of the essence to advert attention to the importance of religious identity in the Palestinian backdrop in the sense that it does not only entail faith but also "situate[s] the devout in the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos" (Weaver 15), which signifies that, through their attachment to their religious identity, these old men demonstrate their Palestinianness as well. Likewise, the semiotics of the Palestinian culinary item "*maamoul*" reinforces the Palestinians' acknowledgement and celebration, in spite of the exilic restrictions wherein they prevail, of the Palestinian cultural identity. Jomana goes further to expatiate on the social layer of Palestinianness by describing the Palestinian community in terms of "families" so as to underscore the close bonds which govern this society, by delineating the culinary cultural peculiarities which accompany these social gatherings, and by annexing to her discourse all categories of Palestinians – old men, mothers, men, women, and children. Not only this, but Jomana's reference to "the art of matchmaking" points out that the Palestinian traditional culture concomitant to the context of marriage still exists, whereas her indication of the Palestinian men's political dreams suggests that the national dream of liberation is still cherished; in brief, the Palestinian identity is existentially still proceeding, refusing to be erased or silenced by the Israeli colonization. On the other side, children, who stand for the future generation, are envisaged as climbing almond trees. Symbolically, this imagery anticipates the development of these children into Palestinian individuals who will carry on the ancestral legacy of the Palestinian land embodied in the almond trees and who will internalize the Palestinian struggle for and identification with the land. Evoking such a metaphorical image upholds the Palestinian national feature of agency by transposing it to the future realm. Last but not least, Jomana includes in this vista of the Palestinians' facets of agency the ability to love despite the grief, the oppression, and the inhumanity which engulf the Palestinians' surroundings, which proves the psychological agency which marks the Palestinian in-group. All these layers of identity aggregated, they make up the Palestinian collective national gestalt which involves the Palestinian in-group's agency to *be* and to *speak back*.

In conclusion, both Abdel-Fattah and Sabawi devote their literary works for the demystification of the concept of the Palestinian exilic identity. In the first place, both authors undertake the task of expatiating on the notion of internal exile in Palestine. Indeed, through their focus on such a topos, they underline the centrality of the construct of exile in the configuration of the Palestinian exilic identity. On the one hand, this version of exile is at the core of the Palestinian identity in the sense that to be Palestinian entails the experience of exile with all its psychological and psychic implications. On the other hand, this same exile shakes the very ground of being and, therefore, prompts a process of identity formation or confirmation. Moreover, drawing on the analysis of *Where the Streets Had a Name* and *Tales of a City by the Sea*, it can be inferred that even though the two writers shed light in quite different fashions on the dynamics underlying the Palestinian exilic identity, they eventually reach the same pattern, one predicated on two key identificatory components. More particularly, when it comes to Hayaat's identity construction in the course of her physical journey, the young protagonist enacts a mode of identification which centers on the internalization of spatial and national precepts. On the other side, the psychic reconciliation with her identity crisis and the fulfilment of her Palestinian selfhood in the course of her psychological journey is but an emphasis on the individuality of Hayaat and her construction of a unique, independent, and idiosyncratic version of Palestinianness despite her pertaining to the delicate period of childhood. Not only this, but the psychological journey results, more significantly, in Hayaat's internalization of a pivotal element of the Palestinian identity, which is Palestinian history. Still, if one is to examine McLeod's account on the concept of nation, one will ascertain the actual nature of the nexus between nation and history. In this regard, he advances that "[t]he nation has its own historical narrative which posits and explains its origins, its individual character and the victories won in its name" (70), and that "[n]ations depend upon the invention and performance of histories" to enable the continuity between past and present of its people's identity" (74). In the light of this, it can be extrapolated that Hayaat's internalization of Palestinian history is, indeed, but an enactment of the Palestinian *national* identity. As such, her Palestinianness becomes, on the whole, predicated on two key constituents: the Palestinian spatial identity and the Palestinian national identity. Indeed, it is exactly these two layers of selfhood which Sabawi's protagonist, Jomana, features in her confirmation of her Palestinianness. All these points considered, the Palestinian exilic identity may then be defined as an identity pattern which necessarily emanates from and is shaped by the experience of exile and which hinges on the internalization of an identificatory bond with the Palestinian space and of a sense of belonging to a social in-group which, in essence, psychologically performs the Palestinian history with all its critical occurrences and exudes the traits of resistance and agency.

2. External Exile: Away from Home

Aside from the psychological and psychic patterns of the internal exile within one's homeland, exile in its conventional meaning denotes "a social, political, religious, or anthropological state of being physically displaced from one's home and left to live in a place or manner that is different from what was one's own" (Burr 49). In contrast to this traditional sense of the concept which entails a psychological state of predicament and anguish, Eva Hoffman points out that there has been recently a burgeoning redefinition of exile as "somehow interesting, morally heroic, even glamorous" (57). This is because, as she elucidates, exile purveys an original perspective for the exiled subject, especially for exiled writers, from which everything seems new and strange, that is, the exilic position defamiliarizes existential images. However, in his essay "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said criticizes such perception of exile as "a heroic or romantic metaphor for the lonely artist or intellectual" in particular (Barbour 711) and for any exiled soul in general. In this regard, he opens his essay by articulating that "[e]xile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. [...] its essential sadness can never be surmounted" and that "[t]he achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever" (Said, "Reflections" 137). Indeed, the representation of exile as a fascinating and intriguing existential vantage point obfuscates and downplays the psychic crises and disorientation which mark the exilic condition, especially when it comes to the bitterness of distance from and the irreconcilable longing for the homeland "left behind forever," to echo Said's words. This bitter taste and mournful tone of the physical exile[7] from the homeland are conspicuously reflected in the writings of some Arab-Australian writers who, far from romanticizing and idealizing exile, unearth the convoluted psychic ramifications underlying the exilic existence of their protagonists in foreign lands. Not surprisingly, most of these are of a Lebanese origin as is the case with Nada Awar Jarrar whose protagonists Aida in her novel *Somewhere, Home* and Salah and Aneesa in *Dreams of Water* fail to identify with their new societies and spaces, lamenting instead their distant Lebanese homeland and its golden pre-war past. Following suit, Leila Yusaf Chung, another Lebanese-Australian author, devotes her only novel *Chasing Shadows* to relate the story of her Palestinian protagonist Ajamia who, having spent most of her life in Lebanon, is thrust, with the outbreak of the Lebanese civil war, into the tribulations of exile in France and Iran before her ultimate return to Lebanon. Such concern by the Lebanese-Australian authors with the question of exile stems in essence from the deep scars which the civil war has carved in the Lebanese collective unconscious. These writers' interest in exile is even more intensified by the realization that the Lebanon engraved in their memories and exilic psyches is no longer extant as exemplified by the aforementioned protagonists' sense of alienation and estrangement upon their long-awaited return to the Lebanese soil.

In this context emerges the Lebanese-Australian author Chafic Ataya with his poetry collection *Empty Shell* to address this very issue of exile as well yet in a quite different fashion which singles him out of the other Lebanese-Australian authorial voices. More particularly, Ataya's uniqueness emanates from his digression from the novelistic mode and his selection instead of a poetic voice to demystify the bitterness of exile and configure an existential selfhood. His singularity does not cease in his poetization of exile and identity but transcends it to concretize in the unconventional and genuine pattern of identity which he contrives as an antidote to the physical and existential exiles of his poet. However, it might be worth mentioning that albeit Ataya's poetry collection was written in 2003, no scholarly attention – not even a single review – has been directed towards it in spite of its fertile literary language. This certainly is a pertinent evidence of the marginalization to which Arab-Australian literature is subjected. In this regard, taking into account the uniqueness of such a collection of poems in grappling with the issues of physical exile and exilic identity, which are at the core of this chapter, and the absence of academic criticism which dissects its precepts, this part of the thesis attempts to draw some scholarly attention to Ataya's *Empty Shell* by incorporating it in the studied literary corpus. Specifically, this chapter is concerned with the thematic and interpretive study of six poems of the collection, namely "Empty Shell," "My Cosmic Self," "Sydney and my Days of Yore," "My Point of Birth," "Destination Unknown," and "My Empty Shell." Indeed, the selection of these particular poems for analysis is not a haphazard process; rather, these poems are chosen as they are the most germane within the collection to the demystification of the intricacies of the concepts of exile and identity as experienced by the poet.

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[7] The usage of the adjective "physical" to characterize this type of exile which refers to the physical departure and displacement from one's homeland to live in another place is purported to distinguish it from the other manifestations of exile, including the existential and the psychic exiles. All of these pertain to the umbrella concept of the "external exile" as distinct from the "internal exile" experienced inside the subjects' homeland as is the case with the Palestinians or the Lebanese who remained within their homelands despite the prevailing quagmires.

2.1. Mourning Disintegration and Placelessness

When examining the poems in question, one notices that these are fragments which, when aggregated together in the right order, form an architectonic whole which is the poet's self. In other words, the selected poems make up a narrative which relates the poet's existential story starting with his physical exile from his Lebanese home and his ensuing existential exile and ending with his identity formation. More importantly, a closer scrutiny of these poems unveils that these can be thematically pigeonholed into two distinct categories. The first exudes the poet's exilic placelessness and worldly disorientation, whereas the second exhibits the minutiae of the process of his identification. In this framework, moving from "Empty Shell" to "Sydney and my Days of Yore," "My Point of Birth," and "Destination Unknown," the poet, now in Australia, laments his ascending sense of exile which takes a convoluted form in this collection. If the exile of Abdel-Fattah's and Sabawi's protagonists materializes in their alienation from their immediate spatial, social, and existential conditions, the exile of Ataya's poet crystallizes in his feeling of displacement given the loss of his cherished homeland Lebanon, in his estrangement from humanity as a whole, and in his alienation from his own selfhood.

Elaborating on the notion of exile which forms the center of many of his writings, Said emphasizes the weighty presence of loss in the experience of exiles and which results from their involuntary parting from their homelands. In this respect, he claims that "what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both" (Said, "Reflections" 148). Etel Adnan, herself an exiled Arab-American poet who shares with Ataya the grief of witnessing their Lebanon's disintegration, describes exile from home in sorrowful terms: "What is exile if not the violent and involuntary loss of all the living symbols of one's identity? [...] Exile is a dispossession with no recourse" (8). In the light of this, the poet in Ataya's prefatory poem which bears the collection's title, "Empty Shell," unleashes a combination of multiplex affects that translate his exilic loss:

> On a lonely beach of a foreign land,
> so distant from my point of birth,
> pebbles and shells embrace the sand
> mingling with the foam in senseless mirth.
> My numbing feet fail to reach the foam
> and feel the churning ocean waves. (Ataya 10)

These lines inform the nature of the poet's relation with this space which, as will be exposed in the subsequent poems, is Sydney or as he terms it "the austral shores." More particularly, such a relation is unearthed through the poet's adjectival diction, for he initiates his description of space by his recourse at once to the adjectives "lonely," "foreign," and "distant." In fact, the poet's depiction of the beach as "lonely" confers on the space a desolate, macabre, and barren character which generates a mood of death. This cosmic death is itself but a metaphor for the poet's psychological loss as a result of his exile from his homeland. This is confirmed through his further characterization of this space as "foreign" and "distant." These two attributes powerfully clarify the sort of the relationship between the poet and this space, a relation not of familiarity but rather of unfamiliarity and psychological divergence. In other words, the poet finds himself located within a space which he cannot call a "home." More importantly, the position of this space is defined against the poet's "point of birth" which opens and seals the poem. Accordingly, his homeland becomes the existential reference point around which his life revolves. As such, perceiving the Australian space as emphatically "so" distant betrays the poet's psychological distance and abstraction from it. The poet's descriptive account goes on to transmute space into a mirror of his exilic psychology. In this respect, he sets the "sand" as a symbol of transience and frailty in contradistinction to the solidity represented by the "pebbles" and to the permanence incarnated in the chronological continuity of the ridges of the "shells." The juxtaposition of the symbolic meanings typified by these cosmic spatial elements is purported to uncover the observant poet's psyche, one in which his "solid," *physical* existence on these foreign shores is contrasted with his displaced, uncertain *inner* self far detached from this space. These exilic emotions vis-à-vis space are corroborated by his picturing of the natural vibrancy of space as "senseless," which reveals his perception of its cosmic movement as divested of any signification and renders his ontological relationship to it as one that is meaningless. Besides, the poet transposes his exilic loss from the surrounding space to the language of his own body. Put differently, the feeling of the numbness of his feet bespeaks the disconnection of his body from the very ground of this space, evincing, thus, that his body is not rooted in this space which he cannot call "home." Such a precept is underscored by the failure of the poet's body to be harmoniously involved in the environing cosmic spatial life in the sense that its inability to either "reach" or "feel" the elements of space accounts for the poet's physical and psychological alienation and exile from this space.

To top it all, having euphemistically and metaphorically spoken his exilic alienation through the languages of space and body, the poet ends up claiming the loss typical to exile more explicitly:

> Naked pebbles, empty shells
> and bones, broken bones,
> a sullen sky and only I,
> yearning relentlessly to be one entity with a sea. (10)

In these lines, the combination of the implemented adjectives and the cosmic components of space is of a considerable importance in probing into the poet's psyche, for the descriptive images of "naked pebbles," "empty shells," and "broken bones" all emblematize *absence*, specifically the absence of life. This absence is both a symptom and a disorder of the poet's exilic condition. On the one hand, absence symptomatizes the poet's loneliness as he is left solitary in this foreign space, metaphorically alienated from any form of life, from any flora that might spring on the pebbles, from any fauna that may inhabit the shells, and from any living human "bones." In point of fact, this loneliness is a requisite leitmotif of exile in the sense that the exile becomes cut off and isolated socially, culturally, and geographically from all that which is familiar to and delineative of his being. In line with this, Said expounds that "in a very acute sense exile is a solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation" ("Reflections" 140). Correspondingly, the sheer absence of life and the loneliness in the poem are but a metaphor for the poet's exilic solitude, both physical and psychological, which bespeaks the loss of his familiar home with all its psychological and socio-cultural foundations. On the other hand, absence is an exilic disorder *per se* given that it points to the absence of the poet's psychic essence in this foreign milieu, that is, to the loss of his identity closely affiliated to his point of birth. More plainly, the "nakedness" of the pebbles symbolizes the bereavement of the poet's soul from the safe haven that was his motherland, whereas the "emptiness" of the shells epitomizes the psychic emptiness which he feels as a result of the loss of his home and identity, while the "brokenness" of the bones incarnates the fragmentation and disintegration of his inner self. The result of this absence, be it an exilic symptom or an exilic disorder, is eventually his "yearning relentlessly to be one entity with a sea / ebbing and flowing beyond [his] reach" (Ataya 10). The poet's yearning for oneness suggests that his inner self is fragmented, decentered, and lacking unity, all of which are prominent features of exile and of the exile's disintegrated selfhood. Additionally, by qualifying his yearning as "relentless," the poet discloses the intense and excruciating torment of his exilic psyche. As such, he longs, through his merger with the sea, for unity, wholeness, order, and a center of being. Not only this, but this longing is also a tearing yearning for his home. By way of explanation, his choice of the sea to be the object of his longing is not random; rather, the sea, for him, is privileged for its "ebbing and flowing beyond his reach." This prerogative elevates the sea into a paradigm of infinite mobility, freedom, and borderlessness and allows it to traverse endless spaces, including his motherland which is "beyond [his] reach." So, by voicing his desire to merge with the sea, the poet aspires to appropriate its dynamic properties and to assume a borderless, nomadic existence. Hence, his longing becomes a tacit expression of his acute desire to escape his painful exile and to ride the sea towards one destination: his point of birth.

If in "Empty Shell," the poet imparts his exilic loss and displacement in a subtle and vague manner, choosing reservedly not to mention the name neither of his lost "point of birth" nor of the “foreign land,” in “Sydney and my Days of Yore,” he dares to mourn his parting from Lebanon more openly and intensely through his reference to the ravages of the Lebanese civil war and goes further to linger on his exile in Sydney. When one examines the title of the poem, one is left with the impression that the poem is all about Sydney and the poet’s life in it. However, a further scrutiny of the poem unveils that its kernel is Lebanon as a home and as an identity, while Sydney remains, though present, in the background. Such a discrepancy between the poem’s title and its gist demonstrates that the poet’s soul and psyche are haunted by one presence: Lebanon. From the very outset, the poet reiterates more overtly than before his identificatory position:

> Oh Sydney, I have in you a past.
> I had no future – I went away
> relating to a world of dreams
> and full of hope returning home. (63)

The poet associates Sydney solely with the past, which is quite significant in pinpointing the sort of relation that links the two. More particularly, the past always indicates an occurrence which is already complete and finalized. Correspondingly, by confining Sydney to the past, the poet transmutes it into an experience of the past which no longer shapes his present. Likewise, his claim that he has no future in Sydney signifies that none of his aspirations and dreams is rooted in this place, which discards it as a space of self-fulfillment and identification and reduces it into an exile. As a result, his ensuing action of going away attests to his inability to build an identificational bond with Sydney as he is psychologically ingrained in another space, i.e. Lebanon. This is substantiated through his labelling of the latter space as a “world of dreams” and as “home,” which idealizes it and makes it the locus of his ambitions and the core of his selfhood. Not only this, but the idea of return buttresses the poet’s exilic position in Sydney and his nostalgic obsession with his only home, Lebanon.

Besides, adducing the issue of Lebanese exiles is never complete without the mention of the civil war which has been a turning point in the lives of all the Lebanese wherever they are. In this regard, exiled in America, Adnan explains the centrality of such an internecine war in feeding the sense of exile:

> The war in Lebanon created in me great bitterness (and in many, of course). I found it useless from the start, cruel in its very premises. It killed a beautiful country, and what was the most extraordinary city of the XXth century: Beirut. […] Such a catastrophe, for what? That constatation makes one bitter and bitterness creates loneliness. Bitterness takes you back, creates distance between you and the other, between you and history. It therefore gives rise to a deep sense of exile, an almost metaphysical sense of exile. (12-13)

As a matter of fact, the Lebanese civil war has galvanized the Lebanese and has created a fathomless schism between them and the Lebanon they had known for its intellectual and cultural refinement and for its spatial and historical grandeur. No wonder that, after having witnessed much of the cruelty and fanaticism of human nature, post-war Lebanon has become so disfigured that it has grown into an unfamiliar lieu and, in bitterer terms, into an *exile* for its Lebanese *sons*, for there is nothing more harrowing than having one's space present in its geographicality yet absent as far its psychological representation of the past and of history is concerned. In this groundwork, Adnan's same feelings of exile from the once cherished Lebanon in America are reiterated by Ataya's poet in the austral space in his elegiac lines: "Blades of wars defaced the humankind / and slaughter spread across the Lebanon / scarring my image and my race" (Ataya 63). The scars which torture the poet here are, indeed, of a psychological and psychic nature and refer to the traumatization provoked by his realization of the inhumanity and inexorability of the war in Lebanon. These war scars have mostly affected his image and race, and while his "image" points to his personal identity, his "race" stands for his Lebanese social in-group, in particular, and for his Arab imagined community, in general, and, thus, incarnates his national identity. Therefore, it can be extrapolated that the Lebanese war has instigated a personal and national identity crisis in the poet's psyche, which adds to his exile.

The poet's exilic condition does not cease here but ascends further upon his return home. Put differently, even return which usually mitigates the exiles and expatriates' sense of exile does in no way comfort the poet but rather exacerbates his loss and alienation as he poetically verbalizes:

> All sorts of things took place
> after my returning home…
> The blood of my people shook my being.
> I had no choice other than to flee
> my Lebanon, my soil of birth,
> leaving my mother buried behind
> - her soul now streaming in my heart. (63)

Following his return to his cherished home, the poet makes an allusion, through his recourse to "all sorts of things," to the cruelties, disorders, and traumas perpetrated by the Lebanese war in an attempt to euphemistically impart the catalysts of his alienation and psychic malaise. Such a disclosure showcases that the disparity between the reality of his return and his preconception of return laced with the idealized image of his old Lebanon as a "home" and a "world of dreams" is so striking and discrepant that it results in his estrangement and detachment from his homeland. Consequently, his exile becomes more profound as it prevails and persists both within and without his homeland. Also, the poet's return authenticates his national identity crisis which he has earlier symbolically labelled as the scars of his race. These scars resurface in the poem as "the blood of [his] own people" which metonymizes the massacred bodies and souls of his Lebanese fellow-nationals. In this sense, by dint of his articulation that "the blood of [his] people shook [his] being," the poet evinces that witnessing such a collapse of the epitomes of his nationhood destabilizes the certainty and wholeness of his very selfhood, which further nurtures his sense of exile. His last resort is, hence, escape from his homeland. By claiming that he "had no choice," the poet bestows on his departure a "forced" character which typifies the exilic nature of his migration. However, albeit disentangling himself, by means of his escape, from the new distorted Lebanon, the poet's sense of exile is but firmer since he cannot shun away the presence of his old Lebanon with which he identifies as substantiated through the metaphor of the mother. In fact, the mother is a token of the motherland and, in the poet's case, represents his idealized, pre-war Lebanon, one which did and still does fill his existential essence. By touching upon the burial of his mother, he metaphorically adverts to the death and non-existence of the familiar version of his homeland which forms the basis of his identity, a process which Adnan also broaches in her essay: "[Beirut] does not exist anymore and will not exist, I mean *the Beirut I knew*. It has been destroyed and will not be rebuilt according to its *old patterns* […]. It is as if when I am there I am not there, and some people could lose their mind for less" (15-16; my emphasis). Analogously, the poet's statement that his mother's soul is still ingrained in the deep recesses of his psyche intimates the unfaltering presence of the old image of his motherland in his self as evidenced in his yearning for its "days of yore" and in his sense of exile.

In addition, the poet's exilic alienation and loss are further enhanced by his approach to Sydney, on the basis of which this host land never compensates for the loss of the *initial* homeland. This is buttressed by the poet's performance of a poetic apostrophe in which he addresses Sydney after his flight from the geo-political insanity in Lebanon:

> Oh Sydney, I'm back to you once more,
> but only crying over my past.
> My native land is out of sight;
> its days of yore will not return.
> . . . . (Ataya 63)

Throughout the poem, the poet implements the apostrophic structure "Oh Sydney" to address Sydney as if personifying it. Followed by a disclosure of the intense anguish his heart endures, this structure betrays a tone of grieving and of bitterness over his bereavement. Accordingly, whenever the poet addresses Sydney, his psychology never seems to be one of joy and reinvigoration but rather one of mourning. Similarly, whenever the name "Sydney" figures in the poet's discourse, it is immediately pushed into the background to grant room to the foregrounding of Lebanon as if to point out that Sydney can never substitute his lost Lebanon and that albeit his relationship with Sydney is one marked by attempts of integration, it eventually ends with an exilic feeling of detachment and disconnection. In the light of this, the poet, in this passage, construes his return to Sydney as a mere reminder of his lost past, when all his hopes and dreams were rooted in Lebanon. In other words, Sydney becomes a mere spatial framework where the Lebanese "days of yore" are psychologically and psychically re-enacted and recollected. This disposition towards Sydney is quite congruous with the character of exile wherein one "inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another" (qtd in Burr 83), which in this case matches the poet's projection of his idealized past in Lebanon into his present existence in Sydney.

Such an idea is emphatically asserted by the poet as he ends the poem with this same exilic stance:

> Oh Sydney, I am now wholly yours!
> Will I ever see tomorrow's dawn
> when Lebanon would march once more?
>
> I had a Lebanon once … (Ataya 64)

In the first line, the poet utterly resigns himself to Sydney, believing that there is no refuge for him but in this space. Yet, just after this claim, which seems suffused with surrender, he evokes Lebanon as if to remind Sydney that even if it is his only haven, it will never replace nor obliterate the memory of his beloved pre-war homeland. That is to say, even though he has left his motherland to settle in Sydney, the latter remains, in his viewpoint, an exilic locus as he can never force the presence of Lebanon into oblivion. He even goes further to proclaim that dawn in Sydney will surface only when Lebanon rises again. This implies that as long as Lebanon is immersed in its endless imbroglios, his existence in Sydney is reduced to mere darkness and nights, which alludes to his exilic displacement and disorientation. To top it all, the poet's last utterance lays bare his mourning over his irreconcilable loss of home; at the same time, its past tense and the subsequent ellipsis reveal a nostalgic longing for the old version of Lebanon. These points considered, it can be inferred that, though having settled in Sydney once and for all, his identificatory allegiance remains to his old Lebanon as the sole center of his psyche, which deepens his estrangement in Sydney and enhances his exilic position.

Furthermore, undergoing the poet's same exilic experience, though in different host lands, Adnan advances that "[o]ne exile calls to mind another kind of exile which it intensifies, defines" (9). This signifies that exile from one's homeland does not cease at the mere point of feeling the pain of being physically severed from one's native roots but goes beyond it to develop into a far more intricate experience of exile inextricably intertwined with the physical one, that is, into an existential exile. In explanatory terms, "[t]he all-too-frequent experience of disorder and expulsion from one's 'native land' has taken on a more fundamental quality that transcends the physical experience itself and has become a manner of understanding the human relation to existence and the world" (Burr 74). When this "manner of understanding" unveils eventually that the human relation to existence consists mainly of a feeling of "not-being-at-home" in the world, existential exile comes to the fore within the contours of physical exile. This is the case of the poet who, in the poem entitled "My Point of Birth," positions himself as an exile from the whole humanity. This is instantiated in his lyrical disclosure: "I feel that earth is not my home / as nations are on killing sprees" (Ataya 66). The poet's alienation from the "earth" symptomatizes his feeling of not-being-at-home in the whole world, a feeling which is, indeed, quintessential to existential exile (Burr 49). Yet, existential exile is not limited to the sense of not-being-at-home in the world but goes further to entail, as has been expounded in the previous chapter, alienation from manifold grounds of Being including the possibility for order and unity. It is this very pattern of alienation which humanity, the poet's homeland included, displays through its inhumane wars and chaos, instigating a sense of exile in the psyche of the poet who witnesses such disintegration. Here, there is a parallelism between the alienation of humanity from its natural ground of Being and the poet's psychic alienation, as if to suggest that he moves hand in hand with humanity so that when the latter becomes adrift, he, in turn, becomes existentially exiled.

What's more, the third and fourth stanzas of the poem carry on the thematic concern of the poem, i.e. the demystification of the poet's existential exile, but in a tacit fashion by resorting to the language of symbolism:

> Tomorrow's dawn may not appear:
> the sun is losing fast its heat
> and fumes are shutting off the rays.
> My heart, now leaden, will cease to beat.
>
> Beneath the pulsing stars I sleep,
> but tears by night distort my dreams. (Ataya 66)

The poet, here, is embracing a pessimistic view of existence which reinforces his exilic being. Again, such a dark existential outlook is triggered by the downfall of everything humane in humanity, mostly love, sincerity, hope, and life essence, all symbolized by the motif of the sun, and by the dominance of the barbarism of wars and bloodshed epitomized in the "fumes" which allude to the visual upshots of war weapons and bursts. As a result of this disintegration of humanity, the poet's existential exile persists, concretizing in his thorough loss of hope as represented by the disappearance of dawn which is, indeed, a negative answer to his ontological query in the previous poem, "Will I ever see tomorrow's dawn / when Lebanon would march once more?" (64). Additionally, his exile manifests in his physiological response to the downfall of humanity as he avows that his heart, heavy with all the burdens he bears and the traumas he witnesses, "will cease to beat" (66). On this score, the surrender of the poet's heart translates the agony and crisis to which his psychic life is subjected on account of the decay of human values and ethics. Not only this, but it emblematizes his giving up of his existential agency, which demonstrates his passive resignation before his ontological crisis and agony and his radical exile from humanity. Reprising this same exilic meaning is the symbolism typified by the image of the "sleeping" figure of the poet. While the stars symbolize the faint aura of optimism which the poet as a human still harbors in his worldly outlook on humanity, the night connotes human darkness and alludes, then, to the traumas and wars which he witnesses, authenticating as such that his "tears by night" are intensifiers and symptoms of this psychological darkness. Thence, the poet's optimism as mirrored in the starlight is dissipated and disrupted by the extreme bitterness of his loss, despair, and detachment from humanity to which he gives shape through his shedding of tears, which evinces the intensity and incurability of his exile from the whole existence.

Above all else, to paraphrase Adnan's words on exile, each mode of exile generates another, more intensified exile which it defines. This certainly applies to the poet's experience of exile given that the latter transitions from his physical exile from his homeland to his existential exile from humanity. And yet, his exilic experience does not stop here but goes on to reach its apex in "Destination Unknown" where he goes through an existential exile from being *per se* and from his own self. Probably, the most obvious manifestation of this exile is to be found, first and foremost, in the poem's title, "Destination Unknown." More particularly, Ataya's choice of the word "destination" to be the first linguistic unit in the poem unearths that the poet is embarking on a journey that, as will be revealed throughout the poem, is far from being of a physical nature. It is a quest for signification, a search for identity and for a psychic anchorage. Nevertheless, with the following word "unknown," the title conveys that the poet's process of search is endlessly deferred, never reached, which indicates his identity-less and placeless position. At the very onset, the poet voices his plenary ontological exile: "No connection with you, / no contact with anyone" (74). In these opening lines, the poet's physical and existential exiles intermingle through the polysemy incarnated in the pronoun "you." Put differently, "you" is intended to be interpreted both ways as Lebanon and Sydney so as to insinuate the lack of any identificatory bond with either space, for he is rooted neither in the new disfigured Lebanon nor in the foreign shores of Sydney, which signals his placelessness in the world. That is to say, the poet possesses no space whatsoever to identify with, which leaves him detached from the human world and deprives him of the privilege of belonging to an in-group. As a result, he becomes a separate, rootless entity, spatially and socially exiled from the human life, proving as such the interplay of his physical and existential exiles.

By the same token, the poet further expresses his existential exilic position by portraying himself as

> Alone on a mud boat,
> rudderless, aimless, afloat,
> . . . .
> drifting toward one last twilight
> where dusk descends to sink
> the black center of my soul. (Ataya 74)

The imagery of sailing on a mud boat which is deployed in these lines is a literary translation of the exilic state of the poet's psyche. While the boat is an emblem of his ontological journey of search for signification and identity, the "mud" is a metaphor for the critical, delicate, and enigmatic vortex of loss in which his boat is stuck. That is, being trapped in the mud and vainly struggling to disentangle himself from its grip uncover the poet's psychic experience of identity loss and existential exile incarnated in his having nowhere and no one to identify with. Added to this, the meticulous diction of the adjectives to which the poet resorts to characterize his status attests to his exilic psyche. Specifically, the adjective "rudderless" exhibits the poet's psychic disorientation – a symptom of exile – and existential loss as it conveys the absence of any guide to usher him in his psychic voyage, whereas the adjective "aimless" exudes that his quest is one with no target, which bestows on it a character of absurdism, pointlessness, and nonsensicality. Equally, the poet views his psychic self as one being “afloat,” which connotes his uprootedness. In other words, his psyche is bereft of any anchor that could root his selfhood in existence. Thereby, the poet’s existential approach to his psychic realm becomes one marked by the weighty absence of ontological meaning, which makes him alienated from his very being. More significantly, the destination towards which the psychic journey is heading ends, in the poet’s mind’s eye, with the drowning of his soul in the twilight of the dusk. In the process, he discloses that the center of his soul is “black,” that is, engulfed by all the darkness garnered from his former exiles. Put differently, it is a darkness which represents the despair, loss, alienation, and utter anguish which he has so far felt as a result of his vehement parting from his homeland and of the cruelty and barbarism of humanity, which displays the interrelation between this mode of existential exile and his exile from home and from humanity. That being said, the “twilight” becomes the last ray of hope to which the poet clings so as to redeem himself from the darkness of exile and from his identity-less being. This hope is, indeed, an integral and defining feature of exile:

> [The] individual in exile ultimately finds oneself fundamentally disconnected from that which one has lost […], and this disconnection defines the exile experience. Disconnection, however, on its own does not tell the *full* story of exile; whereas disconnection implies the primacy of the past in the experience of a lost connection, there is likewise an important consideration of the future that arises in the *hope* of a *reconnection*. While exile invariably entails a looking back at the past and what was, it likewise implies a looking forward toward what is hoped to be again. (Burr 82)

It might seem quite odd to claim that such two discrepant notions, one bitter in character – exile – the other sweet in experience – hope –, are closely affiliated. But, it is this hope which drives away the macabre mood brought about by the exilic experience and which saves the exiled subject from disintegration and catalyzes his survival and resilience.

2.2. Identity Revival through Resistance and Survival

Usually, when exiles find themselves in head-on encounters with their excruciating plight of exile, be it physical or existential or both, with all its psychic manifestations, chiefly alienation and identity crisis, they resort, in most cases, to conventional dynamics of identification which encompass, among others, their native space, their national in-group, and their past memories. But, when all of these fail to fend off the feelings of exile and re-root the exiled subjects in a given existential ground, the latter risk psychic disintegration and downfall. It is this same path of struggle for identification which Ataya's poet, exiled both physically and existentially in Australia, carries out. In other words, confronted with the anguish of his exile, he conjures up at every opportunity his affiliation and attachment to his cherished motherland. Yet, his awareness that such a bond remains psychologically virtual, never to be possibly actualized as *his* Lebanon no longer prevails, only exacerbates his placelessness in the world and furthers his exilic vortex, pushing him to the verges of psychic disintegration and agony as he laments: "My heart, now leaden, will cease to beat" (Ataya 66). The failure to reinvigorate his identity by dint of all that is familiar, mainly his native space, impels the poet to look for a new home with which to identify and to seek a different psychic route to ontologically root himself. In this regard, he brings into play his imagination whereby he contrives a "surrogate" space which pertains to a context quite different from that from which he has been exiled, that is, to the cosmic realm. Accordingly, as typified in Ataya's poems "My Cosmic Self" and "My Empty Shell," the poet survives his psychic crises through his construction of a selfhood which feeds on his identification with the oneiric cosmic space he creates: an empty shell.

Such a discussion is redolent of Said's "Reflections on Exile" wherein, speaking of Adorno's exile from his homeland Germany, he claims that "Adorno's reflections are informed by the belief that the only home truly available now, though fragile and vulnerable, is in writing" (147). This signifies that to compensate for his exile, Adorno has created a new home for him in writing. The same applies to Ataya's poet who, tormented by his exile from and his irreparable loss of his Lebanese homeland, finds a new home in his poetic imagination. Indeed, imagination is not a mere mental invention of images that do not pertain to reality as many would simply define it. Rather, as Gaston Bachelard posits, it is a whole locus and catalyst of psychic life. In point of fact, Bachelard defines imagination as "a creative faculty of the mind" which liberates the subject from a mental simulation of reality and enables him instead to create new images, forming as such a "basic measure of his mental health" (Kaplan 160). This latter prerogative enabled by imagination is exemplified by Ataya's poet in the sense that the latter would have undergone a psychic and psychological disintegration were it not for his poetic imagination as will be elucidated. In this sense, Bachelard turns imagination into a faculty requisite for the agential transcendence of the crises and disorders of reality through his postulation that "imaginary lines are the real life lines" (*Air and Dreams* 111). More significantly, he goes further to elevate the poetic image into the most exquisite crystallization of the creative imagination. In his book *The Poetics of Space*, he starts his account on imaginary poetic images by positing that "[t]he poetic image is a sudden salience on the surface of the psyche" (Bachelard xv). That is to say, poetry, as a high form of creativity, does not only uncover the ontological conundrums of the psyche but goes further to usher, shape, and restore the psyche to its equilibrium. Bachelard's expatiation on poetic imagination does not cease here as he conceives of it as rooted in what he labels "anthropo-cosmology" whereby he means that every imagined poetic space is an intimate cosmos and opens up other cosmoses. This claim is corroborated by his utterance that "[i]nhabited space transcends geometrical space" (47), which indicates that the "home" space, for Bachelard, is at once an intimate and a cosmic realm imagined by the imagining agent, namely by the poet. All these elements considered, it can be theorized that Ataya's poet enacts all these subjective processes propounded by Bachelard in an endeavor to construct an imaginary cosmic space which constitutes the very basis of his identity.

To start with, in the poem "My Cosmic Self," the poet exhibits the new foundation of his identity: the cosmos. The title itself alludes to the new pattern of identity which he embraces, that is, the cosmic identity. At the outset of the poem, the poet discloses his consciousness of his own being and his will to retrieve his ontological balance. This is instantiated in his first lines:

> Not my body not my soul
> can practice each alone
> free will and consciousness.
> The two exist as one. The one is I. (Ataya 59)

These lines reflect the poet's psychic development as he longs for the establishment of unity and order within his fragmented and disoriented self. More particularly, his reference to "free will and consciousness" is a sign of his awareness of his own being, of his sense of self, and, therefore, of his involvement in the construction of his identity. He is now sentient that his sense of psychic order and selfhood can never be achieved unless he synthesizes and reconciles the two divergent pieces of his self, that is, his physical and psychological selves, for unlike his physical being – his body – which is on the shores of Australia, his psychological being has never left Lebanon. On this score, the poet's last claim, "The two exist as one. The one is I," corroborates that he is in the process of shaping his identity by making the two ends of his inner self meet through his cosmic, poetic imagination. In fact, his resort to the cosmos to entrench a solid, organic selfhood is not haphazard but is rather governed by the fact that the cosmos itself caters to the psychic need for a home and for belonging. Such a point is underlined by Bachelard for whom the cosmos entails the will of dwelling: "cosmic reverie causes us to inhabit a world […] it gives the dreamer the impression of a home (chez soi) in the imagined universe" (*The Poetics of Reverie* 177). That is to say, the cosmos here is transfigured into a comfortable home where the lost, disoriented self can be rooted and where the placelessness of the exiled soul can be ruled out.

Yet, Bachelard's premise of finding home in the cosmos does not signify the mere psychological production of poetic images of *being* in the cosmos, but it necessitates a psychic merger with the cosmos. This human cosmicity is articulated by Bachelard in variegated tropes as that of breathing: "the world comes to breathe within me; I participate in the good breathing of the world" (179). Such a cosmic process of fusion is enacted by the poet himself in the poem:

> What if I were a cosmic entity,
> . . . .
> traversing space and grinding time
> to catch sight of my smaller self?
> What if there were in me a moon
> shredding shadows along my path?
> What if there were a sun
> scorching the core of me to dust?
> What if there were myriads of stars
> twinkling in the abyss of my soul?
> I would then be a lit-up universe,
> a facsimile of a greater one
> hurtling toward eternal emptiness
> to seek only a refuge in a shell
> . . . . (Ataya 59)

The use of "what-if" along with the verbal form "were" alludes to the poet's performativity of his cosmic imagination as an agential act of resistance to and deconstruction of his exile. In other words, his psychic search for signification and for unity is actualized by his imaginational metamorphosis into a cosmic existential form. That is to say, he escapes his exilic existence in the world by resorting to the cosmos through his identification as "a cosmic entity." Such transformation is of a considerable paramountcy to the poet's selfhood in that it radically affects his temporal and spatial conceptions of his own existence. To elucidate this, it might be crucial to recollect that exiles are governed, even restricted, by space and time boundaries as Said insinuates: "a life of exile moves according to a different calendar […]. Exile is led outside habitual order" ("Reflections" 149). Spatially, exiles are torn between the borders of their homelands and their exilic locations, while, temporally, they are prisoners of a golden past and aliens to a dissatisfactory present. Hence, by merging with the universe, the poet liberates himself from his exile and from the spatio-temporal constraints of his exilic state since he becomes cosmically able to "traverse" spatial borders and "grind" temporal spans. His enactment of his cosmicity results in the emergence of a more solid self in comparison to his former exiled self which he now refers to as a "smaller self." The smallness here is a symbolism of the vulnerability, frailty, and disintegration of the traumatized and exiled poet's self and from which he now detaches and disentangles himself, finding instead his psychic solace in his imaginary, free cosmic self. So far, it can be inferred that the poet configures a liberatory, cosmic identity on the basis of which the cosmos *per se* is his home and the essence of which is the outcome of his fusion with the cosmos. On this account, the subsequent lines purvey three imagined tableaus, as implied by the poetic parallelism introduced by the "what-if" clauses, which all contribute to the holistic creation of the underlying basis of the poet's identity: his cosmic fusion.

The nexus between these envisioned images and the poet's identity is made clear through the symbolism inherent in the implemented cosmic elements, the moon, the sun, and the stars, for these are all tropes of *light*, which substantiates that his quest for identity finds its lost light in his cosmic selfhood. First, the cosmic fusion between the poet and the cosmos is initiated by his merger with the moon so that their movement becomes bidirectional and involving unity. Not only does the poet's existential entity "*me*" become a dwelling for the cosmic moon, but his existential "path" also becomes lit up and guided by the moonlight. Such an interplay between the poet and the moon becomes, then, symptomatic of his identification with the imagined space of the cosmos. Second, the poet's cosmic identity concretizes in his cosmic fusion with the sun. This process transpires through the transformation of the poet's “core” into “dust” by the catalyzing power of the sun. Given that dust itself is a material cosmic substance, it can be deduced that the sun subjects the poet to a corporeal metamorphosis from an exiled anthropomorphic body to a free *cosmomorphic* dust. Equally, the scorching fire or heat of the sun can be construed as a cosmic reinvigoration of the exiled poet’s body, which points to his physical liberation as a result of his cosmic identification. This process of identificatory confluence materializes, finally, in the poet’s spiritual union with the stars. Put differently, the exiled poet’s soul is solely affiliated with Lebanon and is in a state of psychological gloom which is hinted at by the word “abyss” that implies darkness and profundity. Yet, the stars as cosmic elements find a dwelling in the poet’s soul, and, reciprocally, they illuminate his abysmal darkness, redeeming him from the psychic darkness of his exile from Lebanon. The result of these facets of the poet’s cosmic fusion which originates from his fantasized poetic reverie is the formation of a cosmic selfhood, one whose essence and home are anchored in the poetic cosmos and its components. More particularly, not only does the poet identify with the imagined cosmos, but he is further “lit-up”; that is to say, he has reached a state of self-fulfillment wherein he exults in the light of the ontological signification, order, and unity which he has derived from his union with the cosmos. On top of this, his fusion with the manifold cosmic elements triggers a process of ontological becoming whereby he becomes a cosmos dwelling within the Cosmos – the universe. In this respect, it is of the essence to note that the universe is a metaphor for a rhizomatic pattern of existence, one which is nomadic, with neither beginning nor end. So, by imagining himself as a micro-universe, the poet assumes a dynamic, unfinalizable, and nomadic identity. Eventually, he transposes his dwelling and the roots of his identity from the most general, the cosmos, to the most specific, emptiness. Such emptiness, for him, can be ascertained nowhere but in an empty shell. By harboring such a conception, the poet fulfills his longing for psychic unity which he has expressed at the beginning of the poem in the sense that, as Bachelard advances, “the shell, for the Ancients, was the symbol of the human being in its entirety, body and soul" (*The Poetics of Space* 116). It follows that, being the epitome of psychic unity, the shell becomes the quintessential antidote to the poet's psychic fragmentation and the nucleus of his cosmic identity.

In point of fact, the consequential centrality of the shell can be discerned from the first poem of the collection, "Empty Shell," where the poet laments his exile. As has been adduced, the very concept of exile entails hope. This hope is at once virtualized and actualized on the part of the poet by the same motif: the shell. In the midst of his exile, the poet finds no salvation from disintegration but in his decisive encounter with a shell he picks up:

> Therefore, I raise a shell
> and lend it to my ear
> only to hear the wind carry
> a sea sand mounting sound
> containing a waveless tune,
> so cosmic, so measureless a tune
> streaming out of an *empty* shell
> . . . . (Ataya 10; my emphasis)

The act of raising the shell to his ears comes as an assuasive reaction, as shown by the use of "therefore," to the pain of exile which he has felt on this "lonely beach of a foreign land," to use his proper words. What is intriguing about the poet's recourse to the shell is not the shell itself as a cosmic element but is rather its "emptiness" which recurs in the collection on various occasions. On the one hand, the shell's emptiness symbolically makes room for the homeless and placeless poet. This symbolic function is reminiscent of Bachelard's discourse on the image of shells as imaginary cosmic spaces, in which he briefly mentions the peculiarity of "empty" shells: "an empty shell, like an empty nest, invites day-dreams of refuge" (*The Poetics of Space* 107). In accordance with this, the empty shell becomes a refuge for the placeless, exiled poet, a cosmic home which compensates for the image of the lost Lebanon which he harbors in his psyche. On the other hand, the emptiness of the shell epitomizes the poet's psychic emptiness, that is, his identity void and the absence of his soul's essence as a result of the irreconcilable loss of his homeland. In the same vein, the emptiness of the shell creates a paradox in the sense that the shell is at once empty yet teeming with a peculiar cosmic tune, which evidences that there *is* life inside this ostensibly lifeless form. Concretized in the sound which haunts the poet's senses, this paradoxical life is the existential reinvigoration which the shell proffers to the psychically agonizing poet so as to shun away his exilic feelings and restore his roots and sense of "home." As such, by lending his ear to the shell and hearing this sound that springs from it, the poet's auditory sense becomes imbued with the spirit and essence of the shell, which makes him merge and identify with it. Aside from this, the diction implemented here is of utmost momentousness given that each linguistic unit conveys a symbolic signified which contributes to the delineation of the signification of the shell. For instance, labelling the sound generated by the shell as a "tune" connotes that it is a song of life, a deep voice of the soul. More importantly, the characterization of the sound of the shell as "waveless" may connote that this sound does not pertain to the human range of sound "waves." That being the case, the poet's reference to the tune of the shell as "waveless" elevates it to an existential level beyond the human grasp, associating it, thus, with identity as an existential construct. Equally, the adjective "cosmic" confirms not only the existential dimension of the tune but also its universality. Put differently, the tune becomes a sound, a language of all places, transmuting the shell into "the home of all homes," including the poet's Lebanese home. At last, the adjective "measureless" confers an unfinalizability, fluidity, and an all-inclusiveness on the identity voiced by the tune of this shell. All in all, exiled from his homeland with which he identifies, the poet finds no other home but in the cosmos, the universe, as incarnated in the overarching space of the shell.

Moreover, the poet's empty shell does not merely become his cosmic refuge and home but transcends this to be the anchorage and fulfillment of his very self as exuded through his enumeration of the ontological similarities and differences between his own self and the shell in the collection's most expository poem, "My Empty Shell." To begin with, the title and form of the poem foreshadow its focus on the poet's identification with the shell. While the title of the first poem in the collection was "Empty Shell," the title of this particular poem is "*My* Empty Shell," and although they seem quite analogous, the insertion of "my" in the second title utterly alters its symbolic meaning. Indeed, such addition reveals an appropriation on the part of the poet of the empty shell and proposes the title as paraphrasing his characterization of the shell as "My own and only home." Equally, it suggests that an inextricable bond between the poet and the shell is established, which makes his identity rooted in and predicated on the shell. Besides, this identificatory bond is highlighted through the form of the poem which consists of couplets so as to emblematize that the poet and the shell make a harmonious, cosmic couple. In other words, the rhyming and inseparability of the couplets suggest that the poet and his shell form two united, fused entities involved in a relation of identification. It is also worth mentioning that an examination of the poem's first couplet uncovers the peculiarity of the shell which the poet singles out: "My shell, my empty shell, you are a shell / freed from the flesh and yet with much to tell!" (Ataya 77). In these first lines, the poet's deliberate linguistic transition from "my shell" to "my empty shell" is purported to underline the emptiness of the shell, which recalls the symbolism of emptiness in the first poem and reverberates Bachelard's claim that empty shells evoke the image of refuge. Hence, the poet's choice of this specific shell is rationalized by the meanings which it conveys as a signifier.

Furthermore, as has been theorized, the poet's cosmic identity is molded by the ontological similarities and differences which prevail in his relation with the shell. On the one hand, the shell resembles the poet in several ways, which transmutes it into an "other-self" of the poet. This similitude is metaphorically illustrated in the second line of the aforementioned couplet: "freed from flesh and yet with much to tell" (77). Here, the poet confers on the shell a mystic power on account of its paradoxical nature in the sense that even though its emptiness points to its deprivation of any life form, it conceals a cosmic life, cosmic secrets beyond human grasp like the measureless, cosmic, "waveless tune" which the poet heard in the shell in their first encounter in "Empty Shell." Drawing on this oxymoronic structure of the shell, it can be inferred that this paradoxical property is a common feature it shares with the poet. Although both are internally "empty" – the shell is devoid of its inner physical life, while the poet of his psychic and psychological essence –, both harbor an innermost life incarnated in their profound existential knowledge. More specifically, just like the shell which has "much to tell" about spaces through its measureless, waveless cosmic tune, the poet has much to tell, through his mournful lines, about the destructive tune which humanity is performing in its wars and decay. The poet goes beyond this metaphorical similarity to shed light on another condition which the shell, like himself, goes through:

> The swell has wrenched you from your ocean bed
> to cast you alien on a shore instead...
> You are being tossed about the sand, the foam
> and violent waves to live away from home. (77)

The poet showcases that the shell has been extirpated from its roots embodied in the "ocean bed" and alienated on a foreign shore. As such, he is pointing out to its alienation and displacement and more importantly to its exile. On this account, it becomes a cosmic epitome of the poet himself since he has also been dislocated from his motherland and roots and displaced on the same "foreign" Austral shore. Not only this, but, like the poet, the shell is not merely displaced from its home but is detached from its surrounding as well, being vehemently unable to integrate. Added to this, the shell is resting on symbols of fragility and ephemerality, that is, the sand and the foam respectively, and on those of instability, i.e. the violent waves. Therefore, it is able neither to anchor itself in this environment nor to peacefully settle in its landscape. Again, the shell becomes a poetic allegory of the poet who at once perceives himself as having been violently alienated from his home given its relentless wars and feels quite foreign, psychologically frail, and uncertain in these “foreign” shores as he keeps labelling them. Thus, he and the shell become one entity with a history of displacement and alienation. On top of this, the concept of home which haunts the poet’s psyche is another experience which he shares with his shell as he imparts in his couplet: “Your home I know. It’s far, so far from land, / so deep beyond the reach of human hand” (77). The structure of the first line has been adjusted so that the focus is laid on the home of the shell which opens the sentence. This indicates that the poet zeroes in on the home of the shell given that his whole search for identity hinges in its greatest part on the very concept of home and on actualizing it. In this sense, his choice of the shell is based on his inclination for space. Also, the poet signals his familiarity with the shell’s home, that is, its origins and roots, which signifies that he already has a psychological connection with the shell and identifies with it. In the same vein, his emphasis on the unreachability of its home adds to its power and cosmic mysticism. Yet, more germane to the poet’s identificatory bond with the shell is the fact that such unreachability and remoteness make it closer in nature to the poet’s home in the sense that his Lebanese motherland is not only physically far from his present location but is also psychologically unreachable because of its categorical alteration and its geo-political imbroglios. Correspondingly, the shell’s exilic existence transmutes it into a cosmic replica of the poet’s self.

On the other hand, the shell possesses its own ontological idiosyncrasies which distinguish it from the poet yet remain quite vital for his identification with this cosmic element as they complement his self and fill his psychic emptiness. Probably, the most blatant of the shell features which underscore its difference is that demystified by the poet while addressing it: “You sway between the ebb and flow of time, / yet still you sing in rhythm and rhyme” (77). The phrase “ebb and flow of time” in this poetic discourse is laden with significant connotations in that it symbolizes the movement of time between the past and the present, which is, indeed, a temporal pattern symptomatic of the exiled subject. What the poet insinuates here is that the shell is not only affected by the spatial ebb and flow but also by a temporal ebb and flow; that is to say, just like him, it is influenced by its past exile from its ocean bed and by its present foreignness and alienation. All the same, the shell proves to be different from the poet since it has maintained its order, represented by its "rhythm," and a cosmic harmony with its existential status, as betokened by its "rhyme," in its song which is but its life song. The imagery of the singing shell is a personification which is intended to make its comparison to the poet a plausible task. By so doing, it can be extrapolated that while the poet's exile has resulted in his psychological chaos and psychic fragmentation, the shell, notwithstanding its exile, still upholds its order and its existential harmony and unity through the recondite, cosmic tunes it assimilates and disseminates. This same imagery figuratively depicts the shell with its rhythmic and rhymeful singing as more successful than the poet in singing his own field of expertise – poetry. The poet is bitterly mourning his chaos, despair, loss, and fragmentation in his poetic lines, whereas the shell maintains a composed air and sings order and unity. It follows that the power of the shell and its resistance and resilience to its exile make it different from and more agential than the poet. Thereby, the power of its difference becomes a cosmic balm which heals the poet's alienated psyche and soothes his exile as implied by his adherence to rhythm and rhyme in this very poem. The poet carries on his examination of the shell's character just to discern another difference between the latter and his: "No more a heart, no more a pulse to beat, / yet still you feel the touch of naked feet" (77). This couplet is evidently redolent of the poet's "leaden" heart which has "cease[d] to beat" (66) and of his "numbing" feet (10). This being so, the poet is cognizant that like his dead soul, leaden heart, and derealized spirit embodied in the absence of any pulse, the shell has lost its essence, that is, the life form it usually incorporates, and its affiliation to and intimacy with the world. Thus, as has been noted before, the poet and the shell share their bereavement and loss of their inner lives on account of their exile. However, the shell turns out, once again, to be more resilient and resistant than the poet, for while the latter's own feet have become numb because of the detachment and derealization inherent in his exile and which translate his psychic agony and pain, the shell still interacts with its surrounding space and "senses" the life surrounding it, escaping and resisting the disintegration and agony imposed by exile. As such, the shell possesses everything that the poet longs for to surmount his exilic condition. That's why, he does not only take refuge in it but appropriates it in an act of cosmic merger with it, the result of which is a cosmic self endowed with the capacity to resist exile and be rooted in the cosmos realm. Above all else, the evolution of the poet's selfhood in conformity with the shell's empowering difference does not cease here but goes to concretize in his awe vis-à-vis this empty creature:

> The wind whistles in you to chisel scars
> and pare you down beneath the southern stars.
> You stand defiant though of that element
> and all that lies beneath the firmament.
> I stand yet by the ocean edge in fear,
> longing to raise you once more to my ear. (77-78)

In this poetic passage, the "wind" is a metaphor for the predicaments and difficulties which the shell goes through in its foreign shore and which physically damage it, leaving the traces of "scars" and of degradation as indicated by the process of "paring" it. Again, the shell experiences the poet's same torment and typifies his suffering. Particularly, the leitmotif of the wind corresponds to the worldly hardships which he has undergone, including exile, war, inhumanity, and death, and which instigate psychological scars within him and degrade his own self. Yet, as articulated by the adverb "though" and by the juxtaposition between the shell and the poet, the shell, in contrast to the desperate, exiled poet who stands on the ocean "margins" afraid and lonely, brings into play its agential differentia epitomized in its defiance which attributes to it the trait of resistance to all the cosmic dilemmas and bestows on it cosmic power and *voice*. Such discrepancy between the two cosmic beings compels the poet to long for the shell. In fact, as has been expounded in the first poem of the collection, "Empty Shell," when the poet has raised the shell to his ear, he has been reinvigorated psychologically and psychically. This moment of existential fusion has been the only time of solace and comfort for the poet in the course of his exilic existence; that is to say, it has been the only temporal juncture in which he has found his lost self and home and has, therefore, retrieved his inner essence and identity. As a result of this initial encounter, on the one hand, and of his culminating exilic feelings, on the other, the poet experiences a deep longing to merge with the shell again since it is within it that he hears "the sea sand mounting sound" and "the waveless tune, so cosmic, so measureless." Briefly, he hears the sound of his lost home, the sound of his cosmic haven, which transmogrifies the shell's sound into the existential tune of *home*. Overall, the poet finds in the shell's similarity an identification with his suffering and exilic experience and in its difference everything that he needs to reconstruct the lost and broken fragments of his self and to be "whole" again.

No wonder then that the final couplets of this poem translate the fulfillment of his identity by carrying out a thorough, cosmic fusion with *his* shell:

> Here, I heard the whole creation through
> and heard the tune of eternity, too…
> Oh my shell, tide of time is overdue!
> This time, I long to hear myself in you. (78)

In the first couplet, the verb "to hear" is in the past tense, which denotes that the poet is referring to his first encounter with the shell in the first poem. By incorporating the "whole creation" and "tune of eternity" in the cosmic tune which the shell has generated, the poet elevates it into a mystic cosmic entity which pervades all the spatio-temporal realms of his existence. This means that he does not merely eternalize it but goes further to confer on it an unfinalizable and all-encompassing identity. The shell as such becomes endowed with a cosmic power that enables it to cross temporal and spatial borders and subsume identities unhampered by temporal and spatial constraints. In this case, its exilic journey becomes a vantage point which grants it a flexible, dynamic, and border-crossing identity. In the light of this, having found his home in the shell, the poet desires to become one entity with it, to "hear," in the present time, the sound of his spirit and soul in the shell among all the sounds it subsumes. This renders his longing as a yearning to root his identity in the shell and to fill the shell with his presence, that is, to establish a "cosmic affinity" with it and to fulfill their cosmic confluence. Finally, the poet's relation with the shell takes a new dimension in his mind's eye, which only makes his identity more deep-seated in this cosmic element as the last lines illustrate: "I saw you first awhile on Mount Sunneen, // Oh empty shell, my soul for Lebanon! / I heard your soul – I hear it on and on …" (78). What is intriguing at first glance is his claim to have seen the shell first on his Lebanese homeland, which clarifies his instinctive predilection for and clinging to it among all the other ecological elements. It follows that the shell, for the poet, is more than a comforting home; rather, it is imbued with the cosmic presence of *his* psychologically omnipresent Lebanese home. In different terms, the shell can be conceived of as the cosmic totem of Lebanon, one which encapsulates the spirit of the Lebanese space on which the poet's existence is centered. In actual fact, the poet implements his imagination to entrench an affinity between the shell and Lebanon, for, literally speaking, how could he remember a shell among thousands of other shells on the Lebanese mountains? This evidences that, by dint of his poetic imagination, he encompasses his idealized Lebanese space within this very shell, transmuting the latter not only into a cosmic reproduction of the Lebanese spirit but also into a repertoire of his lost Lebanese spatial identity. Subsequently, the poet seals his poem by confirming that the shell *is* his Lebanese soul, the lost self that has disappeared with the downfall of his golden Lebanon. The verb "to hear," which has become a symbolism of the poet's fusion with the shell, is eventually mentioned both in the present and the past tenses and is modified by the adverbial phrase "on and on" that implies an endlessness conferred on the present. Such usage is intended to pinpoint the fulfillment of the poet's cosmic self by adverting to the presence of a cosmic confluence which involves three entities: the empty shell, the poet, and Lebanon. This unifying process, the nucleus of which is the shell, puts an end to the poet's exile by proffering him the shell as a "home" and a "self."

In conclusion, Ataya's poetry can be considered as ground-breaking in the field of Arab-Australian literature in the sense that it maps exile and identity in its discourse but in a differently ingenious fashion. In other words, burdened by the endless political quagmires in Lebanon, Ataya escapes the realm of reality and makes his exiled poet dwell instead in the safe abode of the imaginary realm. As such, he does not only propose imagination as a panacea for the disintegration and alienation typical to exile, but he further concocts an unconventional mode of identity, that is, the cosmic identity. Indeed, this mode of identification intensely championed by Ataya in his poetry emerges as a pattern of exilic identity which is grounded in the humane approach to existence and which evades essentialism given its rootedness in an unfinalizable and rhizomatic realm, i.e. the poetic cosmos.

Chapter 2: Exilic Identity in Anglophone Indian-Australian Literature

A close scrutiny of Indian-Australian works unveils that the majority of these fall into the category of "migrant literature" which negotiates the dynamic, in-between, and hybridized structures of their characters' diasporic identities. More recently, many of these works have displayed a nascent tendency towards transculturality, shaping the preliminary contours of the "transcultural identity." However, elaborating on migratory experiences is never complete without taking into account the exilic experience which has long been the focal concern of various scholars and authors, including mainly Edward Said, Joseph Brodsky, and the existentialist pioneers. Surprisingly, the theme of exile is scarcely broached by Indian-Australian authors. This does in no way signify that the exilic experience and identity are absent in the Indian-Australian diaspora. On the contrary, exile is a strongly present condition in the Indian-Australian experience of migration in one way or another, for Australia has not always been welcoming of cultural diversity. Australia is historically known for its displacing attitude towards non-European immigrants as substantiated by its exclusionary and racist White Australia Policy[8] and by the Australian academic historian David Walker's claim: "It can hardly be denied that ignorance and prejudice towards Asian nations, cultures, and peoples has figured prominently in our history" (313). Despite Australia's abolition of the White Australia Policy and its embrace of a multicultural policy, its alienating and discriminatory character towards non-European minority groups still persists as typified, among other issues, in the prevalence of what might be termed "new racism,"[9] in the acts of violence perpetrated against Indian students (Sarwal, *Narratives* 59), and in the Indian immigrants' difficulty of finding work in Australia or their confrontation with discrimination at work (Acharya). All these exclusionary attitudes trigger the psychological experiences of disconnection, disorientation, displacement, anxiety, trauma, and alienation, all of which are feelings symptomatic of exile.

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[8] The "White Australia Policy," institutionally known as the "Immigration Restriction Act" and introduced in Australia in 1901, was a legislation that enabled the Australian government to stop the movement of non-European immigrants into the country, "particularly those of Asian background, with the goal of creating an 'Anglo-Celtic' nation" (Armillei and Mascitelli 114). As such, it is considered as a manifestation of a racist ideology which was purported to preserve a "white Australia."

It is then quite intriguing to perceive the question of exile, or at least racism as a catalyst of it, as a largely overlooked issue in the literature of the Indian diaspora in Australia. Such a literary disposition, echoed in Sarwal's articulation that "[r]acism or social prejudices are a lived reality for many people in this part of the world [Australia], but it remains largely a silent or invisible issue" (*Narratives* 7), can be explained by the Asian-Australian communities' silence and voicelessness despite their subalternity and powerlessness (*Narratives* 11). Another explanation of this Indian muteness and passivity over their exilic troubles is presented by Ghassan Hage who opines that "the 'last thing' the migrants (particularly men) would like to share with their families back home is shocking stories about racism, discrimination or prejudices that they may have experienced in public or the workplace" (Sarwal, "Re-Mapping Caste" 3) as they will most likely receive such critical questions as "why did you make us suffer and move to the end of the world [Australia] just to get demeaned and insulted?" (Hage, "Multicultural Situations" 494). Hage goes further to posit that the image of the familial and class migratory experience in literature, movies, and some sociological studies is often represented "as a positive experience" ("Multicultural Situations" 494). Probably, such attitudes are derived from the social concern of Indians, especially Indian diasporans and their families back home, with maintaining a privileged status, a prestigious position, and a favorable reputation within their community. Nevertheless, in the recent years, few Indian-Australian authors have dared to break the silence about the exilic experiences of their communities and to realistically portray the socio-cultural quandaries and victories of their compatriots within a highly Australicentric society. Among these emerges the playwright Rashma N. Kalsie who, drawing on her own experience and on the tormenting experiences of Indian students in Australia which she heard, devotes her play *Melbourne Talam* to paint a dramatic tableau of the exilic Indian experience in Australia with all its socio-cultural and psychological intricacies. In this regard, predicated on the interpretation of the speech, behavior, and thought patterns of the play's two protagonists Poorna and Jasminder, this chapter endeavors to demystify how these two personify the topos of exile differently and configure their exilic selfhoods in parallel with their exilic grounds of being.

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[9] "New racism" refers to the contemporary forms of racism which mark a transition from biological approaches to racism to its cultural conceptualizations. The ideology of new racism incorporates "cultural dimension, ethnic linkages, and assertion of certain religious beliefs," underscores cultural difference, and "acts as a 'natural' determinative force that 'locks individuals and groups a priori into their cultural genealogy' (p. 12)" (Sarwal, *Narratives* 11).

1. Exiled in a Different *Talam*

Exile is no longer confined to its classical definitions as political banishment or forced displacement from one's homeland. Rather, as has been expounded in the previous chapter, beside its physical manifestation – displacement from the homeland –, exile can concretize as a psychological alienation within one's home or as an existential detachment from life and humanity. Yet, its patterns do not cease here, for exile, as Naficy articulates, "consists of multiple and variegated exiles, big and small, external and internal, forced and voluntary" (2). Bharati Mukherjee in her turn distinguishes between "exiles-immigrants" and "exiles-expatriates," inferring that in both manifestations of exile, the migratory experience is perceived "as a journey caused either by a traumatic experience or a desire for adventure and exploration" (Meerzon 26). Nevertheless, Mukherjee conceives of exile as a "traumatizing, degrading, and disenfranchising" act and as "an experience of agony, offering no possibility for self-realization" (26). This indicates that, as has been elucidated with the studied Arab-Australian works, exile, be it physical, psychological, or existential – though all may be reticulate at some point – is an experience inseparable from the psychological states of loss, disorientation, mourning, and alienation. And is there an embodiment of this tragic lexicon of exile more climactic than equating it with the metaphor of death as Said does (Said, "Reflections" 138)? In the same vein, Joseph Brodsky differentiates exile from migration by describing the latter as "a multitude of displaced people seeking refuge in places different to their home" while identifying exile as "as a psychological, philosophical, and existential condition that defines this experience of migration as displacement, loss, and homelessness" (Meerzon 19). In this framework, driven by the desire for a better future in Australia and symptomatizing, hence, Mukherjee's conception of exile as a search for "adventure and exploration," Kalsie's protagonists Poorna and Jasminder immigrate to Australia and particularly to Melbourne as insinuated in the play's title, *Melbourne Talam*. Yet, their exilic experiences are triggered precisely not at the time of their departure but rather at the point of their exposure to the unfamiliar and alien socio-cultural dynamics of their host society, echoing the exilic artist Natasha Davis's claim: "the story of exile begins with a rupture" (qtd in Meerzon 30).

1. 1. Displacement: Asynchrony with Melbourne's Rhythm

Having been hired by his company in Hyderabad to work on a software project in Melbourne, Poorna, an IT engineer, settles in Melbourne along with his two colleagues and friends Shashi and Shiva. Nevertheless, it does not take long before he is discomforted by Melbourne's rhythm – Melbourne's *talam* – which initiates his multi-facetted exilic experience typified in in his social isolation, in his alienation from Melbourne's rhythm, and climactically in his downfall. To begin with, social isolation denotes "basically the inability to feel connected to the society," a condition where the "constant rejection and degradation of people isolate them from the world around them" (Singh 5). Such a disconnection from society, which echoes the disconnection inherent in exile, is experienced by Poorna who, far from the familiar, vibrant and gregarious atmosphere of Hyderabad, finds himself in an unsettling social environment wherein he feels isolated in many ways. A subtle illustration of this can be seen in the stage direction following Poorna's struggle to find his train in Flagstaff Station: "*He looks around to ask – no-one is looking in his direction*" (Kalsie 3). In this diasporic context, the act of "not looking" goes beyond its literal level to assume a symbolic function in the sense that it inserts Poorna within the framework of invisible alterity and of subalternity in Melbourne society. Poorna's response to this social marginality obtruded on him is equally significant as he declaims, "Let me get out of here" (3), which substantiates his sense of trappedness and desire to escape this reductionist and exclusionary position. This is confirmed and more lucidly expatiated in another setting, i.e. on the train, where Poorna's social isolation ascends:

> *POORNA is on the train. Other PASSENGERS are either texting or calling.* (8)
>
> *He watches the PASSENGERS. But they do not notice him.*
>
> *Beat.*
>
> Melbourne people are so busy – no time to look up from their phones.
>
> *Beat.*
>
> *Silence.*
>
> I'm not used to so much silence – this train is quieter than my home in Hyderabad […]. (9)
>
> *PASSENGERS are still on their phones. POORNA looks at them in anticipation of a chat. He tries to say something but stops. They take no notice of him.*
>
> *Beat.* (10)

Indeed, the action of "un-noticing" Poorna by the passengers, who stand as a microcosm of the Melbournian community as signaled by his labeling of them as "Melbourne people," reverberates the previous stage directions at the station, yet one can obviously remark the deliberate shift in the diction of the verb informing the passengers' deportment. In other words, there is a remarkable transition from "not looking" to "un-noticing." While the first one, though symbolic, bears a certain behavioral spontaneity, the second entails the intentionality and will subsumed in the act of ignoring and "unseeing" Poorna. This underlines his subalternity and outsiderness from the Melbournian social in-group and underscores at once his otherness and his othering, which marks his disconnection from the social landscape of Melbourne and his isolation. Not only is Poorna socially exiled through rendering him invisible and excluded, but he is further exiled by this in-group's detachment from their human nature of sociability and involvement instead in another type of exile, that exercised by what Derrida terms the "techno-tele-media apparatuses" (Bhabha, "Arrivals and Departures" ix). These technological apparatuses, as Bhabha postulates, result in a temporal disconnection by engendering an existential state of "acceleration" and "tele-technic dislocation" (ix). He goes further to explain that they generate a condition of exile by disturbing the "sense of ontology, of the essentiality or inevitability of being-and-belonging by virtue of the nation" (ix). That is to say, these mechanizing devices isolate the individuals who implement them and create, thus, a psychological distance and rift between them and their social in-group and reality. This is the case of the passengers on the train whom Poorna observes, for overwhelmed by the power of their "phones" which reduces their actions to "texting or calling," they become exiled from the naturalistic order of humanity entailing communication and sociability and from each other as members of the same social in-group. This is reinforced by Poorna's remark that Melbourne people have "no time to look up from their phones," which translates his awareness of the surrounding virtual world wherein these passengers, as microcosmic social agents, have lost their social bonds and have become socially alienated. Therefore, Poorna becomes displaced from the authentic social reality of the Australian community and placed instead within a *simulacrum* of it, which immerses him in a further social exile. Additionally, his exilic isolation is translated into a significant trope which figures both in the stage directions and in his speech, imposing as such its presence: silence. In fact, the playwright uses silence as a metaphor to reflect on Poorna's social displacement from a social and a psychic perspective. On the social level, silence points to the absence of language and, hence, to the absence of a socially structured system which closely binds these in-group members. Equally, given that language is a national symbol, its absence connotes the absence of a united social culture. This social schism prompts a process of double social alienation, of the Melbourne in-group members from each other and of Poorna from this so-called social community. On the psychic level, silence mirrors the psychic *absence* within Poorna's self, that is, the lack of a psychic insight into this disfigured, *exiled* and exiling social reality and the loss of the social familiarity and roots he identifies with in Hyderabad. Both levels delineate Poorna's confrontation with an alien social reality wherein he finds himself isolated.

In the same context, Poorna's feeling of social isolation is not only perceived in the stage directions accompanying his actions and in his soliloquial observations, but is concretized in his speech directed to other protagonists. In this respect, he obliquely discloses such a tormenting emotion to his Hyderabadi friend Shashi through his questions: "But are you sure you want to live here? Has anyone ever talked to you in this office – as in *talked*? Not 'Hi, beautiful day' kind of talk" (Kalsie 22). Rather than addressing Shashi with his query, Poorna is in reality unleashing the recesses of his subconscious. Put differently, his discourse betrays his psychic position vis-à-vis Melbourne as a social space. His initial question – "are you sure you want to live here?" – translates his own uncertainty about his desire to carry on life in Melbourne. This exudes that he is socially a "floating" subject in Melbourne; that is, he has in no way reterritorialized in Melbourne society but is rather abstracted and distant from it. In the same vein, Poorna is quite resentful with regard to the Melbournian social landscape, for his social invisibility and marginality are not limited to the train where every person is basically a stranger but persists even at work. In other words, even at his office, a public social space like the train yet more intimate, his Australian colleagues display a cold, detached, and superficial attitude in their social relationships. The word "talk" which fundamentally incarnates the essence of social identity and dialogic communication is reified from its meaning in the sense that, as alluded in Poorna's speech, it becomes a hollow word which enacts simply a phatic meaning, conveying no social warmth or signification. Also, Poorna's question, "Has anyone ever talked to you in this office?," insinuates his sense of his social outsiderness and otherness and more importantly of negligence. This latter psychological behavior towards him generally "isolates the human from society" as it subsumes the "loss of self-esteem and individuality [that] generates feelings of self-estrangement, which makes [him] feel unable to find a reward in society" (Singh 6). Hence, Poorna's disclosure of his feelings of negligence and exclusion from the social relationships in his workplace is but a voicing of his social exile in Melbourne.

Moreover, Poorna's experience of displacement is exacerbated by his alienation from Melbourne's unfamiliar rhythm which crystallizes in the Melbournian instrumentalist, egocentric and mechanized existence. As a matter of fact, alienation denotes "the state of feeling estranged or separated from one's milieu, work, products of work or self" ("Alienation"). Socially speaking, people are subjected to the condition of alienation when "there is an interruption in their mutual affection or reciprocal understanding" (Wood 24). More particularly, from a sociological outlook, alienation is a concept which derives mostly from Max Weber's "recognition of the individual's feeling of helplessness in a 'disenchanted' world governed by rational, bureaucratic, and impersonal institutions" (Skand 23). Sociologists conceive of alienation to be the outcome of "human powerlessness, meaninglessness, cultural estrangement, social isolation, and self-estrangement" (Singh 5). With this in mind, it can be assumed that, added to the social isolation which he experiences in Melbourne, Poorna's alienation stems from his estrangement from the rationalistically utilitarian and bureaucratically egotistic rhythm of Melbourne. Rhythm in the play is not used in its basic meaning to refer to the "pace" of life or to the "speed" of time but is deployed as a trope which epitomizes the mode of life, the life philosophy, and the system of beliefs and psychological attitudes which the protagonists confront or carry out in their milieu. In this sense, Poorna's alienation materializes in the first place in his inability to reconcile with the utilitarian and egocentric rhythm which his boss, who embodies Melbourne's social system and institutions, enacts and imposes on him and on his Indian friends. This is exemplified in the first appearance of the boss in the play:

> *FLASHBACK*
>
> *SHASHI (25) and POORNA are with the boss (36). She is cold and artificial. You cannot read her mind – her expression remains constant.*
>
> BOSS. I have news for you – good and bad.
>
> SHASHI. Can we have the bad news first?
>
> BOSS: We lost the contract you had been hired for.
>
> SHASHI. What the – […]!
>
> POORNA. Do you want us to go back to Hyderabad?
>
> BOSS. That's the good news – we'll make a place for one guy – *the best guy stays in Melbourne,* others go back to Hyderabad.
>
> *CUT TO THE PRESENT*
>
> POORNA. It's a great career opportunity. I'll learn a lot if I get the job, but I don't connect with anything in this city. (Kalsie 10; my emphasis)

Before getting acquainted with the existential rhythm which the boss provokes, her psychological character delineated in the introductory stage direction of this sub-scene foreshadows it. The coldness and artificiality of her facial expression mirror her unemotionality, relentless will to power, and a concealed cunningness. Beside these attributes, her psychological impenetrability alludes to her overly Western rationalist and instrumentalist *rhythm,* one which is apparently devoid of any emotional essence. Put differently, she is leading an existence wherein her mind and reason have effaced her emotions and repressed her soul. More significantly, her utterance, "the best guy stays in Melbourne," instigates not a mere competition but a *race*. As such, the boss has set in tacit terms a conflictual situation between the three friends, planting the seeds of egocentrism among them. This results in the alienation of the three compatriots from each other and from their work since the latter becomes divested of its essence and reduced to a mere race wherein each colleague becomes an antagonistic force to the others. Such alienation is redolent of the Marxian Alienation[10] which, in a capitalist society, compels the individual to experience “the entire objective world as a conglomeration of alien forces standing over and above him” (Skand 23). This renders the boss as a paragon and agent of the utilitarianism, reification and exclusionism inherent in the Australian capitalist society. However, Poorna’s Alienation is overshadowed by his exilic alienation from this whole utilitarian system. This is authenticated, first, in his spontaneous question, “Do you want us to go back to Hyderabad?,” which, unlike Shashi’s furious reaction, expresses the typical Hyderabadi easy attitude, carries an overtone of his acceptance of a contingent return to the homeland, and corroborates, accordingly, his detachment from Melbourne’s capitalist rhythm. Analogously, this same psychological distance from Melbourne is persistently enacted by Poorna in his present afterthought which confirms that he does not “connect with anything in this city.” Through this statement, Poorna disconnects his existence from the “city” which is presented here not as an urban space but rather as a synecdochic fragment of the Australian instrumentalist capitalist social system. This disconnection is symptomatic of the exilic experience, which demonstrates again Poorna’s displacement and alienation from Melbourne’s rhythm. Added to this, as he stands in a head-on confrontation with his boss, Poorna’s awareness and cognizance of the intricacies of Melbourne’s utilitarian rhythm is unmasked:

> BOSS. Hi, Poorna. I wanted to chat to you about your friends […].
>
> […]
>
> BOSS. You are a nice bloke, Poorna. But your friends … […]. Whose fault is it – who’s not doing their job, Shashi or Shiva?
>
> POORNA. You.

---

[10] Alienation with a capital “A” is used to differentiate its meaning from alienation with a lower-case “a”. While the former – Alienation – points to alienation in its Marxian context, the latter inserts the term within a psychic and a sociological framework that reveals its nature as a symptom of exile. Placing both side by side is meant to point briefly to the intermingling between the psychological and psychic exilic implications of the protagonists and the socio-economic forces of their exilic environment.

BOSS. Easy, mate.

POORNA. Who started this competition – the best guy stays?

BOSS. That's how things work here. You are not being fired, we are only sending you back to our office in your country.

POORNA. It's not about going back, it's about losing a race.

BOSS. This could go against all of you, Poorna.

POORNA. Well, I don't care. (Kalsie 28)

In this encounter, the boss is trying to push egocentrism and instrumentalism to extremes by provoking Poorna to think solely of success and promotion in his career even at the expense of his friends who are, more importantly, members of his imagined community. Yet, Poorna disconnects himself from this alienating rhythm by empathizing with his fellow-nationals and preserving an in-group faithfulness. Correspondingly, he blames the boss for inducing the Alienation of his friends and the reification of their social identity by instilling in them a purely materialistic and egotistical philosophy. Not only this, but Poorna is sentient of the dualistic and conflictual nature of the competition which the boss has initiated as indicated by his choice of the word "race," which implies that he and his friends are before an unwavering binary: to win/to lose. This upholds that the rhythm carried out by the boss as a paradigm of the social system is not only utilitarian and exclusionist but is egocentric as well. As such, Poorna's reply, "I don't care," translates his indifference and antipathy vis-à-vis Melbourne's instrumentalist and egocentric character, which corroborates his detachment and break with its rhythm and his disavowal of its very precepts and values.

Above all else, exile as a death-like condition and as a psychological and psychic site of alienation essentially crystallizes in the tragic trope of downfall which the playwright dramatizes through Poorna in both psychic and physical terms. Probably, such culmination of Poorna's exilic experience is foreshadowed earlier in his pleading claim: "*O Bhagwan*, protect me from the evil forces of this city" (23). By rendering Melbourne as possessing "evil forces," he transmutes it into the play's "antagonist" with which he is involved in a pertinacious conflict – *agon*. Not only is his relationship with Melbourne one of conflict, but it is one of categorical disconnection, which recalls again and again his exilic position within it. Put differently, Poorna distances himself from Melbourne by demonizing the city's character, which foregrounds at once his awareness of its exilic power and his apprehension of his fate once caught under its "evil" spell, i.e. exile. This prophetic apprehension is eventually actualized in Poorna's psychic implosion which can be construed as a psychic downfall brought about by the brunt of Melbourne's exilic effect and which takes shape in his longest soliloquy:

> […] *Myki myki myki* – quick-quick-quick… This umbrella slows me down, bloody Melbourne weather! […] *Uuf*, this is crazy. I am forever chasing trains and trams. Shashi starts calling me within ten minutes of my leaving the office. He wants me to start working on the train. Everyone keeps pushing me. I have been working nonstop. There are no pauses, no breaks. I have completely lost my *talam*. All I hear is the ring of mobile phones, the noise of escalators, platform announcements and the trains squealing on the tracks. Where's the *koyal*, where's the ring of temple bells, where's Carnatic music, where's my mother's voice? I feel spaced out. I haven't slept for a week. Not tonight. I am going to shut down the laptop, switch off the phone and *sleep*. (28-29)

This soliloquy is replete with manifold metaphorical and symbolic meanings which mirror the apex of Poorna's exilic experience in Melbourne, that is, his psychic downfall. First, Poorna's psychic disorientation emanates from the clash between two contrastive rhythms, his native rhythm and Melbourne's rhythm, which is tacitly expressed by dint of the symbolic language, specifically his statement, "This umbrella slows me down, bloody Melbourne weather." On the one hand, Melbourne's "bloody weather" is but an allusion to its rhythm, which, as indicated by Poorna's previous anaphoric expression "*myki myki myki*," is vehemently fast and hectic. On the other hand, the umbrella, a theatrical property which has accompanied Poorna since his first appearance in the play, is a leitmotif whose symbolic function is protection, protection not from the rain but of Poorna's identity from the unfamiliar values of the foreign, Australicentric world. As such, the umbrella becomes a cultural shield which protects him against the alien, fast rhythm and which attempts to keep his native identity intact. In so doing, it promotes his native Hyderabadi rhythm which, as he acknowledges, is "slow and eaaasy" (2), slowing him against Melbourne's fast rhythm and impeding his integration and assimilation. Therefore, Poorna's psyche becomes positioned within a conflictual situation wherein the homeland and host land rhythms are set in contradistinction to each other, immersing him in an exilic limbo. Second, by complaining that "[e]veryone keeps pushing [him]," Poorna evinces that he is being pushed against the ordinary course of his identity by Melbourne's alienating social landscape, which subjects him to much pressure to forsake his Hyderabadi identity. Third, his enumeration of the various noises of "sophistication" that suffuse Melbourne reinforces his resentment of the relentless, mechanical lifestyle according to which Melbourne denizens live. Contrariwise, his anaphoric use of "where's" attests to his longing for the spiritual, polyphonous voices of his motherland: the voice of nature ("the *koyal*"), the voice of religion ("temple bells"), the voice of culture ("Carnatic music"), and, overall, the voice of the motherland as personified in the figure of the mother. Such contrast is purported to establish a juxtaposition between the mechanical "voice" of Melbourne and the spiritual "voice" of Hyderabad, which underscores the wide discrepancy between Poorna's homeland and host land. The upshot of this disparity is his sense of being "spaced out" which connotes the absence of his feeling of *being-at-home* and accentuates his exilic groundlessness within Melbourne. Fourth, the italicization of the verb "sleep" which is conditioned by the action of switching off both laptop and phone represents Poorna's belief that psychic solace and tranquility in this exilic setting can be achieved only if he isolates and detaches himself from the alienating voices of Melbourne's social landscape, lending himself solely to the nostalgic sounds of the homeland. All these discursive articulations of Poorna's language reflect the climactic ascension of his psychic disorientation and alienation which symptomatize his psychic downfall. The latter eventually translates into a physical downfall during a quarrel on the phone with his friend Shashi: "*Poorna loses his balance, his phone slips. He trips over his umbrella and falls down [on the railway] [...]. The train is* *speeding in […] Poorna tries to get up but his foot is stuck […]. The train wheels screech – the train halts. Jasminder freezes in shock, Sonali stops. Blackout*" (30). Poorna's fall symbolizes the loss of his psychic balance as a result of his detachment from his Indian *talam*. Of greater significance is the bodily outcome of this fall and which consists of his loss of his legs. A gloomy image of such loss and of Poorna's subsequent hysteric state follows in the play (33-34). This psychological reaction conveys his sense of bodily dispossession and his inability to accept himself as "disabled." With his failure to reconcile with his disabled self, Poorna's exile is pushed to extremes: "my life […] is oppressive" (34). Through this claim, he becomes exiled not only physically and psychologically from his homeland but also from his own existence; that is to say, he becomes existentially exiled. To put it succinctly, Poorna's double experience of his psychic and physical downfalls leads to the culmination of his exile, which radically alters his existential approach to his exile and selfhood as will be unraveled.

1. 2. Disillusionment: The Collapse of the Australian Dream

Having herself witnessed the discomforting lived reality of Indian students in Australia, Kalsie is so much concerned with the experience of this category there. Cherishing a bright image of "the Australian dream" of a successful career, a promising future, and a prestigious life, these students come with the prospect of high aspirations and wide horizons, just to be galvanized by a different and unexpected face of life in Australia. It is at this specific point that their exile is initiated. In this context, the playwright devotes a great part of her work to dramatize realistically the idiosyncrasies of exile as experienced by Indian students in Australia by dint of her protagonist Jasminder. In fact, a review of the variegated definitions attributed to exile in its different manifestations suffices to aver that Jasminder's experience of exile is mostly congruous with Burr's previously mentioned description of exile as "a social, political, religious, or anthropological state of being physically displaced from one's home and left to live in a place or manner that is different from what was one's own" (49). Indeed, physically distant from his homeland, Jasminder goes through an exilic experience which alienates him in economic, social, psychological and psychic terms from “what was [his] own,” that is, from all that was familiar. In other words, confronted with a socio-cultural framework quite different from his own, Jasminder is subjected to the economic, social, psychological and psychic discontents of exile.

As Sarwal advances, a migrant’s position in a given host land is fundamentally shaped by “historical, political, economic, geographic, and other socially stratifying factors” in the new land (*Narratives* 81). While most of the scholarly talk on these factors incorporates the prominent issues of culture, race, and gender with some references to history and politics, the issue of the immigrants’ economic conditions is almost absent from this debate despite its paramountcy in shaping the nature of a migrant’s position – exilic or diasporic. That’s why, this chapter endeavors to aggregate the immigrants’ economic intricacies in the account on exile as these induce a rift, a break, and a discontinuity in the immigrant’s existential condition, promoting as such an exilic environment. This is the case of Kalsie’s protagonist Jasminder whose economic awareness, which concretizes in his disillusionment and in the reification of his existence, thrusts him out of his comfort zone and into an exilic ground of being. This is instantiated in his recognition of the wide disparity between the economic “philosophy” adopted in India and that extant in Melbourne: “Back in Gurdaspur people think once you enter a foreign country you can do some *jugaad* and settle down there. […] *Jugaad* is being street smart the Indian way. Fools! *Jugaads* work only in Punjab, here you need money” (Kalsie 20). The easiness with which Jasminder’s in-group approaches economic life is epitomized in the quintessential Indian concept of *jugaad* which Indians employ to signify creativity, ingenuity, and improvisation in finding solutions. Such a concept, which purveys an easy-going attitude towards life, collides with Jasminder’s violent confrontation with a Western society, the utilitarian economic nature of which makes such a social skill of no avail. Correspondingly, Jasminder becomes disillusioned as can be seen in his deconstruction of his in-group's economic thought through his focus on Melbourne's economic structure which, hinted at through his utterance, "here you need money," entails purely materialistic and instrumentalist skills and resources rather than smart and innovative ones as in India. His disillusionment is further and more blatantly underscored in his unveiling of the sheer contrast between the pre-arrival illusion and post-arrival reality which he realizes as his soliloquy and flashback evince:

> JASMINDER. […] They [people in Gurdaspur] have no idea how expensive it is to live here – not even those immigration agents. Agents show you the websites of colleges where you see a *huge* campus, *modern* labs and the *promise* of a *good* life.
>
> FLASHBACK
>
> *Gurdaspur, an office* […]
>
> *An eager Punjabi IMMIGRATION AGENT (42) is convincing JASMINDER'S FATHER (60).*
>
> AGENT. Don't worry, Bauji, the boys I sent abroad are *happily* settled. Cunadaa, Englaand, Umerica *te* Australia. *Te* Jassi [Jasminder] is a gem of a boy. No smoking, no drinking, no girls – expenses only three hundred dollars a month. (20; my emphasis)

In his soliloquy, Jasminder's use of the words "huge," "modern," "promise," and "good" implies his recourse to a lexicon of grandeur and prestige to picture how immigration agents in India represent Australia as an epitome of modernity and as a utopic land, a dreamland for Indian students. Indeed, it has been noted that "India has been targeted by Australian educational institutions, often organizing aggressive marketing campaigns, and efforts have been successful in as far as India's burgeoning middle class is concerned" (Voigt-Graf 153). This is authenticated in the persona of the immigration agent in Jasminder's flashback who, "eager" as he is, exemplifies this "aggressiveness" in promoting an illusory utopian image of Australia wherein little capital is needed. That is to say, cognizant of the middle-class status of Jasminder's family, the agent does his best to portray Australia, along with other Western countries, as an economically unchallenging and easy location which requires simply a reasonable amount of money to live “happily.” However, Jasminder becomes disillusioned once the shiny mirage which the immigration agent has proffered to him collides with the deplorable financial situation to which he becomes subjected in Melbourne. In economic terms, Jasminder undergoes an acute financial crisis which paves the way for his disillusionment and which consists of his inability to pay his university fees despite the family’s sale of their farm, of the miserable state of the apartment which he shares with his Indian compatriot Ranbeer and other Indians, and of the pressure of rent which leads him to “rent” his mattress half a day by sleeping in shifts (Kalsie 21). All these circumstances immerse Jasminder in a psychological state of loss, helplessness, and disorientation, which symptomatizes his exile on an economic basis. Additionally, what might be termed the “economic exile” of Jasminder, i.e. an exilic condition incited by degraded economic circumstances and by a shortage of financial resources outside one’s homeland, manifests in the reification of his life on account of his economic *location*. An example of this can be seen in his statement: “When the dollar goes up, my food rations go down” (20). Such an economic equation reifies Jasminder’s life into a mathematical process, which mechanizes it, divests it of its essence, and exiles it from its human course. Likewise, clearing some of his shelves for the new partners in the apartment, Jasminder exclaims as he squeezes his clothes in his suitcase: “You have to squeeze all the clothes into the suitcase […] isn’t it amazing how much we can contract?” (26). While this utterance seems at first sight a simple and spontaneous expression on the part of Jasminder, it conveys, on the figurative level of signification, the reification ensuing from his economic life, and it does so by bringing to light the metaphor of contraction. This metaphor connotes the reificatory reduction to which every aspect of Jasminder’s being is subjected. More specifically, Melbourne’s utilitarian capitalist system drives him to *contract* his food, his medicines, his sleep, his needs and now his clothes. Metaphorically, this mirrors the psychological reduction which he experiences in the sense that his very being becomes “contracted,” objectified, and reduced into two words:

rent and fees. That is, his whole existence becomes obsessively centered on providing the financial capital to pay the university fees and the rent, which eviscerates his existence of its human essence and, thus, exiles his self from the ordinary *human* ground of being.

In addition, most exiles who go through a social exile experience it in terms of social isolation, as is the case with Poorna, or social alienation in the host society. In Jasminder's case, social exile in Melbourne truly consists of this same pattern concretized in his exclusion from the Australian social in-group yet transcends it to materialize most strikingly in the pressure imposed by the social expectations of his native society. First, Jasminder's exclusion from the Australian social community stems essentially from his lack of proficiency in English. From the very outset, the first scene devoted to Jasminder displays his experience of a job interview in Melbourne which ends by the interviewer's question: "Do you understand English?" (4). This exclusionary query is reproduced in the play when, after rebutting Jasminder's job application at a store, the store managers justify their act by asserting that his "English is not up to the mark" (19). Germane to Jasminder's delicate social and economic statuses in Melbourne is Clark's concept of "investment in language" whereby she argues that a migrant's close affiliation with the target language is, indeed, an investment "in ideologies and representations of such a target language and culture" and that language "can be a symbolic investment, a highly valued commodity, occupying an emotional or cultural attachment and/or [social] space, a means of gaining membership or belonging to a certain group," linking as such the concept of language to citizenship (Clark 9-10). By implication, Jasminder's distance from and unproficiency in English, the dominant language in the mainstream Australian society despite its claim of multiculturality, denies him any *investment in the Australian English*, which implies his categorical alienation from the Australian society, the denial of his access to Melbourne's social space, and his inability to integrate. This exclusionary position socially alienates him from the Australian social landscape, including Melbourne's social institutions, and deepens his economic exile. Besides, Jasminder's inability to speak English properly is even more problematic as it signals further social ramifications. A flashback to Jasminder's life in Gurdaspur exhibits the way in which he learnt English in what he calls "the best English school in Gurdaspur":

> JASMINDER. *Oouu – eeee-aaee-saaa-haaa. Pur* madam *ji*, why are we learning English language in Punjabi?
>
> TEACHER. If you ask so many questions, Jassi, you'll never learn English – now pay attention and follow the instructions. (Kalsie 20)

Learning English in Punjabi is at once an internalization of an Indianized version of English and a displacement of the latter from its appropriate socio-cultural context. The result is Jasminder's displacement from the Western social reality, culture, values, and system of thought which this very language represents. In this respect, Bill Ashcroft and others offer a theoretical foundation instrumental in the understanding of this idea: "Language provides the terms by which reality may be constituted; it provides the names by which the world may be 'known'. Its system of values – its suppositions, its geography, its concept of history, of difference, its myriad gradations of distinctions – becomes the system upon which social, economic and political discourses are grounded" (*The Post-colonial Studies* 283). Drawing on the social dimensions of such theorization, Jasminder's *performance* of the Indianized English he learnt suggests that he interprets Melbourne's social discourse – its social life, system of thought, and values – in typically Punjabi terms, which results in his constitution of a reified image of Melbourne's social reality and, correspondingly, in his lack of insight into its intricacies. It can be inferred that equipped as he is with an Indianized channel of communication and of meaning construction, Jasminder has psychologically never left Punjab nor its mode of thought, which accounts for his alienation and exile within the Australian social landscape and his inability to reconcile with it. No wonder, then, that Jasminder's speech is profusely filled with the Punjabi language. This is a tacit sign inserted by the playwright to convey Jasminder’s psychological and social rootedness in Gurdaspur as opposed to his detachment from Melbourne’s social reality, which echoes the exilic mode of existence as one wherein the exile “inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another” (Burr 83).

Second, being alienated and excluded from the Australian community, Jasminder cannot find refuge or social compensation even in his Gurdaspur society, which adds to his sense of being a social exile *here* and *there*. Such nascent divergence from his social in-group is in great part engendered by the feeling of being subjected to the pressure of the Indian social expectations which make his return an impossible option. This can be pinpointed in Jasminder’s conversation with his mother wherein he addresses her with an overtone of urgency: “we will lose everything if you don’t send me money on time” (Kalsie 14). His use of the pronoun “we” in lieu of “I” is not a random choice; rather, it corresponds to his devoted affiliation to his family and his rendering of his self-image as one defined by the “we” of the family. Such a disposition feeds on his identification with the Indian socio-cultural politics according to which the social position and pride of the family are highly regarded and maintained and which urge individuals to act “in the best interest of their family’s reputation, as the act of an individual may impact the perception of the entire family by their community” (Scroope). This implies that the status and reputation of a family within its community is conditioned by the actions and conducts of every individual within this family. Jasminder’s statement, then, can be construed in the light of this socio-cultural code as an apprehension of his family’s loss rather than his. Put differently, if Jasminder does not pay his university fees, his life in Melbourne will be doomed to failure. This failure to fulfill the Indian expectations of success and social ascension will not simply blemish his status within his community but, worse, it will stigmatize his whole family’s social reputation and pride. Hence, Jasminder’s exile in Melbourne is intensified by the social exile which will be awaiting him and his family if he loses his opportunity in Australia. By the same token, when Ranbeer warns him of the likely scenarios of police arrest and detention centers in case he fails to maintain his student-visa and advises him instead to return to his motherland, Jasminder insinuates his irreconcilability with the contingent social humiliation he risks to face upon his return:

> JASMINDER. […] anything is better than going back.
>
> […]
>
> RANBEER. [*becoming impatient*] Don't screw up your life, Jassi […]. Just go back, you don't have a choice.
>
> JASMINDER. What will I do in Punjab? All my friends in Gurdaspur will graduate next year, and what am I, a high school pass? I can't go back without a *degree, paaji*. (Kalsie 37)

Again, the concern about his and his family's social image, pride, reputation within Gurdaspur community leads Jasminder to repudiate the idea of return *without a degree*. The degree, as its italicization in the play alludes to, is symbolic of the social achievement and success which enables the Indian individual to earn deference and high-esteem and, thus, to live up to the expectations of his home society. Consequently, an imagined juxtaposition between Jasminder's status as a "high school pass" and his "graduate" peers does not only uncover the likelihood of his social inferiority and stigmatization but positions him below the social standards and norms of his same-age circle and of his community. In the light of this, Jasminder becomes trapped in what can be labelled a "liminal social exile," that is, the state of being psychologically exiled in a *social no man's land* as a result of one's alienation from both the homeland and host land social in-groups.

Moreover, Jasminder's exile rises to a crescendo as it becomes carried out on a psychological level as typified by his sense of solitude. In his account on exile, Said posits, "'exile'" carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality" ("Reflections" 144). In fact, the solitude which Said is broaching here is not simply a social solitude – being socially isolated – but is rather a psychological one. For the exile, having people around is not the antonym of nor the antidote to solitude; rather, solitude is persistently *present* for the exile until he/she finds someone with a mutual empathy, insight, and identification. It is the case with Jasminder who, albeit surrounded by his Indian fellows including Ranbeer, cannot shun away his feeling of solitude: “I had a terrible headache and no-one even bothered to give me a cup of tea. Everyone is in such a rush in this city, nobody would notice if you died in your sleep” (Kalsie 19). Jasminder’s “terrible headache” is but a reflection of his tormented, exiled psyche, the anguish of which is exacerbated by his sense of negligence and loneliness. Such feelings are, for him, generated by Melbourne’s rhythm which turns everyone around him into typically egocentric and mechanical characters as epitomized respectively by their carelessness vis-à-vis him and by their hectic, fast lifestyle. Thus, Jasminder experiences a profound sense of solitude which leads to his displacement and loss as integral dispositions of the exilic condition. Analogously, speaking of the crowded apartment he shares with many Indian immigrants, he observes: “This place seems crowded, but it’s quite lonely. You are always alone here whereas in Gurdaspur people don’t leave you alone” (26). This utterance voices Jasminder’s exposure to exilic solitude as a psychological affect rather than a social condition in the sense that though he lives within a community of his same origin, he still feels lonely and alienated as this community, in his viewpoint, has grown detached from Gurdaspur’s social values, which he cherishes and for which he feels a deep longing, and no longer stands for his social in-group.

Furthermore, Jasminder’s exile does not cease at the psychological level but goes beyond it to materialize in the profound recesses of the psyche in the form of an intense crisis of identity. Such a psychic dysfunction entails his loss of a sense of selfhood and of an existential anchor. This is articulated by Jasminder on many occasions as when he addresses himself: “I don’t know what’s wrong with me, I have forgotten everything I had learnt” (36). In actual fact, this statement is denotatively affiliated to Jasminder’s studies, yet connotatively, it is related to his exilic psyche. On the one hand, his ignorance of what is transpiring within his psyche signals his alienation and disconnection from his own self, which emblematizes his depersonalization. On the other hand, the act of forgetting is quite symbolic as it marks a discontinuity in his selfhood through initiating a process of "erasure" of all the existential anchors which he has "learnt," that is, acquired and internalized. In both states, his selfhood is substituted by a psychic abyss and void which evidences his exilic crisis of identity. Similarly, this crisis is reproduced in Jasminder's desperate speech which is enacted as a double enunciation as it is directed at once to Ranbeer and more significantly to the audience so as to lay bare his exilic psychic crisis: "I only want to finish my graduation – is that too much to ask? […] Can I go back? No-one goes back, I go in circles and a circle is a zero. *Bauji*'s money, my efforts, my mother's blessings, the time I spent here, the hardships I lived through, the nights of panic, the days of anxiety – everything becomes zero" (37). This discourse marks Jasminder's culminating crisis and betrays his tone of bitterness and helplessness. In this mournful speech, his crisis of identity takes shape in the inescapable dilemma in which he is stuck. In other words, Jasminder confronts a psychic impasse as he cannot live in Melbourne unless he provides the sufficient money for this purpose and his university fees nor can he return to his homeland given his community's conception of such return as defeat, cowardice, and shame. Even worse, he finds himself incarcerated within vicious circles which betoken the meaninglessness and disorientation prevailing in his self. Worst of all, Jasminder feels that his existence with all the sacrifices he has made has become reduced by Melbourne's rhythm and exilic character into "*zero*." Zero stands for psychic emptiness, nothingness, and meaninglessness and for the prevalence of *absence* which suffuses Jasminder's exiled self. Indeed, absence is a motif associated with identity crisis given that it embodies all the losses intrinsic to it, including the loss of all that is familiar, the loss of the homeland, the loss of roots and existential anchors, and the loss of certainty. This absence also insinuates that Jasminder's identity becomes devoid of its process of signification, which engenders a pointless and a deferred selfhood and, by implication, a crisis of identity. Worst of all, Jasminder's identity crisis ascends with his loss of his self-esteem both from a personal and a communal stance: "Now my grandmother believes I am a loser […] Sarabjit uncle was right – I am a weak boy and there's no place for the weak in Melbourne. […] If I die, at least my parents will be free to live their life" (41). This evidences that Jasminder has lost his self-esteem and confidence in his own self as well as his privilege in the Indian community represented by his grandmother and his uncle Sarabjit. As such, he has become alienated not only from Melbourne community but also from his own self and in-group, which ontologically shakes his selfhood and subjectivity. Further, his desire to die, which bespeaks his radical rootlessness and placelessness in the world and his existential alienation, is actualized by his two attempts to suicide by the end of the play, which unveils the pinnacle of his identity crisis and his psychic collapse and disorientation.

The patterns of exile experienced by Poorna and Jasminder can be assumed to intermingle in the migrant's experience of the female protagonist Nina contrived by the Indian-Australian author Roanna Gonsalves in her short story "The Dignity of Labor." Having fondly cherished Jasminder's same "Australian dream," Nina comes to Sydney with her husband Deepak just to become a subject of Poorna's and Jasminder's same exilic experiences "at second hand." In other words, her husband's failure to find a job, his alienation and detachment from the values of this alien society, his sense of disgrace owing to his social decline from a privileged manager in India to a shelf stacker in Melbourne, and their delicate financial situation result in projecting all his despair and anger towards Nina in the form of domestic violence. The entanglement of this "exilic" violence, her economic exile, her lack of agency, her invisibility, and eventually the social nightmare of being a divorcee back in India all immerse Nina in a "double exile," as an alienated migrant and as an oppressed female. Like Kalsie, Gonsalves invests her utmost concern in unveiling Nina's position *within* Melbourne. So as not to be accused of overgeneralization, this brief account on Gonsalves's relative focus on exile is provided here in order to prove that the Indian-Australian literary works which dare to broach the theme of exile proceed basically in the same direction. In other words, drawing on the close reading of Kalsie's exilic play, it can be deduced that the exilic Indian-Australian literature addresses the issue of exile through its exploration of the relation between the exiled subject and the *host land*. The authors of this literature tend to examine the broken bond between the exiled subject and the host land along with the former's inability to adapt to this new environment. Accordingly, they work towards a literary defamiliarization of the concepts of alienation, displacement, and social estrangement. It follows that the exilic Indian-Australian literature differs much from its Arab-Australian counterpart which deals with the issue of exile through its exploration of the relation between the exiled subject and the *homeland* through the literary insertion of such concepts as nostalgic longing, absence, and loss. In this regard, one may notice that while Kalsie's protagonists are detached and alienated from Melbourne in many aspects, Abdel-Fattah's and Sabawi's characters – Hayaat and Jomana respectively – experience loss, displacement, and absence in Palestine in their most variegated forms from the absence of freedom and anchoring familiarity to the traumatic losses they witness and undergo. Albeit the exile of Ataya's poet seems at first sight, like Jasminder and Poorna's, to consist of his alienation from Sydney, the focus on his longing for an idealized Lebanese past and the brunt of the absence of *home* along with the existential meaninglessness associated with it pervade his poetic discourse and outweighs as such his relationship with Sydney. Therefore, his exile becomes rather analogous to Hayaat and Jomana's, one wherein the *homeland* is the essence of the exiled subject's obsession. Such difference between these two variants of Australian migrant literature can be explained by the geo-political quagmire in the Arab homelands, namely Palestine and Lebanon, on the one hand, and by the nature of the Indian society which makes adjustment to and integration in the host land an irrevocable priority, on the other. When it comes to the Arab-Australian authors examined so far, the loss of the idealized versions of their homelands, the tragic touch of trauma, the long wait for decolonization in the Palestinian case and for an era of peace in the Lebanese instance, and, worst of all, the inability to compensate for the irreconcilable gap between a longed-for golden past home and a dystopian "here and now" in their countries urge them to produce a literature of engagement. The latter unveils to their Western audiences the nucleus of the human suffering and tragedy extant in their homelands and obfuscated by the media and compensates for the *absence* which prevails in their motherlands by highlighting the *presence* of the homeland in their literary works. This is not the case with Indians who, despite the social and political corruption which prevails in their homeland, the spatial existence of their homeland has never been disrupted since decolonization. Hence, prompted by the determination to integrate, the Indian-Australian perception of exile becomes directed towards the host land as the desired object of exploration and understanding.

Another difference which can be discerned when comparing exilic Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures is the tendency of the Arab-Australian works to go beyond the tradition of physical or external exile. Aside from Abdel-Fattah and Sabawi's exploration of an "internal" form of exile, that is, an exile *inside* the homeland, which no Indian-Australian author undertake, Arab-Australian authors devote a great part of their narratives to elaborate on the peculiarities of existential exile, whereas with Indian-Australian authors, exile more often crystallizes in its conventional physical mode, that is, as a physical displacement and distance from one's homeland. This interest in these types of exile can be rationalized by the pointlessness of the "physicality" of exile in the case of the Arab-Australian diaspora, chiefly the Palestinian and Lebanese diasporas. That is to say, the Palestinian characters' *physical location inside* their homeland makes any talk about physical exile meaningless and calls instead for a focus on the psychological and existential modes of exile. As for the Lebanese poet in Ataya's collection, as a prototype of the Lebanese exiles, his physical exile is undermined by the pointlessness of return. Put differently, the poet's return to Lebanon, as examined earlier, is even more excruciating as it deepens the reality of the loss of his home, immersing him into existential and psychological exiles which only trivialize his physical exile.

On the other extremity, the exilic Indian-Australian works display a tendency to incorporate, beside the social, political, and psychological catalysts of exile, to which Arab-Australian writers limit their works, other variables which impinge on the implications of exile. Among these, the economic conditions are foregrounded. These are exemplified, as has been expounded, in Jasminder's financial crisis and struggle with the fees and rent and can also be illustrated in Deepak's struggle to obtain a decent job and his eventual economic degradation in Gonsalves's "The Dignity of Labor." Gender is another marker that frames the experience of exile as Nina typically instantiates through her "double exile" in Sydney mainly because of her husband's patriarchal mentality intensified by his own exile. This Indian-Australian inclination to interweave these issues with the question of exile stems from the centrality of these social criteria in the Indian society. More particularly, the Indian-Australian authors' propensity to include economic factors in their narratives emanates in essence from the fact that these are, indeed, the very driving force behind the recent migratory movements of Indians to Australia. Elucidating the burgeoning South Asian migration to Australia, Sarwal claims: "There is a 'combination of push and pull factors: the push of inadequate opportunity in South Asia and the pull of better prospects' in Australia" (*Narratives* 17). Yet, when these expectations of economic opportunities clash with an economic reality like that of Jasminder or Deepak, the outcome becomes an intensification of the migrant's exilic alienation, hence these authors' insertion of economic factors in their works. Such an exilic catalyst is overlooked in Arab-Australian literature as the Arab subjects' exile is essentially driven by political imbroglios or by an unendurable psychological trauma. Even when talking about Arab immigrants moving to Australia, like Ataya's poet, the motive behind this migration is quite often the desire to escape the political and psychological oppression of the homeland environment and not economic aspirations. Intertwined with these economic dynamics is the interest of some authors like Gonsalves in interpolating the issue of female oppression in their literary works. This derives from the intensely subaltern position and effaced agency of women, especially wives, in the Indian patriarchal society as evidenced in *The Laws of Manu*, the canon law of Hinduism: "a husband must be constantly worshipped as a god by a faithful wife"; "No sacrifice, no vow, no fast must be performed by women apart from their husbands" (Manu ch. V). Thus, Indian diasporic authors, in general, tend to put an emphasis on the position of Indian women in diasporic spaces to examine if the latter liberate them or accentuate their subalternity and otherness. If the latter is the case, this results in their exile in the host land as Gonsalves's protagonist Nina.

On the whole, however, the exilic Arab-Australian authors are more willing than their Indian-Australian counterpart to broach the issue of exile. They specifically emphasize the Palestinians' exile within their homeland and the Lebanese loss of an idealized past and home, mainly because of the civil war, as Ataya exemplifies alongside other Lebanese-Australian authors like Nada Awar Jarrar, Leila Yusaf Chung, and Abbas Al-Zein. Contrariwise, while some of the works of the early Indian novelists who came to Australia like Mena Abdullah's *The Time of the Peacock* dealt with the issue of exile, contemporary Indian-Australian literature is more reserved and reticent with regard to such a theme. This accounts for the number of the studied exilic Indian-Australian works subsumed in this thesis compared to the exilic Arab-Australian works.

2. Confirmation of the Inner Indian: Nostalgia and Cultural-Religious Dynamics

It is theorized that immigration points to a significant change in "the existential conditions of immigrants with all its implications for the change in their consciousness"

(Sarwal, *Narratives* 4). This change is even more consequential in the case of exile as a migratory experience, for it is not any change but is a "discontinuity," a "break" encroached on one's existence and, more particularly, on one's sense of self, i.e. identity. It is true that identity is an ever-changing, dynamic construct, the mobile character of which has been emphasized by recent postcolonial and postmodern conceptions. Nevertheless, with the exilic experience, such dynamicity intersects with the sense of existential discontinuity and undermines the sense of fragmentation within the exiled subjectivity as this latter psychic state becomes viewed merely as another change in the course of one's identification, which leads to the exile's intense psychic disorientation and disintegration. The need to fix identity in temporary contexts proves then quite crucial and urgent so as to retrieve the sense of "continuity" of one's self. The hyphenated Indian-Ugandan-British scholar Avtar Brah's elaboration on the discursive elusiveness of identity elucidates this idea:

> Identities are marked by the multiplicity of subject positions that constitute the subject. Hence, identity is neither fixed nor singular; rather it is a constantly changing relational multiplicity. But during the course of this flux identities do assume specific patterns, as in a kaleidoscope, against particular sets of personal, social and historical circumstances. Indeed, identity may be understood *as that very process by which the multiplicity, contradiction, and instability of subjectivity is signified as having coherence, continuity, stability; as having a core—a continually changing core but the sense of a core nonetheless—that at any given moment is enunciated as the 'I'*. (123)

In this sense, she partly reproduces Erikson's classical definition of identity as "a subjective sense of an invigorating *sameness and continuity*" (Erikson 19; my emphasis). These precepts imply that notwithstanding the dynamic, nomadic nature of identity, it entails a relatively contextually stable subjectivity and selfhood that surfaces against a backdrop of specific catalyzing circumstances, which assures the continuity of one's sense of self and one's essence – *core*. In this respect, in the midst of the play's exilic circumstances, each of Kalsie's protagonists – Poorna and Jasminder – enacts a set of features which enable him to constitute a stable Indian identity that parallels his exilic subject position in Melbourne. Both characters make use of their nostalgic, cultural, religious, and social dynamics to entrench an identity which shields them against the disorientation imposed by the oppressive character of exile.

2.1. Nostalgia: Bridging the Past and the Present

The restoration of a sense of self-continuity is essential to surmount the discontinuity brought about by exile, and an effective mechanism to fulfill such a process for the migrant is nostalgia. Despite some views of nostalgia as a negative affect which impedes one's relation to the present, a burgeoning number of theories are approaching the concept differently from a positive perspective. In point of fact, drawing on their various experiments on nostalgic subjects, Sedikides and others advance that "[a]lthough nostalgia can at times raise the specter of a contrast between past and present, […] nostalgic reverie is a crucial vehicle for maintaining and fostering self continuity over time and in the face of change" ("Nostalgia as Enabler" 230). They go further to argue that nostalgia, as "a positive emotion with bittersweet elements," plays a vital function in preserving the nostalgic subject's "psychological equanimity and protect[s] the integrity of the self" (230 - 231), especially in contexts that evoke discontinuity as is the case with the exilic condition. This is because as Hage postulates, "[n]ostalgia is […] imagined from the standpoint of the present *to be homely*. […] [Nostalgic feelings] guide *home-building* in the present because one seeks to foster the kind of homely feeling one knows" ("Migration" 420; my emphasis). What Hage emphasizes here is the contribution of nostalgia in a psychological home-building, that is, a feeling of *being-at-home* and which involves, according to him, four key feelings: security, familiarity, community, and a sense of hope or possibility (418). In accordance with this, Sarwal theorizes that nostalgic feelings induce a "cultural construction in which our very selves and sense are constituted" and a fictive or psychological return to the homeland or "Watan" by recreating this distant homeland through the act of remembering (*Narratives* 119). In the light of this, Poorna and Jasminder resort to nostalgia so as to retrieve a sense of self-continuity which contests their "discontinuous state of being" and a feeling of *being-at-home* in the sense not of making Melbourne their home but rather of conjuring up homely feelings and images. As a matter of fact, Poorna's speech offers multiple discursive occasions wherein his nostalgic feelings surface. An illustration of this is perceived in the soliloquy following the stage direction "*Silence*" which briefly yet firmly pictures the utter silence on Melbourne train: "I'm not used to so much silence – this train is quieter than my home in Hyderabad. You can't imagine the noise in our house – old gramophone records, guitar, *tambura*, classical music, metal, rock, *Tollywood* songs, Bollywood songs, cricket commentary, news telecasts, TV serials, nonstop noise. We Hyderabadis love to talk" (Kalsie 9). Indeed, this juxtaposition between Melbourne and Hyderabad exudes Poorna's nostalgia to the voice of home incarnated in the concatenation of sounds he has grown with all his life. The nostalgic nature of this account is demonstrated through its very function. To elucidate this idea, Hage's theorization of nostalgia remains of considerable momentum: "Nostalgic feelings are experientially triggered. They can be triggered by an absence, what I will call a negative intimation, or by a presence, a positive intimation" ("Migration" 421). It is the first type of nostalgia which best describes Poorna's yearning. These "negative intimations" are epitomized in the motherland "noise" which he longs for and which comes to fill the absence of social and psychic anchorage as incarnated in the prevalent "silence" – a metaphor which has been demystified earlier in Poorna's exilic experience. Poorna's use of the intensifier "so much" to indicate the degree of silence suggests the acuteness of absence in his existence, which kindles a set of compensatory "negative intimations." The latter take shape in the semiotics of the *homely* "noise" which is evoked as a polysemous signifier that articulates the voices and sensory experience of a kaleidoscopic culture and society and which magnifies the longed-for Indian *presence* and deconstructs the Australian *absence* – silence. More specifically, Poorna's enumeration of music varieties ranging from "old gramophone records" to rock music is intended to unearth the cultural encounter in India between the old – gramophone records, *tambura*, and classical music – and the modern – guitar, metal, and rock – which culturally co-exist in the Indian cultural system, conferring on the latter a dimension of cultural diversity and dialogism. Added to this, Poorna's nostalgic intimations reveal the peculiarities of his Indian cultural identity. By placing "Bollywood songs" beside "Tollywood songs," Poorna celebrates the de-canonization of the Indian culture and the deconstruction of its monolithic stereotyping by positioning the often canonized Bollywood culture industry on an equal status with his local Telugu culture industry. Aside from these carnivalesque sounds, the sounds of "cricket commentary, news telecasts, TV serials" are introduced by Poorna as negative intimations which contest Melbourne's simulacral social reality. In other words, these sounds allude to the ubiquitous presence of media in the Indian society, yet, as contrasted to Melbourne's "technological-social fashion" of calling and texting, these have never reduced the Indian society into a virtual reality or into a locus of "silence" as disclosed through Poorna's allusion to the gregarious nature of his social in-group. Further, his nostalgia does not cease at this point but transcends it to materialize in flashbacks as illustrated in his recollection of the conversations having taken place in a Hyderabadi bus (Kalsie 9). In this evoked public space which becomes a microcosm of the Hyderabadi society, two conversations develop: Poorna's conversation with a male passenger about a cricket match and this passenger's dialogue with another female passenger on their nephews' futures. The nostalgic nature of Poorna's memory is not grasped through these conversations as much as it is through his ensuant *present* reaction on Melbourne train: "*Passengers are still on their phones. Poorna looks at them in anticipation of a chat*" (10). This anticipation betrays his nostalgic identification with the Hyderabadi in-group traits of sociability, vibrancy, and easy-going attitude evoked in this intimation and his attempt to reconstruct this "social home" in his exilic post.

Finally, Poorna resorts to his nostalgic *feelings* rather than memories to psychologically reconstruct his Hyderabadi homeland and position himself existentially. After the ascension of

Melbourne's egocentric and exiling rhythm, especially with the competition between him and his Indian compatriots, Poorna addresses Shashi: "Don't you miss home? Don't you long for the sounds of Hyderabad – the call of the *koyal*, the ring of the temple bells, the *azaan*, the song of the hawkers, horns and hooters – oh, Hyderabad is so musical" (22). Rather than being a question directed to Shashi, this query, which goes unanswered, is a rhetorical question through which Poorna imparts his innermost dispositions. His diction of such words as "miss" and "long for" and of a whole lexicon of auditory experience attests to his nostalgic psychological reproduction of his motherland. What he longs for in particular is once again the "voice" synchrony of Hyderabad, the polysemy of which is more authenticated here. In this synchronous combination, "the call of the koyal" – the cuckoo bird – stands for the voice of the Indian nature and, hence, the purity of space. "The temple bells" are an allusion to the Hindu *sadhanas* – practices and rituals –, whereas the *azaan* is a hint at the Islamic practices. By bringing these two religions side by side, Poorna voices his longing for the harmonious *talam* of Hyderabad wherein different religions co-exist peacefully. The final sound is the noises of "the hawkers, horns and hooters" which at first sight point to the vibrancy suffusing Hyderabad but on a deeper examination adverts the musical ear to the repetition of the sound "h" as if to bring to mind Poorna's musical "*h*ymning" and "*h*ailing" of "*H*yderabad's" voice by "performing" an alliteration in his speech that synchronizes and, thus, identifies with Hyderabad's musicality. By acknowledging his longing to this soundscape of Hyderabad, Poorna nostalgically reconstructs *homely* cultural, religious, and social sounds and positions himself, in contrast to his assimilated friends, as a migrant whose identity and roots are anchored in every single aspect of Hyderabad's carnivalesque voice.

In Poorna's same fashion, Jasminder endeavors to preserve a sense of continuity with regard to his selfhood by bringing into play his nostalgic feelings. In so doing, he typifies Hage's further elaboration on the enactment of nostalgia. In this framework, Hage contends that nostalgia is, in many cases, instigated by the absence of "homely feeling of familiarity (lack of practical and spatial knowledge) and lack of communality (lack of recognition and the non-availability of help)" ("Migration" 421). When it comes to the lack of familiarity, Jasminder's inability to keep up with Melbourne's trains and schedules, which echoes his lack of practical and spatial knowledge of Melbourne, instantiates the absence of this homely feeling. Upon missing his train and, therefore, his first class, for example, the first idea which crosses his mind is *home* – Gurdaspur: "Travelling was so much easier in Gurdaspur – I used to travel by shared auto-rickshaws that *wait* for the passengers and then drop them at their doorstep. Not like Melbourne where you have to take a train to reach a bus which drops you two kilometers away from your destination" (Kalsie 3). By dint of juxtaposing Gurdaspur and Melbourne, Jasminder reveals his nostalgia for the simplicity of life in Gurdaspur which makes reaching one's destination an overly familiar and taken-for-granted task as opposed to the unintelligible sophistication of the Melbournian life which defers the destination, deepening one's detachment from its spatial map. As such, the nostalgia for Gurdaspur's simple lifestyle is evoked as a psychological compensation for the absence of Jasminder's sense of familiarity vis-à-vis Melbourne's *talam*. In a like manner, the lack of communality in Jasminder's exilic existence provokes him to perceive his apartment as follows: "This place seems crowded, but it's quite lonely. You are always alone here whereas in Gurdaspur people don't leave you alone" (26). This same utterance, which has earlier highlighted Jasminder's psychic exile, can now be construed as a revelation of his nostalgia, for these contrastive existential statuses – exile and identity configuration – are paralleled to each other. As is the case with most of the juxtapositions established by the play's protagonists, Jasminder's juxtaposition of Melbourne and Gurdaspur conceals a yearning for the social vibrancy and mutual recognition in Gurdaspur, a longing which is stimulated by the absence of social empathy and communicability in Melbourne – even when it comes to his Indian social circle – that is, by the lack of communality.

This substantiates not only the exteriorization of nostalgia, albeit tacitly as it is not expressed straightforwardly as a remembrance but rather as a psychological longing, in Jasminder's statement but its function as a negative intimation as well. Eventually, not only does nostalgia crystallize as an "intimation" which fills an absence, but it more momentously functions as a catalyst of existential meaning. In their psychological experimental account on nostalgia, Sedikides and colleagues reason that since "nostalgia serves as a reservoir of positive cognitions that foster self continuity, […] accessing these cognitions would imbue one's [present] life with higher levels of meaning" ("Nostalgia as Enabler" 235). This is the case of Jasminder who, disheartened by his present economic exile, strives to maintain an ontological meaning of hope by means of his nostalgic reminiscences: "When I was a child [my grandmother] used to tell me the stories of our gurus. She would say, 'Never lose faith, Jassi. God wants us to be brave and fearless, just like your grandfather. A true Sikh.'" (Kalsie 28). His nostalgic memory, suffused with positive cognitions and emotions, reminds Jasminder of his Sikh roots which idealize the notions of fearlessness, endurance, and resistance to all the predicaments. Thereby, it nurtures him with an existential meaning in his present exile as it inspires him with hope and the willingness to courageously confront his exilic conditions. This nostalgic memory becomes then a psychological source of an identificatory meaning that empowers Jasminder in his exile.

2.2. Performing a Cultural-Religious Praxis

The negotiation of migrant identity in such a context as the Australian society which, according to many critics and writers, still privileges "a monocultural (Anglo-Saxon) framework" (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 3), necessitates the underlining of one's cultural difference, specificities, and agency, that is, one's cultural roots. As Brah, along with various critics, asserts, identity and culture are involved in an inextricable relation wherein identity, be it subjective or social, is "constituted in and through culture" (21). On this score, in her study of Indians in "white" Australia, Marie De Lepervanche finds that these immigrants' maintenance of a continuous contact with their culture and customs lays a basic foundation for their adjustment and integration (Sarwal, *Narratives* 53). No wonder, then, that culture is an underlying concept of the discourse of identity in the play. A mere glimpse at the play's three protagonists suffices to notice the playwright's propensity for shedding light on the intrinsic presence of culture in the Indian identity. The choice of three characters from three different religious, linguistic, and spatial backgrounds uncovers this cultural presence and reveals at once a demystification of the diversity and cultural polyphony of the Indian identity and a dismantling of the perception of non-western cultures as uniform and monolithic wholes in the Western imaginary. In this context, while Poorna is a Brahmin Hindu from the Southern Indian city of Hyderabad who speaks Telugu, Jasminder is a Sikh from Gurdaspur whose language is Punjabi, and added to this twosome is Sonali – discarded from this discussion on exile because of her diasporic inclinations – who is a liberal Hindu from Delhi and whose mother tongue is Hindi.

As far as Poorna is concerned, his cultural identity is dramatized through an intertwinement of his cultural practices and his religious devotion, which roots him more firmly in his motherland. From the very beginning, the opening stage directions single out Poorna's cultural difference: "*Poornachandra Rao (24) gets off the escalator onto the platform. White sandalwood tika on his forehead and generous coconut oil on his hair confirm that he's a South Indian Brahmin*" (Kalsie 1). Poorna's vestiary aspect is presented as a typical translation of his cultural-religious identity. First, the *tika*[11] is a polysemous cultural-religious item as it mirrors Poorna's religious devotion as a Hindu, his *varna*[12], that is, the caste to which he pertains – a privileged Brahmin –, and his cultural beliefs. More particularly, in the traditional Hindu culture, the *tika* is symbolic of a plethora of meanings which it conveys through its position on the forehead. That is to say, located between the eyebrows, it is claimed to promote memory, thinking, and the power of intuition. It can be inferred, then, that Poorna's recourse to such a cultural symbol is but an adoption of the meanings it articulates, that is, of its mnemonic power which psychologically roots him in his native land and of its intuitive power which psychically ushers him against the backdrop of exilic disorientation. Second, the coconut oil is another cultural signifier as it marks the Southern Indian appearance and cuisine. But, again, Poorna's use of such a cultural component goes beyond his desire to externally display his Southern Indian cultural background and becomes instead an attempt to internally celebrate the meanings it conveys. In Indian culture, coconuts are more often affiliated to the concept of *prasad,* i.e. graced and blessed food that has already been offered to a god (Kuiper 100). Accordingly, Poorna's sartorial aspect becomes a cultural text symptomatic of the meanings of religious devotion and dependence on the "blessings" of his deity with which he approaches and surmounts his exilic life. In addition, Poorna's cultural identity crystallizes in his cultural practices and rituals which bear a religious dimension as well. These are embedded in what may be considered as Poorna's most culturally and semiotically expressive soliloquy in the play:

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[11] The *tika, tilaka* or *tilak* is the mark or sign placed on the forehead. It points to a specific religious identity, varies in its color and form according to the worshipped deity and one's caste (Milner 253), and may bear symbolic meanings.

[12] Hinduism is known for its hierarchical and socio-economically unequal system of castes wherein four main classes exist: Brahmin (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaisya (farmer, merchant), Sudra (laborer, worker). The Brahmins are the most privileged and superior of all the *varnas* and enjoy a powerful social status as opposed to the lowest caste (Milner 235).

> […]
>
> I could have taken the earlier train if I had walked faster but I was enjoying Carnatic music in my mother's voice.
>
> *He inserts earphones, switches on music on his phone*.
>
> Aah! '*Vathapi Ganapathim*' … I recorded this when *amma* was doing her morning *practice*. All my life I have woken up to this song.
>
> [*Singing*] *Vathapi Ganapathim bhajeham*
>
> *Vathapi Ganapathim bhajeham*
>
> *[…]*
>
> *Vaaranaasyam Vara Pradham Sri*

Vaaranaasyam Vara Pradham Sri …[13]

POORNA claps the song on his thigh in Carnatic tradition.

A passenger announcement for a platform change.

POORNA does not hear the announcement. (Kalsie 1-2)

With regard to the cultural rhetoric underlying Poorna's identity, this passage at once delimits the overall cultural matrix wherein he positions himself and illustrates a particular cultural practice which he "performs" among others as an enactment of his cultural identity. To begin with, Poorna's proclivity for "enjoying" this native musical variant rather than catching the earlier train reflects the prioritization of his cultural identity over any attempt to integrate or assimilate in his Australian host land. This unconditional inclination towards the culture of the homeland is corroborated by his recourse, after having missed the first train and during his waiting for the next, to an Indian piece of music. Such an action symbolizes his immersion in the Indian cultural "noise" for which he feels nostalgic and his escape, in return, from the social "noise" surrounding him in the station space. This auditory choice evinces that albeit physically present in Melbourne, Poorna is psychologically transposed to and shaped by the Indian cultural realm. His profound affiliation to the cultural capital of his homeland does not stop at this level but is further expressed through the metaphor of recording. In fact, the act of "recording" can be metaphorically construed as a mnemonic device which ensures the continuity of his Indian cultural selfhood and religious legacy. Of greater significance is the fact that the recorded voice which articulates this cultural sign is his mother's. This is of paramount meaningfulness as far as identity formation is concerned in the sense that the figure of the mother here simultaneously stands for the Indian motherland and for generational legacy. His reference to his mother by the Telugu linguistic unit "*amma"* supports this point as it essentially associates her with Indianness. Accordingly, by recording this cultural-religious song – "Vathapi Ganapathim" –

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[13] These Hindu religious lines translate as follows: "I worship Lord Ganapati of Vathapi, he who has the face of an elephant and showers his devotees with boons" (Rasa).

in his mother's voice, Poorna exposes his cultural-religious identity as one which is inextricably enmeshed with the Indian motherland and as an identificatory legacy transmitted from one Indian generation to another. To top it all, Poorna's cultural identity is best enacted through his slow rhythm which is set in contradistinction to Melbourne's exilic fast and mechanical rhythm. His rhythm, which, as has been elucidated in the context of exile, connotes a mode of life or an order and a pattern of existence, is slowed down by his enjoyment of the Indian music, an image which recurs in the play as he cooks in a very slow motion while singing an Indian song to finally admit: "maybe singing is slowing down my speed" (15). This demonstrates that his existential rhythm synchronizes with the *talam* of the Carnatic music. Being the cultural signifier set forth in this passage as Poorna's paradigmatic cultural practice, the Carnatic music points to a genre of Indian classical music which hinges on two principles: *raga* which refers to the melodic formula and *talam* (or *tala*) which points to the rhythmic cycle of a musical composition (Weidman 250). Years after its emergence, the Carnatic music has become devoted to the praise of particular Hindu deities (250). Drawing on this, the "synchrony" of Poorna's rhythm with the slow *talam* of the Carnatic music as opposed to Melbourne's fast *talam* connotes that this particular cultural practice transcends the aesthetic level to become his own psychological and spiritual guide amidst the flow of Melbourne's alien cultural *talam* foreshadowed in the play's title – *Melbourne Talam*. Further, the centrality of the Carnatic music in the configuration of Poorna's identity can be best perceived in its elevation, through its lyrical performance of "Vathapi Ganapathim," into a discursive locus where culture and religion intersect. Put differently, the wording and italicization of "*practice*" mark this Carnatic song at once as a "cultural practice" and as a religious Hindu *puja* – religious ritual –, which bestows on it a cultural-religious dimension. Also, while the cultural discourse of the song is seen in Poorna's singing – not just passively listening – and clapping which can be interpreted as cultural agential rituals, its religious character is embodied in its devout lyrics. Most importantly, in the Geertzian model, the essence of culture is to be found in the meanings it generates. Such is the case with this cultural-religious Carnatic chant. Indeed, while the Carnatic music offers a wide range of religious songs, Poorna is riveted on the "Vathapi Ganapathim" song that praises the Hindu god Ganesha, which is not an arbitrary choice, for the cultural signification inherent in this religious praise molds and empowers Poorna's identity in this exilic context. More specifically, in the Hindu pantheon, Ganesha is envisaged as the "remover of obstacles"; this mythic character makes Poorna's choice of this deity among the others laden with a belief in the eventual removal of the predicaments and hindrances of his exile and transforms his rendition of this musical composition into an externalization of his cultural-religious identity as a shield against the erosive character of exile. A further confirmation of such identificatory externalization is to be found in the nature of language implemented by Poorna. The latter turns his speech into a discourse suffused with the jargon of the Carnatic music as illustrated when he notices Jasminder's confusion: "Arere, this poor Sikh fellow – didn't get his *talam* right […] Life in Melbourne is like *talam* in Carnatic music – you have to *time* it right. If you follow the *beats* of the city, your life never goes *off-key* here" (Kalsie 2; my emphasis). His usage of words that typically pertain to musicology – *talam, time, beats,* and *off-key* – exudes that his approach to his life in exile is predicated on the cultural frame of the Carnatic music with which he identifies. Likewise, his last claim displays an irrefragable faith in his ability to overcome Melbourne's exilic rhythm through the cultural formations underlying his thought and life philosophy.

In Poorna's same fashion, Jasminder's process of identity configuration in the exilic environment of Melbourne is essentially conditioned by his native cultural-religious frame of reference. From his first words to his last speech in the play, Jasminder seizes every dramatic moment to take pride in his Sikh identity as a "haven" and as an antidotal assertion of his selfhood against the discontents of his exile. Delving into Sikhism uncovers that it is not a mere religious practice, but it also involves and aggregates whole cultural, symbolic, social, historical and political praxes. Literally, the term "Sikh" in Punjabi signifies "learner" (Kuiper 124), but, conceptually, the terms Sikh and Sikhism refer to "several *cultural* or *symbolic* identities prevalent in the Punjab during the 19th century" (Judge 3948; my emphasis). Having been first founded by Guru – "teacher" – Nanak and subsequently led by nine other Gurus (Kuiper 124), Sikhism has undergone a variety of changes because of the multilayered history and politics of India, with a specific focus on British imperialism[14], resulting eventually in the construction of what is termed as the "Khalsa" identity as the "true Sikh identity" in the late 19th century (Judge and Kaur 351). The concept of "Khalsa," which is a derivative of the Arabic "*khalis*" meaning pure, means in Sikhism "the people of god" (Judge 3951, 3954). This idealized form of Sikh identity incorporates a myriad of cultural and symbolic practices and is intentionally or unintentionally emphasized by the Sikh diaspora in their self-definition (3950) as is the case with Kalsie's protagonist Jasminder. In *Melbourne Talam*, Jasminder dramatizes his Sikh Khalsa identity through his performance of a set of cultural and symbolic practices affiliated to the religion of Sikhism. From the play's very beginning, stage directions play a descriptive function in highlighting Jasminder's Sikh identity: "*Jasminder Singh (19) runs down the stairs onto the platform. [...] Jasminder's clothes hang on his frail body and his turban looks big on his boyish face*" (Kalsie 2). The first cultural attribute symptomatic of the culture of the Khalsa Sikh can be seen in Jasminder's name *per se*, "Singh." Having this name, Jasminder overtly expresses his social and cultural affiliation. As a matter of fact, the Sikh culture of the Khalsa accords a vital centrality to its special nomenclature system as it attributes to all Sikh men the name "Singh," meaning "lion," and to all Sikh women the name "Kaur," signifying "princess," in their birth and naming ceremony (Kuiper 133). The adoption of such uniformity in surnames is intended to instill in the Khalsa adherents an egalitarian culture which contests any discrimination on the basis of caste or class. As a result, by bearing this name, not only does Jasminder evidence his adherence to the Khalsa creed by having gone through the Sikh baptism, but he also evinces his deep-seated belief in a culture of equality to all people. The same stage directions underscore Jasminder's belonging to the culture of the Khalsa by means of their zeroing in on his appearance, especially on the turban he wears. The fundamental precepts of the Khalsa identity attribute a focal attention to the Sikhs' "outward appearance," making of the "turban" a cultural key symbol. Indeed, there is an inextricable nexus between this cultural item "*kesh*[15], Sikh honor, and the Khalsa," which has turned it into an inherent component of the Sikh identity, in general, and into a central emblem of identity for the Sikh diaspora, in particular (Judge and Kaur 351). For this reason, Jasminder's psychological attachment to the turban connotes an assertion of his cultural practices and beliefs in this disorienting space. Added to this, Jasminder's turban is a sign of his difference. At a certain moment in the play, he justifies to his mother his inability to find a job through his statement that "Australians don't like turbaned Sikhs doing front-end jobs" (Kalsie 14), yet, in a subsequent scene, he is described as tying a turban around his forehead (19). On this account, Jasminder's persistence in exposing this same cultural-religious difference despite the resultant cultural othering and discrimination reveals not only his celebration of his difference but his extreme pride at and honor of harboring a Khalsa Sikh identity as well.

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[14] In his article "Politics of Sikh Identity and Its Fundamentalist Assertions," Paramjit S. Judge provides a detailed account on the role played by the British imperialism in shaping the Sikh identity and on the political and military ideology governing such British interest in Sikhism. The British devoted much effort to preserve clear-cut borders of distinction between Sikhism and Hinduism and to reduce the plural identities subsumed in Sikhism into a single form of identity in order to serve their imperial intents.

Aside from his exhibition of his Sikh identity on the "external" level, that is, through his vestiary aspect, Jasminder enacts it on the "internal" level as well by psychologically glorifying it. In this respect, he venerates his Khalsa identity when his exilic feelings reach their height. More particularly, when Jasminder faces his psychologically most critical junctures, he finds his utmost solace in his Sikh culture and religion as he verbalizes: “Whenever I feel bogged down I remind myself we are Sikhs – the warriors who fight to the end” (15). It can be extrapolated from this revelation that embracing Sikhism, in Jasminder’s stance, goes beyond its religious and cultural foundations to incorporate its symbolic significations as well. That is to say, being a Sikh, for him, entails the adoption of a life philosophy predicated on the notions of struggle, resistance, hope, and the dismissal of surrender, all of which function as a psychological equipment necessary to surmount the disintegration and disorientation of exile. This stems in essence from the Sikhs’ idealization of their Gurus’ fighting throughout history against oppression and injustice (Judge and Kaur 350) and from the British depiction of the Sikhs as “a martial race” (352). The symbolic formations of fighting and struggle integral to the Sikh identity become, then, a psychological inspiration for Jasminder to be resilient and resistant against the exilic predicaments which encounter him in Melbourne. In a like manner, when his exile rises to a crescendo, he prays: “*Wahe guru*, please work out a solution for me” (Kalsie 21). “Wahe guru” or “Waheguru” is a term used to refer to God as conceived of by Sikhism. By imploring God’s help at this moment of crisis, Jasminder carries out his Sikh identity not as mere cultural and symbolic formations but as a faith, as a deep religious belief whereby he is seeking spiritual guidance and solace. In this sense, his exilic identity becomes spiritually framed by the religious essentials of Sikhism. This corresponds to Tweed’s theorization of what he calls “diasporic religions,” that is, religious identities that surface in migratory contexts. In this framework, Tweed propounds that religion, in the context of migration, proceeds as a map which “situate[s] the devout in the body, the home, the homeland, and the cosmos” and as a “trans-temporal” compass which “moves practitioners between a constructed past and an imagined future” (94). This is the case with Jasminder, for his religious enactment of Sikhism through his veneration of his gurus ushers him towards a reconciliation with exile as the "temporary home" since he rebuts the idea of return to the motherland and cherishes his uncle Sarabjit's settlement in the diaspora. Also, Jasminder's religious orientation manifests in a "trans-temporal" fashion. The trans-temporal orientation of his Sikh religious identity is epitomized in his last speech in the play:

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[15] The traditional culture of the Khalsa entails that a Khalsa Sikh should bear what it calls "the five Ks": *kesh* (unshorn hair), insinuated by the turban, *kanga* (comb), *karha* (steel bangle), *kirpan* (ceremonial sword), and *kachha* (short trousers) (Judge and Kaur 364). The impetus behind these is to openly declare one's Sikh identity.

> JASMINDER. '*Naik na ran te muri chale nidar havey ghai,*
> *Gir gir parei patang te bare barangan jai.'*
> 'They do not retract their steps from the battlefield and inflict wounds fearlessly,
> Those who fall from their horses, the heavenly damsels go to wed them'
> A true *Sikh* I am. (Kalsie 44)

The liberatory trans-temporality of Jasminder's Sikhism can be ascertained in the signification of this religious hymn which he sings. On the one hand, earlier in the play, Jasminder reminisces his grandmother singing these religious lines and preaching at him: "Never lose faith, Jassi. God wants us to be brave and fearless, just like your grandfather. A true Sikh" (28). As such, this sermon reiterated by Jasminder becomes a religious legacy which roots him in the "constructed past" of the ten Sikh Gurus and of his devout grandfather. On the other hand, these religious lines are centered on the Sikh cultural prototypes of struggle, bravery, and triumph. Projecting these cultural "shields" onto Jasminder's "exilic battlefield," they become an internalized religious-cultural capital which virtually constructs a brightly "imagined future" for him in Melbourne. In the light of this, Jasminder's usage of the phrase "true *Sikh*" hints at the fulfillment of his self-definition and selfhood through his enactment of the Khalsa identity which does not only existentially empower him but enables him to reconcile with the discontents of exile at a time when disorientation and despair seem the only fates skulking around.

All these points considered, it can be inferred that when it comes to the configuration of exilic identity, Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian exilic literatures concur in their overall perception of this type of identity yet stand at odds over their insights into its intricacies. But before delving into these literatures' similarity and differences, it is crucial to briefly point to the meaning of "exilic identity" in the context of this thesis. In point of fact, exilic identity refers to the pattern of identity which emerges as a psychic response to a given context of exile, no matter what type this exile is, and as an inevitable constructed mechanism of resistance and survival against the psychic backdrop of the exilic condition. Exilic identity differs from any other identity in that it issues from a primary experience of psychological or psychic pain, uncertainty, and groundlessness ensuing from a sense of break with the homeland, be it acute or mild. In this regard, both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures conceive of the need to contextually fix identity despite its open-endedness and dynamic nature as a prerequisite for the construction of exilic identity. This fixedness is vital for the psychic survival and re-orientation of the exiled subjects because of the ensuing psychic implications of exile which can be summarized in the three Ds of exile: discontinuity, disorientation, and displacement. For this reason, the authors of both minority literatures choose specific markers to entrench a fixed pattern of identity that serves to define the exiled subjects' selves in their immediate exilic grounds of being. Yet, they differ in their view with regard to these discursive markers which make up identity. The Arab-Australian literature regards exilic identity as one which is constructed through an utter identification with one's home. In Ataya's poetry, for example, this home is incarnated in the poet's cosmic fusion with the empty shell he chooses, whereas in Abdel-Fattah's and Sabawi's literary works, the Palestinian protagonists' homeland is constructed as the home with which they identity and which concretizes in the constructs of the nation and the agential space. The implementation of these concepts in the process of identity formation is owing to the Arab-Australian authors' concern with compensating for the loss of home through its re-creation in their literary works either obliquely by dint of such underlying concepts as nation and space or metaphorically as in Ataya's trope of the empty shell. For

Indian-Australian authors, no such concern is at stake, which accounts for the relative absence of the concepts of space, nation, and home in their exploration of exilic identity. Rather, this identity, in their outlook, is predicated on the nostalgic and cultural-religious formations. Nostalgia, in this sense, does not designate a longing for the native space but rather for a given socio-cultural atmosphere, which underscores once again the centrality of the native culture in building the Indian-Australian exilic identity. In the same discourse on nostalgia, a slight difference is to be noted between the Arab-Australian exilic literature and its Indian-Australian counterpart: nostalgia in the former sustains the exilic condition, whereas in the latter it consolidates the exilic identity. Suh discrepant functions called into play by the same notion result from the absence of the longed-for objects in the Arab case – a lost home and a never-to-recur past.

3. (Self)-Exile: Towards a Liberatory Exilic Identity

Exile and identity are nomadic concepts marked by the mobility of their meanings. While identity is irrevocably mobile, fluid, and relative, exile is, as Naficy claims, "multiple and variegated" (2). While the urgent need to contextually fix identity by Kalsie's protagonists is instigated by the alienation and displacement inherent in exile, the dynamic character of the latter results in an abrupt change in the pattern of identity. This is significantly typified by the character of Poorna whose accident forms his exilic turning point and brings about the transposition of his *difference* and *otherness* from the host land to the homeland. In other words, Poorna's experience of the tragic accident leads to the radical change of his politics of location[16] from a socially privileged Brahmin male engineer to a *disabled person,* the latter category bearing on its own a whole convoluted discourse of identity in the Indian context. The insertion of this coordinate[17] within the play's text does not only confirm its exilic character but engrafts it further within the framework of disability studies. With regard to the interplay between this latter field and literature, Mahanta posits that very few are the Indian English works that grapple with "disability," and when these are contrived, they callously implement it as a metaphor for the weakness, maladies, and powerlessness of the nation after partition (85). Nevertheless, Kalsie's choice to subsume this issue in her play diverts from this tradition and rather reflects her criticism of the Indian society's view of disability and her active engagement in disability as an ideology of difference. *Melbourne Talam* emerges, then, as one of the few literary works which address disability in terms of the play between the homeland and host land borders. In this regard, Kalsie appropriates this issue to dramatize it within migration contexts and proclaims exile as a form of escape and liberation from the Indian essentialist othering of disability. Consequently, cognizant of his new status as a disabled person, Poorna chooses to adopt the so-called "self-exile," and with this change in the exilic pattern, his identity discourse changes too. This shift in both concepts generates a multilayered dramatic discourse in the play wherein the two evolve in parallel. In point of fact, the inception of the new model of Poorna's exile can be seen in his dialogue with his mother following his accident:

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[16] The concept of "location" acquires a typical signification when examined in the groundwork of migration. Beyond its indication of a migrant's "position," a *location* encompasses all the parameters that frame the migrant's existence in the spaces he crosses, including social inequality, geopolitical position, material conditions, prerogatives and feelings (Sarwal, *Narratives* 3). Claiming that the politics of location are scarcely subject to academic attention when it comes to researches on South Asian diaspora in Australia, Sarwal proposes a definition of the politics of location: "by politics of location, I here refer to a migrant's position within power hierarchies created through sensory and spatial factors. This affects and shapes the relationship in between the homeland and the hostland" (*Narratives* 4).

> POORNA'S MOTHER. Don't be disheartened, Poorna. Chinna [Poorna's brother] is going to Sabrimala temple to pray for you –
>
> POORNA. What's wrong with Chinna – he used to be a logical guy. You must have brainwashed him to do this crazy pilgrimage. You can't make him walk barefoot for forty days! It's atrocious.
>
> POORNA'S MOTHER. Chinna has changed after this misfortune fell on us – he has been going to the temple every day. Once we bring you back he'll look after you.

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[17] In disability studies, many theorists conceive of the notion of disability as the "fourth coordinate" following race, class, and gender (Mahanta 80).

> He will take you for physiotherapy, oil massage, and wherever you need to go. He has pledged to carry you to Sabrimala temple on his back –
>
> POORNA. Stop! Please stop it, *amma*!
>
> *He breaks down, disconnects the phone*.
>
> If I go back to Hyderabad *amma* and *nana* [father] will reduce me to an invalid and forsake Chinna to look after a disabled brother […]. (Kalsie 38)

This dialogue unearths not only the Indian approach to disability but also the social and psychological torment which Poorna, as a disabled person, will have to endure back in his homeland. A close scrutiny of the mother's claims reveals that, in most of the sentences that make up her speech, Poorna is invariably the object of the verbs, whereas the subjects are all the time his brother Chinna and his family members. This linguistic usage is a clear evidence of the tendency of the Indian society, represented by his mother, to deprive him of his agency by making him *unable* to carry out any actions or even decisions as his mother plans his own future without taking into account his own will. Additionally, Poorna is subjected not only to a linguistic objectification but to a physical objectification as well by rendering him a mere bodily burden to be literally carried by his brother Chinna on arduous pilgrimages to temples and to be looked at with a dehumanizing pity. Further, Poorna is subjected to a psychologically debasing attitude by reducing all his needs into purely bodily needs as "physiotherapy," "oil massage," and the need to move, which effaces his psychological life and agency as insinuated by his psychological outburst in an outright rebellion against such a reductionist attitude. This dehumanization and bereavement of agency which Poorna undergoes because of his disability is not alien to the Indian society but is rather ingrained in the Indian traditional collective unconscious in the sense that disabled people in the Indian imaginary are constructed as people who "sinned" in their previous lives and are now harvesting their *karma* (Mahanta 84). The stigmatization of disabled people does not stop at this point but goes on to affiliate them with many pejorative superstitions and stereotypes. These incorporate the same dehumanizing pity which Poorna goes through, for many Indians believe that "disability in others [is] an excellent opportunity to fulfill religious duties by being engaged in charity towards the person with disability" (84). Such a belief explains Chinna's giving up of his future career to look after Poorna and carry him to Sabrimala temple on recurrent pilgrimages yet most significantly unveils the dehumanizing and othering disposition concealed under the veneer of pity and charity as it perceives the "difference" of people with disability as an "absence" of agency, of voice, and of will. In line with this, Poorna confides, later in the play, to his boss: "India is a nightmare for disabled people. People like me have to live on others' mercy – we can't even use the public transport" (Kalsie 39). Beside foregrounding Poorna's identification for the first time as a person with a disability, this sheds light on the social suffering and predicaments which he has to confront in India, a dark reality on which Mahanta expatiates:

> […] people with disabilities [in India] [are] faced with an inhospitable society, an apathetic government and lack of opportunities […].
>
> The majority of the population of people with disabilities lives in rural areas and is not mobile, and is left out in terms of the urban thrust of disability policies like job reservations, travel concessions, special parking facilities, educational facilities and ease of access to institutions, which are utilized by a miniscule section of the population. (84)

One may ask, here, what the relevance of such a talk on disability in India and on this shift in focus from Poorna the exiled subject to Poorna the disabled character is to the study of the relationship between exile and identity in Kalsie's play. In response to such a possible query, it can be adduced that the bitter fate and reality which will face Poorna as a person with a disability, if he returns to India, elicit his contingent disconnection, alienation, loss, and most importantly a psychologically and socially "discontinuous state of being." All these affects bring to mind the condition of exile. Yet, what is intriguing here is that exile becomes spatially transposed from Melbourne to Hyderabad, leading to the incipience of two exilic loci: Melbourne as an exilic setting for Poorna as a migrant and Hyderabad as an exilic setting for Poorna as a disabled person. Eventually, it is Mukherjee's definition of the "exilic act as traumatizing, degrading, and disenfranchising" (Meerzon 26) which tips the scales in favor of Melbourne. In other words, the exilic act as imagined by Poorna in terms of the dark approach to disability in Hyderabad outweighs its equivalent in Melbourne, for though his exile in Melbourne immerses him in a state of displacement and alienation, it never degrades his humanity, self-esteem, and dignity in the way his imagined exile in Hyderabad will**.** Hence, his description of India as a "nightmare" connotes his detachment from it and, thus, his new conception of it as an exilic locale rather than as a home for disabled people. The same discontinuous relation with his Indian homeland is reproduced as he voices his definite decision after his conversation with his mother: "I can't go back. […] I have to take charge before they wreck Chinna's life" (Kalsie 38). Indeed, Poorna's rebuttal of return to his motherland and his preference instead to remain in his exilic post attests to the now-frail bond between him and his motherland and to his deliberate choice to stay exiled in Melbourne. This testifies to the transformation of his exile from one instigated by his desire for a brighter career and future to one prompted by his desire to flee the nightmarish reality of his homeland. It is this sort of exile which is labelled as "self-exile," that is, "a self-imposed departure from one's homeland" which is often "described as a form of protest against the social […] circumstances which the person does not feel are suitable for their life" (Singh 2). This is the case with Poorna who opts for a self-exile in Melbourne as a protest against his social and psychological dehumanization and reduction which he will encounter as a disabled person if he returns to his Hyderabadi homeland. Not only does this form of exile preclude Poorna from the deprivation of agency, but it also empowers him and enhances his agency as authenticated by his decision to "take charge," which substantiates that his autonomy and agency become nurtured by this new exilic space.

Correspondingly, this change in Poorna's exile is paralleled by a profound evolution of his identity translated into the language of theatre by dint of the sound effect of the "beats" which pervade the play. These beats are a counterpoint to the symbolic *talam* of the Carnatic music and mark an asynchrony in Poorna's rhythmic performance of this Indian music. The exuberant recourse to this sound effect by the end of the play is purported to suggest the break and discontinuity of the bond between Poorna and his Hyderabadi identity epitomized in the cultural motif of the Carnatic music and to announce the newness and change in his selfhood. Distancing himself from this identity, he embraces the Melbournian identity which hinges on all that he used to repudiate. Firstly, Poorna's new identity formation commences with his adoption of the fast and mechanical rhythm of Melbourne which he used to loathe when carried out by his friends. A case in point can be found in the dramatic ascension of Poorna's psychological processes in his conversation with his boss while still in hospital. That is to say, his speech displays an uninterrupted flow of his psychological plans as he eagerly expresses – not awaiting his recovery – his craving for a new laptop for work, his urgent need to occupy himself, his possession of great project ideas, and his desire to mail these thoughts to the boss (Kalsie 38-39). While he used to criticize Shashi's involvement in work everywhere, even on the train, Poorna is now prone to work non-stop, even in hospital, as he tells his boss: "[…] I don't want to go back. I am sick of their sympathy. I want to work here – I can work twenty-four seven" (39). Poorna's identification with the mechanical and fast rhythm underlying the Melbournian identity and underlined through the adverbial phrase "twenty-four seven" is propelled by his determination to escape the degrading exile which lurks in his homeland. Secondly, the dilemma in which Poorna is trapped – exile in Melbourne versus exile in Hyderabad – drives him to go to extremes as far as disavowing his Indian identity is concerned. Put differently, his former abhorrence of the egocentrism promoted by Melbourne's rhythm gives way to his enactment of this very value as exemplified in his attempt to counter the boss's reluctance and convince her of his eligibility for the competed-for job:

> POORNA. You had asked, 'Who's at fault?' Do you still want to know?

> BOSS. It’s alright – you don’t have to answer that now.
>
> POORNA. Shashi’s the one. He was lying about his work status. He was reporting more work than he had actually done and when the clients started complaining he blamed it on Shiva and me. Shashi is ambitious – he can pull down anyone to go up – even his boss. (39)

In response to the boss’s same question, the stark discrepancy between Poorna’s former answer, which bespoke his readiness to sacrifice his job for the sake of his Hyderabadi social values and in-group, and his present reply, which reflects his obvious betrayal of friendship, demonstrates the radical change in his character. It authenticates his abandonment of his Hyderabadi social principles and community and his identification with the egocentric and instrumentalist ideology extant in Melbourne. The internalization of such values is Poorna’s sole option to secure an agential room in Melbourne society and to evade the life of non-agential dependence within Hyderabad community. Thirdly, the new identity of Poorna is conspicuously communicated by means of the stage directions preceding his final soliloquy: “*He’s in a wheelchair [...] Poorna waits on the platform. [...] There’s no oil in his hair, no tika, not even earphones. He looks up to listen to the announcement*” (44). A tacit juxtaposition can be discerned between Poorna’s first and last appearance in the play. The presence of his *ability to walk* was accompanied by the Indian cultural-religious presence symbolized by the coconut oil in his hair, the sandalwood *tika*, and the Carnatic music played in his earphones. Contrariwise, the presence of his *dis-ability* as emblematized by the wheelchair is paralleled by the absence of all these cultural-religious leitmotifs and with the sole presence of one sound: Melbourne’s voice as typified by the sound of the station announcement. This transition from the Hyderabadi presence to the Melbournian presence evidences Poorna’s disavowal of the Indian *talam* which risks to stifle his agency and self-esteem and his adoption instead of Melbourne’s rhythm which emerges as a fountainhead of agency and as a site of difference, that is, a site wherein his disability is seen as a “normal” difference rather than a vilified “otherness.” Finally, the ending of the play unmasks Poorna’s ultimate identificatory *location*:

> POORNA. […]
>
> *Beat.*
>
> Everyone says come to Hyderabad […], but I am glad I didn't go back. Work keeps me going […] I don't know if I belong in Melbourne, but I am getting used to it – all of it – the patter of rain, the rhythm of trains, fixed timetables, changing platforms, noisy trams […], and someday I am sure I'll learn to sync with the Melbourne *talam*. (45)

In this soliloquy, Poorna's satisfaction with his rejection of return to Hyderabad translates his deterritorialization from it. More importantly, Melbourne offers him "work" which is viewed at once as a strategy of psychological and psychic survival after the accident and as a refuge and a home which liberates him from the prospect of a psychological exile as a disabled person in Hyderabad. Further, Melbourne is transformed from an exilic social space into a venue of identification in Poorna's outlook. This is corroborated through his nascent awareness of and adaptation to the noises of Melbourne which simultaneously subvert the silence he used to associate with the Australian space and replace the noises of Hyderabad. At last, of utmost paramountcy is the open-endedness of Poorna's relation to Melbourne as evinced by the uncertainty and indefiniteness of his belonging in and synchrony with it. Such attributes do in no way imply his detachment from Melbourne but rather elucidate that his identity is in the *process* of construction and configuration. In more straightforward terms, his identity is truly changing, fluid, and open-ended, but there is one existential precept which steadfastly pinpoints the core of Poorna's selfhood: His identity is far detached from his Indian *roots* and is heading towards Melbournian *routes*.

The liberation which Poorna undergoes in his exilic location can be likened to that of Gonsalves's character Nina. The latter's exile in Sydney catalyzes a new exilic identity anchored in this very environment which used to oppress her. Put differently, having been a victim of a climactic fit of her husband's violence which rendered her bed-ridden, she parts from him to physically and psychologically recover, getting eventually a job at a petrol station. It is in this Australian space that she meets Donna, a Western female cab-driver with an ancestral history affiliated to India. Nina's tacit impression by Donna's charismatic and agential traits of character and by her acceptance of Nina's difference leads to the establishment of an identificatory feminine intersubjectivity between the two. This autonomous intersubjective nexus concretizes in the metaphor of the laughter which the two share and which, though lived only for a brief point in time, becomes a channel through which Nina identifies with Donna's agency, freedom, and self-assertion:

> The shop resounds with the laughter of these women […]. The laughter is flushing out all the debris of time […], making place for *new constructions*. She knows there are seeds inside her that are rooting her to this minute, this place, seeds that she never knew existed, buried so deep, they are now being shaken out as the laughing *fills* her and thrills her […]. And this time Nina laughs as a woman who has just *absolved* herself. (Gonsalves 246; my emphasis)

As exuded in this passage, laughter "fills" Nina with the essence of identity as it becomes a trope for self-reinvigoration and for her new voice which breaks her long silence. Additionally, "this minute" and "this place" become coordinates of the exilic site which "absolves" her and liberates her from her exile. This liberation, like that of Poorna, can be ascertained in her retrieval of her agency, of the sense of *being-at-home* in the world, and of her selfhood as she realizes by the end: "It is the sudden realization of her weight in this world […] a woman who has found her place. She is sure now. She is home" (247). Nina's "weight" here symbolizes her agency and visibility which provide her with the self-esteem and dignity central to the assertion of her identity.

All in all, this emancipation that Poorna and Nina succeed to extract from their exilic contexts, which have been altered from loci of oppression and alienation into locales wherein the seed of a new exilic identity is planted, is symptomatic of the hope which exile promises. As Burr postulates, exile involves not only discontinuity and displacement but also *hope* as it is centered on an "important consideration of the future that arises in the *hope* of a *reconnection*" and "implies a looking forward toward what is hoped to be again" (82). This exilic hope is latently present in both exilic Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian as they envision literary images of an eventual psychic survival and liberation from the discontinuity and identity crisis intrinsic to exile, taking similar paths at times but quite different ones at others. On the one hand, the protagonists of the exilic Arab-Australian literary works, Hayaat, Jomana, and the Lebanese poet, along with Kalsie's persona Jasminder all fulfill the "exilic hope" through the exilic identities they internalize and which permit them to reach a psychic state of liberation from and reconciliation with their exiles. Liberation and hope are, thus, offered by the very exilic identities they construct in their migratory contexts. On the other hand, Indian-Australian literature tends to divert from this tradition by transmuting exile into a liberatory site and a locus of hope wherein a "liberatory exilic identity" emerges. Here, one may protest by raising the following query: Since all exilic identities surface *in* and *as a result of* exile, what makes the "liberatory exilic identity" a mutation that distinguishes the exilic Indian-Australian literature from its Arab-Australian counterpart? In response to this, it can be theorized that there are two key criteria which differentiate the "liberatory exilic identity": First, it is rooted *in* the host land as opposed to the other exilic identities which showcase an affinity with the homeland, and, second, it is concerned with "subaltern" categories. This subalternity is exemplified in Poorna's disability and in Nina's marginal femininity and is nurtured by the social nature of the Indian society. It is precisely this reason which makes the exilic Indian-Australian literature eagerly prone to insert this rhetoric of subalternity in its narratives unlike its Arab-Australian equivalent. As has been adduced earlier, Indian women occupy a subaltern position in the Indian society just as disabled people do, which makes a return to or an identification with the homeland an endorsement rather than a mitigation of their non-agency and marginality.

Part Two

Locating the Interstice of Diasporic Identity

Being specifically implemented to denote the history of dispersion of the Jewish people in early times, the term "diaspora" has historically undergone a semantic broadening which has eventually transmuted it into "one of the most fashionable terms in academic discourse of late 20th century" (Baumann 325). Since the 1970s, it has become increasingly used to indicate any form of immigration and to describe any displaced or dislocated community. This can be illustrated in Tölölyan's renowned definition of the concept: "We use 'diaspora' provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guestworker, exile community, overseas community, ethnic community" (4). Tölölyan's definition is to some extent vague and restrictive of the concept's signification as it reduces the term "diaspora" into a simple pigeonhole which subsumes *any* category of migrant communities within its confines, overlooking as such the particularities, contexts, and distinctive features of different migrant groups – immigrants, exiles, refugees, expatriates – and overly broadening the purview of the term in a way that blurs its precise meaning. It follows that this vague usage of the term "diaspora" has led to its reduction into "an empty shell, a concept devoid of real pertinence and which may lead to gross overgeneralization" (Král 12) and, as Baumann posits, to "the term's semantic dissolution" (315). This is why Safran urges to entrench an accurate definition of the concept "[l]est the term lose all meaning" (83). In this regard, he pins down diaspora in terms of six defining features. In other words, he considers as diaspora

> expatriate minority communities whose members share several of the following characteristics: 1) they, or their ancestors, have been dispersed from a specific original "center" to two or more "peripheral," or foreign, regions; 2) they retain a collective memory, vision, or myth about their original homeland—its physical location, history, and achievements; 3) they believe that they are not—and perhaps cannot be—fully accepted by their host society and therefore feel partly alienated and insulated from it; 4) they regard their ancestral homeland as their true, ideal home and as the place to which they or their descendants would (or should) eventually return—when conditions

> are appropriate; 5) they believe that they should, collectively, be committed to the maintenance or restoration of their original homeland and to its safety and prosperity; and 6) they continue to relate, personally or vicariously, to that homeland in one way or another, and their ethnocommunal consciousness and solidarity are importantly defined by the existence of such a relationship. (83-84)

Yet, Safran's approach remains more or less simplistic in that it discards from the label "diasporic" many migrant groups. For instance, through his focus on a diaspora's internalization of the "myth of return," he dismisses those groups who have a loose bond with their homelands. Not quite dissimilar to Safran's theorization of diaspora is Cohen's insights into the term. In his delineation of the extant types of diasporas – victim, labor, trade, imperial, and cultural – and their typical features and despite his interest in his predecessor's argument, Cohen criticizes Safran's emphasis on the relationship of the diasporic group to its homeland while at the same time expressing the need to add to Safran's list other characteristics that lay stress on the relationship of the diasporic group to its hostland (23). In this respect, he adjusts four of Safran's features and adds other traits defining diasporic communities, including mainly "a strong ethnic group consciousness sustained over a long time and based on a sense of distinctiveness, a common history and the belief in a common fate," "a troubled relationship with host societies," "a sense of empathy and solidarity with co-ethnic members in other countries of settlement," and "the possibility of a distinctive creative, enriching life in host countries with a tolerance for pluralism" (26). Both Safran and Cohen champion a *bipolar* model in their conceptualizations of diaspora, a model which hinges on the duality of homeland/hostland. This bipolar model is criticized, however, for the rigid, fixed paradigms of identity it implies. On this account, Sudesh Mishra animadverts on Safran and Cohen's representation of diasporas as "class-neutral, gender-neutral and generation-neutral ethnic collectivities," which renders the homeland and the hostland as homogeneous realms ("Diaspora Criticism" 17).

In their critical movement beyond this bipolar model, postmodernist scholars conceive of diaspora as a form of consciousness, i.e. "diaspora consciousness," the most remarkable contributions on the ground being those of Hall, Gilroy, Clifford, Bhabha, and Brah. Hall, for instance, rebuts the classical, bipolar definitions of diaspora which he portrays as old, imperializing, and hegemonizing (235). He goes further to advocate a diasporic identity which departs from the illusion of "essence or purity" and emerges as a processual "production" constituted through heterogeneity, transformation, difference, and hybridity (222, 235). In the same vein, Gilroy identifies diaspora as a "relational network" which involves a tripolar relationship between the homeland, the hostland, and the liminal "contested spaces" in-between (207, 211). Drawing largely on the experience of the *black* diaspora (or what he terms the *black Atlantic*), he contends that diaspora consciousness entails "the multivocality of belongings" (Kalra et al. 29), which disrupts the hegemony, fixity, and rootedness embedded in "sedentary" identities and in the concept of the nation (Gilroy 207). In accordance with Gilroy, Clifford debunks Safran's bipolar model and opts for a version which is centered on the notions of liminality and hybridity. Accordingly, he defines diaspora as a "travelling term" which denotes a discourse that is "hybridizing in new global conditions" (302, 306). He further claims that the transnational connections framing diasporas should not necessarily revolve, as in Safran's theory, around a fixed point of origin but should rather be "[d]ecentered, lateral connections" (306). Most importantly, in his endorsement of a hybrid, decentered diasporic identity, Clifford defines the concomitant mode of thinking, that is, diaspora consciousness, as being "entirely a product of cultures and histories in collision and dialogue" (319). As such, he paves the way for a hybrid identity which operates in a liminal borderzone. In his engagement in the debate on diaspora, Bhabha contrives the concept of "third space" as a site of construction of diasporic identity. He contends that the third space emerges as a "middle ground" where "all cultural statements and systems are constructed" (Bhabha, *Location* 37). In other words, it is a site of interstitiality, ambivalence, and hybridity where cultural and historical identities are "negotiated" in an ever-changing process. The vitality of this space stems from its production of a counterdiscourse to the “homogenizing, unifying force” of fixed identity and of the “originary” history prompted by the discourse of the nation (37). Another valuable contribution to the scholarly delineation of the concept of diaspora is that presented by Brah: “The concept of diaspora places the discourse of ‘home’ and ‘dispersion’ in creative tension, *inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins*” (189). Such a statement authenticates that Brah embraces the duality homeland/hostland long held as central by the classical diasporists yet inscribes it within the postmodern model through her perception of the tension between the two not as dialectical or conflictual but rather as “creative,” corroborating a process of hybrid negotiations and connections that contest the hegemonic discourses of fixity and unity. She articulates quite straightforwardly her break with the classical notion of diaspora and her clear-cut adoption of the postmodern view of the concept: “The word diaspora often invokes the imagery of traumas of separation and dislocation, and this is certainly a very important aspect of the migratory experience. But diasporas are also potentially the sites of hope and new beginnings” (190). While the classical perception of diaspora, as is Safran and Cohen’s, mourns the diasporic state as one which calls forth alienation, loss, and longing, the postmodern conceptualization of the notion celebrates diasporic consciousness as a generative site of new transformations and of identities that are “at once local and global” (192). Taking all these theoretical approaches into consideration, it can be assumed that diaspora is rendered as a mode of consciousness and identification which celebrates the concepts of hybridity, double consciousness, identity (re)construction and transformation, liminality, hyphenation, ambivalence, etc. while at the same time subverting the hegemonic discourses of fixity, unity, and purity.

The purpose behind adducing these different theoretical conceptualizations of diaspora is to pinpoint its meaning and usage in this part of the thesis. Indeed, diaspora is not used here as a generic, hollow term which encompasses any migrant group; rather, it refers to a unique category of immigrants whose diasporic consciousness places them in a liminal position in the productive binary homeland/hostland and subjects their identities to a process of negotiation and transformation. In this sense, diaspora manifests in the analytical study of the examined literary works as a form of consciousness which underlies the diasporic identities enacted by the protagonists of these works. In this regard, the choice of Cecile Yazbek's novel *Voices on the Wind* and of Kavita Nandan's novel *Home after Dark* to be cases in point of the diasporic paradigm of migrant identity owes to the singularity of each literary work in approaching diasporic identity and consciousness and to the overall difference in these approaches and which attests to the multivocality and heterogeneity of diasporic identity.

Chapter 1: Diasporic Identity in Anglophone Arab-Australian Literature

Just as cultural theory has witnessed a categorical shift in the conceptions of diaspora, so has diasporic literature:

> The genre has supposedly moved away from a certain tragic mode linked to the experience of diaspora as loss, nostalgia and a longing for the past, to embrace the more alluring theme of positive immigration and self-reinvention abroad; in so doing, the diasporic experience has become increasingly divorced from the notion of exile and closer to that of residence in a foreign country. (Král 11)

In this sense, diasporic literature has ceased to zero in on the juncture of departure from the homeland as a moment of break, loss, and alienation and to mourn the exile-like nature of the diasporic experience. Instead, the diasporic text has been transformed into a literary venue where the diasporic experience is celebrated as a potential site for the generation of new, hybrid identities which stand in contradistinction to the principles of fixity and purity. Besides, in its neoteric form, diasporic literature suggests a new understanding of the concept of "home" which differs from its classical view. As opposed to the connotations of stability, comfort, and fixity which exile literature associates with the point of origin as the only possible "home" and space of belonging, diasporic literature exposes such a classical conceptualization of "home" as a myth and reconceptualizes the concept in a way that "foregrounds ambivalence, fragmentation, and plurality as a new way of thinking about space and identity" (Mardorossian 22). In the light of these features that may serve to delimit the contours of "diasporic literature" which, much like the term "diaspora," is overly implemented to refer to *any* literary work produced by a migrant author, it can be asserted that this literary genre becomes a fictional locus for the display of "diaspora consciousness." This can be ascertained, for instance, in the diasporic literature written by some Arab-Australian authors for whom exile literature is not an appropriate ground for the fictionalization of their diasporic existence and who find in the "diasporic" a worldly[18] realm for the demystification of the intricacies of diasporic identity. One of these is the Lebanese-South African-Australian author Cecile Yazbek who deflects from the literary tradition of post-war narratives carried out by the majority of Lebanese-Australian authors like Leila Yusaf Chung, Jad el Hage, Abbas El-Zein, and Nada Awar Jarrar. Yazbek's novel *Voices on the Wind* traces the physical and psychological journeys of the Australian protagonist Eva who, after her mother's death, embarks on delving into her Lebanese-South African roots. This leads her to travel to the diasporic land of her ancestors: South Africa. There, she engages in a historical dialogue with the tales and voices of her ancestors, Edmond, his wife Lily, and their relatives and friends. The novel as such alternates the colonial past of these people caught in the diasporic duality of the Lebanese homeland/ the South African hostland with the postcolonial, post-apartheid present of Eva who, moving from Australia to South Africa and then back to Australia, is trying to reconfigure what she thought to be her only identity and to (re)-construct a hyphenated identity. Accordingly, the novel *migrates* across historical, spatial, and generational borders to piece together an integral part of the Lebanese diasporic identity. All the same, the significance of the novel stems from its exposition of the polyphony of diasporic identity. That is to say, it foregrounds two quite different paradigms of diasporic identity. The first, enacted by the Lebanese diasporic protagonists in a colonial South Africa, exudes an interplay between what Lavie and Swedenberg term "identity-as-conjuncture" and "identity-as-essence" which Mishra defines and elucidates in the following terms:

> In the identity-as-conjuncture scenario the diasporic subject, in its multiple identifications, is assumed to promote a revolutionary alternative to the stabilities of

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[18] I characterize the realm of the "diasporic" as worldly in the Edwardian fashion in order to refer to the common perception of diasporic consciousness amongst many authors and scholars as a *realistic* representation of their own worlds rather than as a purely imaginative construct. This is exemplified in Král's contention that what makes of "double subjectivity" – a discursive combination of "double consciousness" and "diasporic subjectivity" – "a useful concept is that it is not a theoretical construct but a de facto metaperspective rooted in the locus of in-betweenness. It is not an imaginary category but an existential one which is both a blessing and a curse – a curse in the sense that the diasporic writer is doomed to a life of in-betweenness, but a blessing in the sense that s/he enjoys a double outlook" (15).

> ethnic and nationalist identity formations. In the reverse scenario of identity-as essence, the same subject draws on strategic essentialisms (not unlike indigenous minorities the world over) to upset hegemonic discourses – hence an implied ethics of essentialism. (S. Mishra, *Diaspora Criticism* 85-86)

As for the second, carried out by the Australian narrator Eva, it typifies what Gilroy labels "double consciousness."

1. The Classical Diasporan: Dialogizing Social, Cultural, and Racial Extremes

One of the popular definitions attributed to diasporic identity in diaspora studies is that propounded by Brah: "Diasporic identities are […] networks of transnational identifications encompassing 'imagined' and 'encountered' communities" (192). While the "imagined" community alludes to the identification with the homeland or nation, the "encountered" community points to the host country where the diasporic subject settles. Such perception of diasporic identity deviates from the exilic duality homeland/hostland in that the diasporic subject does not adopt an unwavering attachment to the homeland at the expense of his new country of settlement. Rather, he/she enacts a double allegiance to both entities in socio-cultural and psychic terms, ensuring what Brah calls "multi-locationality" as a feature marking the process of diasporic identity formation (194). In Yazbek's historical novel, *Voices on the Wind,* this double-loyalty-guided process of identity formation crystallizes in the Lebanese protagonists' social and cultural configurations of their diasporic identity within the confines of the diasporized binary homeland/hostland. Yet, given that the diasporic setting which frames the colonial story in the novel is quite different from those which contextualize most of the Arab-Australian literary works, these identificatory procedures alone do not suffice to configure the protagonists' diaspora consciousness. In other words, moving away from the conventional spatio-temporal contexts in which Arab-Australian narratives occur, namely contemporary Lebanon, Palestine, and Australia, the colonial story within Yazbek's novel takes place in a South Africa under the yoke of English and Boer imperialism during the first half of the twentieth century, which problematizes the existence of the Lebanese diaspora. This historical setting entails the surfacing of another coordinate which plays an umbilical role in the configuration of the Lebanese diasporic identity: racial politics.

1.1. Here and There: Social Configurations of Diasporic Identity

Indeed, the mere mention of diaspora suggests the encounter between at least two societies – the home society and the host society. Unlike in exile where the home society is always the only possible social in-group with which the exiled subject identifies, in diaspora, the subject valorizes both communities in the formation of his diasporic identity and most significantly adds to this process the diasporic "group consciousness" which has been implied in Safran's and Cohen's bipolar models. In this respect, the main protagonists in the colonial story of the novel socially configure their diasporic identity through their affiliation to their home community and through their struggle for social acceptance in the South African community.

After his arrival at Queenstown and his success as a shop owner, Edmond along with his compatriots invariably maintains a close affinity and concern with his fellows in Lebanon in socio-economic and psychological terms. Such interconnection between the Lebanese at home and those in diaspora is implied even before Edmond could leave for South Africa: "Edmond joined the throng on the quay for his voyage to the new world. His father saw him off. 'I know that you will make us proud.' He didn't add how important Edmond's success would be for their survival as the silk price took them from poverty to wealth and back again in the same season" (Yazbek, *Voices* 17). The father's thought suggests that the family's financial situation is contingent on their son's success abroad. In point of fact, in his historical study *Interlopers of Empire: The Lebanese Diaspora in Colonial French West Africa*, Arsan points to the centrality of silk as a vital commodity in Mount Lebanon (30) and the economic crisis resulting from the fall of its price since the early 1850s (30, 33-34). This crisis impelled many

Lebanese from Mount Lebanon to immigrate to the United States, Africa, or Latin America so as to ameliorate their socio-economic status (37). This is the case of Edmond and his brother Joe who, migrating respectively to South Africa and Brazil and labeled in the process as "fortune-hunters" (Yazbek, *Voices* 17), seek to absolve their family from the lurking poverty. Such economic correlation between the Lebanese diaspora and their home community is further substantiated after Edmond's immigration and the establishment of his successful business: "Edmond's heart bubbled when he went to collect his consignment at the train station. […] Tall glazed terracotta jars from a village pottery high in the Cedars were filled in the Koura with olives, oil and olive oil soap. From the Bekaa Valley, there was wine vinegar, goat butter and salted goat cheese. These were shipped to Lebanese providores [sic] all over the world" (45). Beside confirming Cohen's classification of the Lebanese as a "trade diaspora" (Cohen 83), this passage corroborates one of Safran's defining traits of diasporic formations. Indeed, it depicts Edmond's economic affiliation to his homeland through his importation of typically Lebanese commodities from different regions of the country – Koura and the Bekaa Valley –, reflecting his active contribution to the mobilization of his homeland's economic wheel. This corresponds to Safran's assertion that the members of a diasporic community are committed to "the maintenance or restoration" of their homeland's "safety and prosperity" (84). Another feature which evinces this economic affiliation to the Lebanese home community is the nexus established between the Lebanese diasporans' economic prosperity and their kin as was the case in West Africa: "[Migration towards West Africa] was an enterprise driven by a keen sense of the economic opportunities to be found in West Africa, and directed by ties of family and friendship. […] migrants in both French and British West Africa continued to call upon family members and prospective employees […] throughout the colonial period" (Arsan 54). Placing "economic opportunities" and "ties of family" side by side as frames of the migration "enterprise" initiates a parallelism between the two. This parallelism authenticates that calling upon one's family members is intended not merely to reconstruct "the comforting ties of family" in the hostland (54) but also to disentangle the diasporans' family members from poverty and financial crises. Being delimited by the same homeland circumstances and hostland economic opportunities, such a state of affairs is not confined to West Africa but is transposed to South Africa as well, given that the latter also witnessed a migratory flow of familial nature. A case in point is to be found in the novel when, following the success of his trade, Edmond "sent for his younger brother Tony from Lebanon" (Yazbek, *Voices* 17). He also decides later on to write to a newly wed Lebanese couple, Rami and Olga, to join them in Queenstown (120). This concern with his Lebanese relatives and friends reflects his readiness to create economic opportunities for them and to mitigate the brunt of the financial crises which they have to endure. Not only this, but his awareness of the economic circumstances wherein his home community lives can be sensed in the overtone of empathy and compassion underlying his explanation when his wife's family in Lebanon sends her a letter devoid of any words of love:

> The silk price has fallen and times are not easy for them. They fear she will go home and be an extra mouth to feed if they make her too homesick. Besides, whenever one of us wants a wife, we tell them how good our life is with all the business opportunities and our large homes with servants. We give them gifts and money. They feel out of this good life, as they still have to chop wood and fetch water without servants. (73-74)

Edmond's elucidation of the sheer economic disparities between the Lebanese in Queenstown and those in Beit Meri mirrors his social bonds with his home community, for he is neither indifferent to, nor distant from the economic predicaments conditioning its life. His juxtaposition between his and his diasporic fellows' affluence and their Lebanese kin's misery is informed by his awareness of the delicacy and vulnerability of his home community's financial conditions, hence his efforts to alleviate their situation, exemplifying Arsan's assertion that the Lebanese migration "not only provided opportunities for enrichment and betterment for those who had themselves taken the paths of the *mahjar*, but also an increasingly important source of wherewithal for those who stayed behind" (38).

The diasporic predilection for the home community is not only expressed on a socio-economic level, but it goes further to materialize on a psychological level as well. An illustration of this in *Voices on the Wind* is introduced when, despite their physical distance from the Lebanese geopolitical setting, Edmond and his compatriots display a profound concern for their people in Lebanon during the First World War. This is particularly seen in the psychological aura environing them while reading news about the war:

> Men crowded into Edmond's parlour on winter nights to hear him read the newspaper as the war continued into 1916. […]
>
> 'Ingleesies seem to feel at home everywhere. At least our villages in those high mountains are safe from the armies on the coast.'
>
> But when he read the last few lines about a famine in Syria, they sucked in their breath through clenched teeth. (Yazbek, *Voices* 155)
>
> […] silenced by helplessness [they] looked at Edmond. […]
>
> […] Edmond's fears for Mount Lebanon were confirmed in a letter from his brother Joe in Brazil. He described starvation […] and how finally, a locust plague sent people scurrying to the port and onto ships with nothing but their clothes. Most of them headed for South America – as far as possible from the English and European wars. (156)

The men's painstaking interest in reading the newspaper both in its Arabic and English versions is a habit that recurs throughout the novel on many occasions and is, thus, transmuted into a leitmotif of Edmond and his compatriots' diasporic identity, for it emblematizes their national affiliation by looming as a "source of imagined linkage" and nationalist feelings among the members of the imagined community (Anderson 33). In this case, given that the newspaper content to which they are exposed incorporates both the Lebanese and the South African subject matters, it can be assumed to betray the doubleness underlying the social configurations of their diasporic consciousness. In this excerpt, however, stress is laid on their diasporic affinity with their social in-group. Their reaction to the political and social imbroglios wherein Lebanon and its Middle Eastern neighbors are immersed can be construed as "psychological rites of re-connection" to their homeland. More specifically, their feelings of anxiety and distress following the news of their people's suffering during the First World War reflects that their life in South Africa is not only shaped by their immediate historical context but is inevitably molded by the historical circumstances of war and colonialism prevailing in their Lebanese motherland. It is also worth noticing that the shared concern of Edmond in South Africa and his brother Joe in Brazil for the Lebanese in the homeland indicates a global interest of the Lebanese diasporans all over the world in their point of origin and substantiates, therefore, that their diasporic identity is ineluctably framed by the fate of their home community. Moreover, Edmond and his fellows' psychological identification with their in-group in Lebanon transcends mere sympathy and anxiety and materializes in the prevalence of a mood of psychological devotion and commitment to it. This is instantiated in the meeting which Edmond arranges with Mr. Shamley, one of the elders of the Lebanese community in South Africa, specifically for the discussion of the lachrymose situation of their home in-group:

> Fouad Shamely stood up. '[…] How wonderful it is that we are able to share this meal today and pray for our families back home.'
>
> They sat in silence and Fouad held the hand of his son who stood next to him. Their ears still ringing, Elias began to intone the Psalm […] and they joined in the familiar words of supplication, handed down over centuries of troubles in their ancestral villages.
>
> The women wiped their eyes […].
>
> Fouad spoke again, '[…] What we have to do now is hold onto hope in the mercy of God on our families back home. The food we share here today, giving great thanks to the Almighty, most at home will not have eaten for some years.' (Yazbek, *Voices* 162-163)

These Lebanese diasporans' prayers to their afflicted community back home attests to their loyalty to it and their deep commitment to its plight as their primary cause. Such devotion suggests their concern with their home community and their psychological presence in their motherland, both of which become psychological preoccupations inherent in the social configuration of their diasporic consciousness. Additionally, while the silence overwhelming this social gathering bespeaks the solemn air which accompanies every mention of their families back home, the women's tears betoken these diasporans' psychological act of reproducing the anguished and grievous voices of Lebanon as an act of solidarity and communion with their Lebanese kin. To top it all, their cognizance of their people's torment in every aspect of their life, even the most basic – food –, evinces that they are vicariously re-living their pain, which translates an advanced level of psychological identification with their home society in the process of their diasporic consciousness negotiation.

In exile literature, such a relationship between the immigrant and the homeland is the pivotal rhetoric underlying the discourse of the migrant's identity formation. Nonetheless, this exilic premise is not applicable in a like manner to the diasporic, for diasporic organizations are assumed to "literally straddle a 'here and there,' offering ways of being in 'the abroad' (making a home) as well as providing connection with 'out there' (another home)" (Kalra et al. 18). This signifies that the immigrant's affiliation to the homeland alone does not suffice to entrench a diasporic consciousness; rather, the latter entails the diasporic subject's involvement in a social configuration which centers on the co-internalization of a reconnection with one's roots and a connection with new routes. This opening up of new routes in the process of the social configuration of diasporic identity is undertaken in *Voices on the Wind* through Edmond's struggle for acceptance amidst the South African colonial elite community, that is, within the Westernized South African society, which defies Safran's assumption that the members of a diasporic community believe that they are not fully accepted by their host society. In this regard, Edmond typifies the Lebanese diasporic obsession with expunging the stamp of "outsiderness" through his attempt to represent "the model immigrant" and to ascertain a commonality with the members of the colonial community surrounding him. From the very outset, Edmond has strived to build an economically and socially successful life starting as a hawker and becoming a shop owner. His awareness and pride of this social ascension is corroborated through his vestiary predilection: "In reaction to his years on the roads as a hawker, Edmond always dressed in a suit with a stiff collar" (Yazbek, *Voices* 28). The "collar" here is an allusion to the "white-collar" job which, according to Nydell, is much desired in the Arab culture given the high social status it confers (60). Thus, this simple vestiary item betrays Edmond's desire to exude his social success and prestigious status to his Western customers in order to gain their "acceptance." This same disposition is reproduced differently in his deportment when he welcomes the Boer midwife, Mrs. Botha, in his house:

> Instead of his usual short-cut through the store-room to the back of his home, he led her out to the front. From the veranda, they walked in through the double front doors with leadlight insets on which golden lilies had grown in someone's Victorian imagination. He settled Mrs. Botha in the parlor […].
>
> From the velvet sofa where she sat, the midwife looked around the room taking in the silk carpet, the gleaming parquet floors, the wooden clock above the fireplace and the low table with flowers […].
>
> She was nodding quietly to herself […]. (Yazbek, *Voices* 23)

Edmond's deflection from his habitual path to the inside of his home is not a random choice; rather, endorsed by a meticulous description of the place and its paraphernalia, it connotes a deliberate movement purported to display to Mrs. Botha the grandeur and prestigious character of his home so as to gain a socially respectable position and status among the Boer community which she represents. Reciprocally, the Boer woman's reaction to such a tacit exhibition of luxury is in no way passive, for her scrutiny of the place and her eventual nods signals an acknowledgment of Edmond's prosperous social status, which corresponds to the impression that he has intended to generate within her. Additionally, Edmond's embodiment of the model immigrant is brought into play through his determination to fit in and merge into the overall social landscape of his hostland as he earnestly unravels to his wife Lily: "We are strangers everywhere and we have to learn the language and the new ways; we have to make families and homes" (30). Through his claim, Edmond refers to the Lebanese diaspora around the world and underlines a global tendency among its members to integrate in their diasporic communities, insinuating that they encounter new beginnings and alienation wherever they go. His focus on the Lebanese diasporic subjects' integration despite their alienation and dislocation constructs them as a paradigmatic example of "model minorities." More significantly, his emphasis on the necessity of learning the host language and "ways" and of making families in diaspora is a reflection of the diasporic nature of the Lebanese migratory identity as it bears a readiness to internalize and adapt to the cultural and social values of the hostland. Not only this, but Edmond's intention to make "home" in his diasporic outpost attests to the negotiation of his identity through his development of a strong affiliation to his hostland. Finally, Edmond's position as a model immigrant can be noticed in his political disposition. More particularly, being aware of the political conflict between the Boers and the English as two colonial powers attempting to take over different parts of South Africa, Edmond clings to the safe abode of silence and impartiality as he listens to his Boer customers' zealous political talk about the prospect of their outright victory over the English: "Edmond was quiet and the farmers didn't ask him what he thought. Political change could be a stormy sea for newcomers and silence was a good ship to sail in" (68). In this context, any erroneous word on the part of Edmond will be construed as an act of rebellion and antagonism and will, hence, result in his Manichean othering and exclusion. That's why, while fully grasping the conversation, he prefers to stick to silence as a sign of neutrality and pacifism and to distance himself from the conversation, forsaking his political agency in order to epitomize the prototypal model immigrant, one who is able to secure social acceptance amidst the Boers and the English no matter what vicissitudes transpire in their dichotomic political landscape.

All the same, model immigrants' success stories, as Buell postulates, "[are] models precisely because they remind us on every page that the author [of that success story is] an 'other'" (qtd in Dayal 50). This suggests that being a model immigrant invariably implies being "other"; that is to say, what makes a migrant's success a particularly interesting story to be appreciated and singled out from the "regular" successful individuals – non-immigrants – is simply one's otherness and difference. Edmond's awareness of his persistent categorization as an "outsider" and "other," no matter how implicitly this is carried out, makes him all the more obsessed with the idea of becoming *one of the Western "us"* by seeking an identificatory commonality with them. The most expressive moment of such a diasporic sentiment in the novel crystallizes in his pondering after the birth of his dead, disfigured firstborn:

> His customers […] were usually chatty and engaging. Today they were silent and he regarded this as public humiliation in *his* new country. Somehow he imagined that a child born to him and his foreign wife would have made him *one of them*: a man among men who wiped the sweat from their brows when they discussed how costly it was to put their children in school uniforms and their wives in church clothes. He would no longer have been the interloper hung with an air of garlic and outlandish accent. (Yazbek, *Voices* 26; my emphasis)

By referring to South Africa as "*his* new country," Edmond implies that this new community is "his" new home, which reveals his desire to settle and fit in not only territorially but also socially. This aspiration, for Edmond, can only be actualized and fulfilled through the equation he establishes between "fatherhood" and "belonging." Such a nexus owes its origin to the Arab culture wherein the traditional patrilineal[19] family structure "places enormous responsibility and simultaneous privilege on male members because it is men in the family who ensure security, maintain continuity of the family and provide a sense of belonging" (Ajrouch et al. 94). Being raised in an environment conditioned by the Arab culture, Edmond's patrilineal upbringing impels him to conceive of his fatherhood as the link that may bind him to the local in-group, a bond which he expresses through the phrase "one of them." In his own stance, more than being an existential feature, fatherhood is *per se* a social qualification required to pertain to the host community given that it engenders as an inevitable corollary the rootedness of the whole family – the father, the mother, and the children – in the network of its surrounding society. However, the meaning of fatherhood, for Edmond, further entails the ability to have a "normal" child. This explains why he perceives his inability to have one as "public humiliation," for he envisions it as a reduction of his masculinity and an accentuation of his difference and, thus, of his social "un-fitness." Lest he be socially excluded on account of this, Edmond makes his best to conceal the deformity of the child from the Western community by offering Mrs. Botha some extra money and pleading with her not to say anything about this secret (Yazbek, *Voices* 27). Edmond's hankering for fatherhood as the inevitable commonality that will secure him social acceptance within and identification with the host society is not merely a passive whim; rather, it is a persistent thought which crosses his mind whenever he remembers his outsiderness. This is exemplified when he tells his brother Tony that though "people see [them] as foreigners," they are fortunate to enjoy the right of ownership, yet he hides from him "how upset he was at losing his firstborn, the child that would have made this home for all of them" (28). The loss of the child here becomes a symbol for Edmond, a token of the loss of his opportunity to become "one of them," to shun away the "feeling of otherness" which he voices as he describes himself in the previous passage as "the interloper […] with an air of garlic and outlandish accent," i.e. as the typical Lebanese immigrant. Eventually, it is only after the birth of his first child – Samira – that "Edmond thought the life he wished for was coming together" (91). Indeed, it is only after becoming a father that he starts to live his life with confidence, pride, and a feeling of being at home and to lead the Lebanese community in the town, which signals his smooth integration in the host society.

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[19] Patrilineality or patrilineal family structure refers to a system which conditions family members' rights on the basis of their gender and assumes that one's affiliation to a family, i.e. one's "lineage and kinship," is granted through the figure of the father. Such a cultural concept has been enacted in the characterization of Arab families (Ajrouch et al. 94; Ajami et al. 104).

1.2. The Semiosis of Food and the Praxis of Tradition: Cultural Configurations of Diasporic Identity

With the mere mention of culture in the light of diaspora, Hall comes to the fore. In his seminal article "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Hall differentiates between two versions of cultural identity, defining the first approach in the following elaborate terms:

> The first position defines ‘cultural identity’ in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective ‘one true self’, hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed ‘selves’, which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as ‘one people’, with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference and meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. This ‘oneness’, underlying all the other, more superficial differences, is the truth, the essence […]. (223)

In contrast, the second paradigm of cultural identity moves beyond the oneness of identity and beyond the insertion of the latter within the identity-as-essence mold and conceives of it in terms of *difference* and *transformation* (225). Hall goes further to dismantle the essentialist view of cultural identity as something “eternally fixed” by pinpointing it as “a matter of ‘becoming’ as well as of ‘being’” (225). While this second position is maintained by Yazbek’s young protagonist Eva, as will be unearthed later, the protagonists of the old Lebanese diaspora typify Hall’s first version of cultural identity. A first glimpse at the novel will enable any reader to remark that the Lebanese culture is cherished among the members of this diasporic community in quite a prominent and idealized fashion. It pervades and defines their very personal and collective existence and rules out any likelihood of assimilation. For this reason, it can be assumed that with this leading generation of Lebanese diasporans, it would be unsound to talk about cultural “hybridity,” a concept which scholars usually evoke in a taken-for-granted manner whenever the combination diaspora-culture is mentioned. In its contemporary usage, hybridity is implemented by Bhabha to refer to the articulation of liminality, in-betweenness, difference, and ambivalence (*Location* 4, 112), especially in the context of what might be labelled as “the colonial-cultural interface” (Kalra et al. 71). In the novel, however, the protagonists’ unwavering determination to preserve their native culture and their intense attachment to it discard the features of ambivalence, in-betweenness and liminality, which makes of “hybridity” a term that falls short in designating the cultural configuration of their diasporic consciousness. In this groundwork, it is worth mentioning that the outweighing presence of the Lebanese culture in this novelistic discourse sparks no wonder in that diasporans' recourse to culture enables them to recreate their "distant" home and to psychologically survive the discontents of migration, mainly displacement and alienation. Indeed, Bhabha views culture not only as a production of meaning and values but also as a "practice of survival and supplementarity [...] as its resplendent being is a moment of pleasure, enlightenment or liberation" (*Location* 175). In accordance with this, the novel's protagonists "survive" their initial alienation and "supplement" their existence with their native culture. Despite their enactment of a more or less fixed cultural collective self, the diasporic character of their identity is still to be discerned in this cultural configuration of their diasporic consciousness in the sense that this culture, no matter how Lebanese it is, remains open to host modifications and transformations and displays a proneness to cultural cross-pollination. In point of fact, the Lebanese cultural identity of the novel's diasporized community conspicuously concretizes in the protagonists' enactment of the Lebanese culinary praxis and in their preservation of the traditional patriarchal values on which the Lebanese family is founded but remains, however, open to transformation.

When examining Arab diasporic literature, one is intrigued by the inevitable presence of food in many of its works, whether in elaborate or terse yet significant terms. The first example that comes to mind is Diana Abu-Jaber's novels *Crescent* and *The Language of Baklava* where food and culinary recipes are inextricably intertwined with the literary discourse. In Jarrar's novel *Dreams of Water*, the protagonist Salah figures in many scenes as cooking a meal where the Lebanese flavors intermingle, while the characters Kamal and Margo in *A Good Land* elevate the item of the Lebanese coffee into a cultural and social signifier. In Abdel-Fattah's *Where the Streets Had a Name*, Palestinian food is inserted every now and then, endowed with powerful meanings of identity. Such a common concern with food is not a coincidence; rather, it is a careful choice by these authors which stems from the conviction that in the context of migration, as Hage asseverates, "[t]he relation between home and food is an essential one. […] The yearning for a 'mother's mouthful' is one and the same as the yearning for 'back home'" ("Migration" 416). In his same line of thought, Mannur explains that "[w]hen we think about food, it is often to discern some truthful fictions or fictive truths about group identity" (11). This points to the importance of using food as a discursive strategy for the elaboration on identity formation in the context of migration. In Yazbek's *Voices on the Wind*, Lebanese food is copiously implemented to convey a multiplicity of meanings. To begin with, after the loss of her firstborn and with no close female relatives by her side to console her as they do back home, Lily's feelings of alienation and dislocation become even more inexorable, awakening again and again in her psyche the scenario of her abandonment to her fates – marriage and migration – by her family despite her precocious age, which only exacerbates her "negative intimations," to use Hage's words. The coalescence of all these catalysts results in her immersion in a severe psychic crisis which could not be alleviated but by her "motherly" compatriot Mrs. Shamley whom Edmond summons for help. The momentum of such a narrative moment is encapsulated in what Mrs. Shamley offers to Lily in hospital: "She carried a small basket with fresh bread wrapped in a linen cloth, yoghurt, a jar of olives and some mint and parsley from the garden. As soon as she walked into the room, Lily sat up. 'How do you feel, habeebteh?' *Tante* [Mrs. Shamley] kissed her on the forehead" (Yazbek, *Voices* 42). Being all metonymic fragments of the Lebanese cuisine, the Lebanese bread, yoghurt, olives and herbs become Lily's favorite food as opposed to the *kraftsbruhe* which the nuns feed her in hospital (47). These culinary items do not target Lily's body as much as they do her psyche, for they re-create the aura, scents, and tastes of home. That is to say, they reproduce the homely feelings which he has lost since her separation from her kin. In fact, what Mrs. Shamley does here can be accounted for by Hage's claim that food "intimates familiarity" and "promotes a multitude of homely practices for those who might otherwise face the unknowable" (Hage, "Migration"

424). By dint of "experiencing" the quintessential Lebanese food which Mrs. Shamley provides her with, Lily succeeds to re-encounter the Lebanese "familiar" in a world where everything seems to her alien and unknown. The act of *tasting* here becomes a psychological journey of reconnection with the *familiar* home and helps the protagonist, thus, to escape from the imminent madness of exilic loneliness and alienation.

Moreover, probing further into Hage's scrutiny of home-building unveils that "familiarity" is not the only homely feeling which this process involves. Rather, it is predicated on other homely feelings, among which is the sense of "communality" that, in its turn, is enhanced by the homeland food, especially when it comes to "collective eating": "Just as food provided the basis for homely practices within the private sphere, it also provided the basis for practices of home-building in the public sphere, in particular, fostering intimations of homely communality" (424-425). This can be grasped in the novel through the contribution of the Lebanese culinaryscape during the diasporic community's collective celebration of Easter to the buttressing of the protagonists' shared Lebaneseness:

> Lily, the expert, would make the *maamoul*, sweet Easter cakes. Each one resembled a boulder, perhaps the one that had closed Jesus's cave-tomb and was moved aside by a superhuman strength on the day of his resurrection. Mary Magdalene was the first to see the space […], empty but for the fragrance of orange blossoms. (Yazbek, *Voices* 116)
>
> Edmond tapped on his plate. 'I am ever grateful to our brother, Fouad, and his dear wife, Samira, and family for coming to us at this time, all the way from Tarkastad.' He leaned across the table and picked up a maamoul and they all did the same. With the first bite, orange flower fragrances filled their mouths and they closed their eyes lest the moment be lost to the mundane world. (126)

The common denominator between these two passages is the cultural signifier "maamoul" which is inserted in the first passage through the cooking act while being engrafted through the tasting process in the second. This Lebanese culinary item acquires significance as its italicization foregrounds. More particularly, being likened to the boulder used to close Jesus's tomb, the “maamoul” becomes a sacred food, a food which conveys a religious memory. Similarly, having as its fragrance that of orange blossoms which Mary Magdalene smelt in Jesus’s cave-tomb, the maamoul is transfigured into a cultural reminder of Jesus’s memory. It follows that this culinary object is elevated into a cultural epitome and celebration of these Lebanese diasporans’ Christian devotion and into a cultural topos of their collective identification as an Orthodox Christian community. At the moment of their collective eating, the characters’ gustatory sense becomes suffused with “orange flower fragrances”; that is to say, they become semiotically cognizant of the confluence of the religious and cultural legacy of their Christian community through this culinary symbol. To close the scene, the synchrony of tasting this “sacred” symbol and closing their eyes in an act of ascetic experience of the moment substantiates that this culinary signifier unites them and consolidates their communion by making them share the religious and cultural signification with which their celebratory *now* and *here* are laden. As such, it re-instills in them a communal sense of their Lebaneseness in this alien space. Of greater importance is when, at times, the home food goes to extremes to transmute this homely sense of communality into a strong manifestation of nationalism. Such a culinary narrative is related through the lens of Edmond and Lily’s cook: “Every few days, a farmer brought in a freshly killed beast but Cook knew that she was to prepare only lamb and mutton. Her master [Edmond] regarded beef as servants’ food” (51). Albeit beef is consumed by the Western farmers and albeit Edmond is acquiescent to the colonial cultures – the English and the Boer – and institutions, he rejects the “colonial” meat as “servants’ food.” It can be claimed that the culinary items referred to here are but metonymic allegories for each imagined community. Correspondingly, by setting their lamb and mutton in contradistinction to the “colonial-servants’ beef,” Edmond is, in reality, initiating a binary, the privileged extreme of which is the Lebanese community, whereas the vilified extreme is the “other” communities. Although this, in a sense, betrays his ambivalence towards the colonial culture, it more relevantly voices his pride with and inflation of his nationalistic culture and his exclusionary outlook with regard to any *different* culture. On another occasion, when Cook prepares the brawn, which she believes is "much loved by the English people," to Edmond and his brother, they return the plate untouched, commenting: "That is good for you and Abed, not for *us*" (56; my emphasis). Once again, by placing the English food and the native servants on the same side of the scale, Edmond defines the Lebanese "us" as essentially and radically different from the native and colonial out-groups, entrenching a sort of "Leb-centrism." In this way, he does not only magnify the Lebanese cuisine as unique and superior, but he unconsciously implements this culinary site to anchor his diasporic self in the Lebanese imagined community strongly designated as "us," which demonstrates his unwavering nationalism.

Finally, this discussion about the cultural discourse of food in the novel would not be complete without mentioning the feminine culinary realm. Apropos of this realm, Marshall concocts the phrase "poets in the kitchen" to render the women in her family and Barbadian community on account of "the rich legacy of language and culture they so freely passed on … in the wordshop of the kitchen" (qtd in Mannur 221). This phraseology – "poet in the kitchen" – can be applied to Lily not only because of her culinary proficiency but because, like these Barbadian women, she teaches her successors the Lebanese culinary language and culture. Lily "shared her skills with the younger women when they were brought from Lebanon to South Africa" (Yazbek, *Voices* 116), and a detailed example of this is her teaching of Yvonne, a newly arrived young girl, the scrupulous process of cooking maamoul (118). In this case, the kitchen as a culinary site becomes a space of diasporic feminine agency. Put differently, Lily's teaching of the Lebanese cuisine makes the culinary space transcend its gendered connotation of domesticity and elevates it into a site for the performativity of an agential feminine subjectivity since Lily contributes to the continuity of the Lebanese cultural legacy in this alien space distant from all that is Lebanese. By so doing, she contests the risk of cultural assimilation and homogenization and preserves instead the diasporic liminality and borderzone. Such tendency is best expressed by Mannur's claim that if the Woolfian "room of one's own" was the site of intellectual production for women writers in the twentieth century, the kitchen, for women of color and immigrant women, becomes the locus of cultural work and production (221). Not only is this culinary realm a site of cultural production, but it is also endowed with a social dimension as it brings these Lebanese diasporized women, separated from their kin at an early age, closer, establishing a diasporic feminine intersubjectivity among them.

Aside from the culinary rendering of the protagonists' diasporic consciousness, these early diasporized migrants endeavor to transpose the patriarchal cultural values which underlie the structure of the Lebanese families back home into their existence in South Africa in an attempt to maintain "a perpetual recollecting identification with a […] far away existent geographic territory and its cultural-religious traditions" as being "diaspora constitutive" (Baumann 327). These patriarchal codes define in particular the Lebanese women's identity and status in this alien environment as typified in Lily's unquestioned submission to the constraints of patriarchy. More specifically, vehemently separated from everything familiar to her and being the only Lebanese woman in Queenstown upon her arrival, she has yet to configure her identity and decide her position, and with no female assistance to her, she finds no refuge but to recollect her mother's and sister's final resonant words and project them onto her own life. Her home culture, personified in her mother and sister as paradigms of this patriarchal culture, becomes then her psychological guide. Hence, when Lily no longer endures her alienation especially after the loss of her firstborn and imparts to her husband her desire to leave "hellish" South Africa, he simply evokes the Lebanese cultural censorship: "You can't go back. I made a deal with your family. It's the way we do things. You'll bring terrible shame on them" (Yazbek, *Voices* 30). This statement, tormenting as it is for Lily, silences her in many ways. First, by describing his marriage to Lily as a "deal," Edmond reminds her that their marital relationship is a *contract* between him and her parents; therefore, she has no say on it, and any rebellious or resentful words on her part will only put her marriage in jeopardy. He endorses this idea by alluding, through his reference to “shame” and his use of the pronoun “we” to denote the Lebanese community, to the notions of honor and reputation which are at the core of the traditional Lebanese culture and society. As a matter of fact, “[i]n Lebanon, […] the expectations of society can pressure individuals to conceal or deny anything that could tarnish their honor to avoid bringing shame on the individuals (or their family) […]” (Evason). It is this cultural pressure, though denying Lily her agency and freedom, that transforms her selfhood from an exilic identity to a diasporic one as she realizes the impossibility of return to Lebanon. This identity becomes even more ingrained in the traditional Lebanese culture as Lily herself becomes a *patriarchal woman*, that is, “a woman who has internalized the norms and values of *patriarchy*, which can be defined, in short, as any culture that privileges men by promoting traditional gender roles” (Tyson 85). Such a psychological proclivity can be seen in her absolute concealment of her intimate feelings and her silent refusal to confront her husband when she knows about his betrayal (Yazbek, *Voices* 147). This silence emblematizes Lily’s unconditional subservience to the patriarchal codes which make a man’s conduct an uncontested issue and deprives her of the agency and the will to castigate him and question his mistakes. Furthermore, the patriarchal mentality intrinsic to the Lebanese culture continues to influence Lily’s psychological orientation even in her role as a mother. When her son Najib dies, for instance, leaving her with three daughters, she mourns in a lachrymose tone: “What is the matter with me? Can I not keep boys?” (180). Lily’s bereavement here is outweighed by her disappointment with herself for not fulfilling the expectations of the traditional Arab cultural law which favors sons over daughters (Nydell 52, 67). This adherence to her community’s patriarchal code continues to define her selfhood even after her husband dies, for, as reiterated by her daughters and by her Lebanese friends, her son Felix remains her “favorite”

(Yazbek, *Voices* 212). That is to say, having succeeded to give birth to a son, Lily finally feels satisfied with herself and centers her motherly identity around this son as her daughters notice: "She never sat with any of us the way she does with Felix" (212). All in all, it can be extrapolated that Lily's identification with her patriarchal culture at once *filiates* her to her homeland and *affiliates* her to her hostland. Put differently, her enactment of these home cultural codes maintains the presence of her homeland, but at the same time, it is the pressure of these very codes that convinces her to stay and build a new family in her "new homeland" – hostland – given the impossibility of return. Hence, Lily's cultural identity becomes a psychic configuration of her diasporic consciousness.

Still, as has been noted earlier, albeit the Lebanese diasporans in South Africa, typified by the characters of Edmond and Lily, maintain a close cultural affinity with their homeland, their selfhoods remain open to the internalization of new cultural foundations which pertain to their host environment, developing the inchoate contours of a diasporic consciousness. An evident example of this in the novel is Edmond's adjustment of his cultural inclinations when discussing his eldest daughter's upbringing: "For his daughter, Edmond ordered a piano from Germany. 'She will learn that great music from those German nuns at the Convent,' he said to Lily. 'Our music, much as we love it, is not for this place'" (90). Edmond at once harbors a love for his Lebanese music and a propensity for German music, yet his decision to teach his daughter German music and to buy a very expensive piano from Germany shows his favoring of the Western music on account of its "suitability" for his host milieu. Thus, as far as Edmond's musical taste is concerned, his predilection for the Western vogue outweighs his admiration for his home music and implies the fluidity of his cultural identity. In the same fashion, when it comes to the culinary realm, though this site is deep-seated in the Lebanese context, it is rendered at times as a site of intercultural communication and hybridization. This is illustrated when Lily and Cook are side by side in the kitchen. While "Lily had shown Cook how to chop the raw liver and massage spices and herbs into it," Cook has shown Lily how to fry the lamb tail and use the fat to make biscuits (51). Again, speaking of culinary semiotics, one can notice here a process of culinary cross-pollination taking place and symptomatizing the two women's exchange of their cultural skills and items. The outcome is the creation of a ground of dialogic contact and intersection between the two different cultures. More significantly, Lily does not only learn one of Cook's skills but tries to apply it as she tells Mrs. Shamley. This suggests her internalization of such a cultural skill, paving the way for her culinary hybridization. Aside from the culinary realm, Lily demonstrates her cultural openness by negotiating her submission to the patriarchal precepts of her home culture as her private thoughts after her husband's death evince: "After Edmond's death, Lily thought […], as is the belief of the culture, that her life was over, but none of this was true. Lily had four children to care for and they dragged her, pushed her and pulled her into each new year" (216). Such a belief in the thorough dependence of a woman's life on her husband emanates from the traditional Lebanese culture and is intended to efface women's autonomy and instill their unquestioned subservience to patriarchy. Yet, Lily's rejection of this belief translates her negotiation of her cultural identity and the ensuing transformation of her selfhood. The hostland, here, becomes a diasporic site of liberation which changes the conception of this Lebanese woman's own selfhood as a subaltern entity and grants her a new agential life wherein her motherhood becomes her voice and the essence which restores her own existence. This openness to change through disconnection from some Lebanese cultural elements is also to be found in Lily's break with the Lebanese tradition of arranged marriages, for her daughter Najlaa chooses her husband, a Lebanese man, on her own without any prearrangements on the part of Lily or her local community. While the Lebaneseness of the husband represents the continuity of identification with the home culture, the dismissal of the arranged marriage custom marks a discontinuity and hence a transformation at the level of the community's cultural configuration of their diasporic consciousness.

1.3. The Lebanese-South Africans are "white, white to the bones": An Odd Combination of Diaspora and Essentialism

> *"The Lebanese, he asserts, are 'white, white to the bones, of an unalterable white, authentic, that leads to no ambiguity; a fanatical white in opposition to the Moroccan, the Algerian or the Senegalese'" (qtd in Hage, "White Self-racialization" 197).*

Diasporic identity in *Voices on the Wind* would have been centered solely on the social and cultural configurations of the protagonists' diasporic consciousness had it not been for the particularity of the novel which makes of its framework an intersectional venue. In other words, the novel's peculiarity stems from the intersection of two socio-cultural processes in its narrative. The first is incarnated in the early Lebanese diasporans' encounter with a new territorial and socio-cultural setting as a result of their movement from their Lebanese homeland to their South African hostland. The second consists of these personae's immersion in a colonial context where they are neither the colonizer nor the colonized yet have to make room for their existence within this colonial society and take a stand in the heart of the colonial ideology which Trivedi describes as "a *transaction*… […] as a process involving complex negotiation and exchange" rather than merely being "a simple active–passive one" (15). This convoluted novelistic setting leads to the formation of a multilayered yet problematic diasporic identity, one in which the enactment of diasporic consciousness empowers the protagonists' sense of selfhood and self-esteem yet does not suffice to negotiate the relationship between their diasporic "self" and the colonial "other" and "Other."[20] Accordingly, catalyzed by a gradually ascending political tension in this culturally diverse environment, the diasporic social configuration alone, though vitally self-empowering and self-defining for the Lebanese community, proves insufficient in securing to the protagonists a safe position of acceptance in the eyes of the "Other," especially after the proclamation of the colonial government's new racist policies, which compels them to negotiate a supplementary identity: racial identity. The latter emerges as a thorny mode of identification through its problematization of the notion of the diasporic in the sense that while the diasporic is unanimously claimed in academia to offer liberation and to contravene the implications of purity, fixity, and homogeneity and the myths of origin and return, the racial identity constructed in the novel is one which champions essentialism and complies with the colonial discourse. Yet, this pattern of identity is categorized as "diasporic" given the fact that it does not only subsume an encounter between two cultures and two societies as is the case with most diasporic discourses but transcends this to aggregate a triadic cultural encounter, one which involves the diasporic self's encounter with the culture of the colonizer – the Other –, on the one hand, and with the culture of the colonized – the other – on the other hand. In the light of this, the diasporic-racial identity operates in Yazbek's novel through the Lebanese protagonists' self-racialization and strategic essentialism as a Maronite community and through their complicity with the racism immanent in the colonial enterprise.

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[20] While the Other with a capital "O" refers to the Western colonizers who, despite being powerful and privileged, occupy the status of *other* in the Lebanese diasporans' process of identity formation, the other with a lower-case "o" points to the colonized native South Africans who are subjected to a double othering, by the Western colonialists and by the Lebanese immigrants, as will be exposed. Therefore, by capitalizing one and not the other, I intend to underscore the asymmetric power positions of the Western and of the South African *others* in the process of the Lebanese diasporic identity configuration.

When the generation of Lebanese immigrants to which Edmond belongs arrived at South Africa in 1903, the country had been under the colonial rule. As embedded in Yazbek's historical narrative, the colonial government pigeonholed people according to their race and color into four categories: black, white, colored, and Asian (Hourani). These categories were what rigorously determined the socio-economic rights and status of the classed subjects. On this basis, the Lebanese immigrants, attributed then the nomenclature "Syrians,"[21] were pinned down as “Asians” or as pertaining to “the Native Races of Asia.” This mere denomination formed a conundrum for them as it was affiliated to the Asiatics Registration Act which had been imposed by the colonial government in 1885 and according to which the ownership of property along with other rights was forbidden to “persons belonging to one of the Natives races of Asia, including the so-called Coolies, Arabs, Malays and Mahommedan subjects of the Turkish Empire” (qtd in Yazbek, *Voices on the Wind* 247). For the Lebanese diasporans, the only countermeasure against this predicament was to “prove that ‘Syrians’ – the Lebanese – were white” (Hourani). Indeed, “whiteness” conjures up race, a notion which the Lebanese used to take for granted, for in their home villages, their selfhood was ingrained in the precepts of “community, family and religion” (Khater). Yet, with the colonial maneuver of racial restrictions threatening their families’ well-being, their awareness of racial politics was energized once again. In opposition to Khater’s assumption that the notion of race had been absent in the Lebanese consciousness before their migration to new lands, it must be asserted that race has, indeed, never been an outlandish concept to the Christian Lebanese, specifically to the Maronite Lebanese, since the mid-nineteenth century. On the contrary, it has become a latent discourse inextricably enmeshed with their religious identity. In his article “White Self-racialization as Identity Fetishism: Capitalism and the Experience of Colonial Whiteness,” Hage devotes a considerable part to the study of the nexus between the Maronite identity of the Lebanese and their self-racialization as *white* Europeans**.** In this framework, he advances that “the Christians’ identity (especially the Maronite Catholics’) was transformed into a racialized world view that […] culminated in the Christians’ self-perception as more ‘European’ than ‘Arab,’ and as ‘white’” (185). Reinforced by the author’s statement that “the Lebanese, [her] ancestors included, won the right to remain in South Africa with all the privileges of Europeans *because of their Christian adherence*” (Yazbek, “Albinos in the Laager”; my emphasis), Hage’s claim constitutes the very theoretical point of departure for the protagonists’ historical fight for acceptance within the South African colonial society. More particularly, threatened by the nightmarish prospect of losing all their socio-economic success and their diasporic selfhood in a blink of an eye, Edmond and his compatriots find no alternative scheme to survive the racist colonial policy but to embrace a strategic essentialism that feeds on their Maronite faith and lays stress on their "whiteness."

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[21] The word "Syrians" was used to refer to those "Christian Lebanese who migrated to South Africa, North and South America, and other parts of the world between mid 1800s and early 1900s" because the Christian territories of Lebanon from which most of the Christian immigrants came were part of the Ottoman Empire and were affiliated to the Sunjuk of Syria – "a geo-administrative Ottoman authority" (Hourani).

In fact, it is not haphazard that, even before introducing the Australian-Lebanese-South African narratorial voice, the author constructs the novel's prologue as a flashforward which unveils the decisive juncture in the history of Edmond and Lily's Lebanese community, i.e. the struggle in court to "to remain white, and therefore acceptable" (Yazbek, "Albinos in the Laager"). This deliberate choice to open the novel as such heralds the centrality of racial discourse in molding the diasporic identity of the narrator Eva's ancestral community. Yet, as Hage sets forth, the Maronite Lebanese's awareness and validation of their self-racialized white identity "does emerge in writing and speech whenever its normality is threatened and questioned" ("White Self-racialization" 196). This is the case of Edmond and his compatriots who start to belabor the facticity of their whiteness only when they become sentient of their socio-political vulnerability amidst the English-Boer colonial vicissitudes. A prominent case in point of this is rendered through the conversation of Edmond and Elias after the latter's return from Lebanon to South Africa:

> 'We are so lucky here in this place. Look at your house, your shop, my orchards,' Elias said. 'At home, this would be our food, of course, but not as plentiful or as often as we have it here.' […] (Yazbek, *Voices* 71)
>
> 'There was a couple on the boat with us – she was very dark-skinned – some said she was not a Christian – even that she was *Dirzee* Druze. They didn't get off the ship here with us,' Elias said.
>
> '[…] We Lebanese who come here are all Christians, our women as fair and milky-skinned as the most elegant women in France,' Edmond said.
>
> 'Yes, brother […] these Boers […] say we will be soon united with the Boer republics in the north and good riddance to the English.' […]

> ‘[…] it seems that wherever we go, where people speak English, governments want to put restrictions on us. […]
>
> […] I hope the Boers remember that we have been exempted from those restrictions. If they do forget, we will be as poor as the tribal people – our children will not be educated and we will lose our businesses.’ (72)

The ostensibly multifaceted conversation is, indeed, a dialogue centered on a single topic which is the racial-religious identity of the two characters, while the remaining speech functions as a contextualizing frame. That is to say, what comes first – the fortune of being in South Africa – and what comes last – the contingent political upheavals and their repercussions – bespeak Edmond and Elias’s preoccupation with preserving by all means their socio-economic success in this new homeland no matter what the circumstances are. This preoccupation explains, thus, their obsession with the politics of race which emerges as a confirmation of their eligibility to remain “inside.” The essence of this passage stems from the characters’ discourse of self-racialization as white, a discourse which is constructed in a multiplex pattern. First, it manifests in the religious configuration of race subtly carried out by Elias who transmutes the “dark-skinned” Druze woman on the ship into a “text” wherein racial and religious othering intersect. By so doing, Elias reproduces the historical hostility of the Maronites towards the Druze and which essentially reduces the Druze to all that the Maronites are not (Hage, “White Self-racialization” 194). Put differently, just as the West constructs the Orient as an imaginary entity against which it defines itself, the Maronites insert their religious alterity – the Druze – within a Manichean allegory in an act of entrenching a self-idealized identity. It follows that this religious Manichaeism is transposed to the racial realm. That is to say, by projecting the “dark skin” on the Druze woman, Elias associates the Lebanese Maronite identity with *pure* whiteness. This claim of white self-racialization is more reinforced by a racially complicit Edmond who implements an explicitly racial lexicon in portraying the Lebanese women. His description calls forth the binarism white/black, unmasking his “whiteness-mania.” In addition, he likens the Lebanese women to the French women, a simile which mirrors his community’s identificatory idealization and romanticization of the French as white, as civilized, and as Christian Europeans. Ideologically speaking, this racial rationale is purported to seek acceptance among the Western colonizers in South Africa as it is historically deep-seated within the complicit and indulgent identification of the Maronite community with colonialism and its subsidiary racist outlook:

> While for Ibn el-Qilai and el-Duwaihi the Muslims [and the Druze] were seen as different and as enemies, for Murad[22] they also become inferior. This is of course closely linked to the perception of the Maronites as part of a different civilization based on 'the occupations prevalent in Europe,' reading and writing and the Western commodity. This is where we begin to get a clearer hint that this change in the mode of self-identification is a process of internalizing the racialized outlook that shaped European colonialism. Indeed, from that point onward, the Maronites increasingly saw themselves in the image of the Europeans, responsible for what their ideologues referred to, in a direct identification with the French colonialists, as a 'mission civilisatrice.' (Hage, "White Self-racialization" 195)

This suggests that the religious loyalty of the Maronites to the French missionaries in their region has led to their identification with the latter's racial ideology, a natural outcome of which is the colonial project. In the light of this, Edmond's identification with the French, a disposition reproduced by his wife Lily's proud attachment to the French fashion throughout the novel, is, on the surface, an essentialist white self-racialization and, on a deeper level, a championing of the mantra of Western colonization as a "mission civilisatrice," which demystifies his yearning for acceptance and his demonstration of his community's conformity to the dominant colonial identity rather than to a minoritarian one.

Moreover, this self-racialization is transfigured into a strategic essentialism which operates to maintain the Lebanese immigrants' social diasporic identity when their communal crisis reaches its pinnacle. When adducing the phrase "strategic essentialism," one is immediately reminded of Spivak's call for "a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (Spivak, *The Spivak Reader* 214). In this conception, she urges subaltern groups, communities, or ethnicities to use essentialism in political contexts in order to mobilize their political rights and representation. On this score, strategic essentialism becomes a "political strategy whereby differences (within a group) are temporarily downplayed and unity assumed for the sake of achieving political goals" (Eide 2). Such is the case of Edmond's compatriots when they are informed that their fellow Moses Gandur, historically renowned for challenging the categorization of the Lebanese as "Colored Asiatics" before the Supreme Court of South Africa in 1913 (Khater) and for leading to the "classification of the Lebanese immigrants as members of the white race" (Hourani), is denied the right to "purchase land in his own name […] because [the Lebanese] are natives of Asia and, as such, will be restricted like the Indians, unable to trade or own property in white areas" (Yazbek, *Voices* 127). Therefore, aware of their now-vulnerable status as a subaltern minority, politically pushed to the margins of the South African society much like the colonized native people, the Lebanese diasporans acknowledge the urgency to embrace strategic essentialism as their mode of resistance along with the in-group unity inherent in it. In this regard, while their unity blatantly concretizes in the gathering of the Lebanese immigrants from Queenstown, Tarkastad, and Johannesburg before the Supreme Court building in Bloemfontein in an act of communion and of solidarity with their fellow-national Gandur, their strategic essentialism can be grasped in the discourse of their representative lawyer mired in an interwoven racial and religious rhetoric. Propped by Edmond's holy book which his brother has brought to him from the Lebanese "Holy Mountain," the lawyer delivers a strategically essentialist discourse on the religious and racial lineage of the Lebanese: "The advocate for the Lebanese-Syrians then asked the judges and lawyers if they believed that Jesus was a white man. […] The Chief Justice looked taken aback, 'What do you mean by that? Of course the Son of God was white.' In a wide-arm gesture, the lawyer pointed to the gallery. 'Well, there they are, Jesus's people, the first disciples to

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[22] Ibn el-Qilai, el-Duwaihi, and Murad are pioneering Maronite religious scholars.

Christianity […]' (135-136). By asserting Jesus's whiteness, the lawyer parallels Christianity with whiteness, forming a religious foundation for the white race and excogitating whiteness as the supreme essence, as the norm, and as the center. It follows that when the lawyer affiliates the Lebanese to Jesus, he insinuates that, according to his and the Western judges' logic, whiteness is an inherent essence in every person born Lebanese. Put differently, he downplays the religious differences within the Lebanese imagined community and homogenizes all of its members as Christians so that he could apply the Western axiom "Christian *is* white" to them. In so doing, he strategically constructs the Lebanese diasporic community in South Africa as essentially white so as to exempt them from the political shackles of the Asiatics Registration Act and from the nomenclature of "colored Asiatics." Taking into account the ensuing consent to classify the Lebanese as white, this political success marks the configuration of the Lebanese diasporic identity as a pattern of social selfhood underlain by a religious belief in the Lebanese's white racialization.

Nevertheless, the Lebanese diasporic-racial identity does not cease at this point of self-definition but goes to fall in the trap of essentialism *per se* against which Spivak warns in her ambivalent questioning of her own construct of strategic essentialism: "When, in the United States, the statement 'the personal is political' came into being, given the socio-intellectual formation, it really became quite quickly '*only* the personal is political.' In the same way, my notion just simply became the union ticket for essentialism. As to what is meant by strategy, no one wondered about that" (Spivak, "An Interview" 35). This is conspicuously reproduced in the novel's context, for the essentialism initially embraced by the Lebanese for their *political* interests trespasses its primary cause and generates a racial hierarchy where the Lebanese diasporans, subjected to the racism of the colonial institution, project this racist stance on the natives. Indeed, this diasporic racist penchant is mired in the colonial discourse, exuding at once a complicity and identification with the colonial precepts and the ambivalence characterizing the colonial moment. First, this colonial racism internalized by the Maronite Lebanese in South Africa is carried out with no shred of guilt or unease through the Lebanese deportment and speech when it comes to their encounter with the natives. Among the many instances of the essentializing racialization of the natives that pervade the novel, a specific example transpires when, gathered to celebrate Edmond's homely arak, the Lebanese men shift their attention to the native gardener Abed: "the men called him, 'Hey Abed, come over here,' and they teased and laughed at him until Edmond warned them off. 'You donkeys, don't make him cross; he'll bring his friends to drink it all before we even smell it.'" (Yazbek, *Voices* 61). The attitude of the Lebanese group towards Abed is one which is othering, denigrating, and promoting colonial stereotypes. In other words, Abed becomes the center of the jest and mockery of the Lebanese men, which demeans his dignity and self-esteem. Not only this, but in lieu of being grateful for his services, Edmond complies with his friends' racism by warning them of Abed and his friends' reaction, a feedback which evokes the stereotype of the black people as uncivilized and savage. Given that these stereotypical attributes "all take the West as norm and define the rest as inferior, different, deviant, subordinate and sub-ordinateable" (qtd in Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 192), it can be inferred that Edmond does not only bring into play a process of racial othering but goes beyond it to advocate the tropes which are at the very core of colonialism. Thus, he is not merely racializing the black natives but is, consciously or unconsciously, being acquiescent with the ideology of their colonization. No wonder that while Abed is lingering on the colonial history of his country, he "wondered whether his new master [Edmond] would also carry a gun and fight […]. It seemed to him that those who came from over the water always carried guns, ready to fight […] on his land […]" (Yazbek, *Voices* 61). Through his chain of thoughts, Abed positions these Lebanese immigrants within the line of colonizers who have encroached on his country. Ideating them as bearers of the might of the "gun" rather than of the light of civilization, he perceives them as invaders who are in no way different from the Western colonizers. Analogously, the Lebanese men promote their racist standpoint as they subject a group of natives to their othering gaze:

> 'Look at all these black abeed, sitting so squashed on those benches […]' Khalid shouted in Arabic.
>
> '*Ya haram*- pity,' Edmond said. '[…] They are going to travel […] to Johannesburg where they will work like dogs underground picking gold and diamonds […].'
>
> 'And what do they know about diamonds and gold?' Elias said. 'It's not as if their women wear jewellery like ours. They wear those colored beads and their dowry is cattle.' (64)

In conjunction with the onomastic signification of the gardener's Arabic name, Abed, which means "slave," Khalid's usage of the Arabic word "abeed" to refer to the black natives is certainly a racist normalization of the nexus between the black race and slavery as if to substantiate that black people are fatefully meant to be slaves to their white counterparts. And though Edmond initially voices his pity vis-à-vis these natives, his ensuing silence which follows Elias's reply gives away his complicity with his friend's racist othering. On this account, Elias's response to Edmond's depiction of the natives' misery underscores a racist discourse imbued with a multiplicity of racist colonial tropes. On the one hand, he insinuates that the black miners are not clever and civilized enough to recognize the value of gold and diamond, constructing them as the "uncivilized," "ignorant" others who cannot manage their land's riches. Correspondingly, Elias's racism becomes a rationalization of the necessity of the colonial impingement upon this country. On the other hand, he sides with the colonial stereotypes which confer on the natives the attributes of primitivism in the sense that his observation that the beads and cattle are the native women's sole feminine concern as opposed to the Lebanese women who appreciate the value of gold and diamond vilifies the natives and positions the Lebanese as being culturally superior and more sophisticated. This of course conceals his firm belief in the supremacy of the Lebanese as a white race which has as much right to enslave and dominate the black race as the Western colonizers.

Notwithstanding the racial essentialism prevailing within the Lebanese diasporic community, this group abides by the general tendency of diaspora, one which entails a wide array of notions, including ambivalence (Baumann 324). This ambivalence sticks to the very Lebanese diasporic-racial identity in the sense that despite the Lebanese diasporans' racial essentialism and othering of the natives, their stance towards these colonized subjects appears at times to be humane, somewhat dismantling their racist ethos. To narrativize such ambivalence characterizing her ancestral community, Yazbek makes use of recurrent juxtapositions between Lily and her compatriots' discrepant approaches to the natives. An illustration of this is incarnated in Lily and her husband's brief exchange after she glimpses the natives' dwellings: "'Aah, look, who lives there?' she asked. 'The servants and other dark-skinned people.' 'Do Cook and Ellen live there? I'd like to see their places.' 'They don't want us to visit them […]' Edmond said" (Yazbek, *Voices* 69). While Lily's curiosity can be interpreted as a sense of attraction to the natives' space, Edmond's indifference can be grasped as a sense of repulsion from the native milieu, two feelings which delimit the boundaries of ambivalence (Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 10). Likewise, while Edmond imposes a reductionist, objectifying, and racialized identity on the native people by referring to them respectively as "the servants" and "dark-skinned people," Lily's reference to her servants by their own names, Ellen and Cook, connotes an acknowledgement of their identity as humans. At last, unlike Edmond who exudes a preference to maintain a territorial and physical distance from the natives while accusing them of such distance and seclusion, Lily utters her desire to see their place, which symptomatizes her intention to get closer to them. Here again, the disparity between Lily's humane and empathetic attitude towards the natives and her husband's racist aloofness lays bare the ambivalence surrounding their racial relationship with the natives. To top it all, this ambivalence contouring the Lebanese diasporic-racial collective identity culminates in the scene where, after Khalid's recklessness occasions the death of a native toddler, they muse on the incident:

> 'I want to go to town,' Denise said to Elias. 'I don't think we should stay while this funeral is going on. Yvonne [Khalid's wife] feels the same.'
>
> […] in Edmond's home they discussed the tragedy and how they would deal with it. […]
>
> […] Khalid became rather garrulous. 'They don't feel it like we do, you know.'
>
> 'What are you talking about?' Lily said.
>
> 'These natives and death: it happens all the time with them; they're used to it.'
>
> 'I can't believe that,' Lily said. 'When Ellen's child died of measles, she wore black and was very sad for more than a year.' (Yazbek, *Voices* 101)

Apart from Lily, none of her Lebanese fellows displays any feelings of compassion, empathy, or pity for the native servants' bereavement, not even Khalid who has been responsible for the tragedy. He rather goes further to dehumanize the natives without the slightest prick of conscience. In other words, his racism reaches its climatic point as he objectifies the natives by depicting them as sub-humans divested of any emotions and feeling no pain and no anguish even to the naturally most unsettling occurrence for all humans – death. On the other hand, Lily is the only one among the group who feels disconcerted by Khalid's vilifying and racist speech. Her linguistic incredulity each time Khalid speaks symbolizes a categorical rejection of her community's racism. Added to this, her awareness of the personal circumstances of her servants authenticates her sympathy and compassion vis-à-vis them, but it more significantly means that they *are* for Lily, that they exist in her own realm of identification, and that they are not an *invisible*, dehumanized otherness which she subjects to a racist and utilitarian gaze as her compatriots do. Yet, in a typically patriarchal community where her agency is limited, Lily cannot but submit to her compatriots' hegemonic codes and restrictions. It follows that despite her empathy with the natives, this remains a mere psychological feeling which Lily cannot actualize socially as she ruminates in her moments of loneliness: "In another time and place, she could have had a friendship with the servants but it was too far across habit and culture and it would have made the townsfolk look down on her further for not only being different but for breaking their rules" (221). Accordingly, in spite of the ambivalence that characterizes the Lebanese diasporans' relationship with the natives, their clinging to their racist orientation and their preservation of racial hierarchies remain tenets which deeply shape their collective unconscious and diasporic-racial identity.

2. The New Diasporan: Double Consciousness and the Principle of Negotiation

Voices on the Wind provides a fertile ground for rendering the intricate plurality of diasporic identity, for not only does it represent diasporic identity in its bipolar tradition in terms of the social and cultural configurations of diasporic consciousness, interweaving with this socio-cultural discourse a racial politics of diaspora, but it goes further to shed light on diasporic consciousness as a "double consciousness." Probably, the author's concern with this different pattern of identity is purported to question and destabilize the essentialism which featured in the old Lebanese diaspora and to voice the ambivalence and guilt underlying such a communal disposition as the author insinuates: "This fight to remain white, and therefore acceptable, had a deep impact on our psyches. With secrecy and fear around our hard-won racial status, we were in the margins of the society, unable to question the status quo" (Yazbek, "Albinos in the Laager"). More significantly, the author's involvement with two different patterns of diasporic identity highlights the transformation that has marked the Lebanese diasporic identity in South Africa throughout history and across generations. To ensure her discursive aims, Yazbek constructs the narrator Eva as a second-generation immigrant in Australia whose commitment to her Lebanese-South African ancestral past and history and whose identity negotiation lead to her configuration of a diasporic double consciousness.

Before probing into the peculiarities of Eva's selfhood, it is of the essence to foreground the complications which catalyze her quest for identity. Following her mother's death, Eva starts to feel a psychic crisis welling within her inner self: "I felt like I was in a vacuum. The questions I had about her [her mother's] *origins*, her values and attitudes as a *white* South African, her identity and my own, pressed on me and made my head feel as if it would burst" (Yazbek, *Voices* 10; my emphasis). While the "vacuum" symptomatizes the psychic emptiness and abyss which the narrator feels after the loss of her anchor and source of identification, i.e. her mother, the questions which haunt her mind are of an existential nature and allude, thus, to the psychic realm of identity. Both symbols point to Eva's identity crisis which escalates on account of her simplistic view of identity incarnated in her vision of the concept as something that emanates from fixed origins and in her naïve erasure of the cultural and social complexities of Lebaneseness through the reductionist racial label of "whiteness." Noticing the culmination of Eva's identity crisis, her grandmother ushers her in her psychic dilemma: "Go back to South Africa and find out about your ancestors" (10). This statement is an implicit problematization of the narrator's identity since it implies that her identity is not limited to the confines of her Australian comfort zone as she envisages it but is also predicated on her re-connection with her ancestral past and roots.

As opposed to the old Lebanese diaspora which embodies Hall's first conceptualization of cultural identity, Eva's negotiated diasporic consciousness is an epitome of his second paradigm of identity which champions difference and transformation. Elaborating on this version of identity, Hall asserts that "identities are the names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past" (225). This gives prominence to the centrality of the past in shaping and defining diasporic identities. In line with this, *Voices on the Wind* is replete with images which attest to the narrator's resort to her ancestral past in her negotiation of her identity. Indeed, Eva's diasporic identity is negotiated in the middle ground of the dialogic relationship between her self and her ancestral past which is constructed and re-constructed through narrative and fantasy.

It goes without saying that the past is strikingly ubiquitous in Yazbek's novel, to the extent that it itself becomes a "living" character that engages with Eva in a dialogue throughout her discovery and demystification of her diasporic community's history. Here, the first idea that comes to one's mind is that such a personified past literally incarnates Hall's famous statement: "the past continues to speak to us" (226). The past in the novel is rendered as a character that insinuates itself into Eva's solitary presence in the closed Lebanese museum in Johannesburg, or what she calls the "hall of the past," during her frequent visits in which she recounts the story and history of her great-great-grandparents along with their community:

> The place felt alive with eyes watching me from behind pillars and cabinets. At any minute, I expected someone to reach out from the past, wrap long arms around me […]. (Yazbek, *Voices* 33)
>
> I looked down when I felt someone sit on the other end of the pew. I nodded to a white-haired crone and continued writing. […] I didn't want to stare at her. Aside from her resemblance to some in the photos, there was something familiar about her. (34)
>
> When I looked around, I was alone. I began to write what she had told me of the death of young Lily's first child and her subsequent breakdown in a foreign place. (35)

The old woman in the novel is a personification of the past, a symbolic repertoire of Eva's ancestral history. Her representation of the past is insinuated through the resemblance which Eva recognizes between the woman and the "live" photos of the ancestral relatives in the museum and through the woman's apparition out of nowhere in the locked museum, which attests to her emergence from the inside rather than from the outside of the museum as a locus of the past. In addition to that, her allegiance to the ancestral realm is alluded to through the narrator's feeling of familiarity towards the woman, a feeling which she experiences in terms of rootedness in and identification with her ancestors. What's more, the old woman confirms Eva's identification with her ancestral past by portraying her as "somebody […] with a hammer and a fine chisel, tap[ping] and tap[ping] until the voices are released and the stone pictures starts to move" (35). Through her usage of the metaphor of the "hammer" and "chisel," the old woman confers on Eva the role of an archeologist. That is to say, Eva is elevated to an archeologist who digs under the hidden layers of time to demystify the secrets of the past. In keeping with this, Eva is assigned the role of a historian in the process, for her digging results in her restoration of her ancestral voices, that is, of her ancestral past and history, which evidences her dialogue with the past. Furthermore, the dialogic relationship between the narrator and her ancestral past is to be found in her astute awareness of the messages which this past transmits: "this visit to the museum made me feel more at home – even though this 'home' was a little different every time I walked in. Someone was adding to the display and re-arranging the furniture, giving me heaps more to write about and examine" (122). The past here is "speaking" to Eva, trying to guide her every movement in the hall of history in an act of reciprocal conversation. In other words, in response to her many existential queries about her Lebanese-South African identity, the ancestral past provides answers by proffering historical "maps and compasses" to usher her in her uncovering of her ancestral historical roots and routes. Thereby, it does not only speak back to Eva in a mutual dialogue but surfaces as a product of the interplay of fantasy and reality in Eva's psyche. This crossing of the lines delimiting each realm – fantasy and reality – is typically illustrated in the "bangle" which the old woman offers to Eva by the end of her journey telling her that it "will ease the pain" (170) and which Eva's grandmother approaches with great shock and poignancy on the sight of it: "Where did you come by this malachite bangle? […] your great-grandmother loved bangles – her sister, Najla, gave her such a bangle but it went missing" (241). By belonging to a past jointly constructed by reality through the grandmother's memory and by fantasy through Eva's encounter with the fantasied figure of the old woman, the bangle becomes an epitome of Eva's ancestral past, its circular shape connoting the cycle of the past and its continuity into the present – specifically into the narrator's present existence. Hence, its rootedness in an ancestral past laden with the pains and gains of a diaspora enables it to psychologically and psychically alleviate the narrator's identity crisis by situating her in the threshold of the past where she can negotiate her identity.

In her historical excavation in search of her sameness to and difference from the imagined community to which she is affiliated, Eva carries out the two vectors which Hall claims to be the pillars of identity formation: "the vector of similarity and continuity; and the vector of difference and rupture" (Hall 226). The first axis ensures a rootedness in and continuity with the past, whereas the second marks the discontinuity concomitant with difference (227). Drawing on the combination of the two, identity becomes the product of a reconciliation of the continuity and discontinuity with the past. On the one hand, the continuity of the diasporic past in the novel is instantiated in the narrator's enactment of the role of a historian. Such a role is brought into play through her deliberate actions. For example, when she enters the Lebanese museum in Johannesburg, a spatial metaphor for a socially, culturally, and racially constructed past as its miscellaneous items reflect, she "began to take pictures of [the] pictures" of her great-great-grandfather Edmond, his wife Lily, and their daughter Eva among others (Yazbek, *Voices* 14). Basically, the mere pictures of these ancestors are a visual record of history. So, by taking "pictures of these pictures," Eva strives to preserve this history and ensure the continuity of the past. She does not stop at this point but goes a step further to buy a notebook and write everything related to this past locale while listening to her ancestors' voices (34). The act of writing here is not merely an act of recording history, but it is an endeavor to bring into light a marginalized, buried past, that of the Lebanese-South African immigrants, since very few, including Yazbek herself, are those who have written about the existence of the Lebanese diaspora in South Africa as opposed to its widely tackled counterparts in the Americas and in Europe. Therefore, by dint of this visual and textual "construction and interpretation of the past," the narrator matches the quintessential tasks of a historian (Confino 39). Further, at a certain point, Eva becomes advertent to her ring: "I looked down at a […] ring

I'd been given when I turned eighteen a few years ago – 'It belonged to your great-grandmother. She left it to you because we gave you her name; you must look after it.'" (Yazbek, *Voices* 14). Here, the ring is elevated to a sign of the continuity of Eva's ancestral past. That is to say, framed by her name which corresponds to her great-grandmother's and by the concomitant words addressed to her, the ring becomes an ancestral legacy that *dooms* Eva to be the "caretaker" of the family's unique Lebanese-South African past and confers on her the status of a historian.

On the other hand, the narrator's Lebanese-South African history emerges as a genealogical site which involves ruptures and discontinuities in the Lebanese diaspora's system of identification as a result of the transformation and difference of their intellectual and social outlooks. Such discontinuity is demystified at the level of this community's negotiation of the politics of race within their diasporic context. While Edmond and his fellow-nationals adopt an essentialist, supremacist racial perspective in a colonial era, their Lebanese-South African descendants opt for a racially different viewpoint in an apartheid era. This latter racial discourse which marks the point of break in Eva's Lebanese-South African past is enunciated by Melanie, the cousin of Eva's grandmother and a political activist. Eva's recourse to Melanie is instigated by her desire to transvalue the history she has ascertained in the museum, especially its racial archive, by unmasking the *multiple* narratives that make up this historical account as she avers: "I wanted to meet her [Melanie] and see how the history I had been uncovering had shaped her life" (140). Significantly, the first item which Eva could glimpse upon entering Melanie's house is "a photo of Mandela shaking her young hand" (141). Such a visual text prognosticates a radical turn and new routes in the Lebanese diasporic-racial identity as it affiliates the Lebanese diaspora, represented by Melanie, to one of the South African figures of resistance against apartheid. However, it is worth mentioning that rather than being a passive narrator whose position remains unknown, Eva assumes an agential mindset with regard to the racial politics of the Lebanese diaspora in South Africa even before hearing Melanie's historical narrative: "I'd read and heard shocking things about the previous regime and entering through the 'whites only' entry at the Apartheid Museum affected me deeply. This history made me ambivalent about connecting with relatives who'd been through apartheid. What if we had a fight? I feared that whatever Melanie told me she'd done as an activist, I'd be angry that it wasn't enough" (141). Through these statements, Eva imparts not only her anti-racist stance but also her apprehension vis-à-vis the racial politics underlying her compatriots' new diasporic-racial identity. It is this very emotion of apprehension which engenders her sense of ambivalence as it eagerly anticipates the revelation of a decisive marker of her identity, i.e. her people's racial standpoint. In simpler terms, whether she will choose to identify further with her Lebanese-South African ancestors or go back to the starting point of her detachment and distantiation from them is highly contingent on their new racial perspective. Eva's apprehension and ambivalence are in essence framed by her acquaintance with the essentialism and racism which have characterized Edmond's generation and which have planted seeds of mild anger in her psyche, a feeling which comes to the surface only now as she apprehends the cyclical repetition of these same discursive practices in the latter phases of her ancestral history. In a sense, it can be theorized that, at this point, the narrator reverberates the voice of the author herself who discloses her bitterness and guilt at her own people's helplessness during apartheid:

> We white South Africans who live abroad were surely not absolved of the sins of one of the great crimes of the twentieth century simply because we had emigrated. […]
>
> […]
>
> In the bad old days, I looked for anti-apartheid activism in the Lebanese community. But both our Christian social justice beliefs and our culture of hospitality were silenced by overwhelming fear. We were politically timid. I'd seen police detentions and shootings. Not everyone could be on the front line against that ruthless and brutal regime. This fight to remain white, and therefore acceptable, had a deep impact on our psyches. With secrecy and fear around our hard-won racial status, we were in the margins of the society, unable to question the status quo.

> […] My post-colonial white South African identity is bitterly burdened. (Yazbek, "Albinos in the Laager")

By foregrounding the ramifications of apartheid as "the sins of one of the great crimes of the twentieth century" and by describing her identity as "bitterly burdened" despite her settlement in faraway Australia like her protagonist, Yazbek still experiences a sense of guilt and bitterness. Notwithstanding the activism of some of her compatriots, Yazbek's rueful feelings issue from her realization of the helplessness and silence which the Lebanese-South Africans had to experience both because of their desire to socially survive in this place which has become their home and because of their political vulnerability. Added to this, the author's account, like that of Eva, bears ambivalence, a feeling which fluctuates between fighting to remain white and the sin of being a "silent and helpless" white. To compensate for this imposed silence and to "adjust her moral compass and remain engaged in a troubled world," as she asserts to have learnt (Yazbek, "Albinos in the Laager"), Yazbek entrusts to her protagonist Eva the task of reconciling the essentialism and egalitarianism of the Lebanese-South Africans through her dialogizing of a racist history personified by Edmond and his fellows and an anti-racist history incarnated in the few yet persistent Lebanese-South African political activists as Melanie. In this respect, through her narrative, Melanie provides Eva with an oral historical account whereby she heralds a discontinuity in the identity of the Lebanese diaspora in South Africa: "We weren't all bad. There were few activists among the Lebanese, like the human rights lawyer, Christopher Abouchabke. He reminded us that we were classified white by an accident of history. […] Our varsity friend, Bernard Karam, became a priest in the Maronite Church; a few of us, including your gran, supported his literacy classes for blacks […]" (Yazbek, *Voices* 142). Melanie's initial claim is an attempt to exonerate her in-group from being historically lambasted in overgeneralizing terms as *racists* when it comes to the relationship between them as diasporans and the native South Africans. Furthermore, by choosing to reiterate her friend's reduction of Edmond and his compatriots' struggle for whiteness to a mere "accident of history," Melanie deconstructs such a historical struggle and, correspondingly, destabilizes and disrupts all the ideologies and discursive practices it encapsulates, including racism and essentialism. Put differently, such a claim questions the constructed Lebanese diasporic-racial identity by describing it as an "accident," that is, as something which has not been intended to transpire. This does not only problematize the narrator's ancestral diasporic identity, but it also initiates a rupture in the mode of identification carried out by the Lebanese diaspora in South Africa. Similarly, by supporting the Maronite priest Bernard Karam's launch of literacy classes for blacks, some of Melanie's compatriots initiate another rift within and subversion of the Lebanese diasporic identity, configuring a *different* pattern of diasporic self-definition. Simply put, these anti-apartheid Lebanese-South African activists have transformed the very religious institution – the Maronite church – which used to rationalize racism and the expropriation of the black people's agency in Edmond's era by making it now strive to "grant back" agency and voice to these subalterns. It follows that the diasporic identity dramatized by the narrator is at once shaped by her connection with the museum history and re-shaped by Melanie's historical narrative, which edifies her diasporic consciousness as a problematic and ambivalent mode of identification as she unleashes following Melanie's discourse, "I nodded, aware that my life in Australia was much simpler" (142). Through her utterance, Eva shuns away the "simplicity" she used to associate with identity with all the implications of stability and purity and recognizes instead the ambivalence and complexity coexistent with her newly articulated and re-negotiated diasporic consciousness, reverberating as such Hall's point of departure: "identity [is] a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation" (222).

Indeed, this oscillating movement between the boundaries of the past and those of the present at once frames and synchronizes with the protagonist's negotiation of her identity, a process which is at the core of diasporic double consciousness configuration. Devised first by

Gilroy, the concept of double consciousness is embraced by Samir Dayal to denote "the interstitiality of entering (or leaving) and destabilizing the border zones of cultures, as fracturings of the subject that resist falsely comforting identifications and reifications" (48). Dayal goes further to advocate the diasporic subjects' strategic internalization of a double consciousness given the many assets it proffers, for not only does it purvey an interstitial viewpoint which paves the way for "differential meanings of belonging" (47), but it also dissipates "the illusion of a fixed identity and a prefabricated role" (51). Such prerogatives affiliated with self-definition and representation are particularly brought into play via the "regulative ideal" of negotiation which is invariably reinvigorated by the diasporan's double consciousness (56). In accordance with this, intrigued by the utterance of her grandmother, the narrator Eva engages in a process of negotiation through which she re-considers her "prefabricated Aussieness" and digs for the Lebanese-South African traces within her. Ensuingly, this negotiation concretizes in the radical transformation of her identity and results in an eventual cultivation of a diasporic double consciousness. On this score, an examination of the dynamic character of Eva throughout the novel unveils the negotiation taking place at the level of her selfhood through the outright change in her approach to her ancestral identity.

From the very outset, when Eva endeavors to articulate her existential position in reference to her ancestors, she exudes a certain distance from her ancestral background: "Baptized Eva, after my great-grandmother, I was always aware that my mother's ancestors had moved to South Africa from some distant place more than a century ago" (Yazbek, *Voices* 10). By referring to her "grandmotherland" – the ancestral homeland – Lebanon as "some distant place," Eva lays bare her alienation and psychological distance from the Lebanese cornerstone of her hyphenated Lebanese-South African origin and legacy. Taking into consideration the vitality of Lebanon in shaping the old Lebanese diaspora's identity, Eva's *un-voicing* of Lebanon's name is not only an insertion of her grandmotherland within the realm of the “unknown” but is also a denial and an obliteration of an integral part of her ancestral identity, which translates her naïve understanding of her ancestral identity and, by implication, of her own selfhood. This self-definitional view emerges as more simplistic when Eva lingers on the previous intriguing yet puzzling claim of her grandmother: “‘[…] Go back to South Africa and find out about your ancestors,’ she said. ‘It’ll be interesting.’ […] ‘But I was born in Australia, Gran. Only you and Mum came from there.’ I thought I was a real Australian, hanging out with a string of Aussie school and uni friends. Even my voice was different from Mum’s and Gran’s” (10). The narrator’s simplistic conception of identity is perceived in her reduction of the convoluted concept of “home” to her Australian place of birth, discarding her ancestral land and enacting the classical conception of home. Besides, through her qualification of herself as “a real Australian,” Eva at once evinces that she thoroughly identifies as an “Aussie” and alludes to her reductionist belief in the myth of purity and the illusion of fixity as far as her identity configuration is concerned. Drawing on this vantage point, she sets her own “voice,” a term which connotes her cultural and social difference, in contradistinction to her mother’s and grandmother’s Lebanese-South African voice. As such, she repudiates any process of hybridization or cultural cross-pollination between her own selfhood and her ancestral identity. Likewise, Eva’s alienation from the non-Aussie facet of her selfhood is instantiated through her distance this time not from the Lebanese part of her ancestral hyphenated identity but from the South African part: “I sat beside a young family returning to visit their parents [in Johannesburg] […]. The parents’ accents jarred and I wondered how I could possibly be related to people who spoke with such flat vowels. […] I could never belong in South Africa; what on earth was I doing crossing the ocean to meet strangers?” (11). Eva’s questions here corroborate her detachment from the cultural difference and hybridity distinctive of her ancestors and emblematized by the South African accent. It can be, thus, inferred that she refuses so far to acknowledge the “sameness within differentiation,” to use Gilroy’s words, as she harbors the idea of a fixed and pure identity. Also, by labelling South Africans as "strangers," she reveals her sole allegiance to Australianness and resists a reconciliation with the Lebanese-South African "stranger within her."

Yet, Eva's involvement in the past and history of her ancestors prompts the development of her personality from one utterly undermining the intricacy of such a concept as identity to one quite cognizant of the multiplex nature of the discourse of identity. This transition can be observed when the narrator examines the photographs of her ancestors in the museum in Johannesburg: "Like me, their features were diluted – noses smaller, hair bleached to sand color by the harsh sun and other blood" (14). Through this stream of thoughts, Eva conveys a shift in her approach towards her ancestors from their perception as mere "strangers" to their depiction as people "like [her]." For the first time, then, she is aware of the sameness of her Lebanese-South African ancestors to her and, by implication, of her cultural and ethnic difference as a descendant of these diasporans in Australia. Additionally, Eva's interest in her ancestral past is transmuted from mere curiosity to identification with this identity as she unearths: "I settled on a church pew […], listening to the silence in which voices whispered to me from all directions. It was mystifying. I felt drawn, as if by a giant magnet, into that place" (34). The voices which the narrator hears in the Lebanese museum are the polyphonous and diverse voices of her ancestors. Hence, the mystification and alluring attraction which she experiences in this historical locus mirrors her filiation and affiliation with her ancestors and her development of an intrinsic bond with their revelatory voices. This identificatory relation does not cease at this point but goes further to disentangle Eva from the grip of her initial crisis: "For the first time in months, my heart was no longer pounding in my ears. The tremor that spiked my handwriting was stilled" (35). The agitation in her heart and body is symptomatic of the climactic psychic crisis which she has experienced after her mother's death. It follows that the serenity and peace which her body and heart retrieve is but a physical translation of the equilibrium brought back to her psyche as a result of her re-connection and close identification with her ancestors. This demonstrates once again that after her dialogic engagement with her ancestral past, her initial alienation and detachment from her ancestral identity gives way now to an identificatory rootedness in it. Therefore, the narrator's persistently recurrent visits to the museum during her stay in Johannesburg bespeak her "homing" desire, a desire to negotiate her perceptions of home and identity and ensure a synthesis of her blatant Australian selfhood and her latent Lebanese-South African identity.

It is this synthesis which brings about Eva's internalization of a double consciousness wherein she stands "astride at least two cultural identity positions without being tied unproblematically to either" (Dayal 52). This doubleness marking Eva's selfhood signals her reconciliation of her ancestral identity encapsulated in the Lebanese museum in South Africa and her personal identity generated in Australia which, combined together, stamp on her character the mark of diasporicity. Such an interplay is foreshadowed in her first visit to the museum: "My thoughts moved back and forth from my home over the seas to this place, smoothly changing channels as the display of objects in the museum released associations between the present and this unfolding past" (Yazbek, *Voices* 13). The back-and-forth movement authenticates the narrator's crossing of spatio-temporal borders. That is to say, she is crossing borders between her Australian home which incarnates her present and her South African ancestral space which incorporates the past of her Lebanese-South African relatives. Described as "smooth," this border-crossing movement testifies not only to the duality inherent in Eva's identity but to the double consciousness and liminality wherein two identity positions interact congruously rather than collide with each other. This same congruent interaction is exteriorized by the narrator after her many visits to the museum and to her ancestors' graves: "Here in South Africa, and back home in Australia, I was starting to feel comforted by these connections" (124). This utterance unravels Eva's mode of identification as it not only elucidates that her “connection” with her ancestral past and identity starts to anchor her selfhood wherever she is, but it also affirms that while Australia is “home” as she deems it, these Lebanese-South African ancestral connections are the “homely” affective structure which she needs for her psychic equilibrium. Further, having found solace in her Australian *home* and her Lebanese-South African *homeliness*, Eva’s double consciousness delineated by these two discursive dynamics provides the ultimate self-fulfillment for her as she nears the closure of her quest. On the one hand, her identification with Australia as the home which she has always known is instantiated in her reaction to an Australian television program she finds by chance while in South Africa: “This night I turned on the television […] and found an old surf flick, Australian made. Oh boy, I was excited! […] now I could have a taste of home” (193). Rather than being a rampant, random eruption of a sudden feeling, Eva’s excitement is a psychological translation of a deeper psychic affect, i.e. her longing for her Australian home. This is why the mere sight of this Australian-made program is regarded as an act of temporarily quenching her nostalgia as it provides her with “a taste of home” and confirms the persistent presence of the Australian component within her selfhood. On the other hand, as she readies herself to travel back home, Eva experiences the surfacing of her ancestral affiliations and the fulfillment of her diasporic identity: “All the while, the days in the museum stayed with me: the stories of that time and place a century ago forming a comforting collage in my heart. They filled me with their echoes from one mountaintop to the next all the way back to Australia” (225). By portraying her own self as a “collage,” the narrator elevates her inner self into an assemblage of ancestral fragments in which the story of every relative, including Lily and Edmond, becomes an intrinsic piece that contributes to the architectonic making of her identity. The depiction of such a collage as “comforting” asserts that in grappling with her psychic realm, these ancestral pieces and fragments purvey the psychic balance which Eva needs to surmount her initial identity crisis. In addition to this, her subsequent claim is a concise mapping of the historical itinerary of her diasporized identity, for while the first mountaintop points to the Lebanese mountains, that is, her ancestors' homeland, the "next" indicates the South African space, her ancestors' new home and eventually her mother's, whereas Australia is her own home and the point of her eventual "return" as she implies by her expression "all the way back to Australia." By moving from one space to another, the narrator crosses spatial and temporal borders in the sense that every space becomes a repository of human "echoes" which fill and fulfill her selfhood. These subsume past echoes of her ancestors' diasporic consciousness and present echoes of her own double consciousness. Therefore, the narrator's identity becomes a discursive, bipolar assemblage of voices that have crossed spatial and temporal borders, hers and her ancestors'.

Chapter 2: Diasporic Identity in Anglophone Indian-Australian Literature

"Diaspora is […] a site inhabited simultaneously by continuities and discontinuities — ghosts, memory fragments, interruptions, and contradictions. Loss and joy, trauma and inspiration, despair and hope, rupture and renewal, all coexist in accustomed tension" (Um 836). Such a claim echoing Hall's conception of diasporic identity as an outcome of the interplay between the continuity and discontinuity of the past summarizes the gist of the diasporic experience as an ontological state of *being* marked by the workings of memory, hybridity, double consciousness, liminality, multifarious patterns of deterritorialization and reterritorialization, and negotiation of physical and metaphorical homelands and hostlands. In the Australian context, the diasporic experience has been widely zeroed in on by many South Asian diasporic authors like the renowned Bangladeshi author Adib Khan and the Sri Lankan authors Chitra Fernando and Chandani Lokugé. Yet, the most fertile rendition of this experience remains that represented through the writings of Indo-Fijian authors in Australia as Satendra Nandan, Sudesh Mishra, Brij V. Lal, and most recently Shalini Akhil and Kavita Nandan. Indeed, the complexity of their setting and the recurrence of the protagonists' migratory journeys elevate them into paradigmatic literary venues for the study of the multiplex nature of the diasporic experience with its intrinsic identity fragmentation, liminality, and openness. More significantly, Indo-Fijian authors break the literary ground of diasporic writing and defy the tradition of dual territoriality in diasporic literature by inventing a diasporic tripolar model of identification. The tripolar model, in this context, is used to refer neither to Baumann's "tripolar interrelatedness of diaspora group, country of origin and country of residence" (327) nor to the previously adduced "relational network" propounded by Gilroy and which involves the homeland, the hostland, and the space in-between. Rather, it can be theorized that the tripolar model of identification in the realm of Indo-Fijian diasporic writing points to the diasporic subject's intersectional position within three countries shaping the migrant's past, present, and future, to wit, the grandmotherland – the ancestral homeland –, the homeland, and the hostland. This is typified in the Indo-Fijian-Australian author Kavita Nandan's debut novel *Home after Dark* which partly emerges as an autobiographical reflection of the author when it comes to the latter's approach to her own identity across the three territorial sites which frame her existence – Fiji, India, and Australia. The choice of this author to be the object of analytical scrutiny in this chapter stems from the peculiarity and complexity of this new generation of Indo-Fijian authors. As the author herself claims, unlike the older generation of writers pioneered by Satendra Nandan and which displays an unwavering "attachment to the homeland, whichever space they occupy," enacting as such the conventional topoi of rootedness and fixity, writers of the younger generation, including herself and Akhil, "continue to try to negotiate [their] Fiji identity – the journey has not ended" (Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 279). As such, they demonstrate a strong propensity towards processes of negotiation, travel, translation, and border crossing, underlining the dynamic mode of diasporic identity configuration.

In her attempt to demystify the Indo-Fijian diasporic imaginary, Nandan mires her narrator-protagonist Kamini in an identity crisis and eventually empowers her with a triadic, hyphenated identity that unveils the convoluted pattern of the Indo-Fijian *diasporic* identity. On the one hand, this is foreshadowed by the author's diction, from the very outset of the novel to its end, of the term "Fijiindian" instead of "Indo-Fijian." Nandan elucidates this deliberate choice which marks her scholarly writings as well: "I use the term 'Fijiindian' instead of the commonly used ethnic marker – 'Indo-Fijian' for Indians born in Fiji in order to show the merging of once very separate identities, 'Fiji' and 'Indian', and the formation of the unique identity of Fiji Indians over the past 128 years" (269). The use of this particular label, which will be accordingly implemented in this chapter to underpin the author's approach, to designate the Indians whose life has become anchored in Fiji is intended to emphasize the fragmented and hybrid nature of their identity. On the other hand, the tripolar multiplex identity prevalent in the Fijiindian diasporic experience is personified by the character of Kamini who, in her endeavor to come to grips with her Fijian, Indian, and Australian migratory topographies, negotiates what the author calls "the three forces of identity" distinctive of the contemporary Fijiindian, i.e. the "'new' connection with the West, [the] organic connection with Fiji, and [the] ancestral connection with India" (282). In the light of this, being prototypical of the intricacies of the Fijiindian diasporic existence in Australia, Kamini negotiates connections with her Indian roots, Fijian home, and Australian routes and ends up with a typically hybrid and dynamic diasporic identity.

1. The Indian Grandmotherland: Reconnection with Ancestral Roots

In his theorization of the concept of the diasporic imaginary[23], Vijay Mishra distinguishes between two instrumental phases in the history of the Indian diaspora designated by the labels "old" and "new" (*The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* 2). In this respect, he postulates that the subjects of the old diaspora, which consists mainly of indentured laborers in the colonies, are involved in "a complex relationship of power and privilege" (3) with the natives of other colonies like Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, South Africa, Malaysia, and Surinam. On the other side, the subjects of the new diaspora are those migrants who "have entered metropolitan centres of Empire or other white settler countries such as Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the USA as part of a post-1960s pattern of global migration" (3). Of more significance and relevance to this chapter is Mishra's scrutiny of both diasporas in terms of their approach to their ancestral homeland – India: "The old diaspora broke off contact [with India] […] the new incorporates 'India' into its bordered, deterritorialized experiences within Western nation states" (S. Mishra, *Diaspora Criticism* 187-188). In line with this, pertaining to the Fijiindian diaspora in Australia, that is, to the "new" diaspora, the protagonist of *Home after Dark* continues to bear traces of identification with her Indian ancestral homeland – her grandmotherland – despite the lack of territorial contact with it but on her occasional travels. Drawing on Hall's assumption that diasporic identities are essentially predicated on the interplay between history and culture (225), it can be extrapolated that these two dynamics significantly shape the protagonist's encounter with Indianness. Put differently, Kamini's awareness of the Indian cultural aspects that have survived across generations of Indian migrants in Fiji, especially the religious rituals, along with her memories which bear in their folds an adamant attempt to reinvent and rewrite an obliterated history attests to her retention of an identificatory bond with her ancestral Indianness.

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[23] Mishra uses the term "diasporic imaginary" to designate "any ethnic enclave in a nation-state that defines itself, consciously, unconsciously or through self-evident or implied political coercion, as a group living in displacement" (V. Mishra, *The Literature of the Indian Diaspora* 14). He further posits that inextricably bound up with this concept are a "homing desire" and an "impossible mourning" (5, 9). Such a concept is not elaborated at length in this chapter as I consider the "new" Indian diaspora as one which has moved beyond the perception of the diasporic experience in terms of *mourning* and loss and has developed instead a celebratory and fluid conception with regard to this migratory pattern.

1.1. Conjuring the Ancestral "Milieu Effects"

Initially, when the old Indian diaspora set foot in the colonies, they experienced the anguish of severance from their territorial homeland, and to survive this culture of trauma, they enacted what Sudesh Mishra terms the "milieu effects." Mishra implements this notion to indicate those Indian "deterritorialized cultural markers," that is, "the icons of Indian culture" which were integral to these migrants' cultural reconstitution yet "were spatially reproduced [in Fiji] without India as their material referent" (S. Mishra, *Diaspora Criticism* 103). That is to say, albeit these early diasporans broke off contact with India which was reduced into a mere "imaginary space of epic plenitude" (V. Mishra, *Bollywood Cinema* 236), they displaced the Indian cultural matrices, with a special focus on the religious component, from their territorial context and reinserted them in the Fijian frame of reference, reproducing their own version of the Indian cultural system. Notwithstanding her assumed Aussieness, Kamini clings to this Indianized ancestral cultural tradition once she returns to Fiji. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that though, upon her return to her Fijian childhood city, she feels "Aussified" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 24), Kamini is constructed as a narrator who is not only well versed in but also indoctrinated in the ancestral religious and cultural rituals and imageries before her. This attachment is not a random whim or mystification, but is rather elucidated in Tweed's conception of the relationship between religion and diasporic existence: "Religions are confluences of *organic-cultural flows* that intensify joy and confront suffering by drawing on human and suprahuman forces to *make homes* and cross boundaries" (Tweed 54; my emphasis). In other words, significantly regarded as "territorial cultures" or more accurately as "diasporic cultures," *diasporic religions* catalyze different forms of identity formation and configuration (Johnson 102). Correspondingly, Kamini's adherence to her Indian ancestral religious and cultural traditions is triggered by her will to anchor herself at a moment when she feels existentially alienated in Fiji. Such identification is particularly carried out through her reflections on and involvement in the religious and cultural rituals she witnesses in the gathering of her Fijiindian extended family on every possible occasion, the preservation of the extended family bonds being itself an Indian cultural trait. An illustration of this can be discerned when Kamini is invited by her cousin Janki "for *puja* [24] when Arun, her youngest, turned twenty-one" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 81). Witnessing this religious ceremony, Kamini devotes a considerable fragment of her narrative to provide a remarkably meticulous descriptive account of the performed rituals, enumerating the prominent deities that pertain to the Hindu pantheon and displaying a veritable knowledge of the three essentials of the *puja* (82-85). Her construction of this elaborate descriptive discourse attests to her acknowledgement of the Indian culture and religion which her forebears brought with them to this Pacific island.

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[24] In the Indian culture, *puja* refers to "the central form of Hindu religious ritual," the essence of which "is to honor a deity by offering a set of services and gifts" (Milner 251). This religious ceremony subsumes three paramount moments: approaching the deity, *pranam* or praise and deference, and *prasad* or the food of the gods (175).

Still, Kamini does not content herself with the status of a mere observer as a detached anthropologist would do; rather, she goes further to enact an agential performance of these religious acts:

> It was time for the family to participate. The pundit ladled out spoons of sweet milk in cupped hands and smeared *sindoor* and *chandan* on our eager, chaste heads. […] The pundit resumed his chanting but his voice got softer and […] I was being lulled […]. The *aarti* plate was hot on both sides as I circled it three times around the gold framed picture of Ram and Sita. Gavin watched me intently. Frankly, I could do with all the blessings I could get." (84)

The transition which Kamini undergoes from an observer to a doer through her participation in the Hindu religious rituals transforms her Indian affiliation into a mode of identification. This is further confirmed through her adjectival characterization of her own self, much like the rest of her surrounding Fijiindian in-group, as "eager" and "chaste," which authenticates her spiritual devotion and immersion in the religious ceremony. Not only this, but the peace she ascertains in the proceedings, indicated by her being "lulled," and her statement that she "could do with all the blessings [she] could get" substantiate her longing for psychological anchorage and her enactment of a homing desire, which echoes Tweed's former claim on diasporic religions. Additionally, Kamini goes further to disclose the diasporic nature of her identity as the *puja* progresses: "The *puja* was coming to an end. […] The offering was the favorite part of Hindu ceremonies for me; the deep significance of the rituals escaped me. I wasn't a foreigner in the same way Gavin was but neither did I have a connection to them like that of my relatives" (84-85). This utterance corroborates Kamini's diasporicity in the sense that it unveils one of the distinctive features of diasporic identity, i.e. liminality. More particularly, her recourse to a double negation in her discourse positions her within a border-space, between the extremes of a typical outsider, represented by her Australian husband's distantiation from these "exotic" traditions, and a quintessential insider, embodied in her Fijiindian relatives' taken-for-granted rootedness in these Hindu cultural and religious flows. On this account, Kamini acknowledges to be neither an outsider nor an insider but rather an *in-betweener* who occupies what Brah calls "the space of the hyphen" – 'the diasporic space' – which allows for "intermediate states and impure exchanges" that generate a "decentralized" and anti-essentialist diasporic cultural identity (S. Mishra, *Diaspora Criticism* 104). This applies to Kamini whose "impure exchanges" between the Aussie she claims to be and the Indian descendant she tries to become situate her in the liminal space of the Indian-Australian hyphenated duality underlying her immediate diasporic ontology. Moreover, hyphenated as she is, Kamini continues to underscore the Indian component of her identity through her persistent adherence to her ancestral religious and cultural institutions. This is instantiated at a later point of time in the novel when Kamini attends the funeral of *Amma*, her uncle's wife, witnessing the concomitant *puja*: "For a brief hour or so our breaths mingled with the flames of the *havan* before they were extinguished" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 117). This merger with the flames of the *havan*, which is conceived of in the Hindu culture as a "purifying ritual fire ceremony" (Hiralal 169), bespeaks Kamini's identification with the Hindu realm purported to purify her psyche from its manifold crises and to find a point of psychic peace similar to *Amma*'s eternal peace[25].

1.2. Historical Pilgrimage in Space

Kamini's commitment to the cultural rhetoric of her Indian ancestry is not enough to confirm the Indian "force of her identity" – to use Nandan's phraseology. Put differently, it would be quite simplistic to reduce identity into a mere enactment of a given culture. On this score, Hall posits that identities are "the points of identification [...] which are made, within the discourses of history and culture" (226). As far as Kamini is concerned, the historical moment underlying her identity formation surfaces when she becomes advertent to her status as "twice-banished," a term which Nandan engrafts in the title of her article "Writing as Healing: Fijiindians – The Twice Banished?" to allude to the migratory journeys and fates of Fijiindians. While her second banishment, as will be expatiated later on, concretizes in the discrimination and othering which Fijiindians experience in Fiji on the part of their local Fijian compatriots, the first banishment crystallizes in her ancestors' severance from India and the corollary construction of Fijiindians as outsiders to India and Indian history. For Nandan, in the Fijiindian imaginary, this double banishment "reinforce[s] a permanent sense of separation" ("Writing as Healing" 283). Separation implies not only feelings of alienation and dislocation but also a more complex sense of exclusion and identity denial. It is this latter feeling which triggers Kamini to seek a confirmation of her identity through a re-tracing and a re-writing of *her* Indian and Fijian histories.

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[25] The parallelism between Kamini's psychic peace and *Amma*'s death-derived peace draws on the narrator's recurrent juxtaposition between migration and death, most climactically when she reasons: "Some believe that death is migration of the soul but migration is also the death of the soul" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 22).

In this framework, the rewriting of history is catalyzed by Kamini's realization that, be it in the past or in the present, she is the "banished," non-Indian alterity. Such discursive otherness is unearthed as she recollects the moments she shared with her Nani – her Indian maternal grandmother – as a child: "*Nani* would turn to me with her sparkly grey-blue eyes for a moment. Her soft cheeks accepting my kisses, but my cousin would inevitably be the center of attention. Her journey from downstairs was always more meaningful to her than my odyssey from Canberra. My cousin was familiar […]" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 29). Kamini's remembrance adds to her banishment as a Fijiindian in the sense that it bestows once again the diasporic trait of "duality" on her existence by portraying her as twice-foreign. In other words, not only is she the descendant of Indians who departed decades ago from India, but, for her Indian grandmother, she is also a Westernized presence. *Nani*'s focal attention on the typical Indian cousin suggests that Kamini is pushed into the margins of Indianness and subjected as such to an exclusionary viewpoint. This othering gaze of the grandmother is upheld by her perception of her Indian granddaughter as “familiar,” which implies that the latter is constructed as the ordinary, pure paradigm of Indianness, whereas Kamini as the “impure,” alien other. In the light of this, Kamini is excluded at once as a twice-banished nomad – a Fijian for Indians and an Indian for Fijians – and as a twice-foreign visitor – a Fijian and Australian “hybrid” for her Indian compatriots –, which confers the diasporic trait of duality and fragmentation on her existence. Similarly, in the present, Kamini finds herself in a head-on encounter with a denial of her Indianness by her Indian neighbor in Fiji, Mr. Banerjee: “An expatriate family from India lived on the top floor. […] He was the kind of Indian that I didn’t relate to at all – […] he felt superior towards Fijiindians: they were not ‘authentic’ Indians; they didn’t speak ‘real’ Hindi. Mother India had justly tossed them aside like floating debris” (72). Indeed, Mr. Banerjee’s prejudices ostracize Fijiindians from their ancestral identity by stigmatizing them as “unauthentic” and “fake” Indians who have disavowed their homeland and identity and, thus, deserve no affiliation to Indianness. Accordingly, his claim can be characterized as a radically exclusionary and stereotypical discourse which denies Fijiindians their identity. Also, his sense of superiority stems from his belief that, unlike them, he is a “pure” Indian, which reflects his essentialist stance. At last, his comparison of Fijiindians to “floating debris” mirrors his derisive outlook vis-à-vis them. While his usage of the adjective “floating” translates his belief that they are not anchored and that they are mere “subsidiary” or “second-class” Indians, his resort to the simile of “debris” vilifies and reifies their humanity. On the whole, his attitude towards Fijiindians can be construed as a process of othering which is epitomic of the tension and xenophobia extant in the gap between Indians and Fijiindians. In response to such othering, Kamini does not remain inert but rather rebels through her claim that she does not relate at all to such Indians as Mr. Banerjee. This psychological response is an outright repudiation of his vilifying assumptions and, by implication, is an acknowledgement of her Indianness. Kamini does not stop at this point but goes further to seize discursive agency through her undertaking of the task of rewriting her Indian history so as to lay claim to the Fijiindians' Indianness and to articulate a counterdiscourse and counterhistory to Mr. Banerjee's Manichean conceptions that construct them as outsiders. In point of fact, it can be asserted that her task is a form of agency and resistance which typifies Um's claim, "When we don't or can't speak, when we are unable to write or be heard, we become the 'outsider' in our own history, looking in as others reconstruct, interpret, and legitimate their own version – and vision – of that history" (847). This evinces that Kamini chooses not to remain silent, watching her identity being denied and effaced, but to *speak* and *write back* through her narration of a post-memorial history and through her reconnection with her ancestral space.

To begin with, memory is crucial in anchoring identity since "[w]e represent while we remember, we reconstruct while we remember" (Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 277). In this sense, memory proffers the power to reconstruct the past and the self-defining narratives derived from it. Not only this, it also emerges as a psychically healing and assertive haven through its response to "the loss of a grandparent, a home, a country, or even a memory" (277). Experiencing these instances of loss enumerated by Nandan when it comes to her relationship with India yet being bereft of any memory rooted there, Kamini turns to postmemory which, though different from individual memory, is a powerful form of connection with the past since, as Hirsch posits, "It creates where it cannot recover. It imagines where it cannot recall" (664). In accordance with this, Kamini endeavors to bring to life the postmemory she has inherited from her mother as an act of reconstructing her Indian ancestral history:

> A house filled with grandfather clocks, carved desks, and wooden men holding up ashtrays was how my mother remembered *Pili Kothi* [her great-grandfather's house]. […] I imagined my mother's dark curly hair bouncing from one of Great Aunt Lara's leather-bound medical books, to another […].
>
> As the British departed from India, they sold their houses to prominent local Indians. *Pili Kothi* had been owned by a Colonel who was in India during the 1857 mutiny. My

> great grandfather, a military officer, had bought the bungalow from him. (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 36)

By imagining her mother in the ancestral house in Rajasthan, Kamini translates her inner desire to transpose her being into that distant past and relive it and to affiliate herself to the history inscribed in it. Yet, to evade the construction of an unreliable history, she absolves memory from its fictitious pitfalls and from the spurs of imagination by inserting historical dates and facts, as the British departure from India, to confer a dimension of verisimilitude and authenticity on her narrative. Besides, Kamini's postmemorial discourse parallels the ancestral history of her family to the colonial history of India, reinserting as such her roots in Indian history so as to advocate her rightful possession of an Indian identity.

In addition, having been separated from their Indian grandmotherland, Fijiindians have not only been deprived of the prerogative of memory but have been deterritorialized from momentous memorial sites as well, for "[t]he evacuation from the originary source denies […] diasporas of a *lieu de mémoire*, where memory can be enveloped and anchored" (Um 835). This sense of separation and obliteration is profoundly experienced by Kamini as she contemplates both maternal and paternal sides of her family: "As for me, I faced a double loss; *Nani* had signed away that world just as my paternal great grandparents, who had marked the indenture documents with their left thumb mark to come to Fiji, had signed away theirs" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 38-39). Through this thought, Kamini perceives herself as being twice-banished from her Indian roots. On the one hand, *Nani*'s sale of the ancestral house *Pili Kothi* has not only cut off her daughters from their childhood past but has also torn Kamini from her ancestral point of origin and past, that is, from the space and history which bear witness to her rootedness and belonging to India. On the other hand, her paternal great grandparents' surrender of their spatial legacy divests her of the possibility of laying claim to rootedness in the Indian territory and extirpates her existence from such a space. Hence, with no spatial evidence to assert her Indian legacy, belonging, and ancestry, Kamini strives to recreate Indian *lieux de mémoire* as an act of retrieval of her community's lost bond with their ancestral land and, by implication, of reinsertion within Indian history through her re-visits to some Indian sites of memory. That's why, "evacuated" from her ancestral house – *Pili Kothi* – which could have been the only spatial thread that weaves her existence into the texture of India were it not sold, Kamini and her aunt try to find a "foster" ancestral space that shares with *Pili Kothi* its spatiotemporal background. Thus, when Kamini's aunt proposes visiting a newly and unexpectedly discovered ancestral house, located in the Rajasthani desert as *Pili Kothi* was, Kamini jumps at the suggestion: "my aunt, my cousin and I made that journey to the desert once. It was a way to revisit memories, like falling into quicksand. […] My Aunt had set out to restore the house and the stories of our history. […] For my Aunt this was like a return journey" (37-38). Making this utterance, Kamini acknowledges that her journey to her ancestral land is, indeed, a journey in time rather than in space. Put differently, taking into account the connotation of travelling and journeying as a quest for identity, the journey becomes a historical voyage as it enables Kamini to revisit her ancestral traces and vicariously re-connect to an unlived past. By conceiving of it as "a return journey," this chronotopal voyage acquires a diasporic dimension given that it re-connects Kamini as a nomadic returnee to her grandmotherland. Further, examining the desert space surrounding this *foster* house, Kamini discerns its ancestral dimension and identifies with it: "The view was fascinating and frightening; we were staying in a vast, uninhabited land, the land of my ancestors […]" (39). By depicting this ancestral space as "vast" and barren, Kamini brings it back to its origin, to the point of beginning so that she and her aunt could *inhabit* it. The trope of inhabiting emptiness here connotes Kamini and her aunt's reterritorialization, dwelling, and home building, but it most importantly signifies engrafting their ontological trace in this space, transmuting it into their own *lieu de mémoire* and *writing history* on its cartography. In so doing, Kamini senses fulfillment and exultation at being re-rooted and re-affiliated to the long line of her Indian ancestors as demonstrated by the pride and elation which the expression “the land of my ancestors” conveys. This is reinforced by her aunt’s restoration of the house. As a matter of fact, this latter action confers on these scenes of historical revival an autobiographical dimension as it reproduces the novelist and her aunt’s visits to and restoration of some of their ancestral spaces:

> My aunt had begun the process of restoring this Ashapur house many months before I arrived; in a way she was restoring a piece of our history. […] It was as if we, both the youngest in our families, were attempting to claim parts of our lost history. (Nandan, “Living Ghosts” 128)
>
> To create a feeling of the living past, we continue to restore old family houses and revisit the places and spaces of our past. (129)

Drawing on these authorial reflections, it can be asserted that, much like Nandan, Kamini’s visits, along with her aunt, to her ancestral land aims at transforming this space into her own *lieu de mémoire*. Thereby, she intends to write her own version of Indian history, one which acknowledges and legitimizes her Indianness far from any exclusionary and essentialist castigation. Concerned with a further underscoring of her historical belonging, Kamini carries out another paramount act incarnated in visiting typically historical places: “Brother Kalidas was taking us to Lal Qilla, Delhi’s famous red fort. […] There were fewer tourists and more Indians, some expatriates, exploring the walls, rooms, terraces, and museum of the brutally vandalized fort [...] Earlier we’d visited Pandit Nehru’s residence” (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 44). Her visits to one of India’s most momentous monuments and to the house of the first Indian prime minister evidence a reconfiguration of her identity into a fluid pattern which subsumes not only her ancestral history but the national history of her ancestral country as well, a history from which she has been excluded with her great grandparents’ departure from India. Through her visits to these ancient places, Kamini transfigures these historical repositories into psychological *lieux de mémoire* which harbor the Indian collective identity and, hence, internalizes a communal – ancestral – and a national history into her very being.

2. The Fijian Homeland: Assertion of a Homing Roof

Decolonization in Fiji, unlike in other nations, was not a celebration of liberation and new beginnings but was rather an exacerbation of the wounds of discrimination and marginality for the Indian indentured laborers' descendants. Indeed, this exclusionary attitude towards Fijiindians was initiated by the European colonialists as Harris propends:

> The most anti-Indian ideas and attitudes in Fiji came from the Europeans. Whenever there was a need to control either Indian labour or Indian demands for political representation, the Europeans would bring up the greater right of Fijians. The colonial government encouraged racially segregated schools, and prohibited Fijians from going near Indian settlements, prompting the two groups to see each other through a prism of prejudice and stereotype. (57)

Such a racist mentality became deep-seated in the Fijian collective unconscious so that even after the departure of the British colonizers, "a post-colonial world order was established but race remained a formidable category […]" (V. Mishra, "Race, Speight and the Crisis in Fiji" 61). These racist claims have been transmuted into a discursive legacy reiterated by a number of Fijian figures of power such as the Fijian minister Asenaca Caucau who viewed Fijiindians as "weeds taking up space in the country" (qtd in Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 272). Likewise, Sakiasi Butadoka, another Fijian politician, called for repatriating Indians back to their Indian land (273). Such statements and others extirpate Fijiindians not only from the very space which they recognize as their only home – Fiji – but also from Fijian history. In this regard, it is essential to bring into play an agential mechanism to counter such condemnation to spatial rootlessness and historical exclusion. Probably, one of the felicitous ways of carrying out this discourse of resistant self-definition, especially in the context of diaspora, is memory *par excellence* as Gilroy proclaims: "[diasporic] identity is focused […] more on memory, or, more accurately, on the social dynamics of remembrance and commemoration" (207). In the same vein, Um emphasizes that "[t]he struggle to remember for many of history's battered subjects is therefore also a struggle for relevance" (Um 834), that is, a struggle for ontological signification and anchorage and for an agential location within one's history and home. In the light of this, in *Home after Dark*, Kamini struggles to prove her denied "organic connection with Fiji," to echo Nandan's terms, through her mnemonic rhetoric which emerges as a convoluted dialogue between her "critical memory" and "nostalgic memory."

2.1. *Critical Memory*: The Haunting Past of Fiji

In fact, grappling with the paramountcy of memory in defining the individual and collective identities of dislocated people, Leo Spitzer classifies memory into two categories, to wit, *critical* memory and *nostalgic* memory. While he conceives of the former as "incorporating the negative and the bitter from the immediate past" (628), he views the latter as "an escape from the present" which "frees individuals from the constraints of time […] [and] enables a transcendence of the irreversibility of time, permitting persons to stress positive experiences and aspects of the past selectively" (622). Notwithstanding its traumatic nature, critical memory remains an indispensable prerequisite for defining one's identity, especially in its collective and communal affiliations. More particularly, as Spitzer observes, critical memory bridges the differences between the members of an in-group and unites them by reminding them of their collective possession of "a common history of persecution and its critical remembrance" (629). This is the case of Kamini whose critical memory of the first coup retrospectively outlines her selfhood by unveiling the dark facet of Fijian history, confirming at the same time her affinity with the Fijiindian ethnic minority. Indeed, the 1987 first coup, which started with the rebellious protests of many Fijians, culminated in the military coup staged by the Fijian colonel Rabuka, and eventually ended with the overthrowal of the "Indian-dominated" formed government (Lal and Pretes 180), was a turning point in Fijian history. Put differently, it not only deepened the abysmal divide between indigenous Fijians and Fijiindians – labeled "Fijian citizens" – and turned the latter into internally displaced people, but it also instigated the incipience of the Fijiindian identity crisis and traumatized imaginary as instantiated in Nandan's claim: "As for my father, his heart broke quickly the day of the coup and more slowly in the months and years afterwards" (Nandan, "Reflection"). Accordingly, the memory of this coup which paved the way for a preposterous succession of other coups became the nucleus of the Fijiindian critical memory. No wonder then that, after evoking a quite brief incident, Kamini starts her elaborate narration with her remembrance of the first coup:

> On a small island of barely one million people […] the Colonel took my father hostage. That day my father didn't die, but a broken heart gave him the same feeling.
>
> Held for six days […] all our lives changed irreversibly. (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 6)
>
> How could any of us forget the morning of the coup? It had been an ordinary day. Most of us only had a vague idea of what a coup was and even after it happened, the word sounded foreign in our mouths […]. (7)
>
> The thing I tried desperately to understand was why the Colonel had done it. (8)

This reminiscence can be characterized as a critical memory which lingers on the bitterness of betrayal that Fijiindians have been feeling since the coup. The brokenness of the father's heart, likened to a psychological death, symbolizes the brusque sense of betrayal that he has experienced after the overthrowal of the government in which he was a minister. Yet, what is more important in this memory is the collective range of this demoralizing feeling. That is to say, narrating the minutiae of the coup, Kamini asserts that it has changed not *her* or her father's life but *their* lives. By dint of the possessive adjective "our," Kamini positions herself within an imagined community, the Fijiindian community, for the coup has radically affected in one way or another every Fijiindian. Similarly, the usage of the first-person pronoun in the subsequent claims attests to Kamini's social affiliation and identity, for it points to a communal resistance to forgetting the coup and constructs the latter as a collective critical memory which historicizes this juncture as a turning point in the Fijiindians' lives. Besides, the inability to either pronounce or grasp the signification of "coup," corroborated by the narrator's desperate efforts to come to grips with its incentives, does not merely expose the concept as alien to the Fijiindians' social fabric and to their political ethics but most significantly bespeaks their shock at how the brotherhood and homeliness they idealize have become unpredictably disfigured by their *fellow-nationals'* political aspirations.

Even worse, the 1987 coup has become ingrained in the Fijiindian imaginary not only because of its topos of betrayal but also because of the scars of trauma it has carved in the Fijiindians' critical memory as proclaimed by the author herself: "We are reluctant to admit it, but Fijiindian people have been a culture in trauma" (Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 272). A significant part of this historical trauma is rendered in the novel through Kamini's retrospective contemplation of her father's repressed pain: "None of us in the family knew what those six days had really been like for him and we never found out either. I *suspect* he had spared even my mother the worst details. He had made us laugh when Mum had asked him about it […] But later, there had been secret whisperings between my parents during which Mum had cupped her hand to her mouth more than once" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 6; my emphasis). Concealed in the profound recesses of the imagination of Kamini's family members, the unknown character of what the father has undergone when he has been held hostage betokens the bitterness, pain, and negativity encapsulated in the recondite experiences of the coup. The father's attempts to dissipate the feeling of apprehension and anxiety prevailing among his family members through his comic sense only gives way to a dark humor that adds to his buried pain. This is unfolded in the signs which Kamini subsequently discerns in her parents' secret conversation and which allude to the mother's shock and aghastness as she becomes exposed to the unknown truth of the coup. Added to this, the tacit negativity of these memories is laid bare as Kamini eventually ascertains a palpable evidence: "A few days later when I saw the bruise on his back, I *knew* something ugly must have gone on in the Prime Minister's residence that became a jail cell for the deposed Ministers. […] the day I saw the mark with blood trapped underneath his tea-colored skin, I backed away ghost-like into the house" (7; my emphasis). Indeed, this bruise which the narrator descries is a bodily translation of the discourse of torture and anguish concomitant with the political coup, that is, of the psychological wounds which the coup has inflicted on the Fijiindian psyche. In this respect, it is worth mentioning that what is unearthed in Kamini's narrative is not the anguish and affliction of a mere individual – her father – but rather of a whole community in the sense that, as Um conceptualizes, historical trauma "stirs not only a personal feeling of dislocation but also a collective sense of anxiety about national survival" (834). At last, scrutinizing Kamini's former and latter utterances, one notices a transition in her psychological disposition from a mere "suspicion" into a veritable "knowledge," which absolves her memories as a historical repository from the accusation of imaginary unreliability and validates their truth. In other words, the trauma, coterminous with the coup events, has become a historical truth that shapes the Fijiindian community and embitters their recollections, forming an integral part of their collective critical memory.

To top it all, despite its negative ramifications which announce a rupture in the history of Fiji and trigger a crisis of identity in the Fijiindian psyche, Kamini's, and by implication all Fijiindians', critical memory bears within its folds traces of a latent hope, the hope which the older generation of Fijiindian authors has never ceased to cherish[26]. It is this hope which counters the exclusionary politics of Fiji and contrives a counterhistory that affiliates Fijiindians to the Fijian imagined community and proves their belonging. In the climactic moments of narrating the coup occurrences, the author chooses to foreground scenes which can be construed as portions of a counterhistory that holds promises of a utopian and egalitarian Fiji where Fijiindians could proudly claim their belonging. One of these scenes is recounted through the lens of Kamini during her and her mother's visit to her imprisoned father: "A crowd had collected outside the deposed Prime Minister's house. […] The wives [of the Ministers] couldn't have known at the time that their visit had made the Colonel nervous. When he saw them entering the prison together, like a united line of defense, he resolved instantaneously to separate the Indian from the Fijian Ministers" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 11). Kamini's zeroing in on the unity and communion which underlies the relationship between Fijians and Fijiindians, represented by the wives of the Fijian and Fijiindian Ministers, and which is emphasized by the simile she establishes between the wives and a "line of defense" authenticates a retrospective dream of building a united imagined community in Fiji where both ethnicities could coexist peacefully. However, such a prospect of an inclusive Fijian national identity is deconstructed by the politics of discrimination ideated by the Colonel. Analogously, the psychological manifestation of this Fijian-Fijiindian national brotherhood is exhibited in the reaction of the detained ministers:

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[26] An example of these is Satendra Nandan who, despite having migrated to Australia, continues to devote his writings to the rendering of a positive Fiji and of a hopeful future in it.

> [S]ome of the Fijiindian Ministers had been beaten up by the soldiers for refusing to be separated from the Fijian Ministers. […] The Fijian Ministers had sprung into action and gripped their Fijiindian brothers tightly – much to the surprise of both the soldiers and the Fijiindian Ministers, who had never before been in such close proximity to their Fijian brothers. Eventually, a number of burly soldiers had pried them apart and thrown the Fijiindians into a military truck. That's when Dad landed on his back. (16)

By enduring torture, the Fijiindian ministers mirror the ethics of sacrifice, which incarnates the degree of their loyalty to people whom they elevate into fellow-nationals and substantiates their affiliation to the Fijian national identity. In return, the Fijiindian loyalty and sacrifice are reciprocated by the Fijian ministers' reaction; through the act of gripping their Fijiindian fellow-nationals "tightly," they externalize a sincere expression of solidarity, communion, and identification with the Fijiindians and an utter resistance against discrimination and segregation. Additionally, the word "brothers" is reiterated in this passage to designate both Fijians and Fijiindians. Such a repetition is not arbitrary but rather underlines the bond of brotherhood underlying the hope for a united Fijian national identity but dismantled by the Colonel's racist politics as symbolized by the father's fall. Therefore, though bitter, Kamini's critical memory commemorates this brief historical moment wherein loyalty, sacrifice, and unity as social dynamics of the Fijian national identity crystallize and celebrates an unprecedented counter-historical incident which, inconsequential as it may seem to be, significantly informs the Fijiindian identity. More specifically, this commemorated moment can be remarked in the physical contact made between the Fijian and Fijiindian ministers, an act that can be interpreted as an agential resistance, though ephemeral, against the separatist and racist politics initiated by the colonial institution (Harris 57) and carried on by the racism prevailing in present-day Fiji. All in all, albeit demystifying the bitterness and attempt to marginalize Fijiindians and deny them agency and Fijian identity, this critical memory harbors their counterhistory, i.e. a history of resistance as *Fijians* corroborated by their Fijian compatriots' acknowledgement of their Fijian identity and of their belonging to and affinity with the Fijian imagined community.

2.2. *Nostalgic memory*: The Homely Spirit of Fiji

If critical memory recollects the Fijiindians' traumatized past which precludes them from their Fijianness and discursively banishes them from their home, nostalgic memory counters this exclusionary rhetoric by reterritorializing them and evincing their rightful rootedness in this Pacific space. In this framework, defining nostalgia as "a bitter-sweet, affectionate, positive relationship to what has been lost" (Hirsch and Spitzer 258), Spitzer theorizes that nostalgic memory is the retrospective emphasis on the benign and positive images of the past and goes further to assert that "by establishing a link between a 'self-in-present' and an image of a 'self-in-past,' nostalgic memory also plays a significant role in the reconstruction and continuity of individual and collective identity" (Spitzer 622). In accordance with this conception, Um propounds the idea that nostalgia is "a way of reclaiming history and identity" which is in great part "nurtured by the alienation of the present" (836). Likewise, grappling with the specific context of the South Asian diaspora to which Nandan pertains, Sarwal elucidates the nexus between nostalgia, memory, space, and identity:

> […] nostalgic yearnings to return to a lost home reflect the migrants' search for the home or a sensory location in which the self is comfortably secure, thus providing a therapeutic value. Memory and nostalgia play with concrete spatial histories in not just recreating the lost home but also in a 'cultural construction in which our very selves and sense are constituted' (Chambers 1994: p. 22). (*Narratives* 119)

It is precisely this interplay which Kamini dramatizes in her endeavor to surmount her identity crisis instigated by her critical memory and nurtured further by her unsettling present alienation as a foreigner in her Fijian homeland and to prove, against any exclusionary history and politics, her and her Fijiindian community's Fijian identity. In other words, this process of identity confirmation is carried out through her *nostalgic memory* which zeroes in on the multifunctionality of the Fijian space as a psychological retrieval of and return to an idealized, past version of *home*.

First, through her nostalgic memory, Kamini transposes the past into the present, compensating for the alienation of the present by the idealized images of the past. An instance of this materializes in the centrality of the past positive feelings in molding the protagonist's bond with the present: "It grew darker and the potholes were more difficult to avoid but there was no fear of getting lost on the one winding road from Nadi to Suva. My family had made this journey endlessly, returning from visiting the relatives in the West, with Mum in the front seat, Dad driving and my small frame squeezed in the backseat between my ever-growing brother and sister" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 59). Despite the dark and the potholes which pervade the Fijian road and which symbolize the unknown and delicate character of her journey of search for identity in Fiji, Kamini succeeds to enlighten this psychological path and derive a psychic certainty and solace from her positive past feelings. That is to say, her innermost comfort and peace stem from the reinvigorating reminiscence of feeling secure and safe among her family members in this very space – what the author describes, in an autobiographical reference to her life in Fiji, as the "idyllic nature and simplicity of childhood" (Nandan, "Living Ghosts" 122) – and from the endless journeys which bestow on the space a sense of familiarity that discards Kamini’s present alienation. In this sense, through her positive remembrance of her journeys with her family on this Fijian road, Kamini does not only anchor herself in the present space but goes further to ensure the continuity of her self-in-past, that is, of her individual identity. In the same fashion, her identification with the Fijian space issues from the past place-identity encapsulated in her nostalgic memory as illustrated in her approach to the university campus after her return to Fiji:

> The campus was essentially the same after all these years and yet I felt as if I was looking at everything with new eyes. I could smell the fragrance of frangipani, my favorite flower, hibiscus plants and bougainvillea vines, still the old beauty queens of the campus, lit up the buildings. […] As the heat soaked my body, I remembered those soporific days of my childhood – purposeless walks […] with my school friends […]. As we went around the university pool, I laughed to myself remembering how the security guard berated Rahul […]. Passing the lecture hall of my foundation year, I could almost visualize the foreign student from Germany whom I had a major crush on […] we looked around for the Head’s office. […] I grinned widely, as I knocked on his [the Head of the Department] door, recalling how he became infuriated if anyone talked while he was lecturing. (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 68-69)

In this elaborate memory account, Kamini’s first statement is instrumental in delineating the contours of her selfhood. It points to her perception of this Fijian space both in terms of “sameness” and “newness.” This paradoxical blend of sameness and difference or newness is redolent of Hall’s definition of identity in its relation to the past as involving “the vector of similarity and continuity” and “the vector of difference and rupture” (226). While Kamini’s newness, symptomatic of the rupture from the past, substantiates her hyphenated, triadic, and dynamic identity which contrasts with her stable, monolithic past identity, the acknowledged sameness insinuates her maintenance of the past spatial bond with Fiji which still defines her existential status. The nostalgic nature of this self-defining memory can be obviously noticed in the two patterns of her nostalgic experience: sensory and behavioral. On the one hand, Kamini’s nostalgia for her idyllic past interlaced with the Fijian space crystallizes in the immersion of her sensory experience in the past, for her recourse to sensory verbs as “smell” and “visualize” in relation to objects whose existence extends back to the past evidences that her senses are suffused with the spirit of the past, which implies the continuity of her spatial identity anchored in this same Fijian space – the university campus. On the other hand, Kamini’s laughing and smiling are behavioral reactions triggered by past occurrences in this very space. This suggests that she is filling the present space with the presence of the past and approaching it through the lens of her self-in-past. Accordingly, her nostalgic recollections and intimations do not only guarantee the continuity of her past selfhood but also recreate homely feelings in this space by inserting it into a past mold.

Moreover, Kamini’s positive remembrances become a counterdiscourse to the exclusion and identity denial to which Fijiindians have been subjected and which have been ascending since the outburst of the first coup. In point of fact, just as critical memory reminds a dislocated in-group of its history of traumatization, nostalgic memory recalls a history of belonging as it brings to the surface all the moments of shared elation, certainty, and homeliness. This applies to Kamini whose nostalgic memory affirms the collective identity that has been denied to Fijiindians, one which hinges on a history of belonging to Fiji. Through her memories, the Fijian space is retrospectively elevated into a witness to the Fijiindians’ *belonging* to Fiji as it marks three generations’ historical existence. First, nostalgically remembering her childhood moments in the house of her paternal grandparents, descendants of Indian laborers who migrated to Fiji, Kamini pictures the adjacent river in substantial terms: “Nearby a river glistened black, holding in its secret depths the memories of my grandparents” (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 23-24). Kamini goes beyond the spatial nature of the river, as a metonymic fragment of the Fijian space, to confer on it a character of mystification and unintelligibility symbolized by its darkness and depth. Such symbolism is purported to construct this Fijian space as a complex signifier which conveys a portion of the Fijiindian identity. In other words, Kamini’s description of the river transfigures the latter into a repertoire of her grandparents’ memories, that is, into a witness to their history. It becomes a psychological *lieu de mémoire* that substantiates the Fijiindian personal and collective history of *presence* and *existence* in this space. Besides, this Fijiindian affinity with the Fijian space is revealed in Kamini's memory as channeled into the next generation, that is, her father's: "My father returned more times [to Fiji] as death became a frequent occurrence. If important rites of passage like births and marriages were missed, the very last ritual in a person's life commanded attention" (21). This claim is instrumental to the question of Fijiindian identity as it reverberates the author's understanding of such circumstances of return: "I wanted to suggest that Fiji does not only belong to those who live there but also to those who have migrated and return to bury their dead" (Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 275). Thus, it can be inferred that the idea of return to Fiji is associated with homecoming and belonging, a renewal of one's identificatory "contract" with the territory of the homeland. By focusing on her father's many returns, Kamini is asserting the continuity of her family's belonging to and presence in the Fijian space and their ongoing reterritorializations in it. Intriguingly, she lays more stress on the occasion of death as a catalyst of these returns. This emphasis on death ceremonies more than on other occasions is not haphazard but can rather be rationalized by the symbolism of death, for it connotes here that the ultimate destination and final home of Fijiindians is nowhere but Fiji; that is to say, Fiji is the point of their existential beginning and end. Hence, such returns as those of Kamini's father can be construed as a rite of witnessing a confirmation of their and their kin's belonging to the Fijian space. Finally, the identification with Fiji as a homeland and a home extends to Kamini's generation as reflected through her memories:

> I wondered if all the trees that has surrounded our compound had survived; the coconut trees that lined the side of the house, the lushest mango tree in the neighborhood […] and the soursop tree that drooped with the weight of its fruit […]. Rahul and I would take turns shaking the branches of the mango tree until one fell. […] When we both had secured a mango or two, we'd go our separate ways of bliss. […] Lachlan McDougal and I would run into the Edenic garden to pick 'wines' off its tree […], and run quickly before we were caught by the Vice-Chancellor's gardener or security guard. It was a

> time when I believed that the whole island was mine. […] I thought I had the luxury of possession. (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 66-67)

In this vivid nostalgic imagery, Kamini enumerates the trees that used to mark her childhood moments. By so doing, she transmutes these metonymic fragments of the Fijian space into metaphorical witnesses to her past rootedness in Fiji and to her right to identify with it. Therefore, by wondering if these trees have survived, Kamini desires to preserve the continuity of her belonging to Fiji and conjures up the Fijian trees as evidence against the exclusionary discourse denying her identity. Not only this, but this memory is teeming with the positive feelings of bliss, pleasure, and young-age adventures proffered by the Fijian spatial elements. This potpourri of positive affects attests to Kamini's exultation in the past version of the Fijian space and to her desire to transpose these homely feelings into her tenuous present being so as to anchor her self and mitigate her identity crisis. Most important of all is the fact that Kamini's belonging to Fiji, proved and "approved" by space itself, culminates in her appropriation of space. Cognizant of the "spatial witnesses" to her belonging, she assumes her rightfulness to lay claim to her Fijian spatial identity by appropriating space. This appropriation is at once a continuity of the Fijiindian transgenerational spatial legacy and a counterdiscourse to the present politics of exclusivism, separatism, and marginalization to which Fijiindians are subjected. In this sense, Kamini's re-anchoring nostalgic memory testifies to the centrality of memory in identity formation as a node that "links the stateless body of the displaced with the roots and identities that history and politics have pried away from them" but most significantly as a "a struggle to reconnect, reclaim, and reaffirm" (Um 836). Indeed, this is wholly enacted by Kamini who, through her recollections, reconnects with her past, reclaims her belonging, and reaffirms her denied Fijianness.

The concern with the different discursive forms of the past, including memory, is a literary feature which the novel shares with its Arab-Australian counterpart *Voices on the Wind* and is by no means the only commonality between the two. As a matter of fact, when placing

Nandan's *Home after Dark* and Yazbek's *Voices on the Wind* side by side, sundry similarities can be pinned down in the construction of the two novels, representing as such the degree of similitude between the two minority literatures to which each novel pertains, i.e. Arab-Australian literature and Indian-Australian literature. Yet, juxtaposing Eva's and Kamini's narratives unveils that each point of similarity is superseded by a point of difference between the two oeuvres, which reflects the uniqueness of each minority experience in Australia. Such is the case when lingering on both novels' emphasis on the disruption of the linear chronology of events. Both novels are engaged in a temporal border-crossing movement between the past and the present. This pinpoints the centrality of the past in both diasporic literary venues. This feature has certainly been underlined by many diasporists both in the classical and contemporary conceptions of diaspora. Nonetheless, approaching the past does not abide by a uniform pattern in all diasporic literary works, for each has its peculiar perspective and impetus in addressing this temporal frame as exemplified in the two works under study. In *Home after Dark*, the past materializes in variegated forms that range from Kamini's dramatization of postmemory and reinvention of *lieux de mémoire* in India to her recollection of her critical and nostalgic memories in Fiji. In *Voices on the Wind,* Eva brings the past into play through the overlap of "memory, fantasy, narrative and myth," to use Hall's words. In other words, Eva engages in a *virtual* dialogue with the fantasized version of the past embodied in the old woman who engrosses her in the historical narrative of her ancestors and in an *actual* dialogue with Melanie who exposes to her a different facet – more recent – of her kin's past. The difference underlying the rendition of the past in both novels is not simply limited to the multifariousness of its manifestations but is shaped by the motive kindling its interpolation in each novelistic narrative. Indeed, while the insertion of the past in Yazbek's novel is purported to trace the collective identity of the Lebanese diaspora in South Africa so as to induct the character Eva to the Lebanese-South African in-group and expose her hybridity, Nandan's novel goes beyond this personal quest to voice the cause of a whole community. Put differently, the retrospective processes suffusing Nandan's work transcend the configuration of the protagonist's personal identity to be induced by the desire to rewrite a collective history, to concoct Fijian and Indian counterhistories that deconstruct the exclusionary official versions of Fijian and Indian histories which vilify Fijiindians. It follows that while writing about the past in Arab-Australian literature is a strategic articulation of one's belonging and roots and a mode of self-confirmation, the preoccupation with transvaluing the past in the works of Fijiindian-Australian authors is a form of discursive resistance and a retrieval of a denied agency**.** It is a form of healing as Nandan puts it: "I feel as if I have gained greater self-knowledge through the process of writing. It has made me reflect on the past and made me conscious of the possibilities of healing in the present and the future" ("Living Ghosts" 130).

2.3. Being Fijiindian, Being Other

Kamini's identity is not solely predicated on the logic of doubles – Fiji and India – exuded in her temporal journeys and historical rewriting but rather involves a third coordinate, i.e. Australia. It is crucial, in this respect, to point out that her search for Australian routes in the configuration of her identity is instigated by the dynamism of her Fijian identity. The latter, rooted as it is in nostalgic and critical memories of Fiji, is approached in ambivalent terms on the part of Kamini given the position of her own community in present-day Fiji. In fact, as Kamini's narrative typifies, the position of Fijiindians in contemporary Fiji defines their traumatized status, evinced by Nandan's claim, "Fijiindian people have been a culture in trauma" (Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 272), and most significantly leads them to a sense of disillusionment.

The narrator herself is disillusioned by the present social conditions wherein her fellows have been living following the coups. This unsettling disillusionment concretizes first and foremost in the discomfort and melancholia which engulf her as she witnesses the poverty pervading Fiji, striking Fijians and most drastically Fijiindians who are denied the right to own the land (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 53) and are brusquely evicted along with their families from their farms (78, 90). Yet, what deepens Kamini's disillusionment is her awareness of the social and discursive othering to which her compatriots are subjected in present-day Fiji: "Overall the city had not improved since 1987. […] I noticed there were more Fijian security guards stationed in the doorway of Fijiindian jewellery shops. […] A group of Fijian men incited by racist politicians had smashed shop windows and looted DVD players, sports clothes and women's jewellery, just before breaking up a peaceful demonstration in Ratu Sukuna Park" (75-76). The presence of Fijian guards specifically in the doorway of Fijiindian shops is not only an allusion to the unspoken assaults and abuses perpetrated against Fijiindians but is also a tacit indication of the repercussions of the coups and of the historical discrimination against them. Added to this, Kamini condemns the Fijian politics as a corrupt, essentialist discourse which preaches an inimical agenda of antagonism, racism, and xenophobia vis-à-vis Fijiindians and ultimately materializes in the chauvinistic enactment of violence and bigotry towards them. On this account, she renders the life of Fijiindians within their homeland as reified by the jingoist politics that hinges on divide and separatism within the Fiji community and promotes the irreconcilable othering of the Fijiindians whom she metonymically represents, through their demonstration, as "peaceful." The outcome of this exclusionary othering and subalternizing process is, in Kamini's narratorial voice, the guideless Fijiindians' development of a vulnerable and disillusioned disposition. Kamini is apprised of this point by a taxi driver and a Fijiindian friend who both unravel the status quo of Fijiindians in their home space:

> The taxi driver told me that [Fijiindian] farmers and their families had been evicted from their farms and had come to the city in the hope of finding work. […] the people were refugees in their own country. They were experiencing poverty, and since the coups the idea that Fiji was not their home had been further entrenched. A writer friend, who had migrated to New Zealand, told me that he had walked down a Suva street post-coup and

> accidently bumped a Fijian man who declared: ‘Eh brother, remember this is not your country.’ (78)

The taxi driver is foregrounding the oppression and injustice committed against Fijiindians, for they are denied the right of ownership of the land which they have tended since the arrival of their ancestors. In this sense, they are also divested of the right of belonging to Fiji – their own home and nation – and of their identity as *Fiji*-Indians. In the same vein, by being represented as a refugee in one’s own country, the figure of the Fijiindian is constructed as an outsider and as an internally displaced individual or even an exile in his own homeland. What’s more, this conversation with the taxi driver sheds light on the double subalternity to which Fijiindians are subjected in the sense that they are territorially dispossessed through their eviction from their farms and through the inhibition of their access to the land resources and are socially stigmatized through their impoverishment and their racialized othering. This idea is further backed by Kamini’s friend who does not merely point out the essentialism and othering carried out towards Fijiindians but also unmasks their state of being in a post-coup Fiji. Indeed, he renders their status quo as one wherein the social and national affinity binding them to their Fijian fellow-nationals has collapsed. Even worse, as the words of the xenophobic Fijian man signal, Fijiindians are even refused the freedom of mobility in the home space, condemning them more or less to a state of spatial incarceration and trappedness.

All these ideas considered, it can be inferred that their existential status is one where they have become “floating citizens,” that is, individuals who, albeit considering themselves part of their own nation, are geopolitically and socially denied any anchor or basis that roots them to this so-called home. This subalternizing politics of location to which Fijiindians are subjected results in their hopelessness and ensuing disillusionment when approaching Fiji: “many Fijiindians had understandably lost confidence about a future in Fiji [...]. They had an archaic idea about India as a backward and impoverished land that had been inherited from their ancestors. At least with the West they didn’t expect to have feelings of belonging or to be loved in return" (79). This statement unearths the Fijiindians' feeling of alienation from and placelessness and exile within Fiji because of the betrayals and anguish they have been undergoing since the coups. This un-homeliness and the absence of any national or social affiliation with the Fijian in-group have led them to memorialize the double banishment to which their ancestors were subjected in the first place, an exile from both India and Fiji. Accordingly, adopting India as a home-substitute for Fiji is not a choice they would opt for, especially with the preconceptions and prejudices they hold with regard to it. In the light of this, it can be hypothesized that Fijiindians have opted instead for new routes in the West. Expatiating on the dilemma of outcast Fijiindians in Fiji, Sundar Harris explains the latter's search for migratory paths to flee their conundrum: "When people are denied the privilege of calling their homeland 'home,' denied roots, then they begin to look outwards to the other possible landscapes where they can actually plant roots. Thousands of Indo-Fijians have migrated to Australia, New Zealand, Canada and the United States, a mass exodus taking place after the 1987 coup" (59). This corresponds to Kamini's former claim which elucidates that the Fijiindians' inclination towards emigration emanates from the fact that *there* at least, as opposed to their grandmotherland and homeland, they have no history or legacy which incites them to anticipate a treatment taking into account their filiation and affiliation. As a result, the life which they embrace in the West, as Kamini hints at, is one of transience and of contingent nomadism.

In view of the aforementioned ideas, the topos of othering and its subsidiary leitmotif of the expropriation of the land is another literary commonality which takes shape in both Fijiindian-Australian and Arab-Australian literary realms. But again, though this point betokens a shared thematic concern between Nandan's novel and Yazbek's novel, it uncloaks more difference than similarity between the two. The process of othering, as Spivak defines it, is the process whereby a hegemonic discourse produces its "others" (Ashcroft et al., *Key Concepts* 156). In the studied works, both diasporas are subjected to this process by which they are denied the right to own the land. The early Lebanese diasporans in South Africa are othered specifically though the Asiatics Registration Act, enacted by the colonial system, which racializes them as non-whites, i.e. as Asians, and forbids them the right of ownership along with other rights. In the same fashion, Nandan exhibits how the colonial system others the Indian labor diasporans in Fiji, depriving them of the right of owning the land, an ideological legacy which is further carried out in postcolonial, contemporary Fiji where Fijiindians are racially and ethnically essentialized and vilified. With both diasporas sharing the trauma of being discursively constructed as an inferior alterity, difference can still be prominently ascertained when taking into account the socio-cultural position of each diaspora. More particularly, where the Fijiindians' struggle for equality and justice and for their right to lay claim to a Fijian identity fails to fulfill its objective on account of the many coups distinctive of the Fijian history, pushing them further to the margins of Fiji and leading to their disillusionment with regard to the possibility of adopting this space as an ultimate home, the Lebanese diaspora triumphs in its struggle, garnering a privileged socio-economic status and embracing South Africa as their home. Consolidated by their affiliation to the colonial religion, they assert their triumph and racialization as whites and maintain their full land assets. It may also be worth mentioning, in this context, that othering is an allusion to the politics of location which defines the power relations between two groups. This to aver that at a time where Fijiindians are othered by the natives of Fiji, which confines them to a subaltern location, the Lebanese diasporans' prerogative incites their othering of the native South Africans, positioning themselves in a location of superiority and power. By and large, this disparity in the fates of these two diasporas can be accounted for by a set of rationales. In fact, the Lebanese diasporans' affiliation to Christiandom indicates that they share the colonizers' same faith, which situates them and the colonizers on one extreme of the colonial binary civilized/uncivilized, though not on an equal footing. Probably, their identification with the French and, by implication, their unquestioned acceptance of Western values along with their siding with the colonial institution are also momentous factors which result in the construction of this diaspora as an unthreatening presence for the colonial ideals. Contrariwise, since the arrival of Indian laborers at Fiji, the fact that the Indian presence in Fiji is a cultural threat that may erode the quintessential Fijian identity has been ideated by the European colonialists and continues to be harbored by Fijians for whom Fijiindians are a potential cultural and economic threat. These circumstances may then explain the constant antagonism, culminating in coups and the outright denial of the right of ownership, against Fijiindians. Hence, it can be contended that power politics plays an indispensable role in locating a minority group in its new homeland.

3. The Australian Hostland: Embarking on New Routes

Broaching the issue of the Fijiindians' unhomeliness in Fiji, Nandan contends that "[a]fter more than 125 years, Fijiindians still do not feel at home in Fiji; unable to rest, they are always on the move, seeking ways to migrate and being ready for the next migration if necessary" (Nandan, "Writing as Healing" 274). This indicates that the Fijiindian identity is one which is paradigmatic of dynamism, mobility, and prospective migratory routes. On this score, it can be extrapolated that despite the paramountcy of her critical and nostalgic memories in delineating her identity, Kamini's disillusionment, spurred by the disturbing image of present-day Fiji, compels her, like the other Fijiindians, to seek new routes in her configuration of her selfhood and to ascertain solace in migration. As a result, she returns to Australia – her family's post-coup refuge – wherein she negotiates her Australianness through her ambivalent attitude towards space and through her cultural hybridity.

3.1. Ambivalent Walking in the City

An examination of Kamini's relationship with the Australian space reveals a character of ambivalence which typically symptomatizes the diasporic existence, for, at times, she feels quite detached from it, yearning instead for her Fijian homeland, whereas, at others, she entrenches a deep-seated nexus with it. On the one hand, the many juxtapositions Kamini establishes between the Australian and the Fijian spaces after her return mirror her nostalgic longing for her Fijian homeland. An illustration of this can be discerned in her comparison between the two spaces' landscapes: "Some dry leaves had landed in the ladybird flowerpot […]. Twigs, feathers and acorns lay stranded on the cement. This world was crisp and sharp while Fiji was greenness, wetness, rain and sea" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 159). In this imagery, the Australian space is associated with dryness and barrenness which connote death and absence of vigor and, hence, reflect Kamini's psychic alienation from this space and her ruptured relation to it. Contrariwise, the Fijian space epitomizes "greenness," "wetness," and the imagery of water, which all stand for life and fertility as if to construct this space as a source of psychological reinvigoration. This positive rendering of the Fijian space attests to Kamini's yearning for a re-connection with it so as to mitigate her crisis. Analogously, she juxtaposes both spaces' discrepant weather conditions: "I never felt quite warm enough in Anjali's house despite its efficient central heating. Canberra weather was hard to get used to after three years in Suva's immense heat. I created a world of warmth around me like an amniotic sac" (160). The cold prevailing in the Australian space, as opposed to the Fijian heat, connotatively associates this space with the absence of psychological warmth. In other words, Kamini's feeling of cold in Canberra translates her deprivation of psychological warmth, that is, of the absence of psychological solace and gratification, and her psychological experience instead of alienation and solitude. The juxtaposition between Canberra's and Suva's weather conditions is intended to highlight the disparity between the identities encapsulated in the two spaces and, thus, the polarity underlying Kamini's diasporicity and to mirror her proclivity for the Fijian space and her detachment from the Australian territory. Additionally, her creation of a world of warmth around her emblematizes her attempts to compensate for the absence of the Fijian warmth and to recreate the Fijian milieu, which authenticates her nostalgia to her homeland.

On the other hand, Kamini's nostalgic glimpses of Fiji are outweighed by her internalization of an identificatory bond with the Australian space on many occasions, the most substantial of which is probably her "walking in the city" in the Certallian fashion. Indeed, walking transcends its conventional conceptualization as a mere bodily movement in space to assume a deeper signification formulated in Michel de Certeau's seminal chapter "Walking in the City." In this chapter, de Certeau revolutionizes the implications of walking by comparing it to the system of language: "The act of walking is to the urban system what the speech act is to language or to the statements uttered […]. It thus seems possible to give a preliminary definition of walking as a space of enunciation" (Certeau 97-98). This is to say that walking is a "rhetorical practice" that generates meaning as much as linguistic utterances do. He goes on to posit that this production of meaning, actualized by the walkers' peculiar and particular movements and trajectories, is what grants walking as a signifying practice the power to activate and invent spaces (107) and the agency to transform a *place* – a geometrical space – into a *space* – an existential space (117). In this groundwork, it can be claimed that, faced with meaninglessness after her marital breakup and her return to the Australian hostland, Kamini strives to fill her *self-in-space* with meaning, and one way in which she proceeds is through her walking in Canberra:

> Grief broke like a hurricane inside me. To the world, I showed only a little because I could not find an adequate expression for it. […] I knew I could not carry on like this. I needed to do something, however small. The plan I came up with was to go to the shops and catch a bus to another suburb […]. I felt so shaky walking that if a passerby had bumped into me, I would have slumped on the pavement like a beggar in Suva's Victoria Parade. I envied the smartly-dressed people who strode past me on their way home from work. A busker sung melancholy tunes on his guitar outside the IGA supermarket, his hat upside down on the pavement, seeking the generosity of strangers. He looked out of place, but not as much as I did. (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 148)

This passage is an epitome of Kamini's rhetoric of walking, a rhetoric that necessitates a careful reading to lay bare the intricate meanings it conveys. Prompted by her alienation and immersion in a psychic vortex of identity crisis and meaninglessness, as insinuated by her inability to express her innermost world, Kamini finds no means of psychic survival but in her performativity of walking in the city as a rhetorical creation of existential meaning as de Certeau puts it. All the more, the nature of her walking is extra-ordinary in the sense that it is of a "shaky" nature. Taking into account Kamini's former position in the Austral space, one of categorical detachment, disconnection, and alienation – a *floating* entity – as displayed in the recurrent juxtapositions between Fiji and Australia, her shaky walking marks the inception of her reconnection with this space. Her walking, though emblematic of a certain vulnerability, is a recuperation of a spatial anchorage and a rooting of her subjective body in the spacescape in the same manner a toddler would stagger before walking steadfastly, which implies an establishment of an autonomous and free state of being-in-space. Further, walking, in this case, transcends the physical function of creating a nexus between Kamini's body and the *place* to undertake the psychological objective of actualizing *space* by suffusing it with signification. To begin with, her feeling of envy vis-à-vis the passers-by emanates from her lack of and longing for their own asset, that is, a trajectory with a clear origin and destination, a trajectory that *means*. Thus, by dint of her envy, Kamini is vicariously filling her spatial vicinity with a feeling intended to atone for her psychic absence with a meaningful presence. As such, she turns space into a repository of her cravings and desires, planting the first sprouts of meaning in her void existence. Added to this, by deliberately walking within a purview that makes the busker and his lachrymose tune accessible to her sight, Kamini unleashes her grief outward in space. In different terms, she is freeing herself from the hurricane of grief by transmuting the spacescape – the place, the busker, and the music – into an aesthetic embodiment of her melancholy. In this sense, her walking converts space into a container that loosens her emotional burdens and spares her from a psychological implosion and disintegration. Eventually, while Kamini's last claim bears a self-comparison to the busker seeking generosity, one of the preceding statements – in the same passage – likens her to a Fijian beggar. Correspondingly, her practice of walking ends up turning her self into a metaphorical intersection of a Fijian beggar and his or her Australian counterpart – the busker. This is to corroborate that Kamini is dispossessed and displaced in the Australian space as much as she is in the Fijian space. In so doing, she self-consoles by convincing herself that her vulnerable state *here* is no different from hers *there*. This likening of the *here* and *there* is purported to construct the Australian space as a substitute for the Fijian one, which proffers an Australian space identity to Kamini.

Furthermore, Kamini's identification with the Australian space does not cease at the point of walking in the Australian city but transcends it to concretize in her attempt to fuse with the space. This is exemplified in her recourse to it in one of her psychically critical moments: "I opened my eyes and turned my head to witness the glass doors being slowly kissed alive by the sunlight. The oak tree stood tall and solid with leaves that were rusty brown and crinkled around the edges. […] I lay on the futon for a while, willing the grand oak to give me some of its strength" (159). By picturing the doors as "kissed alive by the sunlight," Kamini does not simply personify the sun as a cosmic component of space, endowing it with a life of its own, but bestows on it a reinvigorating power. This restorative power of space is not confined to the sunlight but is also possessed by the oak. More particularly, the imagery which the narrator engrafts portrays the oak as a source of life in the sense that the adjectives used to describe it, "tall," "solid," and "grand," and set in contradistinction to the dry and frail backdrop surrounding it entrench the oak as a prototype of strength, resilience, and indifference to the losses of life encountering it and symbolized by the "dead" leaves it has lost. It is no wonder then that Kamini voices her earnest desire to acquire some of the oak's re-enlivening strength so that she could surmount her own psychological losses. This desire translates, hence, her will to merge with space through appropriating the psychologically curative power of its elements and, by implication, her identification with it. In the same vein, Kamini perceives the Australian space as a mirror image of her own psyche, that is, as an organism whose existence moves hand in hand with hers as if they were one entity: “Rain drops, snow flakes, ashes, leaves – emblems of a passage between heaven and earth? The sight of the falling leaves mesmerized me because it felt like they fell for me; someone for whom time had become suspended, like a kite caught, torn, snared in an oak tree, its strings now intimately entwined with the upper branches” (159-160). The symbolism implemented in this portrayal of the Australian space symptomatizes Kamini’s diasporic identity as it simulates the latter’s distinctive ambivalence and liminality**.** But before identifying the spatial elements which embody her ambivalence and diasporicity, Kamini acknowledges once again the reinvigorating power of this space. Specifically, the “rain drops,” “snow flakes,” “ashes,” and “leaves” on which she is riveted are, in one way or another, tropes of life. In other words, while the raindrops and snowflakes derive from water which represents a source of life and while the leaves pertain to the cyclical life of trees, the ashes foretell a restoration following perishing. Subsequent to this underscoring of the restorative power of space is Kamini’s reference to the parallelisms between this milieu and her own self. The “passage between heaven and earth” bespeaks her multiple crossings between the Fijiindian and Australian borders and between the past and the present, pointing, therefore, to her existential state of in-betweenness and liminality. Kamini’s question can be then interpreted as an assumption that the revitalizing power of the Australian space has led her to surmount her identity crisis by becoming cognizant of the manifold components making up her ambivalent and liminal diasporicity. More significantly, her fascination with the falling leaves, which seem as though they fall for her, evinces her belief that this Austral space is involved in a cosmic movement which is congruous with her psychological movement. In this sense, the falling leaves correspond to Kamini's psychic crises, yet the future life inherent in them prognosticates her contingent psychological rebirth. In a nutshell, space becomes a territorial narrative of Kamini's psyche and identificatory itinerary. At last, Kamini's disclosure that she is suspended spatially, through the simile of the kite, and temporally is but an acknowledgement of her in-betweenness and ambivalence which once again testify to her diasporic identity and to her internalization of a Janus-faced relationship to the Fijian home space and the Australian host space, the latter being embodied in the oak with which the kite is intertwined. All in all, the symbolism latent in this passage indicates that the Australian space is no longer distant from Kamini but has rather become part of the hyphen-identity underlying her self as the in-betweenness and liminality unearthed through this symbolism evidence that Kamini is ambivalently crisscrossing the Fijiindian and the Australian lines of her identity.

Drawing a comparison between *Voices on the Wind* and *Home after Dark*, one can notice the difference in their approach to the Australian hostland. It is crystal clear that Eva is unwavering in her identification with Australia, for while she questions at the very beginning of the novel her Lebanese-South African roots, she carries out her Aussieness without a shadow of a doubt. Nevertheless, Australia as a space and as a society remains almost absent in the narrative; it recedes into the background of Eva's Lebanese-South African discourse. As opposed to Yazbek's narrative, Nandan devotes a considerable part of her novel to foreground her protagonist's relationship with the Australian space. This difference can be rationalized by the fact that, spurred by her psychological experience of nowhere but Australia, Eva takes her Aussieness for granted as an inherent part of her selfhood, whereas Kamini's identification with Australia is drastically problematized by her enmeshment in other spaces, i.e. Fiji and India, and by her psychic preoccupation and identification with these. Accordingly, her identification with Australia necessitates a narrative negotiation of the intricacies of her migratory status in this host space.

3.2. Hybridity as a Dialogic Site

Alongside the most eminent and pivotal concepts that come to the surface when addressing the groundwork of “diaspora,” the notion of “hybridity” is a focal concern of diasporists, for it is identified as a “new cultural politics” in the diaspora context and as “an evocative term for the formation of identity” (Kalra et al. 70, 71). In this sense, hybridity becomes a discursive mechanism of diasporic identity configuration and is particularly enmeshed with the concept of culture. In fact, in its most contemporary and “realist” usage expounded in the works of the pioneering diaspora scholars Gilroy, Hall, Chambers, Clifford, and Bhabha, hybridity describes “all sorts of things to do with mixing and combination in the moment of cultural exchange” within the migratory scene (70-71). In more specific terms, it is the *process* of cultural negotiation and mixing wherein “the diasporic arrivals adopt aspects of the host cultures and rework, reform and reconfigure this in production of a new hybrid culture or ‘hybrid identities’” (71). As such, hybridity becomes a negotiation of the cultural aspects of the home and host cultures, leading to the formation of a mixed third. This is the case of Kamini who, being a nomad crossing and re-crossing three territorial locations, aggregates within her selfhood her Indian ancestral cultural legacy, as has been formerly expatiated, and an assortment of Western cultural values that pertain to the Australian cultural background within which she has been raised after her family’s post-coup departure from Fiji, laying the foundation for a culturally hybrid identity.

From the very outset, Kamini makes it crystal clear that her diasporic identity is delimited by Australian coordinates since not only has she been perceived by her grandmother as “more westernized” (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 23), but she also claims that “[w]hen [she] returned to [her] childhood city eighteen years later – Suva – [she] was a different person […] Aussified” (24). Being perceived by herself as well as by others as westernized attests to Kamini’s identification with the Western culture, yet what is more intriguing is her claim that she is “Aussified” rather than “Aussie.” This linguistic difference points out that she has not inherently acquired “Aussieness,” but has rather been involved, in her diasporic position as a Fijiindian migrant in Australia, in a *process* of negotiation and transformation whereby she has “reworked” and “reconfigured” her identity, resulting in the Bhabhan cultural newness, i.e. hybridity. Aside from her straightforward acknowledgment of her new Aussieness, Kamini’s conducts and convictions reveal her Western cultural affiliations that exist at once in opposition to and in conjunction with her traditional Indian cultural values. Such a cultural predilection is foregrounded in the novel the very moment Kamini is introduced as having an Australian husband. This fact substantiates that she defies her ancestral cultural legacy which hinges on the tradition of arranged marriages and opts instead for the Western cultural value of utter autonomy and freedom of choice of her future partner. Kamini’s unwavering clinging to such an “Aussified” cultural belief is further upheld when, in response to her aunt’s numerous questions about Gavin, she provides an equivocal answer which praises her husband’s virtues and conceals his social deficiencies, their connubial problems, and the likelihood of a failing marriage, justifying such an insincere answer through her claim, “I wanted her to have a good impression of him and ultimately to respect my choice” (34). Kamini’s rationalization gives way to her utmost concern with proving her personal identity and autonomy and to her downright repudiation of the culturally-taken-for-granted family encroachment on her *own* life choices, no matter how flawed these are. This cultural way of being is more or less profusely explored in Akhil’s *The Bollywood Beauty* where the Aussified Fijiindian protagonist Kesh is struggling all the time to evade family gatherings and any conversation with her traditional parents so as to corroborate her individuality and avert any interference in or any questioning of her privacy, freedom, and liberal lifestyle. Further, Nandan’s narrator hints at her Aussie cultural stance as she becomes sentient of her deflection from her traditional Indian culture: “It was midday already. I emerged from our tomb guilty of having overslept. […] As I fastened the lock of our front door, I caught our Gujerati neighbor watching me, probably thinking, 'These people are strange… […] And the wife! I never see the wife go to the market. What does that poor white husband eat all day?'" (87). Kamini's ability to read her Indian neighbor's thoughts evidences her advanced awareness of the cultural precepts shaping the traditional Indian culture. The latter presupposes that a wife should be obsequious to her husband, idealizing him and subserviently tending to his needs to the degree of worship (Lannoy 103). Nonetheless, Kamini's indifference to live up to these cultural expectations reveals her deliberate un-performativity of these and her embrace instead of a different, if not discrepant altogether, cultural flow – Western. Put differently, her internalization of the Western feminist and egalitarian values leads her to select the values which best suit her career and inclinations and which are dictated by her circumstances and to place her personal achievement ahead of any familial commitment. Such a cultural conviction is buttressed in the novel by the reversal of the household gender roles between Kamini and Gavin:

> I gritted my teeth with irritation. The day had been long, the students uninterested in Coetzee and I was hungry. No dinner had been cooked or even started.
>
> "I'll get something from town, what do you feel like?"
>
> "Gavin, we can't keep doing that. It's expensive and unhealthy. Can you cook something?"
>
> "Okay, just give me half an hour, I'll cook pasta."
>
> "Pasta!" I rolled my eyes. "Not again!" "I'm hungry now Gavin, I've been working all day, can't you stop that stupid bloody [video] game!" (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 102)

This conversation, along with Kamini's desperate thought, "if only [people] knew that I was the one who supported him financially" (78), attests to the reversal of the social roles allotted to each gender in the Indian and Fijian cultures[27] wherein men are supposed to work and financially support their families, whereas women's roles are confined to cooking and taking care of the household responsibilities. In Kamini's marital institution, however, it is she who financially provides for the family, while Gavin, unemployed, addicted to video games, and blaming all his failures on depression, assumes the task of cooking, an equation which will be obviously derided and stigmatized in the Indian cultural imaginary. This demonstrates that Kamini rejects the values of her traditional patriarchal culture and internalizes instead the Western cultural codes of gender equality, feminine social agency, and the flexibility of gender-constructed social differentials according to what circumstances dictate. Correspondingly, it can be claimed that Kamini's hyphenated and hybrid identity and cultural border-crossing mobility consolidates her agency and self-fulfillment. This is precisely what Pande expounds when she broaches the implications of the diasporic experience for Indian women: "the process of migration and economic self-dependency give them an opportunity to assert independence, and redefine roles and perceptions of the self. […] The space of the 'hyphen' often gives them a freedom for self-exploration and deliberation to conceive new identities and move beyond the fixed definitions of femininity" (1-2). In line with this, Kamini's migratory journey with her family to Australia has nurtured her intellectual outlook with a Western feminist ideology and has liberated her from the shackles of Indian – Fijiindian – patriarchy, contributing to the formation of a hybrid cultural identity, one straddling Hindu cultural rituals and Aussie liberal fundamentals.

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[27] Both indigenous Fijian and Fijiindian cultures are conceived of as patriarchal systems which operate in accordance with the traditional gender roles. In the traditional Fijian cultural institution, for instance, Fijian women "are rarely expected to have full-time jobs or do things for themselves." In the same fashion, many of their Fijiindian counterparts, influenced to a great extent by their Indian ancestral cultural legacy, "carry particular social expectations within their communities as subordinates to their husbands" (Evason).

In addition, this cultural hybridity is further mobilized through the intersection of Christianity and Hinduism in Kamini's negotiation of her ontological status. It may be worth mentioning that this religious intertwinement is indeed a postcolonial hybrid concoction between a religion which has been long deemed as a "colonial" discursive mechanism – Christianity – and an ancestral religion – Hinduism –, that is, between a religion representative of the West and another epitomic of the Indian ancestral homeland. Hence, by identifying with both, Kamini is occupying a “religious space of the hyphen.” This fluctuating movement between the Christian and the Hindu boundaries suffuses Kamini’s narrative. At one point, she discloses her Christianity when recalling the times she spent with her *Nani*: “She [*Nani*] was relieved […] at the thought that at least we were nominal Christians” (Nandan, *Home after Dark* 112). Yet, at another point, as has been elucidated, she does not only express her fascination with the Hindu rituals but participates in them as well. This inclination for the two religions bespeaks Kamini’s double allegiance to both and alludes to the religious hybridity underlying her selfhood. This idea is underlined by Kamini through her devotion of two whole passages in her narrative to evoke the same occasion but in two different religious contexts. On the one hand, Kamini meticulously describes the Hindu practices framing the funeral of her Fijiindian relative *Barki Amma* (114-117). On the other hand, she depicts the religious atmosphere prevailing in the church during the funeral of her friend’s sister (163-166). Again, such a religious doubleness marking Kamini’s narrative discourse corresponds to her identification with both faiths. Still, her pondering on the apparition of the Hindu goddess Kali at the instant when she is saying her vows in church (161) symbolizes her ambivalent existence between the Western religious paradigm and the Hindu pattern of worship. On this account, it can be deduced that this religious co-existence in Kamini’s spiritual self-positioning mirrors the religious cross-pollination defining her diasporic location.

On the whole, it can be extrapolated that the two diasporic literary works under analysis involve a multiplex setting which at once alternates two temporal frames, the past and the present, and crosses three spaces, what has been termed “the grandmotherland,” the homeland and the hostland. However, the way each protagonist approaches each of these spaces is what draws a line of difference between the two novels. On the one hand, Kamini succeeds in re-establishing an organic bond with the Indian grandmotherland through her physical and psychological journeys to it, with the Fijian homeland through her personal memories of her past in Fiji, and with the Australian hostland through her negotiation of space and culture. On the other hand, in Yazbek's novel, Kamini's counterpart, Eva, who is firmly rooted in Australia, manages to establish an affinity with her Lebanese grandmotherland and her mother's South African homeland only by dint of postmemory and dialogue with the ancestral past wherein these are constructed in social and cultural terms rather than in spatial terms. In this regard, the degree of attachment to space varies from one protagonist to the other. At a time when Kamini internalizes the three spaces as intrinsic markers of her identity, Eva seems more ingrained in Australia which she elevates into her "home," experiencing the grandmotherland and the homeland as "second-hand" experiences. Not only this, but by the logic of diasporic movement, it is obvious that, in Yazbek's novel, Lebanon is the grandmotherland, South Africa the homeland, and Australia the hostland. But when taking Eva's mixed origin, being of a Lebanese-South African mother and an Australian father, these three labels – the grandmotherland, the homeland, and the hostland – are problematized as the following query may rise: Is Australia, as her father's lineage implies, her homeland, or is it, as her mother's family line suggests, her hostland? The complexity of the situation is probably deliberately devised by Yazbek to highlight the problematic nature of a diasporic identity eviscerated from its binary tradition and predicated instead on a multiplicity of settings. But what can be undoubtedly claimed is that Australia, be it a homeland or a hostland, is Eva's *home* and dwelling as it has become to Kamini.

This multiplicity of settings in the two novelistic discourses problematizes but still revisits and revolutionizes the concept of diasporic identity in Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures by constructing a new and intricate model of diasporic identification. In this groundwork, *Voices on the Wind* and *Home after Dark* emerge as paradigmatic and prototypal diasporic works which move beyond the traditional, rigorous mode of identity and invest their narratives with concepts that contravene the myths of purity and fixity. More particularly, when it comes to their configuration of diasporic identity, both works are identical in their attempt to render it as located in the sites of hybridity and of the hyphen. Probably, the most conspicuous evidence of such endeavor is their fluctuation between three different spaces, societies, and cultures, inevitably generating identificatory matrices of liminality, in-betweenness, and border crossings. Nonetheless, while Nandan's narrative is much riveted on incarnating diasporic identity as molded through the concept of hybridity, especially through the fluid mixing and combination of cultural, religious, historical, and spatial attributes from the Fijian, Indian, and Australian backgrounds, Yazbek is more prone to zero in on the processes of transformation and negotiation. In actuality, by the end of the novel, neither Lily, as an early diasporan, nor Eva, as a contemporary one, is the same character that the reader encounters at the prefatory pages of the novel, which points to their narrative construction as round and dynamic personae. Along with the character of the protagonists, the narratorial instantiation of the concept of "double consciousness" and of the continuity and discontinuity of the past evinces Yazbek's sharp focus on the processes of transformation and negotiation in identity formation. In this sense, the author succeeds in entrenching a generative diasporic identity through her presentation not of a fixed pattern of identity but rather of identities in flux. To put it succinctly, marking a revolutionary movement which deflects from the classical conceptualization of diaspora as a mourning of the separation and break from the homeland and champions it instead as a procreative site for hybrid and liberatory identities, *Voices on the Wind* and *Home after Dark* creatively go beyond the dualistic tradition marking the diasporic writing and contrive their path-breaking triadic model of identification.

Part Three

The Transcultural Self:

A Post-Postmodern Paradigm of Identity

With the unprecedented upsurge, in the new global world, of mobility trends as neonomadism, transnationalism, and neocosmopolitanism which champion the postmodern conditions of cultural mobility, transnational border crossing, dispatriation, flexible citizenship, and detachment from national and ethnic formations, the attempt to approach the issues of identity and the politics of location, against these global backdrops, in the light of "the migrant/exile syndrome" proves to be uncongenial. It is this inapplicability of the traditional postcolonial, diasporic, and exilic outlooks in such contexts that has led to the emergence of a new vantage point in literary and cultural studies: the transcultural perspective. However, the term "transcultural" *per se* is problematic, for its "voguish" newness has led to a common tendency among scholars to loosely and randomly use the term to designate any type of cultural mishmash, be it "hybrid," "intercultural," "crosscultural," "transnational," or "cosmopolitan," eviscerating it as such of its signification and essence. Given the vagueness attached to the term, it is of utmost necessity to delineate its contours as a discrete concept, mode of identification, and analytical tool, that is, to elaborately *define* it in Brian Smith's sense of definition: "to define is not to finish, but to start. To define is not to confine, but to create something to refine – and eventually redefine. To define, finally, is not to destroy but to construct for the purpose of useful reflection" (B. Smith 33).

In point of fact, three remarkable conceptualizations can be pinpointed in the history of transcultural theories, each marked by the coinage of a new derivative of the term "transcultural": transculturation, transculturality, and transculture. The first, coined by the Cuban anthropologist Fernando Ortiz in 1940, indicates "the process of mutual – even if asymmetrical – cultural influences and fusions between so called "peripheral" and colonizing cultures" (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 21). This implies that rather than involving a process of assimilation of the colonized cultures within the colonizing cultures, transculturation consists of an *active* cultural exchange on both sides of the colonial system.

However, being criticized for its perpetuation of the dichotomy of domination and subordination, of dominant colonizing cultures and subaltern colonized cultures, which the very transcultural approach seeks to transcend, transculturation gives way to a new de-polarized concept – transculturality. In fact, introduced by the German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch, the term “transculturality” is deployed to designate the view whereby cultures are conceived of as invariably involving cultural permeations which go beyond the binarism inherent in “transculturation” and contravene the classical view of cultures as discrete, homogeneous, and self-enclosed entities (Dagnino, “Transculturalism” 4). At the end of this conceptual sequence emerges the construct of “transculture” coined by the Russian cultural theorist Mikhail Epstein whose theorization of the transcultural condition is probably the most overarching, intricate, and influential of all. More particularly, Epstein implements the term “transculture” to point to “the site of interaction among all existing and potential cultures […]. It is a continuous space in which unrealized, potential elements are no less meaningful than ‘real’ ones” (Epstein, *After the Future* 299). More significantly, transculture represents, in Epstein’s view, an existential state at the “crossroads of cultures” and a mode of identity formation wherein individuals “find themselves feeling outside the ethnic, racial, sexual, ideological, and other limitations imposed by the culture into which they were born” (Dagnino, “Transculturalism” 6). Accordingly, developing a transcultural consciousness, for Epstein, absolves individuals from the constraints of a given culture and from the fixity immanent in its conventions and modes of identity formation (Dagnino, “Comparative Literary Studies” 5). In other words, Epstein posits that transculture entails processes of individual cultural transformation, development, confluences, and transgressions between all the cultures yet calls at the same time for a “self-distancing, self-estrangement, and self-criticism of one’s own cultural identities and assumptions” and for the “freedom of every person to live on the border of one’s ‘inborn’ cultures or beyond it” (Epstein, “Transculture” 334). This suggests that transcultural identity can be viewed as a counterdiscourse to the essentialist, homogenizing, and exclusionary patterns of fixed cultural identities and as a mode of identity formation which contests identification through the classical modalities of nation or imagined community, ethnicity, and monoculture.

Endued with such signification, the transcultural approach emerges as distinctly different from other cultural and literary approaches to mobility-related concepts. From a cultural stance, Dagnino, as one of the most prolific contemporary theorists in transcultural studies, establishes a clear-cut distinction between the transcultural condition, transnationalism, cosmopolitanism, and intercultural and crosscultural combinations and mixes. On the one hand, she postulates that rather than typifying a cultural dimension as transculturalism, the term "transnationalism" encapsulates a quintessentially social rhetoric as it accents the study of "social identity formation and the creation of new 'transnational social spaces'" ("Transcultural Writers and Transcultural Literature" 2). On the other hand, she presents "cosmopolitanism" as a strongly politicized concept and as a political ideology, for "the 'neo-imperialist' ideology of capitalist globalization," the utmost "idealization of the cosmopolitan virtues of Northern states," "the despicable resurgence of Western universalist attitudes," and "the expression of an elitist, postmodern existence" are all variegated implications which different parties propound in the debate over cosmopolitanism, symptomatizing the political purview of the term (2-3). Aside from these two notions, Dagnino sets the "transcultural" characterization in contradistinction to the critical labels "inter-cultural" and "cross-cultural." While the term "transcultural" incarnates dynamic processes of cultural permeations, hybridizations, exchanges, border crossings, and confluences, the words "cross-cultural" and "inter-cultural" are rooted in the traditional anthropological and cultural frameworks which perceive cultures as distinct, self-enclosed, and separate units (3), "thereby failing to acknowledge the fact that in an increasingly interconnected world, cultures are increasingly intertwined and people often constitute their cultural identities by drawing on more than one culture" (Schulze-Engler xii).

From a literary perspective, it is of great importance to compare the precepts of the transcultural literary approach to the tenets of the diasporic or postcolonial approach which is commonly enacted in the critical analyses of contemporary diasporic literatures. First, a comparison between postcolonial criticism and transcultural criticism unveils that the former remains "obsessively" tied to such traditional conceptual molds as cultural difference, subalternity, postcolonial hybridity, and the subversive in its perception of cultural encounters, which mires it in "unbridgeable cultural difference" (Helff, "Shifting Perspectives" 78). As such, it problematically promotes "'an alterity industry' which simply cannot do justice to the transcultural dimension of culture" (78) and seems to contradict the global cultural state of affairs. On the contrary, the transcultural approach to culture celebrates and acknowledges limitless processes of cultural confluences and overlaps. Second, as opposed to transculturalism which does not enhance "minoritarian, diasporic, or dissident" cultural formations, postcolonialism mires cultural identities in such classical dichotomies as colonizer/colonized, center/periphery, and dominant/subordinate (Schulze-Engler xi), which preserves hierarchical relationships and fails to represent the postmodern border-crossing condition. Third, transcultural literature adopts a typically novel existential perspective in the sense that, through its singular adoption of the topos of dispatriation which denotes a process of distantiation yet not severance from one's homeland and home culture, it advocates a "relaxed, neonomadic attitude" with regard to the conundrums of "displacement, rootlessness, nationality, cultural allegiance, and identity" and an extrication from the concomitant discomforting feelings of nostalgia, loss, alienation, unbelonging, and disintegration (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers and Transcultural Literature" 8-9). In other words, enacting a dispatriated and detached existential perspective, transcultural writers and protagonists acquire the prerogative of being at home and of "fitting in" everywhere unlike their diasporic counterparts who remain trapped in the homeland/hostland or home culture/host culture dichotomy and in the pathos of homesickness and displacement. At last, when examining diasporic criticism, one notices the diasporic subjects' disposition towards a "strong collective sense of identity/belonging" as opposed to the transcultural subjects' "individualized (or personalized) sense of identity/belonging" (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 9). Put differently, the diasporic condition entails a feeling of national affiliation to an imagined community or of cultural affiliation to a given minority or ethnic group, which bestows on it a collective dimension of identification. Contrariwise, the transcultural condition centers on the characters' individual, infinite journeys of identity formation and transformation and their individual choices and crossings in the process.

Yet, as Dagnino claims, the transcultural condition as this culturally open-ended, decentered, relaxed, and individualized approach to identity is a rare asset, a privileged location which only a tiny minority is "experiencing […], willing to experience […] or ready to experience" given its dependency on the subjects' educational and socio-economic backgrounds ("Transculturalism" 7). In accordance with this, Helff confirms that "transculturality is a very recent concept within literary studies" ("Shifting Perspectives" 82). No wonder, then, that very few are the migration literary works that embrace a paradigmatically transcultural approach in the strict sense of the term "transcultural." Such is the case of mobility literatures in Australia where most of the writers, as has been exemplified through the Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literary works under study, opt for a diasporic or exilic existence for their protagonists. Nevertheless, few authors have undertaken the delicate task of exploring the transcultural mode of identity building in their oeuvres. In this context emerge the Arab-Australian novelist Randa Abdel-Fattah and the Indian-Australian writers Rashida Murphy and Suneeta Peres da Costa, respectively with their works *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, *The Historian's Daughter*, and *Saudade*, who contrive transcultural protagonists whose identities cannot be "squeezed" into a diasporic or postcolonial frame, urging the deployment of a new, conceptual approach which corresponds to their individualized patterns of cultural mobility, i.e. transcultural criticism.

Chapter 1: Transcultural Identity in Anglophone Arab-Australian Literature

As has been formerly pointed, Randa Abdel-Fattah is the most prolific Arab-Australian author, and to this label should be added her characterization as a fluid and dynamic writer when it comes to her literary production in the sense that each of her novels assumes a particular peculiarity. Being born to a Palestinian father and an Egyptian mother, growing up in a country whose culture is entangled in its "racial history and present-day racism," "trying to make sense of negotiating [her] Australian, Muslim and Arabic identities and having that sort of understanding of [her] parents' separate but connecting experiences of immigration to this country" (Abdel-Fattah, "Randa Abdel-Fattah" 194) are all intricate experiences which have endowed Abdel-Fattah with a multilayered identity, the fragments of which are incrementally uncovered in each novel. In this respect, while her novel *Where the Streets Had a Name* translates the exilic existence which her Palestinian community undergoes, her novel *Ten Things I Hate about Me* accounts for the diasporic experience that many Muslim Arab women face in Australia. The latter work follows the Lebanese-Australian protagonist's struggle to suppress everything Arab about her and to appear "as Aussie as possible," withdrawing in the meanwhile to complicit silence in response to her classmates' racist utterances, and ends with her ultimate reconciliation with her Arabness and her identity. Indeed, the novel's thematic concern with the subalternity of the protagonist, with her clinging to cultural anonymity through her apparent assimilation, with the binarism between the space of school where *she* as *Jamie* surfaces and the spaces of home and of her Arabic school where *she* as *Jamila* emerges, and with the fluctuation between her allegiances to her Lebanese Muslim identity and to the Western culture substantiates the diasporicity of its protagonist's experience. In her latest novel *The Lines we Cross* – also known in Australia as *When Michael Met Mina* –, Abdel-Fattah diverts from the exilic/diasporic tradition and chooses instead to address the migratory experience from a typically politico-ideological outlook which involves two clashing parties: asylum seekers and racist, Islamophobic anti-refugee movements. These are respectively epitomized by her two main personae Mina, the traumatized yet existentially agential and firm Afghani refugee, and Michael, who echoes the political and ideological agenda of a racist and Islamophobic family and society and who unlearns these myths when encountering Mina.

Nonetheless, of all her novels, Abdel-Fattah's debut work *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, which pertains to the young adult fiction genre, remains the most popular and resonant, a status which can be justified by its *cultural* expressivity, *performativity*, and originality. Upon its publication in 2005, the novel performed an act of resistance as it introduced a groundbreaking rendition of the Muslim, Arab woman in Australia as a free, autonomous, and agential individual, deconstructing the prevalent clichés and essentialist discourses on the Arab and Muslim women as oppressed and subordinate. In this context, the author herself elucidates that through "'myth-busting,' through 'breaking down stereotypes' and 'bridge-building,' and through 'humanizing the Other,'" the novel "demystif[ied] and debunk[ed] prevailing stereotypes and provide[d] a narrative that simply had not been given a platform before" (Abdel-Fattah, "The Double Bind" 100-101). On the connotative level, these features of deconstructive and agential performativity symptomatize, as will be elaborated in the coming pages, the transcultural condition and, thus, authenticate, along with other attributes, the leitmotif of transculturality in Abdel-Fattah's novel. On the denotative level, one notices, at first sight, that the novel is an assemblage of individual portraits consistently painted in colorful cultural, religious, and social hues: the Australian-Muslim-Palestinian young protagonist – Amal –, her Aussie friends, one obsessed with the Western body standards, the other pertaining to a rigorously traditional Japanese background, her Muslim ethnic friends – one a devout Turkish Muslim, the other a fashion-conscious girl born to a Paki father and to a white, British hippie mother – , her liberal Jewish classmate, the Greek Orthodox Christian old neighbor, and the uncle who went with his wife so far as to change their names to become "Aussie." With all this congruous and confluent assortment of cultural portraits, *Does My Head Look Big in This?* cannot be characterized but as a literary repository of transcultural identity, which justifies its selection to be the object of analysis and interpretation in this part of the thesis. As a matter of fact, the transcultural discourse in the novel manifests in the process of identity formation enacted by the main protagonist Amal as the latter develops a transcultural sense of identity through her negotiation of multiplex and polyhedric dynamics of agency and of transcultural constitution[28].

1. Transcultural Agency: The Muslim Heroine Speaks Back

As has been adduced, one of the key tenets that differentiate transculturality from diasporicity is its individualized reality. Put differently, transculture/ality[29] is a highly individual form of consciousness and mode of identification in the sense that it shifts its scope of focus from national, cultural, and ethnic allegiances to *individuals*. That is to say, transculturalism diverts its purview from the examination of how cultural, ethnic, or national affiliations shape the *locations* and sense of belonging of migrant subjects to the demystification of how *individual* subjects actively proceed in their selection and negotiation of the sine qua nons they *will* to aggregate in their identities. As such, transculture does not only acknowledge the transcultural subjects' individuality but also offers them the empowering abilities of agency and choice. In line with this, Dagnino posits that "[t]he focus on individual agency and the right to a personal cultural *choice* and allegiance," "plural affiliations and multiple, multi-layered identities" are paramount traits that mark the contemporary transcultural condition ("Transculturalism" 5, 13; my emphasis). Accordingly, in Abdel-Fattah's novel, the protagonist's transcultural identity crystallizes as she actively appropriates individual agency. This latter attribute is not a mere asset which Amal enjoys but is a rather convoluted process which hinges on further discursive processes, namely choice and the deconstruction of hegemonic centers.

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[28] "Transcultural constitution" is one of the new yet embryonic key concepts, as most of the transcultural precepts are, in transcultural studies and refers to "the ability to negotiate between different *cultural* identities," depending on one's capacities, attitudes and backgrounds (Dagnino, "Transculturalism" 8; my emphasis).

[29] The structure "transculture/ality" is used to point to the common interchangeability within transcultural studies between the terms "transculture" and "transculturality" when signifying a transcultural mode of identity formation, a transcultural tool of critical inquiry, or a transcultural individual aesthetic or literary creation.

From the very beginning of the novel to its very end, the sixteen-year-old Australian-Muslim-Palestinian Amal holds a firm grip on her agency by asserting the individuality and autonomy of her choices. Without a shadow of a doubt, the most momentous concretization of her agential choice in the novel is her decisive resolution to wear the hijab or head scarf, which positions her in a head-on confrontation with a racist society and an elitist and a rigorously standardized Melbourne school. When the thought of wearing the veil dawns upon her, Amal imparts to herself, "I was ready to wear the hijab" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 2). The simple and terse structure of the claim reflects the unwavering determination it conveys and rules out any overtone of uncertainty, transmuting Amal's decision into an individual choice which stems from a sincere conviction. This impression is further corroborated by her depiction of her inner response to her decision: "I feel like my passion and conviction in Islam are bursting inside me and I want to prove to myself that I'm strong enough to wear a badge of my faith" (6). Amal's statement is intended to rebut the Western mythical conception of the veil as an emblem of subjugation of the Muslim woman:

> A distinct narrative representing the Muslim woman abides in Western culture today. This narrative has formed a central part of the Western discourse on Islam ever since the eighteenth century. The expository tenets of the narrative are 'that Islam was innately and immutably oppressive to women, that the veil and segregation epitomized that oppression […].'" (Kahf 1)

Through her recourse to the words "passion" and "conviction," Amal dismantles the perception of the veil as oppressive and reveals it instead as a personal choice that translates a gratifying sense of psychological certainty and of psychic rootedness in Islam. Not only this, but her description of her hijab as "a badge of [her] faith" exudes her desire to acquire, like a red badge of courage, an identificatory marker that publicizes her religious pride and spiritual triumph. Hence, all these positive feelings associated with Amal's decision to wear the veil evidence that she is "performing" an agential choice. Besides, the character of Amal's choice exponentially ascends from an initial "conviction" and "passion" to a dramatic defiance, the climatic point of her avowal of her personal choice, as she leads a heated conversation with her parents apropos of her decision:

> 'We're proud of you. But it's a big decision, honey, and you're not at Hidaya any more. It's a different environment at McCleans. It might not even be allowed.'
>
> 'Yeah right! How can they stop me? It's up to me whether I want to or not!' […] the thought that somebody else might take that choice away from me is energizing something inside me. Call it what you want. Defiance. Pigheadedness. It's burning me to think that I might not have the right to choose. (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 21)
>
> […]
>
> '[…] I want that identity. You know, that symbol of my faith. I want to know what it means to be strong enough to walk around with it on and stick up for my right to wear it.' (22)

In this passage, not only do the parents' feelings of anxiety and worry in response to Amal's decision establish a juxtaposition between the Islamic school which Amal used to attend and the elitist Grammar school she is attending now, which insinuates the risk of othering and the exclusionary attitudes she might encounter in an environment where her religious difference will readily single her out, but they also dismantle the Western stereotype of the Muslim parents' coercion of their daughters into veiling. More significantly, Amal's question and her subsequent emphatic declaration, "It's up to me whether I want to or not!," translate her utter resentment and repudiation of any attempt to constrain her freedom of choice and suggest her reappropriation of the agency which the Western feminist metanarrative has expropriated from Muslim women under the pretext that "Muslim women need to be liberated and rescued by the 'enlightened' West" from the oppression of Islam (Abdel-Fattah, "The Double Bind" 104). Amal's resentment culminates in the feeling of defiance which ignites her inner determination to proceed further in the enactment of her choice and represents an act of resistance to "being decided for" or "spoken on behalf of." It follows that her defiance along with the willingness incarnated in the anaphoric expression "I want" lays a strong claim to her inalienable right to choose her own religious identity and to select the symbols that best betoken her religiosity and reflects her performativity of an individual act of agency. Further, it is worthy of notice that Amal affiliates her ability to choose to the transcultural realm when she discloses to her friend's mother: "I'm not interested in culture if it clashes with Islam […] I'm picking and choosing what I like and what I don't like" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 312). Through this utterance, Amal confirms that her identity configuration is predicated on a process of choice and selection which in its turn is framed by her religious propensity. In other words, her identity formation is not a random process consisting of a *passive* mixing of cultural components but is rather a systematic pattern centered on an *active* choice of the cultural components that correspond to her religious affiliations and beliefs, which echoes the definition of the concept of transculture: "transculture tends to move the focus of cultural identity from the collective to the individual consciousness, where human beings are seen as individuals able to dynamically select from a myriad of different cultural offerings what best suits them depending on the contexts and the circumstances" (Dagnino, "Transculturalism" 6). Therefore, Amal's choice becomes an agential act that symptomatizes her transculturality.

In addition, transculture as an agential mode of identity formation escapes any attempt to fix the individual identity or to pigeonhole it into essentialist slots or reductionist categories and advocates instead a decentered pattern of identity formation. On this account, the transcultural condition is transmuted into a decentered venue wherein the dichotomy between centers and peripheries is nullified and wherein "every periphery can […] become the center and vice versa, in a constant game of construction and deconstruction where it is impossible to identify any longer a single, permanent and hegemonic center" (Dagnino, "Comparative Literary Studies" 11). This implies that resistance to and disruption of hegemonic discourses and centers is an integral cause to which transculturality seems committed. Additionally, transculture, as Epstein extols it, is perceived as a liberatory identity which absolves the individual from the "unconscious predispositions and prejudices of the 'native,' naturalized cultures" (Epstein, "Transculture" 327). Accordingly, it can be inferred that its battle of liberation from the "prison" of one's culture presupposes a liberation from the prison of traditional hegemonic cultural centers, i.e. the hegemony of ethnic, national, racial, religious, gender, and professional cultures. Therefore, transcultural identity essentially entails a disruption of the hegemonic discourses which reduce and reify one's freedom and agency. This is typified by Amal whose transcultural agency materializes in her resistance to and subversion of the hegemonic discourses that dehumanize her existence, undermine her individuality, and reduce her to travestied categories and labels, that is, of the Islamophobic and patriarchal discourses.

When it comes to Islamophobia, one of the author's fields of academic expertise, Amal refuses to occupy the position of the "victim" or the "subaltern" as displayed through her downright rejection of her teacher's advice and sympathy whenever an anti-Muslim occurrence transpires. Being an act of agency *per se*, this conduct suggests that Amal is "moving beyond" the mere mild denial of Islamophobia to its creative and active deconstruction whereby she becomes not the victim but the agent, the "speaker back." In order to carry out a transcultural deconstruction, Amal strives to disrupt the Islamophobic attempts to stabilize and essentialize the Muslim identity as a homogeneous, monolithic culture with a fixed origin and predictable patterns, appropriates the hegemonic discursive strategies, and deploys a transcultural humor. To begin with, as any other hegemonic discourse, Islamophobia homogenizes "Muslims," harping on a single, uniform version of identity among all Muslims, so as to suppress the power of their differences. Yet, the danger of such a view lies in its approach to Muslims as "a *category* of analysis" which "erase[s] Muslim women's and (men's) individuality and agency, and the socio-historical and cultural specificities of their experience" (Abdel-Fattah, "The Double Bind" 103). That's why, Amal insists on deconstructing this reductionist practice by emphasizing the individuality of Muslims, especially of Muslim women. This is instantiated when, in response to Adam's question about the hijab, she assumes a position of a deconstructive epistemic and religious expertise:

> '[…] how come it [hijab] looks different on you?'
>
> 'What do you mean?'
>
> 'Like you see some women covering their faces and other women wearing really bright material with that red paint on their hand. Are they Islamic too?'
>
> 'You mean Muslim.' […]
>
> 'Yeah they are. But every girl is going to interpret the hijab differently. It depends on their culture or their fashion sense, you know? There's no one uniform for it.' (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 66-67)

Adam's initial query mirrors his internalization of the Western reduction of Muslim women's identities into homogeneous, predictable patterns as insinuated through his surprise to Amal's un-matching and transgression of the Western representation of the hijab. In other words, his surprise emanates from his expectation of Amal's conformity to the stereotypical images of the veil which the Western propagandist media creates and disseminates. Additionally, his diction of the word "Islamic" instead of "Muslim" underlies a discursive construction of Muslim women as a "category of analysis" and as a uniformizing banner. Indeed, the label "Islamic" is heavily ideology-laden as it implies the rendering of the Muslim identity as homogeneous, fixed, and "everywhere and always the same, regardless of class, nationality, politics and location" (Williamson and Khiabany 91). However, Amal refutes such a misidentification of Muslim women by substituting the label "Islamic" with "Muslim," which liberates the Muslim identity from the discursive distortion and reification incarnated in the epithet “Islamic” and positions it in its true light. Added to this, Amal deconstructs the Islamophobic homogenization of Muslim women by astutely unveiling the “difference within sameness” which marks the experience of wearing the hijab. That is to say, she re-represents the latter process as an act of “interpretation” carried out by “every” Muslim girl. The deconstructive nature of her claim can be perceived in the discursive power of the act of interpretation, for not only is it an indication of an intellectual agency but it is more importantly an *individual* act. This transmutes the ostensibly similar process of wearing the hijab into an individualized experience shaped by every Muslim woman’s cultural and personal choices and preferences rather than as a collective experience as the Western political and ideological agendas portray it. Eventually, Amal’s last statement validates her deconstructive intentions and extricates wearing the hijab from the tropes of fixity, sameness, and homogeneity.

Furthermore, Amal’s transculturality continues to concretize every now and then in the novel through her insistence on the Muslim individuality and differences but this time through her appropriation of the same discursive strategies which nurture the Western othering of Muslims in order to deconstruct this very hegemonic discourse. This can be lucidly grasped through the dialogue between Amal and Adam wherein the latter, to the former’s resentment, endeavors to exonerate their classmate Tia, who takes advantage of every single situation to other and disparage Amal, from the label of “racism”:

> ‘[…] But, well, you can’t really blame her. It’s what she hears at home. […]’
>
> […] ‘I’d be less hyper if people would stop making up crappy excuses.’
>
> ‘It’s not an excuse! […]. It’s just, it’s obvious. You judge people on experience.’
>
> ‘Get out of here, Adam! You don’t judge *people*. We’re not a plural, or some big bloc, all acting and feeling and saying the same things. You judge individuals. Anyway, it goes both ways. I’ve got family friends who think all Anglos are drunk wife-bashers who walk around barefoot with a stubby in their hands. Or they think Anglos sit around […] rorting the dole or chucking a sickie, sculling down VBs […]’

> ‘Are you serious?’
>
> ‘Yes. Dead serious. Should I make an excuse for them? *Oh, they’re allowed to think that. After all they’ve never really had a conversation with a sober Anglo*. If it sounds so ridiculous for your background, then why doesn’t it for ours?’ (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 138-139)

In this scene, Amal construes Adam’s attempt to find an excuse for Tia’s racism as an attempt to legitimize Islamophobia and its subsidiary cultural binary of ‘us’ and ‘them’ and as an act of complicity with this hegemonic discourse. The essence of such a racist discourse is again the homogenization and stabilization of Muslim identity and the erasure of differences among the members of the Muslim communities, a hegemonic othering rhetoric to which Amal “speaks back” by rebutting the reduction of Muslims into a monolithic *crowd* and a de-individualized mass. In fact, her mere denial of the stereotypes of homogenization associated with Muslims, implicitly asserting their individuality and differences, is itself a deconstructive performativity as Haines propounds: “Typically assumed to be the product of ignorance, stereotypes are likewise assumed to be ‘solvable’ once the people who hold them are exposed to information about the culture the stereotypes otherwise denigrate” (31). Yet, of greater paramountcy is Amal’s deconstruction through the act of construction. More particularly, her deconstruction of Tia’s Islamophobia, with which Adam unconsciously complies, is enacted through her construction of an anti-Westernist or Occidentalist discourse predicated on the tropes of homogenization and de-individualization of “Anglos.” She constructs an othering discourse which misrepresents all Westerners as drunkards and as a group of lazy people, which suppresses their differences and reifies their image. However, she eventually characterizes this othering discourse as “ridiculous” in order to substantiate that her construction of such a discourse is but a deconstructionist strategy that aims at making Westerners hear echoes of their stereotypes and recognize the nonsensicality and pointlessness of their anti-Muslim discourses. In the same fashion, Amal applies this rhetorical strategy – appropriating the Western othering discursive devices – in answer to Lara, the school captain, when she asks her to deliver a speech in a forum meeting "on the topic of Islam and terrorism" after the terrorist events of Bali:

> '[…] Everybody's got loads of questions and you're the perfect one to answer them.'
>
> 'Why? Because I'm Muslim?'
>
> 'Yeah, obviously.' […]
>
> 'You're Christian, right?'
>
> '…Yeah … what's that got to do with anything?'
>
> 'Okay, well I'll give the speech if you give a speech about the Klu Klux Klan […]. They were really religious, so obviously what they did was textbook Christianity, right? […] And while we're at it, maybe somebody else could talk about the IRA. […] I'm just *dying* to understand how the Bible could allow people to throw bombs and still go to church.' […]
>
> She looks taken aback and coughs self-consciously. […] 'Lara, Muslim is just a label for them. […] It's politics. How can any religion preach something so horrific?' (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 242-243)

By singling out Amal to broach the topic of terrorism from the perspective of Islam, Lara is not only demonizing Islam, but she is also affiliating Amal with terrorism. She entrenches an Islamophobic discourse whereby she portrays Islam as preaching terrorism and dehumanizes Muslims by misrepresenting them as a terrorist threat. All the same, Amal does not remain silent before this othering discourse which misplaces her in a Manichean allegory, nor does she embrace victimhood and subalternity. On the contrary, she assumes agency and voices a counterdiscourse of resistance which dismantles Lara's politicizing and ideologizing claims. By asking Lara and others as Christians to stand for two Western terrorist organizations, the Klu Klux Klan and the IRA, and to account for their terrorism from the perspective of Christianity, Amal is using Lara's same logic and constructing a discourse which derives its structure and ethos from hers. Correspondingly, Amal deconstructs in reverse terms Lara's Islamophobia by positioning the latter in the same politicized mold in which she has been herself inserted and by making her, by implication, realize the narrow-mindedness and simplism of her approach to Muslims. Subsequently, Lara's behavioral reactions, epitomized in her nonplus and her self-conscious cough, betray her insight into her naïve judgment and into the othering processes to which she has subjected Amal, hence her ensuing apologetic statements and reconciliation with Amal (243). It may also be worth mentioning that the protagonist intermingles this deconstructive strategy with other rhetorical techniques as implied through her implementation, in the same passage, of a didactic speech through which she asserts to Lara that terrorism belongs to no religion but rather pertains to human madness. All these agential formations contribute to the ultimate generation of what can be termed "human intersubjectivity," that is, a transcultural relationship which is entrenched in purely humane terms and wherein each party involved in this bond perceives the other as a human soul which deserves dignity, empathy, and acknowledgement regardless of their racial, ethnic, social, cultural, religious, or gender differences.

Amal's agential deconstruction of Islamophobia does not stop here but goes further to crystallize in another discursive practice: transcultural humor. Indeed, a reading of Abdel-Fattah's novels unearths a prevalent implementation of humor in all of her works, even in the traumatic, exilic narrative of Hayaat in *Where the Streets Had a Name*. This insinuates that rather than being a mere narrative strategy purported to bestow a light tone on the narrative, to trigger the readers' laughter and, thus, to break the monotony of narration, Abdel-Fattah's recourse to humor is far more deliberate and functional. In point of fact, humor in its discursive and connotative sense "embodies transgression, lends itself to the study of the culturally hybrid" (Dunphy and Emig 7). That is to say, humor entails a subversion and disruption of the fixed norms and rigid categorization of identities as it entails transgressive processes of border crossing and liberation from monocultural patterns. As a result, it becomes a deconstructive tool of the fixed, traditional patterns of identity. This usage of humor is undertaken by Amal who seeks to liberate her identity from the hegemony of the Islamophobic discourse which strives to force her into a fixed, reified, and reductionist identity pattern. A case in point can be noticed in the thought that crosses her mind when she wears the hijab for the first time in her school and becomes aware of the principal's nervousness: "Too many people look at it [hijab] as though it has bizarre, uncanny powers sewn into its micro-fibres. Powers which transform Muslim girls into UCOs (Unidentified Covered Objects), which turn Muslim girls from an 'us' into a 'them.' […] As much as I would like to live a comic-book character's life, I really would rather not be treated like an UCO" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 34). The humor in Amal's statement issues from her humorous neologism of "UCOs" which bears an analogy to the acronym "UFOs" that stands for "Unidentified Flying Objects," that is, mysterious objects thought to be aliens on the Earth. On this account, the humorous language play is here intended to expose the Islamophobic discourse to which Muslim veiled girls are subjected, one which constructs them as "cultural aliens" that form a potential, threatening power. Amal goes further to exude the implications incarnated in such a neologism by indicating the binary framework which this linguistic concoction incarnates and in which Australian Muslim girls are inserted as alien Others, as identity-less *objects* whose only identifier as a category of scrutiny is their "material cover." It follows that Amal's humor is transmuted into an agential, deconstructive strategy which enhances her transculturality by exposing the hegemonic Islamophobia to which she is subjected and dismantling, by implication, any attempt to other, fix, or categorize her identity and confine it to the prison of a reified monoculture. Drawing on this, this humorous strategy can be referred to as "transcultural humor." Such a concept can be defined as a discursive mechanism and a disruptive strategy which aims at defining one's identity by interpolating a light narrative tone so as to transgress the predictable patterns that hegemonic discourses endeavor to project on it and to eschew the binary oppositions and rigorous borders between 'us' and 'them,' buttressing as such the transcultural condition. Transcultural humor, in this sense, suffuses Amal's narrative and takes shape in her astute replies, especially in her encounter with her community's reactions to her hijab. For instance, after some reluctant silence, her classmates bombard her with questions about her hijab, questions that reverberate the simplistic mindset and irrational logic on which Western stereotypes are founded, such as, “Did your parents force you?” (65), “What’s the deal with that thing on your head?”, “Doesn’t it get hot?”, “Can I touch it?” and “Do you wear it in the shower?” (66). Rather than answering these queries seriously, Amal finds herself amused at responding humorously by formulating witty responses as when she replies, “I’ve gone bald […] I’m on the Advanced Hair Program” (66). The ensuing feedback of her classmates evidences their awareness of her humor. Through her humor, Amal deliberately conveys an overtone of ridiculousness and frivolity so as to expose the Western readership to their own othering voice and to make them discern its immanent cultural simplism and reductionism, dismantling the cultural othering of Muslim girls. Moreover, transcultural humor seems a powerful strategy of resistance and agency when other dynamics fail. This is illustrated in Amal’s confrontation with her assimilated uncle Joe and his wife Mandy, whose obsession with Aussieness is typified in their distorted mimicry of Western values. Seeing Amal’s hijab for the first time, they scold her mother for forcing her into wearing it, and no matter how hard Amal utters that it is *her* “choice” and *her* “decision,” they simply “ignore” her (95-96). Consequently, Joe and Mandy do not only reiterate the Western anti-Muslim clichés, but they turn a deaf ear to Amal’s agential voice, refusing to meet a paradigm of the Muslim girl which deflects from the image of the oppressed, victimized, subjugated, and silent Muslim girl who figures in the Western media. It is only when Amal implements humor that they become silent: “‘[…] to be perfectly honest with you, I’m losing my hair. The doctor said that my hair follicles can’t withstand excessive sun exposure, and if I don’t cover up I’ll be bald at my Year Twelve graduation ceremony.’ My dad snorts with laughter. My aunt and uncle don’t look amused” (96). Amal’s humorous utterance reveals her refusal to be demoted to the position of the subaltern who, even if he/she speaks, he/she is not heard. Hence, she defies the attempt to silence her by sarcastically alluding to her uncle and his wife’s naïve logic through her humorous line of flight. In line with this, their ensuing silence and stern reaction demonstrate their consciousness of Amal’s implication and, therefore, her discursive triumph and transcultural agency.

What’s more, in the face of the Western patriarchal discourse which subjects her to a double othering, as a Muslim and as a female, Abdel-Fattah’s protagonist assumes a position not of subalternity but of powerful positionality and, therefore, disrupts this phallocentric discourse and reappropriates her agency and voice to *speak of herself* not be *spoken on behalf of*. In fact, the novel emerges as a feminist arena wherein Amal destabilizes the clichéd association of Muslim women with oppression by decentering the West and goes further, as a transcultural female, to liberate and empower herself by firmly embracing her religious identity. In this regard, it is of critical significance to advert attention to the intriguing, smooth relationship between religious identity and transculture which the narrator institutes in the novel. Generally speaking, transculturalism breaks with sundry concepts which it deems “fixed,” homogenizing,” “confining,” and “rigid” for individuals, namely the notions of “nation,” “ethnicity,” and “religion.” This thesis, nonetheless, conceives of the bond between transculture and religion in the light of *Does My Head Look Big in This?* as a mutation of the aforementioned transcultural precept in that religion, in the novel under study, is conceived of differently and can even be characterized by the label “transcultural.” By way of explanation, rather than being a restrictive or subjecting mode of being, religion in the novel emphasizes individuality and agency; it is the frame wherein the protagonist’s cultural interplays and formations operate and the guide which enables her to proceed in her transcultural constitution. In the same vein, religious identity here is more than a discourse which preaches a number of values but is an agential discourse that dismantles other hegemonic discourses and affiliates the individual both to cosmopolitan and local frameworks, that is, endows the individual with a transcultural condition.

In response to the Western metanarratives which seek to victimize and subalternize the Muslim woman by perpetuating the "Orientalist imaginings of the Muslim woman [as] invisible and silent behind the veil or in the harem" and reinforces the idea that the West is the savior and paragon of freedom (Abdel-Fattah, "The Double Bind" 104), Amal resists by decentering the very Western center which carries out such a discourse and idealizes itself as the forerunner of feminist ideals, freedom, and agency. This is illustrated in Amal's persistent efforts to assuage her Aussie friend Simone's suffering given the latter's subjection to daily denigration on the part of her mother who forces her into diets and insists on her struggle to "work on making the rest of [her] body more attractive" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 76) and given her going to extremes to match the images of "skinny" models advertised on pop culture magazines. The mother's lectures and the magazine's commodified images stand for a Western discourse which promotes a standardized, "ideal" and "uniform" image of the female body and of the concept of beauty. This institutes a patriarchal discourse which objectifies and reifies Western women's existence and reduces them into mere bodies. By zeroing in on her friend's psychological torment throughout her narrative, Amal unveils the peripheral position of Western women within the realm of the "enlightened" West and its inherent patriarchal discourse, decentering as such the Western center.

Amal's transcultural agency goes beyond the process of decentering the center to construct her religious identity as a deconstructive tool of patriarchal discourse and as a self-empowering strategy. Indeed, Amal's hijab or head scarf is elevated into a polysemous signifier which not only externalizes her religious identity but also incarnates her feminist identity. First, the hijab emerges as a feminist counterdiscourse to the male gaze as Amal writes down a list of her personal incentives and musings with regard to wearing it: "I'm sick of obsessing about my body, what guys are going to think […], and holy I am sick of worrying what people are going to think if I put on a kilo or a pimple" (7). Through her utterance, she expresses her utter refusal to be reduced into a mere bodily entity and to be subjected to the same standards which subjugate Simone, that is, the Western standards of beauty and body-image. As a result, her hijab becomes a "veil" that occults and protects her female body against the objectifying male gaze which divests women of their intellectual and psychological subjectivities. Second, the hijab as a religious symbol provides Amal with a feminine identity which is not only emphatic about her individuality and agency but is also anchored in a universal sisterhood that consolidates her identity as a Muslim and as a female. This is portrayed in a peculiar encounter which, brief as it is, reconfigures Amal's self-definition:

> While I'm walking through the food court I pass three women who are all wearing the hijab. They're huddled around a table, talking and eating ice-cream. One of them catches my eye and smiles.
>
> '*Assalamu Alaykom,'* she says, greeting me with the universal Islamic greeting, *Peace be upon you*.
>
> '*Walaykom Wassalam*,' I reply, smiling back at her. The other two girls also greet me and I reply and they all smile warmly at me. They go back to their conversation and I walk off with a big grin […]. These girls are strangers to me but I know that we all felt an amazing connection, a sense that this cloth binds us in some kind of universal sisterhood.
>
> I lie in bed that night and replay the scene over and over in my head and it puts a smile on my face every time. I'm experiencing a new identity, a new expression of who I am on the inside, but I know that I'm not alone. I'm sharing something with millions of other women around the world and it feels so exciting. (25)

In this scene which marks one of the turning points in Amal's journey of identity formation, the smiles she shares with the three women emerge as a signifier contextualized within a specific religious framework, that delimited by the Islamic greeting. This turns the "smiles" into a symbol which connotes an acknowledgement of a shared social and religious status. Socially, they share their position as women, whereas religiously speaking, they share their position as Muslims, both positions forming marginal identities in a rigorously Western patriarchal society. However, the shared recognition of these identities that bind them together and endue them with sameness lays the foundation for an anti-patriarchal mechanism of resistance and of agency: sisterhood. In the feminist context, rather than being confined to the biological sphere, sisterhood has become a powerful concept which harbors latent connotations of threatening agency and resistance to patriarchy in the sense that it basically paves the way for a "female unity" underlain by women's shared oppression and the "repression brought on by repressive ideological definitions" (A. Bennett 526). Amal is sentient of this bond as she depicts it as "an amazing connection," "a universal sisterhood" brought about by "this cloth." In this sense, the hijab becomes the thread that bestows on Amal and every other "hijabi" woman a shared identity and situates them within the same position as Muslim women. Sensing this sororal unity, Amal feels that she is no longer alone in her struggle to prove her selfhood and to disentangle herself from the double ideological othering of patriarchy and Islamophobia. On the contrary, she is quite certain of a universal community of sisters who, through their various experiences of the hijab, feel, experience, suffer, and triumph in the same fashion as hers. Most important in this symbolic scene is the discursive constitution of the hijab as a typically transcultural symbol. Put differently, the deliberate cultural anonymity of the girls whom Amal meets is intended to blur their cultural origins and to emphasize not their social or ethnic affiliations but rather their universal bond. Correspondingly, it places the hijab as a feminist symbol on the crossroads of all cultures and presents it as a culturally border-crossing signifier. As such, it can be inferred that experienced differently as it is in the world, the hijab, in Amal's case, accounts for what can be termed a "transcultural feminist identity" which transcends the borders of cultures and of nations to embrace a planetary approach to sisterhood and feminine intersubjectivity.

Finally, Amal's hijab is constructed as a discursive element of feminist empowerment and liberation from the hegemony of the West as she discloses the first time she wears it: "[…] I'd never felt so free and sure of who I am. […] As scared as I was walking around the shops in the hijab, I was also experiencing a feeling of empowerment and freedom. […] I was looking and feeling good on my own terms, and boy did that feel awesome" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 26). Disrupting the male gaze and feeding on a free will and autonomous choice, Amal's hijab becomes a trope of utmost liberation from the restraints of both patriarchal and Islamophobic discourses, which underscores Abu-Lughod's objection to "the reductive interpretation of veiling as the quintessential sign of women's unfreedom" (Abu-Lughod 40). Also, by providing Amal with the feeling of "safety," this religious signifier becomes loaded with feminist significations as it turns into a feminine abode, a feminine refuge that nurtures Amal with homely feelings against the alienation embodied outside her corporeal realm, shields her against her most dreaded fears of subalternity and of being othered, and protects the intimate realm of her body from outside looks. Likewise, in the finals of the debate competition, Amal reaches a state of self-fulfillment which derives from her hijab: "I've been injected with the formula for confidence […] Not in spite of my hijab but because of it. Because I want to prove to everybody that it's just a piece of material and that I'm here, representing my school, supporting my team" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 308). This symbol which has long been conceived of by Western feminist scholars as a deprivation of the Muslim woman of her agency and subjectivity and as a sign of her disempowerment is extricated by Abdel-Fattah's protagonist from these Manichean assumptions which force it into a set of reductionist binaries between "us" and "them." By way of explanation, Amal elevates the hijab into a marker of her empowerment as a Muslim hyphenated woman by highlighting its encapsulation of difference and sameness. On the one hand, the very fact of wearing the hijab and being convinced of its values singles her out of the rest and marks her as a religiously and culturally different female, and it is this celebration of difference which contests the Western attempt to homogenize non-Western women and disregard their differences by representing them as "a monolithic subject in some recent (Western) feminist texts" (Mohanty 51). On the other hand, by propounding the idea that her hijab is "just a piece of material," Amal deploys a literary understatement to dismantle the excessive discursive fuss surrounding the hijab and to evince that it does not physically alter her body, her skin, or her femininity, that is, it does not metamorphose her into an alien, a non-human other. She is no different from them, an Aussie girl who is part of the community and of the in-groups prevailing within. This latter feature is, in Welsch's theorization, emblematic of the transcultural identity: "Transcultural identities comprehend a cosmopolitan side, but also a side of local affiliation. Transcultural people combine both" (Welsch 205). Cosmopolitanism, which denotes an affiliation to the world, concretizes in the universal bond which Amal establishes with Muslim women all over the world. Her local affiliation is yet to be noticed in her identification with the various in-groups in her community, namely her school peers, her team, and her school as a microcosm of the Australian society. As such, she negotiates a pattern of identity which crisscrosses the ranges of transculturalism and feminism.

2. Aussie, Arab, Muslim, Other: Reaching Full Transculturality

The transcultural mode of identity formation is not confined to the transcultural persona's enactment of agency and individuality, for its true essence lies in its approach to cultural formations. As has been expounded, all the three pioneering figures of the transcultural turn – Ortiz, Welsch, and Epstein – subscribe to the perception of transcultural identity as centered on pluralistic cultural amalgamations, permeations, confluences, and border crossings and on a categorical repudiation of the view of cultures in terms of polarities or of the binaries of home culture/host culture, or dominant culture/subordinate culture, that underlie the postcolonial, exilic, and diasporic approaches. In *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, Amal manages to edify a transcultural identity through a "transcultural constitution" that culminates in a full transcultural condition. Amal dramatizes such an ability as transcultural constitution through her multiple crossings of the cultural borders which environ her existence – the Western and Aussie cultures, the Palestinian culture, the Arab culture, and the Muslim culture.

On the one hand, belonging to the youth in-group, Amal displays an unfaltering proclivity for popular culture, one of the key concerns that inhere in the genre of young adult fiction (Runa 186), which stands out as an indispensable exigency for her cultural identity building. This can be showcased in her keen interest in the fashion and lifestyle magazines of the Western pop culture, in general, and of the Aussie pop culture, in particular, as instantiated when she defines one of the prerequisites of the Australian youth in-group: "you're seriously doomed to the noncool list if you're one issue behind on the latest *Cleo* fashion" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 13). Through this claim, Amal sets the cultural values disseminated by this Australian pop-cultural magazine as the standards and norms which guarantee inclusion within the Aussie youth culture and shape an "acceptable" social identity among the Aussie youth in-group. Added to this, Amal's social relationships are governed by the Western pop-cultural programs. In one of her dialogues with Simone, for example, the two girls' utterances are replete with intertextual references to famous television programs that pertain to the American culture industry – *Oprah*, *Dr Phil*, and *Roseanne* (111). Similarly, enjoying her time with her Muslim friends, Leila and Yasmeen, Amal indicates that, at a certain juncture, they spend some time "arguing about whether *Big Brother* is better than *Survivor*" (132), pointing to two American television shows. In this sense, the pop-cultural icons devised by the Western culture industry become not only cultural identity markers but also social and existential frames of reference for the adolescent protagonist, since almost every situation in her daily life, especially when in company with her peers, is evaluated against the backdrop of these cultural items and evokes paradigmatic representations of the Western popular culture.

On the other hand, the Muslim-Arab culture in general and the Palestinian culture in particular are another component that adds to the cultural mishmash which forms the core of Amal's transcultural identity. This is a fact which Amal presumes from the very beginning when she contrasts her family to her uncle Joe's: "They're not into Islam or Arabic culture like we are" (93). Thereby, Amal lays bare her identity locations as she signals that her and her parents' identity is anchored in their devotion to Islam and in their allegiance to the Arab culture. The "us" to which she belongs becomes at once defined by the cultural labels "Aussie" and "Muslim-Arab," pointing to her transculturality. Besides, her Arab cultural identity – her Palestinian selfhood in particular – is to be seen in her identificatory bond with the Arab culinary realm which, as has been expatiated on in the previous part, emerges as a defining cultural sine qua non of Arabness in almost every Arab diasporic oeuvre. This is authenticated in the novel through Amal's meticulous depiction of the culinary tableau which her mother has prepared for their guests: "My mother […] cooked a Palestinian dish called *mansaf*, basically rice mixed with pieces of chicken and pine nuts, dressed with a hot yoghurt soup. […] She's also made a massive bowl of *fatoosh*, salad topped with pieces of bread dipped in olive oil […], minced meat pastries and *warak aneb*, which are vine leaves stuffed with spicy rice" (95). Through her enumeration of the dialectal names of the variegated Palestinian dishes and through her demystification of the various ingredients these aggregate, Amal assumes the position of a cultural expert who is well versed in the Palestinian cuisine, which demonstrates her internalization of the Palestinian cultural identity. Still, she does not confine herself to the realm of observation but goes further to enter the site of cultural performance as typified in her rolling of the vine leaves (93) and in her preparation, along with her mother, of "biscuits filled with fresh dates and cinnamon" (183), i.e. the Palestinian *maamoul*. Both of the culinary items which Amal prepares can be deemed "metonymic fragments" of the Palestinian culture and as tokens of her cultural performativity and agency. In the same vein, the narrative is interspersed with utterances that convey an explanatory function, pointing to Amal's awareness of and insight into the dynamics of the Arab cultural formations. This is illustrated in her expatiation on Arabic forms of address: "Aunt Cassandra and Uncle Tariq aren't related to me but in Arabic culture most adults who are family friends are addressed as uncles and aunts […]. It makes for a pretty large extended ‘family’” (102). Amal is explaining here how Arab culture preaches the display of respect and deference on the part of the youth vis-à-vis the elders and transfigures friendship into a solid family-like bond. It can be, then, deduced that Amal’s thoughts and behaviors are regulated by her Arab culture.

Nevertheless, these cultural identities embraced by the protagonist are not experienced as self-enclosed, separate “sets” or as hegemonic closed structures wherein the individual is culturally incarcerated – otherwise, they would have paved the way for a polarized diasporic identity rather than for a transcultural selfhood – but are instead marked by overlaps, permeations, and confluences which transition Amal’s cultural location from the position of hybridity to the position of transculturality. Put differently, while Epstein maintains that transculture implies “liv[ing] on the border of one’s ‘inborn’ cultures or beyond it” (“Transculture” 334), Amal is dwelling in both positions, on the border and beyond, as she constantly crisscrosses her “inborn” cultures in a reconciliatory pattern as evinced by the many occasions of cultural amalgamations and conflations in the novel. Initially, quite strikingly, Amal’s decision to wear the hijab does not derive from a given religious program or lecture but is rather inspired by a famous television program that pertains to the American pop culture, *Friends*. It is after watching a scene in which one of the main characters, Rachel, assumes the courage and defiance to surmount everyone’s mockery and derision in a wedding and sing in her “hideous” outfit that Amal suddenly feels the urge and conviction to wear the hijab (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 1). Despite the seemingly discrepant and irreconcilable difference between this scene, epitomic of the Western pop culture, and Amal’s sudden realization of her Muslim religious identity, both situations culturally overlap, signaling a transcultural condition in the sense that, as Welsch contends, transculturality presupposes the view that “contemporary cultures are characterized not only by internal difference and distinction but also by ‘overlaps’” (Stein 253). In other words, both the causative situation, which incarnates the Western culture, and the resultant situation, which epitomizes Amal's Muslim "culture," mirror the common traits of individual choices, of genuine conviction and defiance, and of a psychological and social struggle – a struggle against mockery for Rachel and a struggle against stereotypes and clichés for Amal – which can be regarded as human "universals." It follows that, when Amal playfully confesses, "[t]hat's right. Rachel from *Friends* inspired me. The sheikhs will be holding emergency conferences" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 2), she is placing and *omni-placing* the hijab, placing it in its authentic cultural context as a marker of her faith and religious devotion as she asseverates throughout the whole novel and omni-placing it in a global cultural context by rendering it as a universal symbol of choice, conviction, and struggle. By so doing, she contrives a symbolic cultural line of flight and transgression, hinted at through her humorous claim that sheikhs will be holding emergency conferences, which *symbolically* redefines and reconciles the borderlines between the Muslim culture and the Western pop culture.

Another significant example of Amal's cultural border crossing and intersectionality is set forth through the plurality of her musical identification. On the one hand, she is profoundly immersed in the Western pop music which seems to outline the contours of her psychological existence. A case in point is, when escaping going out with her friends because of her initial fear of othering after her wearing of the hijab, Amal stays home "listening to Craig David's 'I'm walking away.' On repeat" (73). A glimpse of the song's lyrics displays their exact translation of Amal's emotional state, mainly of the desire to escape "from the troubles" in one's life and from people's "uncompromising" incriminating looks and of the hope of a better tomorrow. Hence, the parallelism between Amal's psychology and the song to which she is listening informs her identification with, rather than mere admiration of, the Western pop music. Analogously, tormented by the Islamophobic atmosphere prevailing after the terrorist events of Bali, Amal is submerged in sadness as she listens to some Canadian popular songs: "I'm finding that each line in each song is a perfect description of my life" (240). Through this statement, she transmutes these songs into a musical rendition of her psychological world. This evidences that the realm of the Western pop culture proffers a wide array of choices that satisfy her moods and bespeak her psychological states. This idea is confirmed when Amal, having been afraid in the first place of exposing her otherness publicly, manages to accept her difference and the gazes around her and celebrates this moment by listening to a pop song entitled "I'm a survivor" (81). This pop culture item which Amal selects matches her psychological and existential statuses. That is to say, the song she chooses celebrates her survival of the othering gazes and questioning looks of her social environment and echoes her existential achievement. As can be noticed in these instances, Amal's cultural affiliation to the Western pop culture is a polyphonic experience given the different cultural sources from which these songs originate – American, British, and Canadian. On the other hand, the nucleus of the transculturality of Amal's cultural experience materializes in her extraction of the same psychological gratification from the Arab music. This feeling can be grasped in her psychological reaction when she hears the Arab music in one of the weddings she attends: "The drums beat passionately and I can feel them" (268). The fact that Amal "feels" rather than simply "hears" the drums evidences the presence of an Arab identificatory marker within her which generates an instinctive response to and a psychological interaction with the Arabic rhythm she hears. More importantly, her cultural identification with Arabness is exemplified in her performance of the *dabke*, a leitmotif which Abdel-Fattah deliberately interpolates in all her novels in order to uphold its centrality in the formation of the Palestinian cultural identity: "At Palestinian weddings I'm a pro. It's just that everybody has their own adaptation [of *dabke*]. The Lebanese have a version, the Syrians, the Turkish. Even within each nationality there are versions of each version so I always perform a standard one step, one kick […]. I'm clapping to the music and my hands are red and sore but I'm having too much fun to care" (268). Initially, through her claim of her deftness in performing the *dabke* in Palestinian weddings, Amal asserts that she enacts the Palestinian cultural identity, of which the *dabke* is a typical epitome. Nonetheless, it is worth mentioning that, by dint of her elaboration on this cultural item, she is underlining the fact that each of the aforementioned cultures – Palestinian, Syrian, Lebanese, and Turkish – has its own adaptation and its integral versions. This claim is intended to unearth the "difference within sameness" and to dismantle the Western Orientalist discourse which fallaciously homogenizes these cultures under the labels "Arab," "Middle Eastern," or "Oriental." Taking this point into account along with her ability to perform these different variations of the *dabke*, it can be extrapolated that Amal's identity transcends the fixity of her Palestinian ethnic background and embraces instead a transculturality which manifests in her crossing of the borders between all these cultures, positioning herself in a transcultural spectrum. In other words, Amal's cultural performativity is typically Palestinian yet conforms to all the cultures she enumerates, which affiliates her to the Arab culture and to other cultures. Added to this, Amal's engrossment in the rhythm of the Arab music attests to her immersion in and harmony with this culture. Finally, Amal imparts that she "love[s] Arabic music and as soon as [she is] on the dance floor a wave of energy takes over [her] body" (269). Indeed, Amal's disclosure of her love for Arab music, in conjunction with the wave of energy which overwhelms her body as a result of this sentiment, testifies to her psychological affinity with it and to her affiliation to the Arab cultural heritage which haunts every aspect of her existence, physical and psychological. All in all, this complementarity between Amal's identification with the Western popular culture and her identificatory affiliation with the Arab folk music and dance confers on her a transcultural character which conflates all her environing cultures in her very being and expunges any potential diasporic polarity or dichotomy that may pave the way for an essentialist identity.

All these cultural tenets considered, it can be theorized that Amal's fluid cultural amalgamations and transgressions enable her to reach what Dagnino calls "a full transcultural condition" ("Transculturalism" 6), that is, the most advanced stage of transculture as a mode of identification. It is, however, of critical importance to point, from a methodological stance, that, when broaching the concept of the transcultural, this thesis approaches it in *symbolic* terms of signification, for "culture is after all, a symbolic reality that can be condensed indefinitely by the increasing scope of its meanings" (Epstein, *After the Future* 299). In the light of this, when delving into the modalities of Amal's identification in the novel, it can be discerned that the "full transcultural condition" crystallizes in purely symbolic terms. This is instantiated in Amal's enactment of the processes of cultural un-belonging and *omni*-belonging. In fact, her cultural un-belonging materializes in her contrivance of a new deconstructionist category as she shares with her friend Simone the experience of othering which reduces them into "abnormal" others: "You know what? Who cares what normal is, Simone. Let's protest. From now on we're *the* anti-normal, anti-average, anti-standard. You can eat when you want to, I'll wear what I want […]" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 77; my emphasis). In this regard, fed up with her othering on account of her hijab and with the othering which Simone endures because of her non-conformity to the body-image standardized by the Western culture industry, not only does Amal come up with an overarching deconstructionist discourse which hinges on agency and resistance and defies any subalternizing or exclusionary processes, but she also invents a new identity category. Through her combination of the definite article "the" and the adjectival entities "anti-normal," "anti-average," and "anti-standard," Amal linguistically constructs a category of identification. The latter acquires a transcultural dimension since it exists outside all cultures, crosses all the boundaries, and goes against all the "normal" definitions and against all the "standard" images. As such, it becomes an embodiment of Epstein's theorization of transculture as "a transcendence into no culture, a metacultural beyond (…) a newly emerging dimension, (…) a process of interaction between cultures in which more and more individuals find themselves feeling outside the ethnic, racial, sexual, ideological, and other limitations imposed by the culture into which they were born" (qtd in Dagnino, "Transculturalism" 6). Thus, through her claim, Amal becomes an "outlier" to all cultures, an other and a non-other at the same time: an other to those who rigidly define cultural "normalcy" and a non-other to her decentered, flexible, rhizomatic, and borderless in-group, i.e. the "anti-normal."

Indeed, what might seem a disavowal of identity is, in the transcultural sense, an assertion of identity in the sense that the anti-normalcy which Amal adopts elevates her into a quintessentially transcultural protagonist who, belonging to no culture, ends up belonging to all (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 6). This precept is corroborated by Abdel-Fattah's protagonist whose transcultural un-belonging eventuates in her *omni*-belonging as she imparts in the last pages of the novel:

> It's been the 'wogs,' the 'nappy heads,' the 'foreigners,' the 'persons of Middle Eastern appearance,' the Asians, the 'oppressed' women, the Greek Orthodox pensioner chain-smoker, the 'salami eaters,' the 'ethnics,' the pom-turned-curry-munchers, the narrow-minded and the educated, the fair-dinkum wannabes, the principal […] who showed me that I am a colorful adjective. It's their stories and confrontations and pains and joys which have empowered me to know myself, challenged me to embrace my identity as a young Australian-Palestinian-Muslim girl. (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 339-340)

On the literal level, each of the categories which Amal enumerates refers to a particular protagonist in the novel that has affected her in one way or another. Through her reference to the category of the "Asians," Amal is obliquely pointing to her Japanese friend Eileen and the Paki family friend Abdul-Tariq. Her reference to the "Greek Orthodox pensioner chain-smoker" is, indeed, a label which she playfully attributes to the Greek old neighbor Mrs. Vaselli with whom she has developed a close friendship. Aside from these, the categories of the "narrow-minded and the educated" are respectively allusions to Amal's intellectually brilliant and religiously devout friend Leila and to the latter's illiterate, strictly traditional, and uncomprehending mother Gulchin who wants to marry her daughter at the age of sixteen. All these adduced personae have shaped, in one way or another, Amal's sense of selfhood. On the figurative level, all the categories, some of which are stereotypical labels contrived by the Western hegemonic discourses, constitute the "different" others of the mainstream "Anglo" Australian society, that is, the different *identities* and the polyphonous and carnivalesque *voices* of otherness. By enumerating them, Amal purports to lay focus on the "difference within difference," that is, the *different* voices and identities aggregated in what the West sees as a monolithic *different* alterity. It is this kaleidoscopic "different difference" which molds Amal's identity, for she negotiates her identity by incorporating all these multifarious voices within her selfhood. Put differently, through her cultural interplay and encounter with all these categories, Amal has built a fragmented, decentered, rhizomatic, and all-inclusive identity which subsumes the individualized experiences of each of the insinuated characters. She has internalized their agential and subaltern, reactionary and assimilationist, and certain and uncertain voices, giving birth to a transcultural identity based on the similarity and difference, the convergence and divergence, and the fragmentation and wholeness of many multilayered identities. In addition, by affirming that these people's stories, pains, and joys are what empower her, Amal intimates that these individual experiences are common to them all, yet she is conscious, throughout the novel, that these experiences are as well the very particular markers that highlight their *individual* differences. This reconcilable paradox of sameness and difference is what enables Amal to grasp her own self, to understand that she is herself a site of difference and sameness, that is, that she belongs at once to her own self and to *every* other in-group. In the light of these identity dynamics emerges Amal's transcultural identity which subsumes all the polyphonous cultural voices she identifies with: "*a young Australian-Palestinian-Muslim girl.*" Every single linguistic unit in this hyphenated label demystifies one of the *many strangers within* Amal's pluralistic self, affiliating her as such to her *individual* self, to the youth in-group which determines the singularity of her experiences and the genre of the novel, to the Aussie community, to her Palestinian origins, to the culturally heterogeneous Muslim community, and to all the women in the novel – subaltern and powerful.

Probably, this full transculturality of Amal is most vividly expressed in the novel in the symbolism of a cloud which she contemplates with keenness: "[…] I fix my gaze on one cloud as it moves and collides into the others. I try to follow its movement, its distinct silhouette, as it fuses and melts away. And then I lose track of its shape and I'm left looking at a chaotic mess of fluffy shapes, the beginnings and the ends of each outline collapsing into each other" (Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head* 285). First and foremost, Amal's hypnotic attraction to this particular cloud *per se* emanates from the fact that it is totemic of her own self and of her transcultural identity. More specifically, the cloud's movement and collision with other clouds symbolizes the mobility, transformations, and negotiations of Amal's identity and her collision with other identity complications in the Australian socio-culturalscape, including her collision with racism, with cultural difference, with stereotypes, and with the fear of othering. Additionally, the silhouette of the cloud looms as distinct yet "fuses and melts away." So similar to its movement is Amal's transcultural identity which is distinct in its individualized Arab-Australianness, yet it synchronously fuses and conflates many cultural dynamics – Arab, Aussie, Muslim, feminist, and Western – within its ambit, forming part of a transcultural spectrum. Further, the cloud's loss of shape and the emergence instead of "a chaotic mess of fluffy shapes, the beginnings and the ends of each outline collapsing into each other" suggests that Amal's identity has lost the character of fixity, oneness, and stability which marks its borders and has become instead an amorphous architectonic gestalt of many identities fused together. It is not simply a *hybrid* mix of discrete cultural components, but it is rather an altogether *new* identity which has lost the rigidity of the borders separating its cultural constituents into distinct categories – none of which can be distinguishable from the rest – and wherein all conflate into a rhizomatic, decentered pattern with no beginning nor end.

Chapter 2: Transcultural Identity in Anglophone Indian-Australian Literature

The fluid and confluential nature of transcultural literature and its immanent themes transmute transcultural writers into an uncategorizable cohort that "def[ies] any conventional pigeon-holing, […] dispel[s] any attempt to pin them down, to fit (or restrict) them into any kind of defining box, even the most flexible and academically sophisticated one" (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 8). This evasiveness of categorization is itself an absolute counterdiscourse and mode of academic resistance which challenges the Western attempt to interpolate the diasporic or the sometimes-called "multicultural," "migrant," or "minority" works and personae into the Western ready-made cultural and ideological molds of clichés, stereotypes, and preconceived expectations. Such were the reductionist processes to which Abdel-Fattah was subjected when she was in search of a publisher who would embrace her *Does my Head Look Big in This?*: "I spoke to one agent at length, explaining the basic plot of the novel. After my pitch, she had the audacity to joke: 'Is there an honor killing in it?' This was the stock standard narrative space for the Muslim novel. The bar was set very low" ("The Double Bind" 101). Yet, the transculturality of her heroine succeeds in eluding these Western discursive endeavors to fit the polyphonous voices in diaspora into standardized predictable pigeonholes. As such, transculture looms as the most pertinent alternative to produce an insurgent, de-canonized, de-centered, and de-ideologized form of a literature of "difference," equivocating all the predictability, fixity, stability, and reductionist and essentializing patterns to which the Western hegemonic discourses confine diasporic authors. This literary cause is committedly undertaken by some Indian-Australian authors as Rashida Murphy and Suneeta Peres da Costa who contrive transcultural voices which firmly resist yet flow in a fluid flux, crossing not only spaces and cultures but also discursive purviews. More particularly, Murphy's novel *The Historian's Daughter* and Peres da Costa's *Saudade* bring together a multiplicity of discursive venues to build a condition of transculture, including the (anti/post)-colonial, feminist, and cultural venues. In this context, it can be theorized that, interlacing the voices of a terrified, lonely daughter, a menacing father, and an idealized, escaped mother, Murphy's debut novel, *The Historian's Daughter*, lays the foundation for a transcultural identity which takes shape in the overarching, confluential amalgamation of the colonial, postcolonial, feminist, cultural, religious, and linguistic border-crossing *identities* of the protagonist-narrator Hannah. For her part, Peres da Costa's *Saudade*, set in its greatest part in pre-Independence Angola, deftly enacts through the lens of the Goan-Portuguese-Angolan narrator Maria-Cristina the anti-essentialist, anti-hegemonic construct of transcultural identity by dint of its convoluted combination of a variety of discourses not quite dissimilar to Murphy's.

Before engaging in the demystification of Hannah's negotiation of her transcultural identity, it is very much useful to probe into the symbolism of one of the weightiest characters in the novel, to wit, the *Historian* – Hannah's father. The momentum of this ambiguous persona arises even before having a glance at the novel, for it figures in the novel's title, *The Historian's Daughter*. By putting the Historian side by side with his daughter Hannah, Murphy foreshadows his centrality in delimiting her selfhood and, hence, the necessity of uncovering his symbolic presence and function in the novel. In fact, the symbolism of such a character can be lucidly seen in the sobriquet whereby Hannah and her sister Gloria refer to him, "the Historian." The capitalization of the label "Historian" and the two sisters' choice to refer to their father as such throughout the whole narrative, never mentioning his name but on a single occasion, evince that this pseudonym is by no means a denotation of the profession of a chronicler but is rather a connotation of his symbolism and allegorism. On the one hand, when scrutinizing the Anglo-Indianness of the Historian, his denial of his Indian identity, his birth the day of India's independence, his being named after the English poet George Gordon Byron, and his selection of colonialists' names for his sons, one cannot but infer that the history affiliated to the Historian is that of the British Empire. That is to say, he is writing *a* history of India that emerges as an "imperious [mode] of seeing brokered by colonial cultures" (McLeod 31), that is, history as seen from the perspective of the English colonizers. Accordingly, he becomes not only a child of the Empire but also an allegory of colonization, especially when lingering on the nexus between imperialism and culture which Said unravels by positing that the West's Eurocentric culture underlies and frames "the economic and political machinery at the material center of imperialism" (*Culture and Imperialism* 221-222). In this framework, the Historian's colonial allegiance is ascertained in his constant demotion of non-Western cultures and in his condemnation of these as "a lower order of being," in Said's phraseology (222), while upholding his Eurocentric legacy. This is to be found in his unyielding hegemony over the languages spoken in the household, a feature which symptomatizes imperial oppression (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 7). Throughout the novel, Hannah's mother – the *Magician* as Hannah and Gloria choose to call her –, who is Indo-Persian, displays a great vigilance in ensuring the Historian's absence before articulating her Persian mother tongue. When the Historian, at a certain juncture, finds out her recourse to Farsi, he begins a heated argument wherein he shouts that he "was sick of her 'heathen language'" (Murphy, *The Historian* 24). Indeed, while the Historian's proscription of the Magician's language is a suppression of the cultural legacy and identity which this language carries, his view of it as a "heathen language" translates his cultural othering and his cultural superciliousness. In other words, he at once silences the Magician's voice as a cultural other and vilifies her native language by depicting it as a language that deflects from the "righteous" Eurocentric norms and standards instituted by the English language. In line with this, the Historian goes further to marginalize and demote any cultural configuration which he deems alien to his Anglo-Indian identity. This is confirmed through Gloria's assertion to the younger Hannah that they "are not allowed to believe in *djinns* and all that" (19) nor "in spirits and things" (47) and through their performance of some of the Magician's cultural and spiritual practices secretly as they "all knew what the Historian thought of the Magician's rituals and practices" (47). All these conducts substantiate that the Historian is imposing a cultural censorship on his offspring so as to impede their agential internalization of any cultural beliefs foreign to his Anglo-Indian identity and to indoctrinate them into the Eurocentric precepts and monoculture of the colonial institution, effectuating what Ashcroft and others term "cultural denigration," that is, the destruction and oppression of a given culture and identity by a "supposedly superior racial or cultural model" (*The Empire* 9).

On the other hand, the Historian blatantly emerges as an allegory of patriarchy as foreshadowed in the epigraphic quotes purveyed by the author. Her adducing of Thomas Carlyle's statement that "[i]n a certain sense, all men are historians" and of George Eliot's utterance, "[t]he happiest women, like the happiest nations, have no history," establishes an explicit link between history and patriarchy, which insinuates the famous feminist assertion that history was written "by men for men." Correspondingly, the Historian becomes an embodiment of the patriarchal oppression of the female members of his family. His association with patriarchy is narrativized through Hannah's accent on some metaphorical signifiers that symbolize his patriarchal hegemony:

> Something made the Historian pace outside our room at night, and my dreams became less terrifying than the fact that he was there, outside my door. […] The sound of his shiny police boots click-clacking in the passage filled my head so completely that I heard them everywhere: at school, in the Magician's kitchen, on the grass […]. (Murphy, *The Historian* 41)
>
> One night, one of the aunties bumped into him on her way to the toilet and screamed. […]
>
> The Magician ran down the passageway and doors opened, spilling out brothers and cousins and Sohrab. […] The aunties and the Magician in their cotton nightgowns and the Historian looking irritated in formal police gear, three silver stars on his shoulder strap, crossed sword and baton. 'Go away, all of you,' he said with a growl in his voice. 'Go back to sleep and stop this *tamasha*. A man cannot walk in his own home? […].' (42)

As in other passages of the novel, the "boots" in this excerpt emerge as a conspicuous symbol which encapsulates the Historian's patriarchy. In literature, boots are mostly deployed as a trope for masculinity and specifically for patriarchal power given that they have always been worn by soldiers, military men, and horse riders who incarnate this power (McCormack 462). Thus, the Historian's boots are elevated into a symbol of his masculine force. Their omnipresence in Hannah's imagination substantiates that they hold sway over every intimate realm of her existence and haunt her psyche, representing the hegemony of the patriarchal society wherein she lives. While the presence of boots at school as a social institution emblematizes a systematic and epistemic indoctrination of girls into subserviency to the patriarchal system, their filling of the Magician's kitchen transforms this domestic space into a site of docility and unquestioned obsequiousness to this very hegemonic system. Also, the grass is a symbol of life which is "crushed" by patriarchal oppression and power. This patriarchal discourse, of which the Historian is a paradigm, is reinforced by other symbols, namely his police gear, silver stars, crossed sword, and baton which all stand for his authority and power in such a typically patriarchal society as the Indian one. Further, a parallelism is established between the police gear and the three silver stars, which suggest his authoritarian status and rank, and the sword and the baton, which connote the masculine might and power, in order to authenticate that the continuity of the patriarchal system, much like colonialism, is enabled through the enforcement of discursive and non-discursive power and hegemony. In this regard, it can be confirmed that Hannah is sentient of and affected by this hegemonic discourse which her father represents in the sense that not only is the Historian the catalyst of all of her recurrent nightmares in the novel, but he is also the source of the overwhelming terror and fear that she feels when he is around, which reflects the attempt of her repression and subjugation by the patriarchal system underlying her Indian society. Furthermore, the Historian's affiliation to patriarchy is demonstrated in his burning of the Magician's books, "*Lorna Doone*, *Little Women*, *Fear of*

Flying, Edible Gardens, Gitanjali, Shahnama and curly-scripted books of Farsi poetry" (Murphy, *The Historian* 65), while shouting in hysterical wrath. Drawing on the latent discourses concealed in these books, it can be inferred that these are signs of the Magician's awakening and resistance. The first four books are works that grapple with feminist concerns and femininity-related themes, whereas *Gitanjali* is a poem by the Indian writer Tagore which centers on a longing to reunite with the divine, while *Shahnama* is a Persian epic poem that traces the rule of fifty Persian kings. Along with the books of Farsi poetry, the feminist precepts incarnated in the English books, the religious nature of *Gitanjali*, and the Persian history epitomized in *Shahnama* all delineate the Magician's identity as they purvey a combination of intellectual and psychological legacies which trigger simultaneously a surfacing of her Indo-Persian identity repressed by the Historian's colonial Eurocentrism and an awakening of her feminine agency and selfhood. Therefore, the Historian's cognition of this discourse of feminist defiance and resistance to his masculine power and to the patriarchal state of affairs justifies his unyielding wrath and his hysterical response to the Magician's departure.

Despite her nightmarish fear of the Historian and her secret wish and yearning for his disappearance from her physical world throughout her narrative, Hannah ambivalently conceives of him as a pivotal presence in her psychic world: "In an ideal world it would be possible to live without the Historian. And yet he remained an integral part of *my* world" (2). This identification with the Historian originates not from Hannah's love for him as a person but rather from the symbolism and allegorism he epitomizes. That is to say, all the metaphorical implications and discourses which the Historian embodies are, indeed, necessary for Hannah's transcultural identity formation in the sense that her narratorial transculturality entails her negotiation, transvaluation, deconstruction and reconstruction of the variegated discourses which environ and constantly (re)-shape her existence.

1. The Aporia of Colonialism

Of the utmost paramountcy in this debate on transcultural identity in *The Historian's Daughter* is the novel's singularity in tackling the topos of colonization. In point of fact, broaching such a leitmotif is irrefutable as it is intimated in the novel's most expressive part, that is, its title. Being "the Historian's daughter" and bearing in mind the Historian's symbolic representation of colonialism, Hannah becomes inextricably affiliated to colonialism: She becomes the "heiress" of her father's colonial legacy. It is true transculture as a mode of identity formation is predicated on the deconstruction of hegemonic modes of discourse and identification, colonialism included. Yet, the colonial legacy in *The Historian's Daughter* deflects from its normalcy and is mutated into a cultural axiom which defines Hannah's transcultural identity beside other markers. More specifically, Hannah's tiptoeing on the contours of the colonial discourse is not carried out randomly but is rather discursively conditioned. Her individual selection of the colonial elements she is willing to relate to and her contrivance of the paradox of constructing and deconstructing her connection with the colonial institution, adopting at once colonial and postcolonial vistas, eventuates in an altogether new "hybrid colonial discourse" built on the logic of paradox. This deliberate choice to embrace colonialism is perhaps a discursive mechanism purported to aver that colonialism culturally shaped and still shapes the history and culture of India, that is, it has hybridized the Indian cultural state of affairs. This conception becomes, then, one bringing up a transcultural construct that stands somewhere between Ortiz's *transculturation* and Epstein's *transculture*, that is, between a notion which scrutinizes the relationship between colonizer and colonized cultures and one which incorporates all cultures. Such is the case with Hannah who enacts the "Anglo" colonizer culture at one end of the continuum and moves along the continuum, as will be unraveled later, crisscrossing the other cultures, Indian, Persian, Australian, Muslim, Christian, Hindu, and feminist.

Upon one’s reading of Murphy’s novel, one readily notices the prevalence of conspicuous figures to which Hannah clings from her childhood to her adulthood: the conquistadors. These colonial personae persist in each phase of her coming of age and are, hence, vital for her identity formation. To begin with, Hannah’s identification with this colonial trope starts even before her epistemic grasp of the word “conquistadors”:

> I first met the English conquistadors in the Historian’s library. It was actually his father’s library […] I didn’t know what the word meant then, could barely say it. For a long time I thought it meant come-kiss-the-doors. I thought it meant I was supposed to kiss the doors of the library every time I entered it. I was used to kissing hands and books, especially holy books […].
>
> As for the conquistadors, there were so many of them. all named in blue-and-gold books on the third shelf […]. *The English Conquistadors of India*” (3).

Hannah’s first statement gives the impression that she has met the conquistadors in body and soul. This substantiates that she is personifying these colonial historical figures, granting them life as though to evince that they are still “alive” and present in the library, in the Historian’s house, and in her world. Accordingly, she ensures the continuity of the colonial presence epitomized in the trope of the conquistadors. Analogously, the transition from “the Historian’s library” to “his father’s library” transmutes the library itself into a locus of colonial history and into a family colonial legacy transmitted from one generation to another. Consequently, the very fact that Hannah as a child spends most of her time in the library associates her with colonialism and makes her an epitome of the continuity of this legacy. Added to this, from her child perspective, Hannah initiates a play of words which, laden with profound symbolism, alludes to her identification with the conquistadors. By replacing the word “conquistadors” by “come-kiss-the doors,” she conceives of the books of the conquistadors as a call to kiss the doors of the library. This latter act is paralleled to the cultural act of kissing hands or holy books as a sign of extreme veneration and reverence. Resultantly, kissing the doors of the library becomes an act of veneration of and devotion to the colonial legacy encapsulated in the conquistadors – the books – and in the library. As Hannah grows and understands the meaning of conquistadors, these become her most intimate companions and the haunting presence which sticks to her being in moments of loneliness and despair (7, 8, 15), filling her times of solitude or her idle yet precious times with Gloria. It is as if, excluded from the patriarchal circle of her brothers and alienated from an invariably busy Magician and from a maturing Gloria, Hannah anchors her social self in the in-group of the conquistadors. Most significantly, as the Historian decides to take a more-mature Hannah and her brothers to Australia, following the Magician's disappearance and Gloria's escape, Hannah defies her father with regard to the conquistadors' books:

> […] the conquistadors remained where they'd always been – occupying the top two shelves.
>
> 'Aren't you going to pack those?' […]
>
> 'What for? […] They're falling to bits […] I'm throwing these books out. Should have burned them with the rest.'
>
> 'I like those books.' (95-96)
>
> […] I wonder if I would be able to persuade my brothers to carry the rest of the conquistador books. I had sneaked in all my favorites, Clive and Warren Hastings and Lord Louie, but was torn between Dalhousie and Bentinck. I preferred Dalhousie because he had a town named after him that we had once visited. I didn't remember being there but the Magician had spoken of it with a faraway look in her eyes. '[…] You and I were alone for the first time […].' (97-98)

Probably, the Historian's rejection of the conquistadors books originates from the bitterness and dilemma of Anglo-Indians who "are regularly stigmatized as a marginal minority group who have never been accepted as legitimate members of either the British or Indian community" (D'Cruz 11). Breaking free from the subaltern identity ascribed to Anglo-Indians as she moves beyond such a fixed identity pattern and embraces a transcultural fluidity and transgression, Hannah agentially chooses her own selfhood by ingraining herself in the "Anglo" colonial legacy of the British Empire. In other words, against her father's will, she exudes a relentless resolve to take the conquistadors to Australia. In so doing, she demystifies her desire to carry to Australia along with her baggage a cultural luggage, that of the English conquistadors, enacting the spatial and temporal continuity of her colonial legacy and of ancestral colonial culture. More significantly, Hannah's coloniality becomes "transcultured" as her transcultural agency frames her colonial culture. Put differently, the individuality and agency inherent in the concept of transculture impact on her choice of the conquistadors that would accompany her to Australia, in the sense that those whom she picks up stand for those close to her. While Clive and Warren correspond to her brothers' names, Lord Louie Mountbatten is redolent of the intimate times she has spent in the library with Gloria, reading their English grandfather's diaries and his account on the encounter between Nehru and Lord Mountbatten (12-13). Dalhousie, on the other hand, is associated with the most special moment she has shared with her mother, a memory of a much cherished and uninterrupted mother-daughter bond. In the light of this, it can be assumed that Hannah builds a colonial identity which is collectively and individually affiliated; that is to say, it showcases an ontological condition which is underlain by Britishness and by her individual choices and free will.

Moreover, Hannah's colonial identity concretizes in her reproduction – which translates her indoctrination – of the colonial discourse. An illustration of this is her disposition towards one of the conquistadors – Dalhousie: "Under his *rigorous* administration, India has entered an era of material and social progress" (98). Hannah's use of the word "rigorous" is deliberate, as indicated by its italicization, and is intended to hint at the hegemony and force immanent in the colonial institution. Nevertheless, rather than castigating Dalhousie's colonial intent and his recourse to might, Hannah idealizes his achievements and his revolutionization of the Indian society. It follows that she champions his representation of the "civilizing mission" and formulates, therefore, a pro-colonial rhetoric which conceals her conviction that colonization has generated a new, sophisticated hybrid culture in India and with which she identifies. Likewise, her identification with the colonial discourse is typified in her reiteration of its stereotypes vis-à-vis Indians: “I had acquired a distaste for public displays of grief. Grandfather Billy would have been proud of my stoicism: ‘Indians are a volatile people. This creates a great inconvenience for the Englishman and gives rise to the barbarous practice of excessive emotion and disobedience.’” (213). At the very core of this statement is Hannah’s tacit reproduction of the colonial binaries reason/emotion and civilization/barbarism linked with the colonizer/colonized duality. That is to say, by dint of her foregrounding of the Indian “excessive emotion,” she is attributing to Indians the character of irrational emotionality, a sign of barbarism, whereas the stoicism she acquires points to the English rationality which reflects the apex of civilization. These binaries are not simple ideology-free linguistic comparisons but rather “[lie] at the root of the ceaseless pattern of conquest and domination that has formed the fabric of human history” (Ashcroft et al., *The Empire* 48). This suggests that this binary logic to which Hannah resorts serves to legitimize and rationalize the colonial process. Hannah does not cease at the mere level of discourse but goes further to actualize this very discourse she advocates through her internalization of a stoical attitude which distances her from the “Indian emotionality” and through her pride in her conformity to the British colonial standards, rooting her identity in the colonial legacy of her British ancestors.

Nonetheless, Hannah’s coloniality is at the same time interspersed with her postcoloniality, and this induces a strong ambivalence as one of the traits of transculturality (Helff, “Shifting Perspectives” 81). A case in point is when Hannah reads one of the conquistador books and becomes cognizant of what is in question in the pages of these books: “Inside these books were other words – words like ‘plunder’ and ‘mastery’ and ‘tragedy.’ I understood those” (Murphy, *The Historian* 3). The words which Hannah enumerates and which go, in their arrangement, from bad to worse are linguistic allusions to the dark facet of colonization that disguises itself under the veneer of the enlightening civilizing mission. Besides, her statement that she understands these words reveals a paradoxical situation in the sense that she idealizes and heroizes the conquistadors yet is quite sentient of the inhumane crimes which they have perpetrated. This paradox can be construed as an acknowledgement of a fact which Hannah takes for granted, i.e. the unquestionable centrality of these figures' colonial presence in shaping and hybridizing – no matter how – the Indian culture, which lays the foundation for an ambivalent identity that fluctuates between construction and deconstruction. Moreover, as much as Hannah has been inculcated with a colonial stance, she has been indoctrinated with a postcolonial outlook: "Later, at school, my history teacher said that Clive, Lord Robert Clive, was a common thug who stole our country and Warren, Lord Warren Hastings, was an even bigger thug who stole jewelry from old women" (4). Here, Hannah is revisiting and reviewing colonial history not from her father or grandfather's lenses but rather from the subaltern point of view. She is recounting a process of deconstruction wherein the heroism of the conquistadors gives way to their inhumanity and barbarism which are here suggested by their demotion to vile "thieves." Indeed, Hannah's identity is deeply affected by such deconstruction, given that, following her internalization of this "new history" different from the Historian's, she projects it onto her imagination by picturing her brother Warren, named after a conquistador, as stealing the jewelry of their female relatives (8). In the same fashion, Hannah's postcolonial identity extends to her adolescence in Australia as exemplified in her conversation with her father's cousin Frankie:

> Aunty Frankie exclaimed over my purchases […] 'When I make curry, I just use Clive of India. I like it hot […],' she said cheerfully, adding a small tin with the words Clive of India above the picture of a conquistador. 'He was a common thug, you know,' I said. 'Clive of India was a robber. He stole our country and handed it over to the British. I read about him when I was little.' (104)

On the one hand, Hannah insists on bringing her idealized conquistador Clive with her to Australia. On the other hand, she is condemning him as a "thug," "a robber," and a colonist of India, which uncovers her awareness of the true hegemonic nature of colonization and of the asymmetric binary relationship between the British and the Indians. Remarkably, her animadversion on Clive is a deconstructionist endeavor to decolonize the Indian cuisine, typified by the culinary item of "curry," from the neo-colonial fetishization and commodification. Hannah's jarring attitudes unveil her ambivalence which aims at positioning her between the realms of colonial and postcolonial existences and at proving the dynamicity and mobility of her identity. Most importantly, it intends to shift the framework of Hannah's identity workings from postcolonialism to transculturalism. Put differently, while the former, in its deconstructionist discursive processes, falls many times in the trap of peddling the very essentialism and polarity it intends to refute, the latter fuses differences and compromises disparities, ushering in new cultural forms expressed in Ortiz's notion of transculturation. Accordingly, Hannah's transculturality is entrenched through her unconventional enactment of her Anglo colonial and Indian postcolonial legacies.

In the same vein, drawing on the counter-hegemonic and liberatory nature of transcultural identity, the latter materializes within Peres da Costa's *Saudade*, much identically to Hannah's postcolonial identity, in its protagonist's thoroughgoing disruption of the hegemony of the Portuguese colonialism of Angola through her symbolic deconstruction of colonial complicity and through her commitment to the rewriting of history. Initially, brought up by parents of Goan origin yet loyal partisans of the Portuguese Empire – her father being a labor lawyer working for the Ministry of the Interior – Maria-Cristina becomes gradually exposed to their colonial complicity, a hegemonic discourse which she utterly repudiates through her symbolic behavioral patterns. This can be illustrated in her brief interplay with her father: "He pulled me up, dusted my dress and admonished me it was not good for the servants to see me sitting in the dirt like that. Do you know whose daughter you are? He asked me with sudden ferocity […] I wriggled like a chick out of his arms" (Peres da Costa 25-26). In fact, his servants being the Mozambican Caetano and the Angolan Ifigênia, the father's admonition and rhetoric question become laden with an ideological discourse through which he subtly alludes to his status as the civilized, refined and educated colonizer as opposed to the uncivilized, savage and backward colonized Africans and which he endeavors to inculcate in his daughter's mind. Yet, her behavioral response typifies an escape from the grasp of colonialism and a self-liberating dismantling of his imperial speech, endowing herself, thus, with an anti-colonial identity. Additionally, through her storytelling, Maria-Cristina unveils the colonial facets of the enterprise of which her father is an obsequious upholder:

> He [Papá] was a labor lawyer, working for the Ministry of the Interior, preparing workers' contracts … I was too young to have understood the liabilities he dealt with were human: that the men and women against whose sicknesses and accidents he insured Portuguese and other European pastoralists were native contract laborers. It did not occur to me then that, to protect the interests of the owner of an iron-ore mine against his laborers' lung disease, tuberculosis and cataracts, a person may become blind after his own fashion […]. That these workers were bought and sold like the slaves had once been and often died from exhaustion in the course of their bonded labor, is something of which I understood the implications only later. (29)

In this detailed account of her father's work, not only does Maria-Cristina shed light on the instrumentalism and utilitarianism of the imperial system with which her father complies, but she also unravels the colonial reification, objectification and stigmatization of the natives which her father initiates through the contracts he writes. Correspondingly, through her evoking of this memory, she grasps the hidden truth of her father's job within the Portuguese imperial institution and psychologically empathizes with the natives in an act of building her anti-essentialist, anti-colonial identity.

Further, history is of a paramount importance in the shaping of the colonialist ideology as Aschroft and others put forward, "the emergence of history in European thought is coterminous with the rise of modern colonialism, which in its radical othering and violent annexation of the non-European world, found in history a prominent, if not the prominent, instrument for the control of subject peoples" (*The Post-Colonial Studies* 355). Hence, in her transcultural task of destabilizing hegemonic centers, Maria-Cristina implements her narrativity to rewrite the Portuguese history in an attempt to contest the latter's colonialist groundwork and to distance her selfhood, thus, from colonial precepts. More particularly, when the teacher from Coimbra asks her students who has heard of Bartolomeu Dias, Maria-Cristina recollects having heard in a radio broadcast Che Guevara describe Dias as an invader and "therefore repeated, loudly, that he was an invader" (Peres da Costa 53). In point of fact, teaching students about the Portuguese explorer Bartolomeu Dias imbues their young minds with the achievements and supremacy of the Portuguese civilization throughout history, but Maria-Cristina's claim foregrounds the oppression and injustice concealed in this part of history, decolonizing, as a result, the colonialist epistemic system and reshaping the Portuguese history from the perspective of the subaltern. More significantly, her repetition of Guevara's claim is a connotation of her identification with and internalization of the rebellious, anti-colonial identity of which Guevara is an epitome. Maria-Cristina's involvement in the process of rewriting history does not cease at her childhood, but transcends it to her years of adolescence as well. An illustration of such a process is to be perceived when her history teacher, a communist Mozambican, enlightens them through his counter-hegemonic remark that "history was written from the perspective of the victors, but there were many other, hidden sides …" (94). This statement is actually an invitation to decolonize history by contesting the past as it was written from the point of view of the dominant imperial centers and bringing to the light the subaltern, peripheral historical outlooks. On this score, Maria-Cristina identifies with the rallying cry for rewriting history through the topic she opts for in her history paper which is but an incarnation of her own logic of history:

> The topic I had chosen to write on was an alternative biography of Vasco da Gama and, not knowing where to begin, I had made a column of the navigational feats of da Gama's life culminating in the discovery of the trade route to India […]. Then, in another column all the acts of terror and brutality which da Gama meted out to the Muslim pilgrims and traders whom he met with in the Arabian Sea and upon arrival on the coast to the Hindus of Calicut – massacring and burning people alive, cutting off their lips, ears, noses and hands. (94-95)

Through her diction of the phrase “alternative biography,” Maria-Cristina discloses her intention of deconstructing the history which has long idealized da Gama, another paradigm of the Portuguese imperial accomplishments. For this reason, she begins with a brief indication of his achievements just to decry these through her extensive enumeration of the cruelties and persecutions he perpetrated. In other words, through her own historical account, Maria-Cristina endows herself with a postcolonial-transcultural identity which hinges on the agency to decolonize history and rewrite the history of the Portuguese Empire by rendering it as one predicated on drastic barbarism and despotism. In this respect, one may wonder then what distinguishes a transcultural identity from a postcolonial one since both are committed to the subversion of colonial hegemony. The answer to such a query, as will be expounded through the subsequent features of Maria-Cristina’s identity, is incarnated in the movement of transcultural identity a step further beyond its postcolonial counterpart, for while the latter generally engenders linear dichotomies and binary structures, the former purveys “a new procreative vision of the world that defies the polarized positions of both master and slave, West and East, of imperialism and anti-colonial nationalism. It enunciates the will to a productive third space of hybridity where the binarisms of cultural politics are suspended altogether” (Moslund 10). That is to say, transcultural identity generates a process of hybridization, of cultural amalgamation and confluence wherein binary pairings become dialogized.

When juxtaposing the hegemonic politicized discourses deconstructed in *The Historian’s Daughter* and *Saudade* and those destabilized in *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, many differences come to the surface. More particularly, one notices the eminent presence of the theme of anti/postcolonialism in the Indian-Australian novels as opposed to its absence in the Arab-Australian work under study. This points to the deep impact that colonialism has had on the Indian collective unconscious, an impact which still bears its traces on contemporary Indians as Murphy herself confesses, “We are a nation of immigrants and colonizers who bring with us history and trauma. We need to look at these intersecting histories and face them" (Murphy, "An Interview"). By interpolating an anti/postcolonial discourse in their novels, Murphy and Peres da Costa aim at decolonizing the history and culture of a whole nation – though Murphy, in particular, acknowledges the necessity of such a colonial groundwork in defining who Indians are. Indeed, it is true that colonialism has deeply marked both Indian and Arab histories, for both bore witness to the military, political, and socio-cultural imbroglio of colonization. In the Indian case, however, the British Empire was inexorable in its colonial grip as it traumatized and scattered Indians all over the world. Not only did it subject them to the brunt of colonization with its concomitant cultural and ideological vilification, but it also persecuted them as enslaved workers in other colonies of the Empire as Fiji, Mauritius, Trinidad, and South Africa, resulting in various Indian *histories*. It is, thus, the Western reduction of all these histories into a single, uniform version narrated from the perspective of the victors which pushes Indian authors, however different their socio-cultural backgrounds are, to rewrite and redefine their Indian histories by engrafting colonial themes in their literature as is the case of Murphy and Peres da Costa's transcultural liberatory literature.

2. Transcultural Daughters to the Rescue

As is the case with Abdel-Fattah's protagonist, agency is a trait of the transcultural hero which best materializes in the deconstruction of hegemonic centers and the nullification of the binaries delimiting the center/periphery duality. This applies to Murphy's narrator whose agency is showcased through her acts of resistance to and deconstruction of all sorts of hegemonic discourses in the novel, starting with colonialism, as has been expatiated on through her postcolonial identity, and moving to patriarchy. Put differently, Hannah transmutes her narrative into a feminist venue wherein a feminine voice is exteriorized and wherein the hegemony of the masculine authority, symbolized by the Historian, is contravened and defied. In a thought-provoking parlance, the novel's first chapter is preceded by the epigraph, "This is not the story he wanted me to tell." The narratorial voice is verbalized here and is set in contradistinction to the masculine voice of a "he," the Historian. This proclamation introduces Hannah's process of narration as an agential act of resistance to and a feminine writing back to the hegemonic patriarch, to the prototype of patriarchy in the novel – the Historian. No wonder, then, that her narrative will not be approved by *him*. However, on a deeper level, this claim elevates Hannah's narrative into *the* story of *every* woman who is oppressed by a *he/him* but decides to write back, to speak back. Another powerful narratorial strategy which Hannah deploys is her resort to pseudonyms to allude to the politics of location of each of the central characters in her life – the Historian and the Magician. While the label "Historian" is deployed to allegorize the colonial and patriarchal affiliations of the Historian, the label "Magician," which she and Gloria assign to their mother, is intended to deconstruct the hegemonic oppression to which she is subjected and to ontologically re-position her by endowing her with an empowering and a liberatory symbolism. Hannah's use of the label "the Magician" in lieu of her mother's name to refer to her in the whole narrative is straightforwardly demystified the moment she hurts her tongue yet heals thanks to the Magician's herbs and love: "'*Jadugar*,' whispered the night servant […] 'Your ammi is a real *jadugar* – see how quickly she made you better? She can make bad things disappear, like *jadu* – magic. She comes from an old country, far away in the land of Fars […]. Her people were all *jadugars* and you are very lucky […]'" (8). Before delving into the symbolism of the Magician, it is of considerable significance to dissect the discursive power of the word itself. The substitution of the English word "Magician" by its Hindi counterpart "*jadugar*" linguistically bestows on Hannah's mother a mystic power and agency that emanates from her intercultural position: The emergence of her magic from within the Persian land and culture and its articulation in Hindi terms are both purported to disentangle the power of the Magician from the rhetoric of the Historian's colonial language – English. Further, the servant elucidates the signification of the label by equating magic with the ability to heal pain and "make bad things disappear." This signifies that Hannah's mother is symbolically endowed with a curative and generative power as opposed to the Historian's destructive power. Her magic is what instills equilibrium in Hannah's family institution. To rephrase it, "bad things," in Hannah's mind's eye, are personified in the Historian's presence, so by being able to "make bad things disappear," the Magician's presence is elevated to a balm and an antidote to the Historian's violent presence. This belief in the Magician's feminine power is reverberated by Hannah who maintains that "[t]he Magician would figure out a way to keep us all alive" (32) and that "she protected the most vulnerable" (201). Through these statements, Hannah once again endues her mother with the magical power of reinvigorating, protecting, and caring. She is elevating her into a feminine dwelling, a feminine refuge. On this account, the magic in which the mother is vested is the magic of her feminine emotions, of her overarching love and care, and of her motherhood.

Moreover, Hannah's mobilization of her narrative to a feminist perspective crystallizes in her identification with her mother through the mother-daughter bond which pervades the whole novel. That is to say, Hannah's female agency is nurtured by her bond with her mother, for this unique female bond is very crucial in the definition of the specificity of the female identity and experience "found in the silences and absences, in all that [culture] has repressed and suppressed" (Hirsch, "Mothers and Daughters" 210). This identification manifests most expressively in Hannah's witnessing of the scene of her parents' confrontation:

> The Historian shouted that he was sick of her 'heathen language' and the Magician had said that shocking thing, so quietly that we thought we'd heard it wrong. But the look on the Historian's face told us he had heard it too.
>
> 'I will not allow a *rishwatkhor goonda* to tell me what I can and cannot say,' the Magician said in a voice like steel, and the Historian left the room. Every time after that, whenever the Historian yelled at my brothers and stormed through the house in his boots and police uniform, I would say *'rishwatkhor goonda'* in my head. The idea of my father being a corrupt thug made him less scary. (Murphy, *The Historian* 24)

Following the Historian's attempt to erase and vilify her identity and to silence her, the Magician does not remain silent and passive but chooses to speak back, for the first time, to the Historian, marking one of the rarest moments of her awakening in the novel. By labelling the Historian, to everyone's shock, as a thug and a bribee, "*rishwatkhor goonda,*" the Magician does not only retrieve some agency but also dismantles her husband's hegemony through her laying bare the corruption of the patriarchal institution of which he is a paragon. Her denial of being told what she "can and cannot say" is a further refusal to be silenced and, thus, a confirmation of her freedom, will, voice, and agency. Correspondingly, the Historian's departure from the room reflects a surrender and defeat in the face of the Magician's emerging power. The germaneness of this to the identity of Hannah concretizes in the latter's acquisition of the first seeds of female agency and resistance through her identification with her mother. In other words, against all the signifiers which connote the Historian's masculinity, that is, his boots, his police uniform, and his yelling, Hannah reproduces her mother's discourse of resistance, one which clearly detracts from the Historian's hegemony. Notwithstanding her ability to confront her father head-on, Hannah repudiates passivity and intellectual inertia and chooses instead to resort to a mode of secret resistance which, though not affecting the Historian directly, still disempowers him obliquely as it paves the way for a generation laden with female agency and prone to dismantle the patriarchal status quo and discourse which he represents. To top it all, feminist resistance and agency in the novel can be perceived in Hannah's transvaluation of origins as she asserts that Gloria's newborn daughter Bahareh "came from a long line of placid, determined women" (185). In this regard, Hannah is deconstructing the patriarchal appropriation of origins by tracing Bahareh's origins, not through patrilineality but rather through a matrilineal line of flight, feminizing as such the child's roots. Additionally, by representing the women in her matrilineal genealogy, including Gloria and the Magician, as "placid" and "determined," she confers on them the traits of resilience and power which counter the patriarchal discourse of repression and subjugation.

Following Murphy's lead, Peres da Costa suffuses *Saudade* with a feminist identity that dismantles the patriarchal hegemonic center in order to free and depoliticize the protagonist's transcultural identity from the prison-thought of any ideological institution. In this respect, Maria-Cristina enacts a feminine side to her transcultural identity which disrupts the patriarchal authority of her abusive father. This liberatory mode materializes best in her identification with her mother, whose anonymity throughout the novel implies her allegorism. At first look, the novel uncovers Maria-Cristina's exteriorization of her mother's silenced voice: "No one really remarked […] how I hung off every one of my mother's words. Indeed, I could have continued in this same vein for an eon or more […] I was more contented by the fact of her voice than what she had to say" (Peres da Costa 14). Being in her period of language acquisition, Maria-Cristina pays no heed to any language but her mother's. In this sense, she is discarding the process of language acquisition through socialization and carrying it out instead through the mother-daughter bond. Correspondingly, she raises her mother's voice over that of her father and of the patriarchal society which he epitomizes and confers on it the power to be heard and to dominate in her own world. Thus, Maria-Cristina assimilates in her tabula rasa a language which is typically feminine, a language which originates from the female bond between mother and daughter. She goes further to endorse the femininity incarnated in this voice by eviscerating her mother's utterances from meaning through her indifference to what the words convey and by preserving instead the integrity and essence of the motherly *voice*. The mother becomes the subaltern who does speak in the narrative and is heard by Maria-Cristina and those whom her narrative targets. Her voice opens the novel's first and last chapters and reverberates throughout the text through such recurrent structures as "my mother told me" and "my mother said," giving rise to a carnivalesque voice "of the marginalized feminine [which] is engaged in a dynamic struggle against the dominant or official patriarchal ‘voice’ in the polyphonous text” (Sikorski 48). Thus, through her zeroing in on and identification with her mother’s feminine voice while almost absenting her father’s voice from the narrative, Maria-Cristina subverts the patriarchal voice of society.

In addition, Maria-Cristina’s female agency goes so far as to subject her mother to an empowering process of becoming. The ontological process of *becoming* counters the state of *being* which is conceived of by the Western thought as grounded in man who is privileged with an invariable knowledge and subjectivity (Colebrook xx). Thus, by bringing into play becoming, the fixedness and stability immanent in being are transcended in favor of a fluid flux of identities. Indeed, becoming is germane to feminist discourse against patriarchy, in that it exudes a considerable concern with the concept of difference which is at the core of feminism and patriarchy, the first advocating it while the latter lambasting it. On this score, Deleuze conceives of becoming as “the continual production (or ‘return’) of difference immanent within the constitution of events, whether physical or otherwise. Becoming is the pure movement evident in changes *between* particular events. […] becoming is the very dynamism of change” (Stagoll 26). In this framework, in her attempt to subvert the fixedness and centeredness inherent in the patriarchal institution, Maria-Cristina, who is privileged with a narratorial voice, endows her subaltern mother with an empowering difference by approaching her in terms of a *becoming-nature*. An instance of this is presented at the very beginning of the novel: “It was the middle of the dry season but each time her lips parted I found myself in an oasis in which I wanted for nothing” (Peres da Costa 14). Through this statement, Maria-Cristina is transfiguring her mother into an “oasis.” In so doing, she is bestowing on her the attributes of this natural locus, discursively constructing her as a paragon of reinvigoration and fertility which saves one from the psychological and ideological dryness, that is, rigorousness and severity, of patriarchal idealism. Analogously, Maria-Cristina subverts the marginal status into which her patriarchal father has forced her mother by initiating a becoming whereby the latter is transformed into a different entity: “she was wearing a house dress of beige linen […]. Her legs were bare but they did not look vulnerable; they were as strong and dependable as the trunk of any one of the trees that rose in the small orchard beyond the compound […]. Her feet appeared to blossom out of her legs, and were so pretty that I could not imagine her being dead” (16-17). Maria-Cristina’s statement that her mother’s legs do not seem vulnerable is an allusive disruption of the patriarchal discourse which objectifies the female body and conceives of women as weak and tenuous. Further, she goes on to confer on the mother the agential traits of power and solidity by subjecting her to a becoming-nature. In other words, the mother’s legs are becoming solid “trunks,” that is, emblems of a deep-seated rootedness, the rootedness of Maria-Cristina in her mother and the rootedness of the latter in the power of her motherhood and mother-daughter bond. Again, Maria-Cristina’s use of the word “blossom” to point to her mother’s feet falls within the framework of becoming-nature as it intimates the imagery of sprouts and flowers, both of which symbolize life and revival. This becoming unveils the mother’s power as a feminine allegory of life and revival, and this rationalizes Maria-Cristina’s inability to picture her as “dead,” eternalizing her as such in her imaginary and liberating her from the prison-discourse of patriarchy. In the light of this, it can be inferred that Maria-Cristina constructs an agential counterdiscourse to patriarchy through her feminine empowering relocation of her mother from a silenced subaltern to a powerful presence.

It is true that both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian transcultural works focus on agency as a prerequisite of transculture and as a counter-strategy to the hegemonic discourses which they broach, yet the Arab-Australian literary variant is privileged over its Indian-Australian counterpart when it comes to the concern with the discourse on agency as it does not merely confine it to the realm of deconstruction but goes further to interlace it with such processes as choice, individuality, transcultural humor, and the appropriation of the hegemonic rhetorical strategies. Why such a laborious preoccupation with the Arab-Muslim female agency pervades Arab-Australian transcultural literature, typified by Abdel-Fattah's novel, can be probably demystified when trying to track the image of the Arab-Muslim women in the Western discourse. As a matter of fact, as Kahf posits, since the eighteenth century, the Western thought has been underlain by a metanarrative which portrays Muslim women as oppressed individuals, whose humanity, dignity, and agency is denied (1). Dismantling this hegemonic discourse is by no means an overnight quest as the negative connotations and rudiments framing it have been accrued and normalized through the archetypal repetition of the vilifying tropes and clichés associated with Muslim women. It follows that deconstructing such a discourse necessitates the appropriation of its same rhetoric, that is, a repetitive harping on the Muslim female's agency, and its implementation in the literature which explores the worlds and identities of Muslim female protagonists. This is, indeed, a task which Abdel-Fattah undertakes in *Does My Head Look Big in This?* through the combination of various processes and strategies to edify a composite agency and which she continues to enact through her *repetition* of this agential rhetoric in her latest novel *The Lines we Cross*.

Both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian transcultural writings, however, share a similar propensity to belabor feminist concerns. Their choice of female heroines, then, is not random but is rather the result of a systematic feminist discourse framing the narratives of the studied novels. Indeed, each novel paves the way for a gradually rebellious female protagonist who liberates herself from the shackles of patriarchy. In this sense, these transcultural literatures concur in their view of the patriarchal oppression of women as a universal matter which does not pertain to any one culture. This female authorial sisterhood is a deconstruction *par excellence* of the Western literary canon which, on many occasions, does not retract from embracing an Orientalist discourse which demotes Muslim-Arab and Indian women. Notwithstanding, this similitude between these two transcultural literary venues gives way to another difference, that is, these transcultural authors' feminist discursive strategies. In the Arab-Australian transcultural text, the protagonist surfaces as a free-spirited character who rebels against patriarchal constraints through her hijab. Transcultural Indian-Australian literature, nonetheless, displays a unique focus on entrenching a feminist discourse through the mother-daughter bond. The first rationale which comes to mind is the fact that the novel genre is itself a determinant of this rhetoric. Put differently, as the protagonist of a Young Adult fictional work, Amal is inclined to represent the typical features inherent in such a genre, chiefly being a rebellious, autonomous young persona who rejects adult interference and advice in her life, whereas Hannah and Maria-Cristina, protagonists of bildungsromans, tend to cling to the motherly bond which nurtures a child's life and identity. Yet, the reason for this dissimilarity between the Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian novelistic discourses is much more intricate than the nature of their genres. More particularly, as opposed to Amal's mother who emerges in the novel as a free, autonomous woman exerting a considerable will and power in her house, the ubiquitous presence of the mothers in both Indian-Australian novels and their common experience of the same oppressive circumstances make one wonder at the existence of a figure that may be labelled "the transcultural mother" as another distinctive feature of transcultural Indian-Australian novels. In point of fact, it is quite intriguing that both mothers are transmuted into a presence which dominates their daughters' narration, are more significantly subjected to the oppression perpetrated by husbands who at once represent a discriminatory patriarchal institution and an unyielding colonial system, that is, to a double colonization, and are eventually liberated by their daughters through the identificatory mother-daughter bond. Drawing on these attributes, it can be deduced that transcultural Indian-Australian literature is marked by the presence of the character of the "transcultural mother" who undergoes a double colonization just to be ultimately empowered by the main female *transcultural* protagonist – a daughter – who confers on her a discursive power ingrained in their mother-daughter bond. The contrivance of such a figure is probably intended to decolonize the historical conception of Indian women that has long constructed the latter as passive, double-colonized subjects, which once again underscores the agency and resistance typified in transcultural literature.

3. The Trope of the Transcultural Continuum

Transculture is explored in *The Historian's Daughter* and *Saudade* in a most composite and intricate pattern in the sense that not only is it tantamount to the cultural intersectionality of its Arab-Australian counterpart *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, but it goes a step further to link this discourse of cultural amalgamation to the concept of the "transcultural continuum" and to enmesh within it religious and linguistic confluences and spatial border crossings as well. In point of fact, coined by Epstein, the "transcultural continuum" is one of the key concepts in transcultural studies which designates "an all-inclusive, non-oppositional point of confluence, an overlapping of cultures, a 'fusion of horizons' in Hans-Georg Gadamer's (1975, p. 273) terms, where one cannot really distinguish what belongs to one culture and what belongs to another" (Dagnino, "Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 4). As such, Epstein's continuum transcends the mere notions of liminality, interstitiality, and in-betweenness and acquires a liberatory prerogative as it redeems the individual from the prison house of a "single traditional culture" and of "any newly acquired one" (Dagnino, "Comparative Literary Studies" 6). In the light of this, it can be theorized that the uniqueness of Murphy's transcultural continuum, much like that of Peres da Costa in *Saudade* as will be expounded later, stems from its centeredness not only on cultural formations but also on the *crossings* of linguistic and religious borderlines.

First, in conjunction with the individual Anglo-colonial, postcolonial, and feminist identities that delimit her transculturality, Hannah's transcultural identity formation is finalized through her (re)-configurations of the cultural dynamics within which she was born and within which she has grown up, that is, the Indian, Persian, and Australian cultures, in a confluential fashion that blurs the boundaries between these and subverts their so-assumed self-enclosure, positioning her cultural selfhood on a transcultural continuum. When it comes to her relationship to the Indian culture, a legacy which partially defines her Anglo-*Indian* father and her *Indo*-Persian mother, Hannah displays clues of affiliation to its cultural precepts. At the very beginning of the novel, Hannah, as a child, describes the atmosphere prevailing in their family house in Devnagri: "There were so many of us, so many relatives and strays in that large house with high ceilings […] Aunties, uncles and cousins came and went […]" (Murphy, *The Historian* 17). Near the end of the novel, Hannah, as an adult, portrays again the aura in her house in Perth: "My brothers and their girlfriends dropped in after work, and the house filled with voices and the clatter of teacups in the kitchen. […] The Historian visited, a little too often" (179). A comparison between the first and the second family auras unearths the Indian cultural traits to which Hannah was introduced as a child and which she continues to uphold as an adult, to wit, the strength of the Indian family bonds and hospitality (Scroope). As a child, Hannah's portrayal of the house as a "large" space "with high ceilings" indicates that this place is spacious enough to welcome the extended family members and relatives and to serve the rhetoric of hospitality which the Magician strives to preserve. Even as Hannah leaves her Indian homeland to Australia and becomes an autonomous woman, she still clings to these cultural attributes. More particularly, the frequent visits of her father, her brothers, and their girlfriends reproduce the coming and going of aunties, uncles, and cousins and, hence, point to the preservation of the strong family bonds while the "voices and the clatter of teacups in the kitchen" are an emulation of the hospitality which used to take place in the Magician's kitchen. Accordingly, Hannah identifies with the values regulating her Indian mother culture even if in a highly individualistic foreign country. Additionally, talking about Indian identity is never complete without broaching food: "Discursively the terms by which 'Indianness' is imagined almost always mobilizes a culinary idiom; more often than not food is situated in narratives about racial and ethnic identity as an intractable measure of cultural authenticity" (Mannur 3). This signifies that the Indian culinary realm is elevated into a marker of Indian identity, be it individual or collective. Such is the case with Hannah whose Indianness in Australia concretizes in her expertise in the Indian culinary realm. Beside her recurrent mention of cooking curry, a quintessential Indian gastronomic item, Hannah's first anxiety upon her entry into their new house in Australia issues from the lack of Indianness in the creative space of the kitchen, thus her rush to suffuse it with the Indian cultural presence:

> I moved a tattered cookbook titled *Budget Meals for Australians* out of the way before leaning my elbows on the benchtop. […] I had no idea what to do with parsley and rosemary. 'Where can I get some cumin, coriander, and turmeric, Aunty Frankie?' I asked.
>
> […] The Asian shop in Northbridge smelled like the Magician's kitchen. I bought five kinds of dal and basmati rice as well as cumin, coriander, turmeric, chili and salt. (Murphy, *The Historian* 104)

Initially, Hannah's moving of the Australian culinary book "out of the way" represents a symbolic rejection of and alienation from the Western cuisine. This is similarly opined through her distantiation from "parsley" and "rosemary," two signifiers associated with the Australian space throughout Hannah's narrative. Instead, she seeks to fill the space with "cumin," "coriander," and "turmeric." These spices, which mark almost every Indian meal, can be regarded as metonymic fragments of the Indian cuisine and, therefore, as markers of the Indian cultural identity. Hastening to purchase these together with five variants of the Indian dal and rice not only alludes to Hannah's expertise and deft performativity in the realm of the Indian culinary culture but also bespeaks her eagerness to render her existence in Australia as teeming with emblems of the Indian culture.

However, being a transcultural protagonist, Hannah is not trapped in the shackles of monoculture but rather crisscrosses and intermingles manifold cultures within her reticulate self, including the Persian culture. Albeit the Persian culture is a prerogative she inherits from her mother, her affiliation to it is by no means passive but is rather undertaken in conformity with the rudiments of transculture, i.e. choice and agency. Specifically, Hannah *chooses* to highlight the Persian cultural identity whenever she senses that the latter, be it hers or someone else's, is critically liable to subversion or dissolution. As far as the Persian culture is concerned, Hannah is singled out of her brothers, for she has been secretly endowed with a second name, Maryam, by the Magician, the transcultural implications of which will be belabored in the following pages. Such a name is pivotal to Hannah's identity configuration in that it can be construed as a repository of the Muslim Persian cultural identity which the Magician chooses to pass to her and which she willingly and proudly embraces. This proneness of Hannah to take pride in her cultural selfhood is evidenced in her transition from her English name to her Persian name when she introduces herself in Iran: "'You can call me Maryam,' I said" (131). Hannah's choice to bring her Persian name to surface in the Iranian context is an acknowledgement of her belonging to the Persian culture and a publicization of her affiliation to her maternal culture. Nevertheless, when Hannah the child discovers the lies and deception of her mother's Iranian relative, Sohrab, she bursts with wrath as he pronounces her Persian-Muslim name: "Don't call me that, you … you liar. Don't use my mother's name for me – ever" (114). Through her prohibitive statement, Hannah establishes a link of causality between Sohrab's lies and her preclusion of him from articulating her Muslim-Persian name, tacitly pointing to her conviction that his lies will blemish the purity of the Persian cultural identity which she conceives of as the idealized blessing of her mother. In addition, recurring in the vast majority of Indian literary works and personifying the strictly traditional Indian culture, the "aunties" who occupy Hannah's childhood house rise as authoritative figures that spare no effort to denigrate non-Indian others and even hybrid or hyphenated Indians like the Historian and his children. It follows that when Hannah hears their rejection of Sohrab, she agentially speaks back to them: "The aunties said he […] needed to be among his own people. […] It was time Sohrab went back – after all, he couldn't stay with us forever and if he wasn't studying what was he doing?

[…] The Magician put her sketchbook down with a thump when we repeated what we'd heard. […] 'Hannah told them we are his people,' Gloria's arm circled mine" (33). Audaciously responding to the aunties despite her young age, Hannah refuses to remain silent while bearing witness to the aunties' exclusionary processes and assumes instead agency and a voice of her own. That is to say, through her statement that she and her brothers are Sohrab's people, she does not only deconstruct the aunties' exclusionary discourse vis-à-vis Sohrab but also implies her cultural hybridity and her transcendence of her Anglo-Indian identity to assume a Persian selfhood. As such, she simultaneously crosses cultural borders and disentangles Sohrab's identity from the discourse of cultural othering by culturally aligning herself to Persianness. At last, from the onset of the novel to its end, the image of the Magician's reading of Matthew Arnold's poem *Sohrab and Rustum* remains quite vivid in Hannah's recollections. Narrating the epic of a Persian king and his son, the poem becomes a metaphor for the Persian culture and history, that is, for the Persian identity, manifesting, thus, as a constant reminder of the Magician's cultural identity. When Hannah meets her mother at the end of the novel after many years of separation and tries to embrace her, she senses an unintelligible awkwardness and shallowness supervening in their physical and psychological encounter, yet once Hannah recites an excerpt from the Magician's cherished poem, their bodily and emotional mother-daughter bond is restored. Indeed, Hannah's articulation of the poem is an assertion not only of the Magician's Persian culture but also of her own affiliation and identification with this identity discourse. By so doing, Hannah forms a point of suture between her selfhood and the Magician's Persianness.

Furthermore, the Australian culture is aggregated in the transcultural network of Hannah's identities and is momentously exemplified in her cultural rites of passage. When adducing rites of passage, the first scholar to come to mind is Arnold van Gennep who pinpoints three rites of passage in an individual's "life-crisis" and subsidiary change from one socio-cultural state to another: separation, transition, incorporation (Gennep vii). Hannah's rites of passage into the Western culture which informs the Aussie society start with her "rite of separation" from her Indian culture. In accordance with this, it is worth elucidating that transculture presupposes a process of deterritorialization and separation from one's own home culture, but such a detachment does by no means signify a disavowal of one's cultural and home origins. On the contrary, as Epstein postulates, "Origins are essential, but the purpose of culture is not to affirm them, but to go away from them, to become a river not a dam" ("Transculture" 341). This suggests that in order to counter the essentialist views and the fixed conceptions of identity and being, transculture entails at once a recognition of one's origins and a "movement beyond" these. This applies to Hannah who, though identifying with her Indian culture, transcends it by separating herself from its values. More particularly, by leaving her father's house in Australia to live with her brother Clive and his girlfriend, defying the Historian's desire to keep his children united in the family house (Murphy, *The Historian* 68), Hannah separates herself from the Indian cultural expectations which require a "good" daughter to live in her parents' house and to take care of her aging parents (Evans et al. 59). Hannah goes as far as to leave her brother's home and to share a flat with her friend Anya after the latter persuades her: "This is what girls do. They share flats […]" (Murphy, *The Historian* 79). By consenting to her friend's offer, Hannah embarks on her second rite of passage, the "rite of transition," wherein she is in a liminal position in the sense that in the Indian culture, a decent and "honorable" girl would live with her parents or close family members rather than live on her own with a non-Indian "stranger," while in the Australian culture such a situation is too normal to be considered typically Aussie. Thereby, she is neither a typically traditional Indian nor a quintessentially cool Aussie. Still and all, Hannah's cultural mobility culminates in her "rite of incorporation" into the Australian culture as she responds positively, after an initial brief refusal, to her Aussie boyfriend Gabriel's request to live with him: "At the door to the shed, I stopped Gabriel […]

‘Okay,’ I said. ‘I’ll move in with you. [...]’” (94). The mere acceptance to live with her boyfriend is an alienation from the Indian culture, an adoption of the Australian cultural values, and a fulfilment of her incorporation into Aussieness. In keeping with this, Hannah herself is well aware of her cultural transgression: “By Australian standards I was an independent young woman with a steady boyfriend and a great job. By Indian standards I was an immoral young woman living in sin with a foreigner” (116). Hannah’s disclosure mirrors her multiperspectival cultural approach which interprets her conducts in different cultural lights. That is to say, from an Indian outlook, she has transgressed and moved beyond the borderlines of the Indian culture, violating the ethics of decency, but from an Australian stance, she is the paradigm of an Aussie liberal and autonomous woman, which occasions her incorporation into the purview of Western cultural normalcy. It is also quite evident that Hannah’s internalization of the Australian culture is to be noticed through her choice of an Aussie prototype to be her future partner as portrayed in their first encounter: “He laughed, eyes crinkling at the corners, his voice filling spaces left by an absent mother, sister, country […] He seemed so foreign. Everything about him […] everything felt foreign” (75). The items which Hannah enumerates – mother, sister, country – exude the set of identity markers that are associated with psychic absence and that, alone, are no longer tenable for her transcultural self-definition as they solely lay stress on her origins. On the opposite side emerges Gabriel’s voice as a cultural identifier that fills Hannah’s inner void – the outcome of the collapse of the traditional markers of her identity – with the cultural rhetoric it conveys. This is authenticated through her emphasis on his foreignness, i.e. Aussieness, which reveals that this cultural newness has not only attracted her to Gabriel but has also supplanted her psychic losses.

Laying the foundation for Hannah’s transculturality, these cultural amalgamations and crisscrosses cannot be transfigured into a transcultural continuum unless they no longer appear as distinct self-enclosed entities with clear-cut boundaries and unless they conflate in Hannah’s selfhood. This transcultural condition symbolically unfolds in the conversation between Hannah, as a naïve child still unaware of her selfhood, and Sohrab: “I’d had enough of my mongrel ancestry and people arguing over who we really were. ‘Do I now go around telling people I’m Anglo-Iranian instead of Anglo-Indian?’ ‘No, Maryam.’ Sohrab started walking with me towards the pond. ‘Say you are unique – you are a world citizen […]’” (60). In response to Hannah’s ontological query kindled by the identity dilemma of Anglo-Indians, Sohrab characterizes Hannah as a “unique […] world citizen.” Not only does such a characterization reproduce the condition of transculture by binding Hannah to a universal scope, transcending as such the trappedness of society, nation, and ethnicity, but it reterritorializes her in a culturally all-inclusive space, a utopian space wherein she belongs to all the worldly cultures at once and embraces a rhizomatic identity, i.e. the space of the transcultural continuum. As the narrative progresses, it becomes obvious that it is riveted on a singular space that haunts Hannah’s childhood and adulthood: the space of the library. The centrality of this space to the symbolic significations within the novel can be discerned in its systematic rather than haphazard presence in the novelistic text in the sense that, in Hannah’s childhood, her revered abode and her safe haven is the library, and in her adulthood, the work milieu of her “great job,” as she describes it, is again the library. On this account, passages about the moments Hannah spends, alone or with Gloria, in this space pervade her narration and unravel the nexus between her and the library as specifically betokened by one particular passage:

> Three new hardcover books had appeared in the library, and it looked like someone wanted to keep them hidden. Unlike the conquistador books and Grandfather’s diaries, these were green. […] I spent afternoons in the library on my own, when the Historian was away. I memorized the order in which the books were laid out, shuffled them around to test myself and put them back as I found them. (39)

The meticulousness with which Hannah handles the books, including her awareness of the colors of books and her memorization of their arrangement, can be interpreted as rites of identification with these. That is to say, the close bond she has developed with the books shows that these are more than objects for Hannah; indeed, they are accounts of her identity. Symbolically speaking, books are chronicles of different times and cartographies of different spaces; that is to say, they are chronotopic markers of different identities. Therefore, by identifying with them through her own rites, Hannah becomes, to use Dagnino's own definitional terms of the transcultural protagonist, "the outlier" who "ends up feeling he/she belongs to everything" ("Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 6). This means that Hannah ends up belonging to all the cultures and identities hypostatized in these books or rather in the space of the library epitomic of the realm of the transcultural continuum to which she remains loyal as she pursues her job in another territory – Australia. Near the end of the novel, Gabriel underlines Hannah's belonging to a transcultural continuum as he confides to her: "What you're going to do next is [important]. And I'd like to be part of that, if you'll let me. Many rivers to cross and all that" (215). By signaling the possibility of Hannah's future river crossings, Gabriel is metaphorically making allusion to the open-endedness and dynamicity of her cultural border crossings, whereas his implementation of the vague expression "all that" intimates the feature of the "all-inclusiveness" of the transcultural continuum. As if on cue, the call for boarding on their plane, after Gabriel's statement, is articulated in three languages (215), which reverberates a fragment of Hannah's open transcultural continuum.

In the same fashion, the transcultural identity of the protagonist in *Saudade* is built on the fluid and dynamic crossing of cultural boundaries according to the logic of Epstein's "transcultural continuum." On this account, Maria-Cristina's transcultural mode of identification pervades her narrative discourse which she turns into an assemblage of cultural culinary items, each of which is semiotically related to a particular facet of her existence. At the outset, Maria-Cristina portrays how Ifigênia prepares the quintessential Portuguese dessert *papos de anjos* to serve to their guest Dona Angela, affiliating as such the Portuguese culinary culture with her social existence. Subsequently, the Angolan food is added to the semiotic culinary tableau pictured by Maria-Cristina, for she establishes a parallelism between her eating of the Angolan *funje* "sweetened with molasses" and Ifigênia's fixing of her braids for school (45). This traditional Angolan gastronomic signifier becomes symbolically associated with the intellectual and epistemic development of the young Maria-Cristina. At last, Maria-Cristina savors *cafrael*, a popular icon of the Goan cuisine, along with Caetano, contemplating how both are "orphans of Empire" (87). Caetano is the child of a Danish father and a Mozambican mother. After his mother's death and his father's return to Copenhagen, he is raised in a Lourenço Marques orphanage and is then brought to Maria-Cristina's home as a child servant some years before her birth. It follows that Maria-Cristina does not merely share with Caetano her Goan culinary legacy but the legacy of the anguish triggered by Portuguese colonialism as well. It is also worth mentioning that each of these cultural items, the *papos de anjos*, *funje*, and *cafrael*, is respectively associated with a period of Maria-Cristina's growth: her early childhood, her transitional period of school, and her adolescence. Taking all these points into consideration, it can be extrapolated that Maria-Cristina's identity becomes a transcultural continuum wherein all these cultures conflate and coexist dialogically. In like manner, she amalgamates in her discourse the Portuguese song "Falling in Love" of Sergio Godinho, the political song "Monagambe" of the Angolan singer Rui Mingas, and the *dekhni*, a Goan popular folk dance, which undergirds the all-inclusive, overlapping, manifold, and confluent aspects of her transcultural continuum.

4. A Transcultural Bonus: Linguistic, Religious and Spatial Transgressions

Delving deeper into the intricacies of transcultural identity unveils that, in Murphy's *The Historian's Daughter,* transculturality is constructed through the protagonist's amalgamation and crossing of the religions that are contiguous with her ontological identity. This is exhibited early in the novel through her *names*: "Gloria […] told me I was lucky to have a Muslim name as well. 'When you grow up you can be whoever you want to be, but I'm always going to be stuck with the name chosen by the Historian.'" (8). Given that one's name imparts much about one's identity, Hannah's possession of two names – Hannah and Maryam – attests to the double allegiance and cultural multilayeredness of her identity. While the name "Hannah" is affiliated to the Christian background of the Historian, the name "Maryam" bears an Islamic signification that derives from the Magician's faith. Hence, the protagonist's multifaceted onomastic attribute incarnates an intersection between the Christian and Islamic faiths, positioning her at a religious crossroads. Also, by assuring her that she can be "whoever [she] want[s] to be," Gloria foreshadows Hannah's power of border crossing and of the agential choice of her identity components. More significantly, Hannah's transculturality is religiously rendered through her hybridized religious position in the sense that Christianity, Islam, and Hinduism all overlap in her self. Christianity, the Historian's religion, censors Hannah's behavior and acts as a spiritual guide that enables her to discern right from wrong as exemplified in her mental objection to her aunt's lying on account of the Christian teachings with which she has been inculcated: "I wondered if Rani's tongue would turn black at the lie she had just told. I […] wasn't allowed to lie. Lies make our tongues go black and put black spots on our souls. We knew that from Sunday school with Sister Angelina" (38). In the same vein, Hannah aggregates Islam, her mother's faith and culture, into her religious configuration not only through her veneration of her Muslim name, as has been exhibited through her fury at Sohrab's use of it, but also through her Islamic religious praxis: "[The *maulvi*] used to come to our house once a week when we were younger. We chanted sections of the Qur'an with him, following his finger as it moved across the page. We couldn't read Arabic, having learned by rote everything we were supposed to" (47). Hannah's reading of the Koran and her memorization of some of its sections, even if she does not understand Arabic, testifies to her openness to Islam and to her subconscious crisscrossing of the religious requisites that underlie her parental legacies. At last, Hannah steps into the Hindu sphere of her aunt Rani as she contemplates the latter’s room: “The framed Ganesh on the wall by the window appeared to be looking straight at me, questioning my acquisitiveness when my aunt had so little, and I was ashamed” (18). Hannah’s encounter with Ganesh, one of the most idolized deities in the Hindu pantheon, betokens her religious fluidity. In other words, her attribution of a reproachful character on Ganesh and her ensuing feeling of shame are symptomatic of her deference vis-à-vis this deity and, therefore, of her religious mobility and border crossing.

Similarly, a close reading of *Saudade* clearly unearths a recurrent presence of the leitmotif of religion in Maria-Cristina’s discourse, which implies her firm identification with religion but not in the conventional mode. Put differently, despite her being raised by her parents in a Christian fashion and attending a Christian institution, the Sisters of St Joseph school, Maria-Cristina’s transculturality instigates her to cross borders between religions, reconciling their disparities and incongruences. Probably, to make this idea more fathomable, it is of the essence to examine her vision after her condemnation of Dias as an invader and the teacher’s wrathful castigation and punishment of her, especially that visions unleash the psychological and psychic nuclei of the self:

> It was not a vision worthy of beatification but it stopped me as I imagine the three children ambling, their stomachs grumbling with hunger, were stopped in the valley of Cova da Iria […]. The vision involved the [native] mistress of the husband of the teacher from Coimbra. I imagined her sitting on the porch of a house in a quiet valley near the Cuanza River. It was *bruxa* to cut your nails after dark, as the clippings would fly into the air unseen and blind your enemy, and that is what the mistress of the husband of the teacher from Coimbra was doing as she sat on the porch with the mist rising. (55-56)

Aside from the postcolonial tenets embedded in this vision, religious implications are subtly prevalent and lucid from the very outset in the sense that “the three children” in the valley of Cova da Iria point to the religious story in which the Virgin Mary is said to have made several apparitions to three shepherd children in the valley of Cova da Iria and asked them to pray for personal and world peace (J. Bennett). By mingling the presence of the Christian native woman who stands for the African natives with the sacred Christian story in her vision, Maria-Cristina elevates the native woman to a state of veneration and sacredness. By so doing, she does not only dismantle the ideological construction of Christianity as a discursive mechanism paving the way for imperial intents, but she also liberates Christianity from the essentialism of Eurocentrism as an enactment of the liberatory aspect of her transcultural identity. She goes further to bridge religious boundaries by turning the native woman into a locus where Christian views and Portuguese-African spiritual beliefs are paralleled as she is at once "a Jehovah's Witness" (Peres da Costa 54) and a *bruxa*, a term for Portuguese-African witchcraft. In this sense, Maria-Cristina concocts a religious line of flight of her own, one in which religion and superstition prevail side by side in an Angolan-Portuguese harmony. Such a dialogization of spiritual differences does not stop here, for Maria-Cristina adds to the religious line of flight she has traced a transcultural dimension wherein her spiritual identity becomes founded on a dialogized Angolan-Portuguese-Goan creed. She carries out such a discourse by way of decentering the Christian onomastic signification of her name in an attempt to give room to her Goan religious faith: "I thought, I should like to take that name, Shakuntala, rather than that of Saint Teresa, whose story I had been learning by heart in preparation for my Crisma. For I should feel more kinship with such a woman, born among birds, who escaped to a forest to raise her child alone in the wild, than one who had spent her life cloistered in a cell of a convent" (74). Through her predilection for the name of the heroine Shakuntala who figures in the Hindu book of the Mahabharata, Maria-Cristina at once identifies with the religion of Hinduism and decenters the Christian religion which the Portuguese have brought to their colonies. In other words, she transposes the center of discursive agency from Christianity to Hinduism through correlating the latter with the power and freedom embodied in Shakuntala while the former with confinement and constraint. Yet, Maria-Cristina's propensity for Hinduism does not stem from a religious essentialism on her part; rather, it is conditioned by her own personality. This suggests that in the process of her identity formation, she selects what fits her own psychological penchants and desires, which attests to the dynamic and borderless character of her identity. Thereby, Maria-Cristina redeems her Angolan-Portuguese-Goan faith from any hegemonic encroachment. Still and all, Maria-Cristina’s transcultural religious identity manifests in her discourse in a postcolonial fashion authenticating once again the fluid and everchanging nature of this mode of identity formation. More particularly, in the decisive day of her Crisma, that is, of the Catholic rites confirming her adherence to the Christian doctrine, Maria-Cristina founds her identity on a process of dialecticization of her colonial and postcolonial religious legacies. The choice of the day itself is symbolically momentous since the rites of her confirmation become indeed the rites of her passage from childhood into adolescence, a critical ontological stage wherein identity is constructed. This process can be grasped in the religious possessions Maria-Cristina acquires in her Crisma:

> She [my mother] presented me with a gold crucifix; her own mother had given the same to her on the day of her Crisma, she told me, and turned the pendant over to show me the *devanagari* signature of the old goldsmith from Goa, before fastening the chain round my neck … We took polaroids in the garden and Ifigênia gifted me a scapular that had a picture of Santa Teresa of Avila on one side and the Virgin Mary on the other. (71)

On the one hand, being a gift similar to the one her mother obtained decades ago, the crucifix becomes suffused with the mother’s past discourse and is, therefore, elevated into a religious legacy for Maria-Cristina. Additionally, being ornamented with *devanagari*, which is a variant of Indian writing, and being signed from Goa, the crucifix becomes a paradigmatic Christian carrier of the Goan cultural and spatial identities, that is, of the spirit of Goa. That is to say, Maria-Cristina’s golden crucifix becomes a religious incarnation of Goa – a former Portuguese colony – or more specifically a postcolonial religious legacy. On the other hand, Maria-Cristina is offered in the same day a scapular by her intimate servant Ifigênia. This item is at once a Christian sign as it bears in its folds the picture of the Virgin Mary and a carrier of the spirit of Santa Teresa of Avila, a Spanish saint. Correspondingly, Ifigênia's gift adds to Maria-Cristina's religious repertoire a Christian legacy which pertains to the culture of the Spanish Empire. As such, Maria-Cristina's transculturality is further enhanced by dialecticizing binary colonial and postcolonial icons into her very selfhood by means of her Christian faith.

Aside from the religious transgressions and confluences in the two Indian-Australian novels under study, another border-crossing movement crystallizes in the two oeuvres to inform the protagonists' transcultural mode of identification, namely linguistic border crossing. When it comes to the use of language as a crucial identificatory element in migration novels, the experience of multiple languages becomes epitomic of "a Bakhtinian heteroglossia" and destabilizes "doxa[30] as it is constantly set in motion, varied, and impurified through the double awareness of two or more languages" (Frank 20). This is the case of the transcultural novel in particular as it enmeshes language in an ongoing process of border crossing by fusing the polyphonous voices in the novelistic work and echoes, accordingly, the Bakhtinian conceptualization of the novel as "a cacophony of voices and languages" (Moslund 6). In the same groundwork, Dagnino posits that an indispensable distinctive feature of transcultural writing is the modelling of "[v]erbally empowered characters, fluent in more than one language" and immersed in a "[p]layful and creative engagement with the experience of foreign idioms, concepts, expressions" ("Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 7). This translingual character is exuded by Murphy's and Peres da Costa's protagonists who engage in crossings and amalgamations of variegated languages and whose narratives are punctuated with a salient resort to non-English words.

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[30] Doxa, often interchanged with the notions of "public opinion," "commonsense knowledge," "commonplace," and "stereotype," has been subjected to two central yet contrastive conceptualizations that can be identified in contemporary disciplines riveted on social interaction. The first dates back to Aristotle's Greek times and conceives of doxa as those opinions that "[appear] manifest and true to all, or to most of the people, or to the wise" (Amossy 371). The second approach to doxa is the one embraced in this chapter and dismantled by the power of translingualism and transculture. In this sense, doxa denotes "an uncritical discourse" that hinges on an "obsession with accepted ideas" and a "repetition devoid of thought" promoted by hegemonic apparatuses (369, 374). As such, it undermines the individual critical and creative thinking and results in alienation (369).

In *The Historian's Daughter*, Hannah is involved in a polyphonous experience of languages wherein she crisscrosses the languages that are coterminous with her being. More particularly, fascinated by her mother's esoteric language, Farsi, and by its motherly tone which brings peace to her (Murphy, *The Historian* 9), Hannah identifies with this language albeit she cannot speak it due to the Historian's rigorous cultural censorship. Her identification with her mother's linguistic legacy can be seen in her practice along with her sister Gloria, in their moments together, of some of the Persian words which the Magician has iterated. The two sisters' insistence on practicing Persian words symptomatizes their psychological internalization of this language. In other words, through their cognizance of the Historian's abhorrence of Farsi and yet their insistence on speaking it, Hannah and Gloria transfigure the Persian language into a token of their most cherished sisterly intimacy and privacy, of their close bond with their mother, and of their defiance of the Historian. Hannah goes beyond the mere verbal enunciation of some Persian words to develop the faculty of understanding some Persian meanings as in her visit to Iran: "The woman nodded and stroked my arm, murmuring things that reminded me of the Magician. I understood some of the words – *dokhtar*, the word for 'girl' or 'daughter' – and I absorbed both the magnitude of my self-inflicted journey and the kindness of the woman's words" (132). The narrator's ability to fathom "some of the words" and to translate the word "*dokhtar*" to English testifies to her translingual formations. Added to this, Hannah moves a step further to imply that her understanding of language operates on a deeper level. The parallelism she establishes between her "journey," symptomatic of her search for identity, and the "kindness of the woman's words" authenticates that her ability to "feel" the emotive function of Farsi is a marker of her selfhood and being.

Further, Hannah's translingualism manifests in her identification with her father's linguistic legacy as an Anglo-Indian, that is, with the English and Indian languages, as corroborated by Gloria: "The Magician told us to talk to [Sohrab] in English […]. 'But, Ammi,' Gloria said, 'we don't just speak English. We mix it up with Urdu and he gets confused […].' […] 'I can teach him some Urdu, if you like. Words like *saala* and *bewakoof*.'" (25). Gloria unearths her and Hannah's linguistic hybridity by pinpointing the linguistic mix that delineates their Anglo-Indian legacy. Hannah's mixing of the two languages points to a process of crossing and blurring of the borderlines of these two linguistic realms. Also, Hannah's offer to teach Sohrab Urdu rather than the English language requested by her mother and her selection from all the Urdu lexicon of the specific insults, "*saala* and *bewakoof*," can be construed as a rebellious act of assuming a linguistic power which derives from Urdu, marking the latter with momentum in a tacit endeavor to decenter the colonial language in her hybrid mix – English. Likewise, when Hannah is derided by the girls at her school, she gets herself into trouble by insulting a girl with a Hindi word which, as she confesses, "sounded so much worse" than its English equivalent (63). This Hindi insult is a linguistic act of rebellion and resistance which subverts the othering to which she is subjected. More significantly, Hannah's intentional choice of the Hindi word in lieu of its English counterpart to insult the girl and her awareness of the power nuances distinguishing the two bespeak her comprehension of the complex workings of language politics and her ability to select the elements that suit her selfhood from each language.

Hannah's linguistic transculturality culminates in her linguistic mobility catalyzed by her territorial mobility. Following her movement from India to Australia, her transcultural mode of identification is brought into play through her creative engagement with the Aussie accent which results in her acquisition of the latter as instantiated in her most meticulous elucidation of the linguistic mechanisms and processes transpiring in her mind:

> Acquiring an Australian accent was easy. As long as I populated my speech with the same words other teens used, I fitted in. I stretched out my vowels and learned to be monosyllabic. I didn't finish my sentences, sulked when asked to do something, skipped homework and smoked with my cousins in the backyard. […] Watching TV helped my accent and vocabulary – the Channel Seven New ('Love you, Perth'), and *Neighbors* ('*Everybody needs good neighbors*'). […] I learned to say 'arvo' and 'too easy' and 'See ya later, alligator.' (110)

This passage demonstrates how far Hannah has become a typical transcultural protagonist through her linguistic proficiency and border crossing. Probing into Hannah's fastidious explanation reveals her movement to the deeper level of linguistic competence, which evidences that her Aussie accent is not a superficial veneer of which she partakes but is an integral attribute skillfully "acquired" rather than "learnt." Besides, the genuineness of Hannah's Australian accent is attested by her approach to it not only as a linguistic phenomenon but as a cultural phenomenon as well. This materializes in the intersection of language and the Australian teenage culture, forming an Aussie teen language which, as she believes, allows her to fit in, to become Aussie. Put differently, not finishing her sentences like the other teens, along with the other teen behavioral patterns, and learning vocabulary through the Australian media and culture industry enable Hannah to acquire the Aussie "language" as a cultural carrier. She even moves to an advanced level of linguistic competence by learning the Australian slang exemplified by the expressions "arvo," which designates "afternoon or this afternoon," and "too easy," which signifies "no problem," which presents another clue of Hannah's transcultural engagement in the Aussie language acquisition rather than learning and, by implication, of her translingualism and transculturality.

By the same token, in Peres da Costa's work, the narrator's transcultural identity engages language in its turn in an ongoing process of border crossing by fusing the polyphonous voices in this novelistic work. This is the case with Maria-Cristina who is dubbed "Cleopatra" by a Kimbundu and Portuguese speaking *bruxa*. Such a label is not a haphazard denomination; rather, it is a reminder of Cleopatra's ability to speak a multiplicity of languages, which grants

Maria-Cristina a “translingual” status. Put differently, throughout her narrative discourse, Maria-Cristina manages to internalize an array of languages into her identity. To begin with, the protagonist identifies strongly with the Portuguese language, for she has been brought up by her parents, especially her “Papá,” in the Portuguese fashion to the extent that even their servant Ifigênia “had been told to speak Portuguese in [her] company” (Peres da Costa 24). This is evidenced through the Portuguese words which Maria-Cristina every now and then engrafts in her narrative discourse, to wit, “Papá,” “beijos,” “mestiça,” “azulejo,” “fidalgos” and most importantly the novel’s title “Saudade,” a Portuguese term that the narrator translates as “a lostness, a feeling of not having a place in the world” (92). Besides, Maria-Cristina momentously claims, “Konkani was a tongue that might have belonged to a people from whom I was also descended […] My mother moved fluently between Portuguese and Konkani” (15). Through her statement, Maria-Cristina traces her ancestral line, elevating Konkani into a Goan, ancestral linguistic legacy with which she identifies. In the same vein, taking into account that her childhood identity is inextricably intertwined with her mother’s, Maria-Cristina’s awareness of her mother’s heteroglot linguistic hybridization and dialogic crossing of the Portuguese and Konkani boundaries is transmogrified into a decentered “linguistic continuum” which she incorporates in her transcultural identity. Eventually, even though Maria-Cristina does not understand Creole, she confers on it a considerable magnitude so that it becomes part and parcel of her psyche and, therefore, of her identity: “[the postboy] spoke in Creole. I did not imagine that he was giving voice to a private thought, derisive or mocking, one that he in any case did not care to share with me; I was happy to hear him speaking, to hear this other voice with its unusual cadences…” (24). Associating the Creole tongue with a “private” level bestows on it a psychic and psychological depth, while highlighting its unreachability and unintelligibility marks it with power and supremacy, which decenters the hegemonic dominance of the colonial language – Portuguese. In addition, Maria-Cristina’s psyche is reinvigorated through her psychological connection with this "other" voice and through the emotional bond she develops with this new language, which annexes this different, carnivalesque tongue to her transcultural linguistic selfhood. To top it all, Maria-Cristina's transcultural verbal empowerment rises to a crescendo when she embarks on a bricolage of her own language: "I sang to myself, not in any language that had been taught me, not a lullaby for a messiah but a song of my own improvisation, maybe discordant, but a song more comforting than real words might have offered" (50). By concocting her own language, Maria-Cristina decenters all languages and disrupts any possible linguistic hegemony. In so doing, she gives birth to an anti-essentialist, heteroglot, and rhizomatic language through which she dialogizes the manifold languages encompassed in her transcultural identity.

Finally, though quite identical to *The Historian's Daughter* in its demystification of the dynamics of transcultural identity, the uniqueness of *Saudade* is ascertained in its focus on an aspect which is seldom foregrounded in Indian-Australian literature: space. However, space here is by no means approached in its conventional and most common conceptualizations, but it rather crystallizes in a novel transcultural approach to the notion of home. In this regard, it is worth mentioning that transcultural identity hinges on its disruption and destabilization of the traditional notions of "home," a condition which Sissy Helff posits as conferring on a novel the feature of transculturality when present in its discourse ("Shifting Perspectives" 83). Accordingly, in the light of its pro-creative, decentering conception of the world, transcultural identity entails a decentering of the traditional notion of home. In fact, such a mode of identity formation is largely carried out in *Saudade* by Maria-Cristina who transmutes "home" into an open-ended concept. For her, home is a concept which she never grasps, an entity beyond her reach both during her childhood and when she reaches maturity. This is evidenced when, told by her mother as a child that the Portuguese Dona Angela is homesick, she wonders: "Homesick for what […] for where?" (Peres da Costa 22). In her interrogation, Maria-Cristina makes a lucid transition from “what” to “where,” which signifies that she starts to realize that homesickness is a feeling affiliated to a space, to home. Yet, despite her knowledge that Portugal is the homeland of Dona Angela, she still questions the “where” to which this home-sickness is directed, refusing to acknowledge a nexus between the homeland and home and destabilizing, hence, the classical diasporic conception of the homeland as home. Even when Maria-Cristina grows up and develops a more advanced worldview, she still ponders the problematic of home: “I wondered what home may mean and what different routes one might take to get there” (65). In other words, home remains for her an unintelligible realm, an unfinalizable construct, which challenges the fixed and absolute meanings which have been attributed to home in its traditional version. More importantly, Maria-Cristina’s choice of the word “routes” is quite redolent, in the context of migration literature, of “roots.” Such a choice can be best elucidated through McLeod’s astute remark that, in settings similar to Maria-Cristina’s, “[t]he grounded certainties of roots are replaced with the transnational contingencies of routes” (146). In the light of this statement, home from Maria-Cristina’s transcultural perspective becomes devoid of the conventional traits of fixity and stability and grows instead imbued with the features of mobility, fluidity and instability so that the quest for home as an immutable system of signification is never fulfilled. This very assumption is corroborated at the end of the novel, when Maria-Cristina examines her passport: “the date – August 15, 1958 – and place – Benguela – of my birth; Papá’s name and my mother’s maiden name … […]. My passport told a story of where I had come from, but nothing could tell me where I was going” (Peres da Costa 105). Indeed, her passport is a narrative of her roots in the sense that it subsumes her birthplace, Angola, her father’s name which is typically Portuguese – Henrique– and her mother’s maiden name which is Goan. Accordingly, Maria-Cristina’s identity becomes a combination of Angolan, Portuguese and Goan roots. However, her destination, symbolic of her journey home, is unknown, which implies that the destination of home remains unreachable, invariably on the move and which also suggests that her concept of home is not ingrained in any of her roots but is rather always "en route."

Overall, a scrutiny of the mechanics subsumed in the protagonists' transcultural constitution in *Does my Head Look Big in This?, The Historian's Daughter*, and *Saudade* uncloaks a similarity between the literatures they represent, as all of the three main protagonists reach an advanced stage of transculturality, the Arab-Australian literature through a narrativization of the full transcultural condition and the Indian-Australian literature through an enactment of the transcultural continuum. Nevertheless, these same mechanics reveal more difference than similarity between the two literatures. When it comes to the concern with the cultural formations underlying transcultural identity, the Arab-Australian novel, on one end, aggregates the construct of modern pop culture in its narrative in order to exude the overwhelming effect of culture industry on the Arab youth's identity and to insinuate that transculture entails cultural permeations of all kinds. Indian-Australian novels, on the other end, are not contented with the cultural state of affairs in their representation of transcultural identity but move beyond these to insert religious and linguistic border crossings, a polyhedric cultural condition which Murphy underscores through her assertion that in India, "hyphenated identities multiply when religions, languages and cultures merge" ("Inner City"). This transcendental literary movement which differentiates Indian-Australian literature from its Arab-Australian equivalent can be rationalized by the nature of the characters' mobility in each type of literature. More specifically, while Abdel-Fattah's protagonist never departs from Australia and never embraces a home but the one wherein she has been born and raised, Murphy's and Peres da Costa's personae, Hannah and Maria-Cristina, move across many spaces. While Hannah moves from India to Australia and Iran at a certain point, Maria-Cristina moves from Angola to India. In other words, in the Arab-Australian case, Amal detaches herself from her taken-for-granted identity markers and engages in a psychological and cultural dialogue with the ideological and cultural discourses prevalent in her society in search for her transcultural identity, thereby undertaking an imaginary and psychological movement. Contrariwise, both Hannah and Maria-Cristina are physically and territorially abstracted from their birthlands and brusquely shoved in unfamiliar lands. This initiates a categorical deterritorialization from all that is familiar and a subsequent reterritorialization wherein the cultural, religious, and linguistic processes of identification emerge as necessary corollaries of the territorial uprootedness and severance from one’s origins. It follows that each literary variant implements, in its grappling with the process of transcultural identity formation, mechanisms that differ according to the protagonists’ degree of detachment from their homelands and origins. This justifies the absence of the concept of space in the Arab-Australian transcultural novel as opposed to a noticeable concern with it in Indian-Australian transcultural literature as instantiated by Peres da Costa who revisits the traditional and classical conceptualization of space and introduces instead a new vision of space epitomized in its constitution as a deferred, open-ended *home*. In addition, Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures differ in their approaches to religion. On the one hand, Indian-Australian literature deflects from the view of religion as a fixed, homogenizing ideology by opting for a conception which crisscrosses various religions in a confluential pattern, generating a religious continuum. On the other hand, Arab-Australian literature preserves commitment and devotion to one religion yet accommodates its approach to it to transculturalism by rendering religion as a liberatory, agential fountainhead that nurtures and consolidates the protagonist’s transcultural precepts and ushers her in the process of transcultural identity building.

All these tenets considered, it can be inferred that Abdel-Fattah’s *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, Murphy’s *The Historian’s Daughter*, and Peres da Costa’s *Saudade* are typical dramatizations of the nascent concept of transcultural identity. More particularly, they move beyond the normalcies of the classical notions of exilic, postcolonial, and diasporic identities characterizing diasporic literature and delve instead into the intricacies of the transcultural mode of identification. As such, they open up more liberatory, discursive spaces for negotiating new subject positions and granting agency and voice to the figure of the migrant or rather postmigrant whom the traditional patterns of identity generally confine to the clichéd status of the victimized, muted subaltern, especially in such a global, transnational, and postcolonial narrative frameworks as the ones delineated in these novels. It is in fact in these empowering, resistant contexts more than anywhere else that transcultural literary works in Australia like *Does My Head Look Big in This?*, *The Historian's Daughter*, and *Saudade* make themselves powerfully heard in their attempt to write back to the major literary canon.

Conclusion

This thesis expatiates on the vexed question of identity in the Anglophone Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures, contributing as such to the current reflections on diaspora literature, in general, and on the latter's intensive preoccupation with identity, in particular. In this regard, through its detailed study of a number of literary works contrived by Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian authors, the thesis proposes the existence of three paradigms of identity which underlie the literary works pertaining to the studied diasporas. More particularly, it contends that each of the two literary realms features exilic, diasporic, and transcultural identities which crystallize in variegated patterns and involve a myriad of markers and determinants. Enacting a juxtapositional perspective which aims at unveiling similarities and differences, this dissertation goes further to demystify the way in which each mode of identification is explored in each diasporic literary framework.

The scholarly significance of this thesis emanates from its attempt to extensively address two largely uncharted and sidelined diaspora literatures in the Australian academic sphere and elsewhere. Taking into account the unjustified critical marginalization of Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures, the very literary venues wherein the study of the thesis operates enable it to play a part in filling this academic gap. In so doing, it strives to give voice to these disregarded literary works and to destabilize the canonization first of Australian "Anglo-Saxon" literature and second of the overly foregrounded Arab-American, Indian-American, and Indian-British diaspora literatures which overshadow such nascent and marginal frameworks as those of the Arab and Indian diasporas in Australia.

Moreover, the academic relevance of this dissertation can be pinpointed in its involvement in simultaneously subjecting two different diaspora literatures to a literary analysis which interfaces with a theoretically interdisciplinary examination. Such a methodological perspective can be claimed to reveal the differences and similarities between these two ostensibly discrepant literary scenes. This is momentous in the sense that it averts the championing of an identity which draws on overgeneralizations biased to one context. Additionally, this comparison problematizes the already vexed issue of identity. In other words, it occasions a more comprehensive yet convoluted perception of the notion of Australian migrant identity. It entails the sketching out of a multiperspectival, architectonic image of Australia from the fragmented and synthesized outlooks of more than one diaspora. By unravelling the differences demarcating the two diasporas, this comparison also proscribes any endeavor to homogenize diaspora literature in Australia or to conceive of it as a monolithic corpus. Accordingly, it not only precludes the production of a uniperspectival epistemic body about diasporas in a fashion which is tantamount to the Orientalist production of knowledge on the Orient, but it also problematizes the conception of diaspora identity and literature, transvaluing these as heterogeneous, elusive constructs which cannot be subjected to any simplistic and impulsive inferences.

Further, the topical concern with identity inscribes the thesis within the burgeoning debates on identity in the diasporic context. Indeed, the nexus between diaspora literature and identity is inextricable, yet identity needs to be disentangled from its classical and fixed conceptualizations as these are no longer tenable in the turbulent state of affairs marking the contemporary diasporic condition. In line with this, Nikos Papastergiadis urges the necessity of a reevaluation of the politics of identity in migratory contexts since, in the heart of the transnational settings of migration, the traditional and fixed conceptions of identity are neither tenable nor suitable for the accurate study of contemporary cultural encounters. In the light of this, this thesis engages in rethinking migratory *identities* through its commitment to the delineation of three modes of identification – exilic, diasporic, transcultural – for the purpose of exhaustively covering the nuances of identities in the diasporic context. Each of these identities is envisaged as typifying dynamicity and mutability, which destabilizes the traditionalist notion of identity centered on fixity and stability and symptomatic of a kind of essentialism.

Following these research frameworks, the thesis is thematically divided into three main parts; each part is devoted to the perusal of one of the three proposed patterns of identity. For the sake of juxtaposition and, by implication, of comparison, each part is further split into two major chapters, one allotted for the Arab-Australian literature, the other for its Indian-Australian equivalent. Drawing on the study of Abdel-Fattah's novel *Where the Streets Had a Name*, Sabawi's play *Tales of a City by the Sea*, and Ataya's poetry collection *Empty Shell*, the first chapter of the thesis elaborates on the conception of exile by the Arab-Australian authorial community, mainly by authors of Palestinian and Lebanese descent. The tragic situation in a Palestine subjected to the Zionist occupation and the wounds of the Lebanese Civil War justify these authors' preoccupation with exile. In this chapter, two main types of exile are showcased in order to reveal the diversity of the exilic experience in Arab-Australian literature: internal exile and external exile. On the one hand, the first version of exile transpires *inside* Palestine, portrays the exilic condition in this space as a traumatic experience undergone by "internally displaced" Palestinians, and underscores the multiplicity of its discursive manifestations, including the conditions of "trappedness," depersonalizing alienation, temporal exile, the alienation of childhood, trauma, and colonial reification. On the other hand, external exile is a condition of physical, psychological, and existential alienation which stems in the first place from the loss of the Lebanese homeland. The chapter goes further to clarify that by harping on the ramifications of exile, Arab-Australian authors purport to underline the centrality of resistance and resilience in the construction of the exilic identity which they represent. The latter selfhood is constructed as an antidotal mode of identity (re)-configuration which incarnates survival and resistance to the draconian repercussions of exile. In the Palestinian case, this mode of identity hinges on an interplay between the key and omnipresent concepts of space and nation and the subsidiary notions of history, memory, and resistance. In the Lebanese case, these cannot be enacted since home, as a space and as a nation, is seen as no longer extant, which instigates the creative contrivance of an exilic identity rooted in an oneiric, cosmic space that symbolically functions as a "surrogate" home.

The second chapter, riveted on the analysis of Kalsie's play *Melbourne Talam* and of Gonsalves's short story "The Dignity of Labor," broaches the rationale behind the scantiness of the Indian-Australian literary works that instantiate the exilic experience. More significantly, it unveils that exile in the Indian-Australian experience can be ascertained in the social isolation and alienation and in the socio-economic, psychological, and psychic complications to which Indian migrants are subjected in Australia. These eventually lead to the collapse of one's psychic security and idealized "Australian dream." To overcome these migrants' identity crisis, the chapter points to the significance of implementing cultural, nostalgic, and religious markers of identity in order to edify an exilic identity that surmounts the demoralizing discontents of exile. Conversely, it is demonstrated that Indian-Australian literature not only conceives of exile as a bitter catalyst of exilic identity but also sets it forth as an identity *per se*. More specifically, the chapter evinces that exile can emerge as a liberatory *identity* which proffers dignity and value to subaltern categories, namely oppressed female migrants and people with disability.

Moreover, Yazbek's historical novel *Voices on the Wind*, which is at the core of analysis in the third chapter, gives prominence to a second type of identity, i.e. diasporic identity. Indeed, the chapter begins with a theoretical delineation of the key concepts of diaspora, diasporic identity, and diaspora literature. Subsequently, it authenticates that the uniqueness of Yazbek's novelistic discourse rises from its attempt to narratively chronicle the evolution of the conceptualization of diasporic identity. On this account, the chapter puts forward two models of diasporic identity. The first, epitomic of the early Lebanese diasporans in South Africa, accounts for the classical, bipolar model of diasporic consciousness and entails a double allegiance to the cultural and social formations framed by the homeland/hostland dichotomy. Yet, alongside these identity components is engrafted the variable of racial politics as an integral part of these migrants' history and brought into play through the notion of strategic essentialism. The second mode of diasporic self-definition, on the other hand, is predicated on the modern-era migratory experience of the Australian-Lebanese protagonist. On this score, she personifies the diasporic construct of "double consciousness" which engenders a more fluid, open-ended form of diasporic identity that concretizes in the dialogue between the present and the voices of the past, reverberating Hall's claim that the past continues to speak to the diasporic subject.

In the same vein, the fourth chapter equally zeroes in on the process of diasporic identity formation. Drawing on the analysis of Nandan's novel *Home after Dark*, this chapter probes into the convoluted Fijiindian-Australian frame of reference which coalesces three territorial sites, the Indian grandmotherland, the Fijian homeland, and the Australian hostland, in order to trace the diasporization of identity. This latter process emerges as an intricate discourse which entails a myriad of discursive mechanisms and notions. In this respect, it is corroborated that a triadic, hyphenated identity which unearths the complexity of the Fijiindian diasporic experience is entrenched. That is to say, the protagonist's sentience of her Indian ancestral cultural-religious aspects, her narration of a post-memorial history, and her reconnection with her ancestral space as a memory site all attest to her enactment of the first "force of identity," to use the author's parlance, that is, of the reconnection with India. It is also belabored that identity in the novel is further diasporized through the initiation of an interplay between the two concepts of critical memory and nostalgic memory, enabling the retrieval of a denied "organic connection" with the Fijian homeland. Added to this dyad is the third force of identity, videlicet, the new affinity to the Western host country. The chapter eventually propounds the idea that this nexus finalizes the negotiation of a dynamic Fijiindian-Australian *diasporic* identity through the establishment of an ambivalent relationship with the Austral space and through the encapsulation of a cultural hybridity that initiates a dialogue between the protagonist's three channels of identification.

At last, transcultural identity is examined in the fifth and sixth chapters of this dissertation. Beginning with a theorization of the concept of transculture/ality as a compulsory process to define the outlines of the transcultural realm, the fifth chapter carries out a close reading of the prototypal transcultural writing of Abdel-Fattah, *Does My Head Look Big in This?*. The critical and analytical study of this novel substantiates that the transcultural identity of the Arab-Muslim-Australian protagonist involves a plethora of determinants. The first of these is the agential deconstruction of the hegemonic discourses of patriarchy and Islamophobia which intercept the heroine's identity configuration but which she destabilizes respectively through the polysemous signifier of the veil and through her enactment of sundry discursive strategies, mainly transcultural humor, the dismantling of anti-Muslim stereotypes, and the appropriation of the West's othering rhetoric. In addition, interpreting this novelistic text in the light of transcultural theories reveals that the protagonist proceeds further in her articulation of her transcultural identity by dint of "transcultural constitution" whereby the Arab, Muslim, and Aussie cultures are no longer preserved as self-enclosed entities but are rather synthesized into an altogether new pattern of identification. On the other side, religion is depicted as a catalyst which, albeit underpinning the protagonist's alterity, ushers in her fulfillment and her liberation and upholds her transculturality. The eventual upshot is the achievement of a "full transcultural condition," that is, of the most advanced state of transculture.

Centered on the study of Murphy's novel *The Historian's Daughter* and of Peres da Costa's novel *Saudade*, the last chapter evidences that, much like in Arab-Australian literature, transcultural identity requires the dismantling of the hegemonic discourses present in the novels. Correspondingly, it expatiates on the deconstruction of colonial and patriarchal discourses in both novels through the characters' embodiment of an anti/postcolonial stance and of a significant interaction with what is suggested to be called "the transcultural mother." Still, the chapter adverts attention to the authorial accent in *The Historian's Daughter* on laying bare the crucial role of colonialism in shaping Indian cultural and historical identities. Thus, transcultural identity in this novel is displayed to reckon both colonial and postcolonial discourses as components of the protagonist's transculturality. The chapter moves further to uncover the two novelistic texts' illustration of the concept of the "transcultural continuum," a site wherein the protagonists' cultural identities – Indian, Persian, and Australian in Murphy's work and Goan, Angolan, and Portuguese in Peres da Costa's oeuvre – are fused so that no cultural realm remains clearly distinguished from the others. Yet, what singles out these Indian-Australian literary works from their Arab-Australian counterpart is their complementary incorporation of linguistic, religious, and spatial amalgamations that are contiguous with the protagonists' "dispatriation" in the process of building transcultural identity.

Taking all these tenets into consideration, it can be inferred that claiming a single Arab-Australian identity or Indian-Australian identity seems impertinent given the polyvocality of identities which prevail within each diaspora literature and given the wide array of identity markers offered in the processes of identity formation and negotiation. The concept of exile, for instance, is dynamized in the Australian migratory context, for while it entails a focus on the affinity between the homeland and the exiled subject in the Arab-Australian context, the homeland gives way to the hostland in this dual relation when it comes to the Indian-Australian case. This implies that Arab authors in Australia, the great majority being Lebanese and Palestinians as the ones subsumed in this thesis, are still psychologically and imaginatively dwelling in their Arab homelands and have never departed from them, whereas their Indian counterparts do not fail to exude a stronger propensity towards the hostland which figures prominently in their narratives. The Arab-Australian literary obsession with the homeland, which does not form a focal concern in the Indian-Australian literature, issues from the authors' conviction of their loss of their Palestinian and Lebanese homes, an absence which they strive to compensate for by inscribing their homelands within a literary rhetoric of presence in their works. The concept of exile is also topically dynamized in both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures. Put differently, both literatures endow exile with a dynamic tenor in the sense that while the Arab-Australian literature articulates its kaleidoscopic nature by diversifying its territoriality – internal and external exiles – and its realm of activity – psychological, psychic, and existential –, its Indian-Australian counterpart inserts economic and gender variables as determinants that shape the experience of exile in Australia and goes further to picture it at once at odd ends as oppression and as liberation.

All these differences considered, it can be stated that both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literary venues are, however, similar in the incentive framing their recourse to the leitmotif of exile in the sense that the latter is not explored as an end but rather as a means to confirm that the construction of an exilic identity presupposes the articulation of an exilic experience. In fact, paradoxically dynamic yet *contextually* fixed so as to surmount the psychic discontents of exile, exilic identity can be conceptualized as a mode of identification which ensues from the psychological and psychic predicaments immanent in the exilic condition and which hypostatizes resistance and survival against the psychic state of affairs in exile. Albeit a common denominator for both literatures, there is a discernible difference in their formulation of exilic identity. Viewed as contextually fixed, this identity hinges on the dynamics of space and nation in Arab-Australian literature while it derives its essence from the enactment of a nostalgia which commingles with a praxis ingrained in the Indian religion and culture in Indian-Australian literature. In addition to this, it can be deduced that exilic identity in the Indian diasporic context gives rise to epiphenomenal identities as “the liberatory exilic identity” which accommodates the subaltern experience in exile.

Furthermore, another identity prototype to be found in Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures is diasporic identity. The latter materializes in literary works that narrativize different times, spaces, and cultures and points to a mode of self-definition which involves a transcendence of the conventional dichotomies, typified chiefly in the homeland/hostland duality, and of the laments associated with classical conceptions of diaspora. It also hinges on a triadic configuration of the sites of hybridity and of the hyphen by intermingling discursive strategies ingrained in the constructs of liminality and in-betweenness. Indeed, this diasporic pattern of identity unearths the presence of much sameness between Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian diasporic authors despite the *prima facie* differences. Though they differ in their impetuses, both literatures share a proclivity to foreground the past as an indispensable marker of diasporic identity through a multifaceted recourse to its manifold mechanisms such as memory, postmemory, history, and the exploration of *lieux de mémoire*. It is true that this emphasis on the past is a feature which prevails in all diasporic writings, yet what singles out Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian diasporization of the past is the authors’ concern with rewriting and revisiting the histories of their ancestral diasporic communities, spotlighting as such the very juncture in which the authors’ diasporicity was predetermined. Another attribute which defines diasporic identity in both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literary realms is their tendency to embrace a multiplicity of territorial settings, adding the site of the grandmotherland to the dyad homeland-hostland as an emblem of their commitment to their ancestral pasts. It might also be noticeable that, in their approach to the past, the literature of both Arab and Indian diasporas in Australia exudes the authors’ interest in the notion of otherness and the key concepts coterminous with it like othering. Regardless of the difference in the ultimate position that each otherness occupies, the raison d’être of this focus on the concept is to bestow magnitude on the discourse of othering and on the radical differentiation of the politics of location into which diasporic subjects are forced, which evinces that perspectives on alterity and power politics are at the very core of the theorization of diasporic identity.

It can be further asserted that among the basic identity paradigms represented in Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literature is transcultural identity. The latter is noticeably tackled through the bildungsroman genre in the Indian-Australian case, whereas it is exposed in the Arab-Australian literature through the Young Adult fiction. Being a ground-breaking mode of self-definition, transcultural identity emerges as an unprecedented intersection of anti-essentialist discourses and as a culturally all-inclusive, agential pattern which feeds on the key concepts of transculture and transculturality. Drawing on the demystification of transcultural precepts in both Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures, it can be asseverated that their approach to transcultural identity unravels simultaneous convergence and divergence between the two. In point of fact, both literary variants display an inclination to choose female protagonists that harbor a strength of character and features of rebelliousness, individuality, and agency. This choice emanates in essence from the authors' desire to edify a feminist discourse which intends to disrupt and dismantle the hegemony of patriarchy, whether the latter operates from within the home culture, as is the case with most Indian-Australian works, or from within the host culture. Besides, the feminist character of this transcultural mode of identification is meant to build an authorial sisterhood which counters the Orientalizing discourse that surfaces every now and then in the Western literary canon, othering Arab and Indian women alike. Yet, the two literary trends in hand diverge in the discursive strategies they deploy in constructing this feminist transcultural discourse. While the Arab-Australian literature spares no effort in shedding light on the multilayered rhetoric of *individual* agency and resistance carried out by the transcultural heroine, the Indian-Australian literature toys with the concept of the “transcultural mother” to underline the paramountcy of the mother-daughter bond in constructing the feminist transcultural discourse.

Of greater importance is the focus of the two literary variants on positioning characters within an advanced stage of transculturality through their literary actualization of such metaphorical constructs as the “full transcultural condition” and the “transcultural continuum,” the essence of which is incarnated in their blurring of cultural borders and their dialogization of cultural differences. However, Indian-Australian literature diverges from its Arab-Australian counterpart in its narrativization of religious, linguistic, and spatial border-crossing dynamics. This transcendental literary movement which differentiates Indian-Australian authors from their Arab-Australian equivalent can be rationalized by the nature of the mobility inspected in each type of literature, that is, whether it is a radical deterritorialization or a psychological detachment from the homeland. Specifically, outright deterritorialization entails not only the resort to cultural praxes but also to supplementary religious, linguistic, and spatial practices.

All in all, there is a common tendency within Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literary works to define identity, no matter what pattern it abides by – exilic, diasporic, or transcultural – as a processual discourse which exhibits the character of dynamicity at its very core, taking clear-cut shapes at times and amorphous structure at others. Probably, exilic identity remains the most prevalent manifestation of identity in the Arab-Australian case while the transcultural paradigm emerges as the rarest experience. The opposite transpires in the Indian-Australian literature wherein transcultural identity is a burgeoning literary vogue, whereas exilic identity remains one about which Indian-Australians are quite reserved.

In the process of carrying out the analytical and critical research on which this thesis is predicated, some difficulties have been encountered. More particularly, the most conspicuous one is associated with the studied authors’ literary productions. Most of the Indian-Australian authors have written so far one acclaimed debut work, including Kavita Ivy Nandan and

Rashida Murphy – at least up to the moment of writing this thesis. At times, even if they have written more than one work, it was a difficult if not an impossible end to gain access to them given that these are not available both as hard or soft copies as emails exchanged with the National Australian library proved. This is the case with Sabawi's older plays *Cries from the Land* and *Three Wishes* which, though having been performed in Canada before her publication of *Tales of a City by the Sea*, are nowhere to be found. This may eventuate in the risk of falling in the trap of overgeneralizations when it comes to inferences deriving from the analytical scrutiny of these works. Yet, a recourse to these authors' biographies, interviews, and scholarly compositions, like Nandan's critical chapter "Writing as Healing: Fijiindians – The Twice Banished?," enabled a thorough and comprehensive insight into these authors' perspectives and stances. In the same vein, having proceeded in analysis through a comparative approach whereby the tenets extracted from a literary text were upheld by theories from different disciplines positions the deduced precepts on a ground of critical accuracy.

Thematically speaking, in conjunction with the incorporation of two different diasporic realms in research, the diversity and polyvocality of the experiences extant within each of the two examined diasporas generated a concern about the accurate enactment of various scopes at once and about the consistent fluctuation from one diaspora to another while at the same time preserving a focused disposition towards each diaspora separately. This hindrance was, nevertheless, circumvented altogether through the implementation of a methodology of comparison which, by means of topical juxtapositions, allowed the lucid discernment and extrapolation of similarities and differences between the two literatures and, therefore, ensured a unified balance and emphasis vis-à-vis both.

Conceptually, the newness of the concept of transculture and of transcultural studies as perceived in this dissertation posed another challenge. In other words, the embryonic character of transcultural studies and the haphazard and vague use of the epithet "transcultural" to denote any cultural mix, be it intercultural, multicultural, or hybrid, engendered, in the process of bibliographic search, an exposure to a multiplicity of references which convey no conceptual link to transcultural studies as an authentic discipline and which overshadow the critical works germane to the study of transculture/ality. Added to this is the paucity of academic works grappling with transcultural literature, which reveals, in the interim, the absence of a clear-cut approach and methodology to address transcultural texts and concepts. Having said that, this difficulty was transcended through the engagement of this thesis in Dagnino's call to ascertain new theoretical perspectives and new conceptual frameworks that may be academically efficient and relevant in approaching and analyzing the nascent genre of transcultural literature ("Transcultural Writers, World Literature" 10). That is to say, transculturality was pinpointed in the examined transcultural literature by means of a transcultural literary approach that will be elucidated in the following pages.

On the basis of the findings induced from the analytical and critical precepts expounded throughout this research, it can be claimed that this thesis may open up new perspectives for future research within the disciplines of diaspora literature and diaspora studies. Through its selection of two literary sites within Anglophone diaspora literature which have not received academic recognition, i.e. Arab-Australian and Indian-Australian literatures, to be its core concern and through its foregrounding of the kaleidoscopic experiences of identity in these realms, this thesis may trigger some scholarly interest in exploring at least one of the conceptual facets of identity crystallizing in one of these diasporic venues, in general, or in one the studied works, in particular. Besides, it may be construed as an invitation to initiate a study within Arab-Australian or Indian-Australian literature by combining the emerging and sidelined authorial voices aggregated in this study with their older and more or less established counterparts so as to constitute an exhaustive scholarly corpus on one of the two literatures, as has been the case with the detailed literary corpuses perused in Salaita's or Fadda-Conrey's book on Arab-American literature.

By the same token, the methodological procedure of comparing these two variants of diaspora literature may contribute to a future debate on the adoption of a comparative-diasporic approach that promotes transcontinental debates or what Frank calls "transversal communications" (9). That is to say, this approach may problematize diaspora literature and open up endless possibilities of research within diaspora literature by applying it diversely. On the one hand, this discourse of comparison can be enacted to juxtapose a canonized diaspora literature with its non-canonized equivalent, bringing to the fore research questions that draw on a comparison between Arab-American and Arab-Australian literatures, for example, or on a comparison between Indian-British and Indian-Australian literatures. On the other hand, this methodological outlook may explore further questions of identity and representation in the light of a comparison between two established or two nascent diaspora literatures within the same diasporic site, which proffers an analysis of diasporic paradigms from a pluralistic perspective.

The concern of this thesis with the analysis of transcultural writings and of a transcultural pattern of identity may, in one way or another, take part in the shaping of the contours of transcultural criticism. Through the analytical procedures implemented in the last part, the thesis may offer a literary transcultural approach for consideration. The latter involves approaching transcultural writings through the demystification of the symbolic transcultural practices within the text and of the intratextual elements that are deployed to form a symbolic image of the transcultural condition or that act as metaphors for the transcultural mode of identity formation. More significantly, within this approach, the textual and thematic determinants are construed and read in light of the transcultural key concepts and theories devised by the founding fathers of transcultural studies, namely Ortiz, Welsh, and Epstein. Enmeshed with this textual, thematic, and symbolic scrutiny is the emphasis on the worldliness of the transcultural text. In this regard, the proposed approach herein subscribes to Helff's theorization that "it seems problematic to approach transcultural texts with a narrative theory that does not consider the extra-textual world and transcultural practices as their main sources of information" ("Signs Taken for Truth" 279). In other words, taking into account the overarching character of the transcultural discourse, it is pivotal to harbor a cognizance of the ideological, cultural, and historical discourses regulating the production of the text under study in order to transvalue how transculture operates in favor of or against these.

Finally, through its concern with the literary implications of disability in the first part, the thesis may draw scholarly attention to the opening of a novel site in critical research on diaspora literature, i.e. disability studies, a recently proliferating groundwork which centers on the resonant and voguish concepts of subalternity and agency. By rendering exile as a liberation for people with disability, this dissertation intimates that it is thought-provoking, within research perspective, to delve into the politics of location of people with disability within the specific context of diaspora. Does the diasporic site invariably emerge as a site of agency and liberation for people with disability? Or is this conditioned by sundry variables, including one's social and cultural statuses? Does the relationship between diasporic subjects with disability and the hostland always imply an exile from the homeland as is the case of Kalsie's play? Or can the negotiation of identity in the light of disability result in diasporic or transcultural models of identity? These and other questions may be answered not only by thematically studying diaspora literature in relation to disability but also through conducting sociological surveys which address the conception of identity in diaspora from the viewpoint of people with disability as a subaltern category that need to be fairly granted voice and agency.

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