Cycles of Negotiation: The Theme of Quotidian in Arab American Short Stories

Dissertation submitted to
Jawaharlal Nehru University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Philosophy

by

Aswathy Rajani

Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110067, India.
2016

Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi-110067, India

Date: 25.07.16

CERTIFICATE

This dissertation titled **"Cycles of Negotiation: The Theme of Quotidian in Arab American Short Stories"** submitted by **Mrs. Aswathy Rajani**, Centre for English Studies, School of Language, Literature and Culture Studies, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi, for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

This may be placed before the examiners for evaluation for the award of the degree of Master of Philosophy.

Navneet Sethi

(Dr. Navneet Sethi)

SUPERVISOR

Dr. Navneet Sethi
Associate Professor
Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University
New Delhi - 110 067

(Dr. Saitya Prata Das)

CHAIRPERSON

CHAIRPERSON
Centre for English Studies
School of Language, Literature & Culture Studies
Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi-110067

Date: 25.07.2016

DECLARATION BY THE CANDIDATE

This dissertation titled ***"Cycles of Negotiation: The Theme of Quotidian in Arab American Short Stories"*** submitted by me for the award of the degree of **Master of Philosophy**, is an original work and has not been submitted so far in part or in full, for any other degree or diploma of any University or Institution.

(Aswathy Rajani)
M.Phil Student
CES/SLL&CS
JNU

Dedicated to

My mother because you gave so much and I gave you so little
My father because this would be a dream come true for you
My teacher Navneet Sethi who inspired life and this work
My friend Ritika who split with her valuable time and energy over me
My sister and my husband who knew what to say at the right time
And last but not least my nephew Atharv because I love you.

Contents

Acknowledgement…………………………………………vi

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Defining Arab Americans …………………………. …7-13
1.2 The Arab Immigration: Waves that Swept across the U.S Shores……………………………….13-15
1.3 Tracing the Arab American Literary Genealogy……15-17
1.4 Conclusion……………………………………………..17-18

Chapter 2: Understanding Cycles: Co-relating Text and Form

2.1 Understanding the Genre……………………………..19-21
2.2 Tracing Geneology: Short Story Cycle………………21-24
2.3 Imagined Locality and Community…………………...24-30
2.4 Reconstructing Worldviews of Family………………..30-31
2.5 Citylore: Model of Folklore……………………………31-35

Chapter 3: Negotiation of the Quotidian

3.1 The challenges of the Everyday…………………......36-43
3.2 Negotiating the Quotidian……………………………..43-54

Chapter 4: Conclusion: Gender in the Everyday

4.1 Gender in the Arab American Context……………….56-57
4.2 Gender and Identity…………………………………….59-62
4.3 Shades of Arab American Feminism…………………62-64
4.4 Shifting Gender Roles………………………………….64-66
4.5 Conclusion: Review and Scope……………………….66-68

Works Cited…………………………………………………..69-78

Acknowledgement

The idea for this research topic came as a result of my introduction to the anthology *The Woman that I Am: The Literature and Culture of Contemporary Women of Color* in Dr. Navneet Sethi's course in JNU. As I meandered through a string of writers like Toni Morrison, Joy Harjo, Leslie Marmon Silko, Alice Walker, Louise Erdrich, Etel Adnan, it tingled both my emotions and my intellect and the classroom discussions that followed were exciting as we shared our unique thoughts and perspectives, personal and impersonal. The dubious categorization of Etel Adnan under Asian American in the anthology though intriguing was overlooked the first time until it returned quite later to provoke my curiosity.

Let me begin, therefore by thanking my teacher and supervisor Dr. Navneet Sethi who had been generous with her guidance and patience; who meticulously went through every line and provided her valuable input and suggestions.

I would like to thank my friend Ritika Singh, who heard me out through my ramblings and who helped with the pre-submission formalities that required a lot of running around and form filling.

I would also like to acknowledge my friend Sibila Ramakrishnan who shared her research experience and countless pointers to pre-preparation phase of research work. I thank Jithin Mathew who was happy to counsel whenever required.

For moral and emotional support, which was often vital, I thank my husband Abhilash who assured me in my moments of doubt that "there is always a next time" and I am also grateful to my sister Anupama who promised me that "everything will be alright".

I acknowledge my mother Geetha Rajani and my father Rajani Pam Dutt who in their own parent like way supported me in this venture and everything else prior to this and in everything that will follow, will do the same.

I also think credit is due for JNU's library resources, especially the web resources without which the research would have been nearly impossible. I also thank Yatti Rawat, our centre staff who was prompt with offering his services with the technicalities of submission procedure.

I am also grateful for all the elements that came together to make this project happen.

Aswathy Rajani

i am an arab,

alienated from american,

sitting on the other side of the hyphen

-Laila Shereen

We are the stories we tell; our words map the spaces of home

-Lisa Suhair Majaj

Chapter 1. Introduction

This research intends to explore how in the Arab American literary works the Arab/Arab American communities negotiated the everyday challenges that were meted out to them by virtue of their identity and the social implications that entails subsequently. To serve the purpose I examine the short story collections *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly* and *Through and Through: Toledo Stories* authored by Susan Muaddi Darraj and Joseph Geha respectively. In addition to examining the textual discourse, the research also tries to posit the view that these collections commonly allocated to the genre of short story collection is more befitting of the *short story cycle*[1] *(*sub)genre, which in turn also acts as an agency of subversion. The negotiation then occurs on dual hemispheres of structure and substance in a symbiotic co-existence where the two domains complement each other.

The stories in the collections are loosely connected with each other thereby enabling the collections to be categorised into subgenre *short-story cycle*. The relevance of this genre in the research context becomes evident as we recall Rocio

---

[1] Short-story cycles are considered to be subgenre of short-story genre, where they feature characteristics of both a novel and a short-story.

Davis's observation that "the dynamics of the short-story cycle have converted it into a form that is especially appropriate to the kinds of conflict presented in ethnic fictions" (*Ethnicity* 4). The unifying thread that spans across the collection of Darraj and Geha is their corresponding geographical location in South Philly and Toledo, Ohio. The characters in the story are closely or loosely related to one another thereby granting the opportunity to view them as individuals and as a collective group at the same time.

The genre of short story in English—famous for its vast white American canon—fathered by Washington Irving and patronized by Edgar Allen Poe and his successors of mainstream white American writers, remains an exclusive pantheon rendering minority groups like Arab American authors invisible. However, the quirky irony surfaces when Elmaz Abinader remarks:

> People don't understand that literature started in the Arab world…The short story was invented in Egypt. When people talk about Arab American literature as 'new'... it's not. This is a literature that has a tradition longer than Western literature. There were Arab women poets in the seventh century (qtd. in Curiel).

This comes as a stark contrast to the popular conception that the short story genre is an American invention like for instance when Alfred Bendixen among others brazenly claims, "The short story is an American invention" (3). However, whatever the disputes about the origin of the genre, there is consensus among scholars and critics that it is of a subversive nature. Frank O' Connor who recognised this potential considered it as a "lonely voice" of "outlawed figures wandering about the fringes of society" (qtd. in Patea 7). Echoing the thought Mary Louise Pratt ascribes a regional, gender and political marginalization to the genre.

The subgenre or sister-genre of short story is the *short story cycle.* A critical approach to the genre is relatively new and rather unexpansive. The existing works duly applies its theoretical framework to Anglo-American tradition. Therefore, it is safe to say that Geha and Darraj's compilations have not yet come under the critical lens tinted with short story cycle genre hue. This is not to imply that the genre has never been acknowledged in the Arab American arena but only to suggest that the genre hasn't been analyzed and theorized with the same vigour and enthusiasm of its Anglo-American peers.

Though U.S ethnic literature has gained much momentum recently, the Arab American quarters hasn't received due attention like its counterparts. Though 9/11 acted a catalyst to initiate renewed interest in Arab American studies and cultural production by the community as manifested in the inclusion of "writing by Arab Americans in U.S ethnic literature courses, incorporat[ion] [of] panels on Arab American culture into national conferences, and publi[cation] [of] edited volumes on the histories of Arab Americans" (Hassan and Knopf-Newman 3), they still require much critical treatment. Dissertations and theses in Arab American literary studies are scant in comparison to its African/Asian/Native American counterparts. This pattern of marginalisation exhibited in the U.S ethnic studies platform is parallel to the position of Arab Americans in the social setup as well. The kind of comradeship and conversation that can be sensed amongst the Afro Americans, Native Americans, Latin Americans and Asian Americans is ostensible through the anthologies of ethnic writings where often the Arab American voices are omitted or tag teamed with its geographical neighbour—Asian American.

What is it about the Arab Americans that make them vulnerable to such side-lining? As noted "[f]rom the perspective of the American historian William E. Leuchtenburg, the most striking aspect of the relationship between Arab and American cultures is that, to Americans, the Arabs are a people who have lived outside of history" (qtd. in Keppel 278). Michael W Suleiman's article "Islam, Muslims and Arabs in America: The other of the other of the other…" eyeballs the factors that contribute to the hamstringing of the Arab Americans in U.S. He alleges how America feigns a certain collective amnesia over the participation of Arabs/Muslim communities in the canvas of U.S history conjoined with *white ignorance*[2]. He imputes the educational and social establishments that survey and document the oppression and marginalization of the ethnic groups in U.S completely neglect the Arab Americans in their endeavour. He recalls how three definitive surveys carried out in 1970s and 1980 for the ethnic group and women in U.S exempted the Arab

---

[2] Charles W Mills introduced the term to denote an ignorance among whites—a set of false beliefs and absence of true beliefs—a conscious worldview that was not contingent but linked to their whiteness.

American communities despite the discriminatory practices doled out toward them explicitly in the media. In an effort to put Arab Americans on the map and to subvert and supplement the conventional historical narrative and annals of America, Alia Malek's *A Country Called Amreeka: Arab Roots, American Stories* came out in 2009, a book comprising of a series of non-fictive stories that are "meant to collectively answer …[this] question: What does American history look and feel like in the eyes and skin of Arab Americans?" (Foreword xi). The stories span from 1970s to the beginning of the twenty first century and the book is stamped with a propaganda:

> The purpose of the book isn't to separate them (Arab Americans) out but to fold their experience into the mosaic of American history and deepen our understanding of who we Americans are (ix)

Does the stereotypical Arab image of anti-American-Islamic fanatics perpetrated by the dominant white culture also affect or influence the way they are perceived by other ethnic groups? The role religion plays cannot be perhaps overlooked in the American topography where Islam is a minority religion and looked with much suspicion even in the pre-9/11 environment. Nabeel Abraham who investigated into the looming invisibility of Arab Americans attributes it to both "external" and "internal" factors. In his illuminating essay "Arab-American Marginality: Mythos and Praxis", he draws a diachronic trajectory of the Arab-American marginalization in the latter half of the twentieth century. He recounts the support exhibited by U.S military, media, and government for Israel during the Arab-Israeli war of 1960s; in 1970s the Arab Americans became scapegoats for the 1973 oil embargo and the 1980s are marked by the international anti-terrorism campaign under the aegis of the Reagan administration and the Iranian hostage crisis. Michael W. Suleiman also charts a coinciding list that according to him are pointers to the aggravated violence casted against Arab American community as a response to the terrorist organisation. His point being that whenever acts of terrorism are carried out by terrorist groups belonging to Arab or Islam background, there is a proclivity for persecuting the whole community and in effect homogenising a conglomerate group deeming them with a monolithic and misconstrued identity. (qtd. in Bakalian and Bozorgmehr 40)

Identity is quotidian. It is an everyday reality. America encompasses multitude identities where power dynamics produce binaries of American/Ethnic American, white/coloured. The right side of the virgule are often subsumed by the hegemonic left. For these identities that have been pushed to the periphery the "racial microaggressions"[3] are rendered invisible due to their frequency and subtlety. As Derald Wing Sue notes:

> Microaggressions are the brief and commonplace daily verbal, behavioural, and environmental indignities, whether intentional or unintentional, that communicate hostile, derogatory, or negative racial, gender, sexual-orientation, and religious slights and insults to the target person or group. . . Perpetrators are usually unaware that they have engaged in an exchange that demeans the recipient of the communication. During the 2008 presidential campaign, for example, Republican Senator John McCain appeared at a political rally taking questions from his supporters. One elderly White woman, speaking into a handheld microphone, haltingly stated, "I don't trust Obama. He's an Arab." (5)

Ironically if Barack Obama, the American president, popularly conceded to be the most powerful man in the world, by dint of his ethnicity becomes subjected to the power dynamics ensconced in the social matrix and has to endure and negotiate the *Arab* label pegged on him on an everyday basis, it is no revelation that Arab Americans in general are subjected to microaggressions even way before 9/11. However, post 9/11 the proportion of these aggression boomed to a macro-level as testified by Edward Said in "Backlash and Backtrack" who said:

> Hundreds of Muslim and Arab shopkeepers, students, *hijab-ed* women and ordinary citizens have had insults hurled at them, while posters and graffiti announcing their imminent death spring up all over the place.

---

[3] Chester Pierce in 1970s coined the term *racial microaggressions* to refer to everyday subtle and automatic insults heaped on Black Americans.

However, stereotyping is not a one sided process. If the white hegemony propagated a certain negative stereotyping of the Arabs/Arab Americans, the Arabs in America or the Arab Americans too participated in their own myth making process of the white stereotypes. Especially the older generation tries to impart a certain knowledge about Americans to their younger generation. The xenophobia was mutual between the two groups as the Arab Americans appraised the Americans as “trash[…] ,degenerate, morally bankrupt, and sexually depraved. In contrast, *al Arab* (Arabs) were morally respectable—we valued marriage, family, and close relationships.” (*Arab America* 2)

These discourses of microaggression are sprawled across *Through and Through* and *The Inheritance of Exile*. This research attempts to scrutinise the strategies the Arab/Arab American communities employ to thwart the hegemonic subduing forces that come into play in their everyday life. Geha and Darraj have brought out a realistic depiction of the everyday of their respective communities. This particular collection of Geha and Darraj has been chosen on the basis of their comparable and yet distinguishable quality. A part of the research question also weighs upon the issue of the plurality of the term Arab American. Geha and Darraj belonging to two different breed of Arab makes it’s a viable means to assess the nuance of the *Arab* numerator of the fraction. On another plane their works also deal with the old and the new generation Arab Americans. The migrant Arab identity is different from their progeny’s who are born and brought up in America and results in the conflict and rupture of identity between the old and the new generation—the disconnect between nurtured/natural dichotomy. The migrant Arabs try to nurture Americaness while their descendants are more or less naturally integrated into their American identity.

The proposition this thesis makes is that in the context of visible and invisible macro/microaggressions meted out to Arab American on a daily basis, their instruments of subversion can be conscious or unconscious or both. These subversive manoeuvring may not always be overt tactics but covert and subtle. Apart from established coping strategies of *ethnic denial*, *ethnic isolation* and *ethnic* *integration*[4] other normative tendencies and culture like memory, story-telling, nostalgia, heritage becomes modes of negotiating the coercive social structure. Institutions of family/friends, art, religion also play a pivotal role in undermining the oppressive elements. Apart from the quotidian racial factor, in the stories of Geha and Darraj, we see how common situations and facets of the everyday realities from aging, marriage, divorce, family, occupation, death are dealt within the American spatial and cultural context. The thesis intends to probe the dynamics of tackling the familiar everyday in a non-familiar space. Is the mechanics of perceiving, responding and interacting with the everyday platitudes different when dislocated to an estranged space is the probing question?

To do justice to such intensive and extensive dissection and delineation of a cultural production of a fluid and ambivalent identity like that of Arab American which carries with it overtones of race, religion, class, culture, colour, its contextualization and a certain extent of genealogical tracing is inevitable.

1.1 Defining Arab American

Who are the Arab Americans? The Arab migration constitutes of three waves and each wave has its unique characteristics and their corresponding literature of which will be discussed ahead in the chapter in detail. The terminology was born in a politically turbulent era of 1960s rife with civil rights movement and an awakening of an Arab consciousness post 1967 Middle East war. The invisible hyphen in the phrase *Arab American* is burdened with the inherent complexity the ethnic group is embroiled in. The publication *Arabic-Speaking Americans* by Habib Katibah and Farhat Ziabeh came out in 1946 for the first time and Orfalea asserts that the term *Arab American* came into adoption by the community themselves around that period.

---

[4] *Ethnic denial, ethnic isolation* and *ethnic integration* are coinages by Nabeel Abraham from his article 'Arab-American Marginality: Mythos and Praxis' that appeared in the journal *Arab Studies Quarterly* in 1989. *Ethnic denial*, Abraham notes, involves the deliberate denial or demphasis of the stigmatized aspects of the identity that pertains to Arabic, Islamic and other negative facets in favour of other neutral and lesser known aspects like Maronite, Ramallahite, Coptic, Chaldean et al. Writers like Abraham Mitrie Rihbany and Salom Rizk employed this technique in their autobiographical pieces.

Ethnic isolation on the other hand nurtures and embraces the ethnic culture and values to shield itself as a community from its external surroundings, while *ethnic integration* engages in the reconciliation of the ethnic and American culture.

To come to a deeper understanding of the intricacies the term bears it is important to look at what *Arab* and *American* denotes. Contrary to the popular practice in U.S of using *Arab* and *Muslim* interchangeably under the assumption both are the one and the same, the fact is not all Arabs are Muslims nor all Muslims Arabs. Statistics state that there are “1.7 billion Muslims in the world and 44 countries with majority Muslim populations. Most Muslims live outside the Arab world, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, Southeast Asia, and the Far East. Arabs number approximately 16 percent of Muslims world wide” (Kayyali 2). In the face of post 9/11 paranoia and Islamophobia where Arabs/Arab Americans were persecuted by America indiscriminately irrespective of their political or religious affiliations largely surges from the aforementioned prejudice Americans carry that all Arabs are Muslims. Paul C. Taylor states that:

> We think of Arab and Muslim cultures as inexplicably and uniquely proficient at spawning terrorists, perhaps because of some primordial tendency to “militancy,” “radicalism,” or premodern conservatism. But this view makes sense only if we ignore a handful of important historical and cultural facts. First, neither Muslims nor Arabs have a monopoly on terrorism, as the history of white supremacy, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), and the birth of Israel will show. Second, since the fall of the Ottoman Empire, and most evidently in the context of Cold War politics, Western countries have had a non-negligible role in creating the modern “Middle East”. We have supported and sometimes installed conservative and otherwise repressive regimes, and we have supported and trained radical Islamist fighters, both of which are significant factors in the emergence and consolidation of terrorism as a political technique. And third, due in part to the unfortunate history to which I have just alluded, the significant Muslim traditions that insist on tolerance, free thinking, and human rights have been overwhelmed on the ground and overshadowed in popular perception. (136)

America’s timeline is punctuated with terrorism. America was founded on it. The native American massacre and bloodbath is nothing short of an act of terror.

However western narratives commit a conscious catachresis in interpreting the colonial violence. The puritanic New England minister Cotton Mather used biblical references to justify incinerating the Native Americans in 1689. As evidenced by Anatol Lieven's critique that exposes the hypocrisy and double standards of America:

> from the very first days of American colonies, the settlers' belief that they were a chosen people by God was accompanied by an Old Testament belief that God was 'God of Warre'. The image of the ancient Israelites and their battles with their neighbours was used to justify wars against latter-day 'Amalekites', whether Indian or French, and God was held to fight for America in those wars. (130)

Throughout history, Islamic/Arab fundamentalist's acts of terrorism overshadows the imperial colonial acts of terrorism. Though orthodox terrorism and colonial/imperial terrorism have overlapping characteristics denoting its affiliations to the same genome of atrocity, one is perceived as terrorism and the other is justified on righteous grounds. Both inheres acts of violence targeted against an unsuspecting non-combatant targets for ideological or material causes. Terrorism wielded against America has been looked upon as the price the superpower had to pay for its imperialistic temperament. As Mustapha Marrouchi gauges:

> [T]he treaty on Biological Weapons Convention makes them (Americans) a vast, over-determine symbol of everything the rest of the world hates and fears at the same time their bombing of Iraq, Libya, Sudan and Afghanistan has played a clear negative role in sponsoring anti-Americanism.

Although the norm is to use *America* and the *United States of America* interchangeably the fact that *America* or the *America* actually signifies all the 35 countries in the south and north American continents shouldn't be overlooked. However, in my research I have adopted the term *America* in its constrictive sense of North America or the USA. The polysemic term *American* on the hand will indicate its neo-native citizens and the cultural production of the aforementioned group.

Being *American* is not the same as being *white*. They are not interchangeable labels. While *American* is a term pregnant with citizenship and geographical identity implications along with its cultural appendage, *white* is a more complicated taxonomy. *American* is a national identity indicator and citizenship marker. Though American citizenship granted legal validation through naturalisation law meant for immigrants and through birth right for children born in the US territory, it fails to give them a social validation and acceptance. Citizenship criterion had whiteness as its determinant and the definition of whiteness was a slippery pursuit. Tim White in *White Like Me* resonates the view when he defines what being white in the United States mean:

> [It] means defining ourselves by a negative, providing ourselves with an identity that is rooted in the relative oppression of others…Inequality and privilege are the only real components of whiteness…Without racial privilege there is no whiteness, and without whiteness there is no racial privilege. Being white only means to be advantaged. (170)

The unhyphenated *American* came to be a signifier for the white Caucasian American of European descent; a cultural tag reserved dominantly for the privileged citizens of the land who are white. Racial identity is a subset under national identity. The borders in which different identity loci are placed often intertwine, interact and intersect to form a gridlock in which one cannot be defined with exclusion of the other.

The ineptness of the reductive and diminutive approach of categorising race as biological or genetic was brought out by studies that went on to postulate race as a social construct. Arab American identity is one that orbits around the nucleus of national, racial and colour-line spectrum. Also their whiteness status has been contested and shifted over time as the legal system kept changing rules as to what constituted whiteness. Though largely assumed to be whites in the legal framework, Arab Americans always felt they never gained a social acceptance reserved for the dominant white Americans. Finally, the sentiment found its culmination in the post 9/11 era where they faced excessive racism and in 2012 the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee appealed to the Department of Commerce & Minority Business Development Agency for minority/disadvantaged status for the ethnic population of Middle Eastern and North African community. For hyphenated identities, where do the two identity baggage at the either end of the hyphen begin and end? Like Singh and Schmidt proposes these borders connect and divide, they are “a part yet apart, home and not-home, neither “here” nor “there”” (7). US Ethnic studies and border studies emerged from the need to scrutinise the nuances and intricacies identified in defining and understanding the multi-ethnic cultural matrix embedded in the fabric of geographical and-political America.

Classification and categorising tendencies are exhibited by the state or governing machinery to exert its influence as it deemed fit. The divide and rule policy imperialism incorporated was a strategy to subsume the objects of its operation. The division happened on the lines of caste, creed, colour, religion. The binaries of coloniser/colonised, occident/ orient, white/black are nothing but result of a categorising criteria adopted by hegemonic forces to oppress. In order to retain such dichotomies of power relations, the State Apparatuses manoeuvres its way around creating an explicit differentiation through imperceptible measures. The census is one such device divulged in the work *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity and Language in National Censuses.* The accounting involved in census radically demarcates individuals on the basis of race, religion and language:

> As a product of the ideology of colonial and modern states, the project of dividing populations into separable categories of collective identity inevitably intersected with the division of populations into racial categories. The two efforts share a common logic, a kind of categorical imperative, in which people must be assigned to a category and to one category alone. The history of racial thinking is a history of cultural categorization, of seizing on certain physical characteristics and inventing a biological category for those people who manifest them.
>
> In devising “racial” categories, imperial census-makers used names from the existing repertoire of cultural and geographical markers, but the categories themselves reflected the perception of the European rulers rather than that of the natives. (10)

Apart from census other instruments employed within the structures of colonialism and nation-state were maps and museums as one of the chapters of Benedict Anderson’s ground-breaking work *Imagined Communities* delineates. It is noteworthy that the “United States has, at different times, classified Arab immigrants as African, Asian, white, European, or as belonging to a separate group. Most Arab Americans identify more closely with nationality than with ethnic group. For Arab Americans, classification became complex” (Carlisle 4).

Another relevant terminology in the context of US ethnic studies or border studies is *white/whiteness.* So where does one place the term *White* in an atmosphere of fluid and contingent identity clusters of class, gender, race, religion and sexuality. Whiteness cannot be understood in isolation of other identity markers. Like Ian Hany-Lopez states *whiteness* is “an unstable category which gains its meaning only through social relations and that encompasses a profoundly diverse set of persons” (xxii). Being white is a relative phenomenon. The famous “You, white man!” vignette of Langston Hughes’ explains the relativity quality of whiteness. When Hughes went to Africa for the first time in 1920s, the native Africans mocked at him for trying to connect with them on common grounds of heritage and called him white despite his protests. The Africans’ response was evoked by their reality of the coloured people of West coast Africa who came to patronise them via missionary propaganda or colonial administrative agenda. Their sense of white is not a visual skin tone one something abstract and socio-political (96).

The fluidity the term *whiteness* acquires can be attributed to the agencies which manipulates its meaning over the course of time in socio-political contexts. Racism has both parallel between/ to the structure of capitalistic social formation depicted by Louis Althusser. In Althusser’s model the Repressive State Apparatus and Ideological State Apparatus controls and oppresses the economic base/infrastructure on which it wields its authority for material benefit and dominance. To illustrate, in the context of naturalization in U.S owing to high immigration and nativism fever that ran high following the civil war, the law becomes the defining agency of whiteness; the role of the legislation in perpetuating *whiteness*, determining its semantic structure was pivotal. Not only did it legitimise whiteness, it also determined the spectrum of privilege accessible to the white. While on the other hand we see the insidious representation of race in the ISA of art in form literature and films. And since the U.S is a state that made humongous profits through ethnic labourers, the vested interests in preserving the *otherness* in the working class and curbing their vertical mobility became crucial (Asher and Stephenson 4-5)

If the *American* part is entrenched in complexity, the *Arab* part possesses its own share of nexus. Akin to the ‘Asian American’ label which covers a wide range ethnic groups with links in countries like India, Pakistan, Bangladesh, China, Japan et al, ‘Arab Americans’ refer to individuals who have Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Palestinian, Algerian, Saudi Arabian et al links. However, it is also important note that people from predominantly Arab speaking countries like Turks, Assyrians, Iranians, Balochs et al are not recognized as Arabs in U.S. The Arabs are a kaleidoscopic community of diverse linguistic, national, ethnic, racial, tribal, religious and sectarian identities and this plurality in turn informs the diversity within the Arab American community. The Muslims among the group is estimated to be only 23% of the Arab American populace, the rest amounting to Christians interspersed with a tiny morsel of Jewish community.[5]

By 18th century Americans developed a sense of nationhood, accumulated a collective national identity of Americans rather than colonisers. The American republican experiment is founded on a paradox or on maybe a non-holistic and discriminatory premises of democratic, secular and republican ideology. America is a melting pot not only of cultures but also of contradiction. America is both postcolonial and neo-colonial; it is both a dream and a nightmare. To this purported promised land the Arabs came in three distinguished waves.

1.2 The Arab Immigration: Waves that Swept across the US shores

Scholars have conceded to three distinguishable waves of Arab immigration to U.S. The first wave is recognised between 1880-1924 and constituted the Greek Orthodox, Maronite, and Melchite Christians from Mount Lebanon and the surrounding Syrian and Palestinian provinces. Subjects of the Ottoman empire they despised, they bore Turkish identity on paper and Syrian identity in their hearts. They amounted to a large populace of illiterate and unskilled immigrants who initially started off as itinerant peddlers that enabled assimilation and through perseverance and assent to American law and value systems they went to open retail stores across the country. They were plenty among the rural villagers who arrived that nestled the dream of returning to their homelands after they have made enough money.

---

[5] This statistics is taken from *Not Quite American? :The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States* (2004) by Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad.

The ascendance of World War I marked the climax of the first wave with the immigration coming to a standstill due to constraints imposed by the war. The unfavourable circumstances that developed after the war didn't help matters. The National Origin Act of 1924 set a limit on the Arab quota and there was largely a breakage of national awareness of the homeland.

The second wave that happened post World War II was drastically different from the preceding wave as it comprised of a different breed of Arabs who were Muslims in majority and were more educated and politicised and better skilled in comparison to their predecessors. They also belonged to the middle or upper class and two thirds of them married American wives (not husbands since women hardly migrated). These immigrants were assertive about identifying themselves as *Arabs*.

The third wave which began in 1967 continues till date. The abolition of the quota system in 1965 accelerated the migration of West Bank Palestinians and 1967 war affected Lebanese Muslims from South Lebanon. The Lebanese Civil war in the following two decades led to them seeking refuge in America. Tanyss Ludescher notes how the immigrants "[i]mbued with anti-colonial sentiment and Arab nationalist ideas, this new group was highly politicized. For the first time, Arab American organizations were formed to defend the Arab point of view and to combat negative stereotypes of Arabs in the popular press" (94). The third wave saw more women migrating to America:

> As they saw it, their mission was twofold: to promote cultural, social, and political reform in the East, based on the Western model, and to encourage a spiritual awakening in the West, based on the Eastern model. (98)

The much spoken assimilation in the context of migration is not an inevitable phenomenon but a choice. The question to be raised is don't assimilation enable racism? Doesn't assimilation translate to a change in identity because the innate one falls short? What good is the claim to secularism if heterogeneity doesn't have a chance? What prompted Arabs to assimilate? Elkholy proposes that assimilation for Arabs meant better living conditions and privileges. Heritage becomes an expendable concept, something negated for material benefits. The influential dimension of the assimilation the migrant Arabs unlike popular belief was not religion but their occupation. He illustrated how communities hailing from the same region and same cultural background had varying degree of assimilation depending on their occupation which in turn informed their class. Assimilation drastically altered certain crucial aspects of their cultural edifice. An account of the metamorphosis of the Toledo mosque as a social centre given by Elkholy throws light on the matter:

> The mosque had thus become not only the place for worship and religious instruction but also the popular place for the youth where American social activities range from dating to mixed dancing. . . .
>
> . . . .The same loudspeaker which broadcasts the recorded Qur'anic verses before Friday prayer now broadcasts the rock and roll music of the third generation and waltzes for the second. (qtd in Haddad 9-10)

1.3 Tracing the Arab American Literary Genealogy

Arab American literature is relatively new in the American literary tradition bandwagon. Steven Salaita has acknowledged the body to be in its adolescence. Taking its novelty into account, it comes as no surprise that a strong adjoining body of literary theory for the class doesn't exist. However, in attempting to define any label it is confronted with a plethora of problems. The literary arena is fraught with ad infinite discussions on the question of defining body of works written in English by non-native writers or ethnic writers and so far there has been no conclusive resolution to the debate. Without any exception, the definition of Arab American literature is also caught in this mire. Salaita tries to define it as such keeping in mind the fluidity and slipperiness of trying to define categories:

> Arab American literature consists of creative work produced by American authors of Arab origin and that participates, in a conscious way or through its critical reception, in a category that has come to be known as “Arab American literature. (4)

Of course the definition being limiting and restrictive as Salaita himself acknowledges, he hones it up with the observation that it is a “political category…as it is not a blueprint of actual literature; it is mainly a way for this literature to find a niche and an audience and a way for critics to pursue coherent forms of investigation of that literature” (7). The Arab American literature is a growing field and shows a promising future. There are initiatives taken by scholars and academicians to solidify and establish the project.

The lineage of Arab American literature goes back to the diasporic *Mahjar* group spanned across the American continent in beginning of the twentieth century. The north American faction of the group was consolidated in New York with Kahlil Gibran as its umbilical figure and Ameen Rihani as the father figure of Arab American lterature. Gibran and his contemporaries like Ameen Rihani, Mikhail Naimy and Elia Abu Madi in North America revolutionised Arab American literature by embracing western Romanticism and American transcendentalism and intertwined it with their ethnic aestheticism and severing from the usual conservative conventions that its south American brethren adeptly followed. The émigré school’s movement climaxed in the inception of the Al Rabita al Qalamaiyya or the Pen League that addressed topics “other than the immigrant experience” (Abinader 12) and was not self-conscious.

The *Syrian World* became a pivotal journal for Arab American in the 1920s as it proliferated with popular writers’ plays, poems, stories and articles that were all dominantly in Arabic and often “discussed American-ness, most often in a positive light” (Abinader 12) though leaning heavily towards universality. The Pen League cease to be by 1940s. From that decade till the 80s, the writers fell mute about their Arab American identity. However, in 1960s independent poets like Jack Marshall, Etel Adnan, D. H Melhem, Sam Hamod, Samuel Hazo initially did not emphasise their ethnic identity they eventually did so. They became the brand ambassadors and paved the path to the gates of American literary canon.

Grape Leaves came out in 1982 and the following decade saw *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminist;* edited by Gregory Orfalea and Joana Cadi respectively. These anthologies were decisive milestones in Arab American literature as they showcased a collective voice densifying the category and shaping the contours and carving an anatomy of what would be recognised as a body of Arab American literature. As Lisa Suhair Majaj puts it “not only did it assert the existence of Arab American literature; it asserted its historical presence over time” (*Transformative Acts* 45). Evelyn Shakir complements the point as she comments:

> [I]n the early eighties I could come up with only a handful of contemporary writers…. I don’t think even these writers necessarily thought of themselves as ‘Arab American writers’ or saw themselves as belonging to an ethnic movement or a moment in time. These days they and those who follow in their footsteps are almost forced either to identify themselves as Arab American writers or else to explain why they refuse that label. (qtd. in “Of Stories and Storytellers”)

Another notable anthology came at the twilight of 21st century in *1999--Jusoor’s Post Gibran Anthology of New Arab American Writing* edited by Khaled Mattawa and Munir Akash. “The reasons for the absence of Arab American narrative are complicated. For decades, Arab American writers have relied almost exclusively on the lyric poem as their preferred medium” (*Dinarzad* xvii).

Recently, that is the last decade saw several short story collections by Arab American authors. Some of the noteworthy ones are: Frances Khirallah Noble’s *The Situe Stories* published (2000), *The Brutal Language of Love* by Alicia Erian (2001), Evelyn Shakir’s *Remember Me to Lebanon* (2007), “*Love is Like Water” and Other Stories* by Samia Serageldin (2009).*Fields of Fig and Olive: “Ameera” and Other Stories of the Middle East* came out in 1991 authored by Kathryn Abdul-Baki.

1.4 Conclusion

The next chapter “Understanding Cycles: Co-relating Text and Form” delineates on the genre of short-story cycle and the function of the genre to cull out the relevance of the text and its form. The chapter would explore the role the cycle plays in generating meaning for the text. The third chapter “The Negotiation of the Quotidian” will explore at length the theme of negotiation that occurs in the everyday, the quotidian. The thesis will conclude with a comparative approach that weighs differences induced by gender in the identity construction of Arab Americans.

Chapter 2. Understanding Cycles: Co-relating Text and Form

The Inheritance of Exile and *Through and Through* are widely known as short story collection but the works easily fits into the relatively new genre of short story cycles. Short story cycles are modernised as they are fragmented and they do not obey the linear rule of plot common in novel. The stories are link through a loose link of characters or setting or theme. The disjointed structure thus enables to resonate the disjointed trait of modern life and individuals. The stories do not try to bring closure often and thus echoes the modern dilemma. It is especially a working template for the bifurcated identities of Arab American individuals. An understanding of the genre will forge the understanding of the cycles of Darraj and Geha within the context of the genre's modality.

2.1 Understanding the Genre

Forrest L Ingram in 1975 who was the pioneer to attempt to delve into the genre of short story cycle defines a story cycle as a "set of stories so linked to one another that the reader's experience of each one is modified by his experience of the others" (13). The stories in the cycle should suffice as individual units and should add to its inclusion as a part of a whole. Susan Garlan Mann's *The Short Story Cycle* attributed to the genre unifying features like "repeated and developed characters, themes or ideas, imagery, myth, setting, plot or chronological order or point of view" (xii). Gerald Lynch, author of *The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles* also makes a very similar distinctive categorizing of cycles on lines of unity of place, character and theme or style.

The recurring ideas provides, as Nagel argues "thematic resonance, whether in reinforcement, juxtaposition or counterpoint" (*Contemporary American* 16). They become a set of stories that maintain equilibrium between the individual stories and the larger unit. These collected stories could be put together by an editor or an editor-author or by a single author. Also the unifying element in the short story cycle Ingram notes are the "dynamic patterns of recurrence and development" that work concurrently (20). Sometimes the linking element in the stories is tenuous and it is left for the reader to "identity and interpret" (Pacht 4) the connecting link. The unifying factor subscribes to coherence and incoherence ironically. As Lynch observes, the unifying factors like place or character may in itself be a connecting thread but it also exposes that within this coherent framework, the elements embedded in it has varied vision. To illustrate, in *The Inheritance of Exile,* the story is set in the unifying space of a neighbourhood where its protagonists are Palestinian American community in South Philly. However, these characters in this closed setting have different and polar views, thus questioning the coalescent and composite culture of the neighbourhood.

Ingram also makes classifications within the genre like the *composite cycle,* the *complete cycle* and the *arranged cycle.* The *composite cycle* is more unified and is conceived thus prior to its creation while the *complete cycle* is a series that was conceived as a whole only after having begun its composition. The *arranged cycle* on the other hand is simply compiled together after the individual stories have been drafted. Both Geha's and Darraj's collection come under the *arranged cycle* category.

A short story cycle is viewed as the transitory genre between short story and novel. The short story cycle because it embodies hybridity is a "genre about genre" (*One Story* 5). They are different from the novel in terms of not having a central protagonist and a linear development of plot, instead "the cycle lends itself to the diegetical discontinuities, to the resolution of a series of conflict, to the exploration of a variety of characters, to the use of family or even a community as the protagonist, to the exploration of the mores of a region or religion or ethnic group, each story revealing another aspect of the local culture." (*Contemporary American* 15). In *Inheritance of Exile* and *Through and Through*, we see the narratorial voice shifting between the first person account of a character and the third person narration of the invisible voice. These narrative discontinuities leave gaps in the plot and there is no effort to fill these holes. The subsequent lack of a linear conspicuous plotline is made up through complexity of thematic and aesthetic integrity. Lynch censures the popular practice of looking at the short story cycle with the wrong aesthetic perception that is prejudiced by novel's domination for centuries. He defends the code of story cycle which is different from novel's. He argues that the sequence's code signals:

> the world and life as seen by stroboscope, held still momentarily, strangely fragmented into new arrangements, moving unfamiliarly in the minds of readers accustomed to the spatial and temporal panorama of novels. That steady beam, itself an illusion of novelistic codes, is broken up, perhaps intentionally disrupted in the way that many a Modern novel set about marring its most attractive generic feature. (22)

The narration swings between past and present across and thus at times disrupts character evolution and while other times there is temporal simultaneity in the stories. Both the works have plural protagonists with depth and sharpness entrenched in their respective conflicts which find resolution. While Darraj's protagonists belong to a definite community, Geha integrates both-- a family network that extends into a tightly knit community. Their collections depict the issues of the Arab American ethnic community. Also these narratives set in America charts out "the process of immigration, acculturation, language acquisition, assimilation, identity formation, and the complexities of forming a sense of self that incorporates the old world and the new, the central traditions of the country of origin integrated into or in conflict with, the values of the country of choice" (*Contemporary American* 15). They are different from short story collections as there is hardly any unity or integrity between the stories in a collection.

2.2 Tracing Genealogy: Short Story Cycles

The short story cycle's genealogy could be traced down to the ancient oral tradition and its predecessors would include *Cantebury Tales* and *The Decameron.* The genre of short story cycle has its earliest manifestation in the "linked narratives that appeared in the form of related sketches and tales" (*Contemporary American* 3) in the works of Washington Irving, Sarah Josepha Hale, Eliza Buckminister Lee and Baldwin Longstreet. Hawthorne and Melville cultivated and intensified the genre. By Civil War the sketches and tales acquired a realistic tone and found its authorship extending to female gender and coloured writers like Harriet Beecher Stowe, Charles Chestnutt, Grace King, Mary Noailles Murfree and Frances E W Harper. Nagel notes that in the fact that "last century many of the most important works of this kind were written by authors from differing ethnic backgrounds suggest that despite its ancient history, the story sequence offers not only a rich literary legacy but a vital technique for the exploration and depiction of the complex interactions of gender, ethnicity and individual identity" (*Contemporary American* 10). Davis also treats the link between the form and ethnic literatures, contending that the genre:

> which hovers between the novel and the short story, is thus a particularly apt medium with which to enact the enigma of ethnicity… The ethnic short story cycle may be considered the formal materialization of the trope of doubleness as the between-world condition is presented via a form that itself vacillates between two genres. (*Ethnicity* 7)

The fragmentary character of the cycles resonates with the disjointed identities of the characters accelerated by modernity and migration. As Nagel recounts several ethnic writers have used the genre to portray the conflicts in their corresponding ethnic characters as well. The narrative technique in Geha and Darraj subscribes and subverts the expectations of person, space and time. Darraj moves back and forth between past and present. Geha displaces the already displaced from the locality of Toledo in one of the stories and also cuts across timeline in different pieces.

The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly has recurring characters and location. The characters in the cycle are from a closely knit community of Palestinian immigrants and their daughters. The book is divided into four segments embedded with stories under each of them. The segments are titled with the names of its protagonists who are in their mid twenties-- Nadia, Aliyah, Hanan and Reema. Their mothers Siham, Nabeel, Layla and Huda respectively are equally important characters. Their parents are migrants of the third wave who came during the 1967 Arab-Israeli war that led to the displacement of hundreds of Palestinians. Each segment has stories from the point of view of the mother and the daughter. The mother/daughter binary parallels the Old Country/New World binary. The stories are voices of women from two generations. The timeline shifts between the past and the present. The mothers' narratives are either recollections of past or placed in past. There is no male point of view in the narration, though there are male characters.

However, male presence is scant in the text. The male absence could be deliberate as to subvert the masculine corpus of narratives corpulent in literary discourse. It could also insinuate the symbolic absence of male presence in the lives of these women as Nadia loses her father to an accident, Aliyah's and Hanan's fathers both leave for work early and returns late. Reema's father is altogether absent. The characters live in the same neighborhood. Some of them are loosely acquainted before the migration like Nabeel who knew Siham's father—the town doctor in the Old Country.

Geha's *Through and Through: Toledo Stories* is bound by the city of Toledo and Detroit with narratives that take place in 1930s and across interrelated Lebanese and Syrian community. The stories are more subtly connected than in Darraj. There are ten stories and an afterword to the second edition by Geha. The second edition has new additions. The surname Yakoub features dominantly and one of the vignettes "Almost Thirty" reveal that Jiddo Braheem Yakoub was one of the first migrants in the family to come to America in the late 1920s. The protagonist voice in different stories is diverse as there are stories from the vantage point of men, women and even children; from the young, middle-aged and old too. However, there are mostly male oriented stories with only three among the ten narrated by women and one in the three is a pre-adolescent child. The main characters and their introductory stories are Nazir Yakoub, Jiddo Braheem Yakoub ("Monkey Business"), Barbara ("Everything and Everything"), Haleem and George Yakoub ("Almost Thirty"), Tonia ("Something Else"), Amos, Sofia, Issac ("News from Phoenix"), Uncle Elias, Aunt Maheeba, the unnamed boy ("And What Else?"), Nadia, Mikhail, Azar Yakoub, Eddie Yakoub, Sitti ("Holy Toledo"), Nate Yakoub ("Stepping Out") and Hank, Jimmy and Samir ("Homesickness").

The most persistent cohesive element, as Nagel claims, in the history of short story cycle would be the setting with prominent landmarks. In *Inheritance of Exile*, the St. Agnes hospital becomes a landmark where the characters die, be born and meet the love of their life, other landmarks include the bookstore in the neighbourhood that is a meeting place for friends, and sometimes an exile from domestic tensions as in the case of Darraj's Aliyah. In Geha the Walbridge Park is not only a remarkable landmark but also a heterotopic space where the community had their family picnics in which they performed the Arab traditional snake-dance *debkee*, they sang, feasted on Arab food and the old folks in the family played cards and smoked pipes. The Mercy Hospital is another landmark which not unlike the St. Agnes hospital, bears witness to several crucial moments in the lives of different characters in the cycle.

These cycle also assume the genre of regional literature, a genre “dedicated to elaborating the meaning of places and of the people who inhabited them” (Foote 27). Its major producers have been identified to be writers who belonged to a minority or marginalized group who were excluded from the normative category—like women, ethnic writers, sexual dissidents and village dwellers.

2.3 Imagined Locality and Community

Jennifer Jane Smith in her essay “Locating the Short Story Cycle” coins the term *limited locality* to denote the method by which the narratives are bound and grounded to a restricted geographical terrain. The unifying elements in a cycle like the limited locality and characters are simply not recurring elements but also develops into a mechanism of constructing an ideology or discourse by engaging itself in a definite space and character cache. By focusing on a sub culture in a limited local space it showcases the cohesion and incoherence that subsists in the locality/community. The community partakes in the formation of the locality’s identity and yet the individual members perceive the locality differently. Thus there are not just one imagined space but imagined spaces in the minds of the community. Rocio G. Davis talks about the connection and disconnection that prevails influences the perception of the community by the reader:

> Yet, paradoxically, the cycle also reflects the struggle between cohesion and fragmentation. While the fusion of the stories in the reader’s imagination may effectively create a vision of community, the actual fact of stories’ independence, their individual closure and completion, may suggest the incapacity to unite. (*Telling Stories* 324)

The imagined space or its corollary the imagined community thus exists on two dimensions, internally and externally; within the minds of the community in the text and also in the minds of the readers. Thus it is left up to the readers to peel out the anomalies and incongruities that are seated in the community. This “imagined community" in the reader enforces the visibility of the community that has been marginalized by oppressive forces. In *Inheritance,* the Italian Market is the neighbourhood in which its protagonists reside and in *Through and Through*, the extended family lives in the Monroe Street of Toledo and branches out into the Congress Street in Detroit.

The imagined locality takes various forms as it is shaped by the perception of its resident. Often this cognition includes a juxta positioning of the neighbourhood against the larger city beyond its borders, thus defining it in relation to the *beyond,* through an us/them polarisation. The *us* identified with their own kin and kith—the *Arabs* in this context, filtering out other multi-ethnic groups and the other was the American. This divide is illustrated in "Preparing a Face":

> Hanan would argue back, wanting to truly understand this mysterious dividing line between Arabs and Americans, who faced off each other in her mother's mind like boxing opponents. In Mama's mind, they stood in opposite corners glaring at each other, waiting for the fight to start—in Hanan's life, however, they were constantly duelling it out. (*Inheritance* 87)

Geha sketches the cocooned image of the neighbourhood that sees itself apart from rest of the American landscape in "Holy Toledo". Nadia looks out from her window in East Detroit to take in the view of her neighbourhood "Little Syria" that had:

> shops that old woven artifacts and brass from the old country. They had food too, things that couldn't be found anywhere else in Detroit. . . .there were *ahwa* shops too, where old men sat all day amid tobacco smoke and bitter smell of Turkish coffee. (87)

The geographical space acquires meaning only through its social components. The interaction of an individual with the city's social mechanism, social culture and its society is what shapes the relation and identification of an individual to his environment. South Philly, Toledo and Detroit are urban spaces marked with modernity and postmodernity in juxtaposition to the rustic and mountainous villages of the old world the first wavers migrated from. Even the third wavers who came from cities that were less modern and entrenched in a different culture had trouble getting accustomed to the urban modern space of America. However, they found settlements in ethnic neighbourhoods that mollified the pangs of culture shock and sense of estrangement that accompanies displacement.

The Arab American community clustered together in neighbourhoods and tried to recreate the phantom of their homeland. This description of the neighbourhood shows how the community has ensconced itself into an alien space. The snugness of the neighbourhood and the perturbation of leaving it is witnessed in the homesickness displayed by Uncle Eddie when he was away while in the navy. "The food, that's what I missed most," Uncle Eddie said. "The Americans, they don't know how to eat" (Geha 87). After he returned from the "lostness" of his navy venture, he praised his mother's cooking every single day for a week and chimed "Great to be back" occasionally. The neighbourhood thus became a geographical border against America. Called "Little Syria" it demarcates itself against America that was *out* there. The grandmother always answered "America" in response to Nadia's and Mikhail's prodding to disclose where their father was.

Commodities brought from beyond the enclave was American too like the satin pillows Uncle Eddie had brought as souvenirs from navy were called "American pillows" by Nadia's grandmother. Her grandmother's house was cluttered with paraphernalia of past from the old country. In her grandmother's dresser Nadia found "broken rosaries, pages from Arabic prayerbooks, shreds of holy palms plaited years ago into the shapes of crosses ad crowns of thorns" (89) and the drawers were "crammed full of all sorts of odds and ends" (84) that her grandmother refused to throw out.

Her grandmother tried to preserve memories and reproduce her past attachment to her Arab heritage by turning her home into a museum of the reminiscence of the old country. However, Nadia's previous home in the same neighbourhood could have had a completely different aesthetic and cultural sensibility as her mother was American and her father was not the conventional Arab. Her father is infamous in the community for his cultural transgressions. He marries outside the community, he rejects and mocks the superstitions rampant in the old generation, defies traditions when he refused to remarry or return to his mother's house when he became a widower. Nadia informs:

> Especially since Papa was the elder son and it was his duty to stay. More than that, the custom still held, even here in America: a widower with two children is expected either to remarry or else return to his mother's house. Papa did neither. Instead he remained in his own house after the funeral. (85)

This disconnect in perspective of belonging to a community and not belonging creates internal tensions. While one struggles to survive through affirmation, the other resorts to assimilation. Thus, when Nadia and Mikhail is left by their father to their grandmother, they have trouble adjusting to the new environment and fails to be at home as Nadia never addresses it her home but makes references of it belonging to her grandmother. Thus the locality has two opposing forces of nostalgia and acculturation that subscribes and subverts its concrete crystallization into a space of rigid identity.

Despite the conflict, the communization in the geographical space thus engages in the dual process of maintaining allegiance to multiple national identities. It at once tries to negotiate between the two— the material land of America and the nostalgic homeland beyond the continent. When regional literature began around the turn of the nineteenth century, coinciding with America's formation of its national identity where new states were born, the literature like Giles comments ""tends not only to be saturated in locality but also to understand that locality as a guarantee of its own authenticity and its patriotic allegiance" (11). There is arguably a parallel between the regional literatures of those period and the regional literature that is produced in a postindustrial transnational environment of America where multi ethnic identities are born.

These multi-ethnic identities vie for an equal positioning in the society that is dominantly white. Arab American regional literatures like the cycles of Darraj and Geha becomes an attempt to mark their territories and find a space where they will be heard as separate yet not distinct from the American mosaic. The claim being that though they are different, the difference doesn't warrant a different treatment or discrimination. Arab American characters in the cycles born in America often identify America as their homeland and internalise its culture without completely severing their ethnic ties. Hanan feels her bondage to America in "Preparing a Face":

> passing over the landscape of the row houses along the gleaming Delaware River, then into the industrial area in the southwestern part of the city, *her* city, her home and her roots. (*Inheritance* 82)

In Geha there are characters who readily assimilate with their Americanised names where Habeeb becomes Hank and Jameel becomes Jimmy and where parents envision a more American future for their children. Fathers like Jiddo Braheem send their sons to the army when "the United States entered the Second World War" in 1946. Nazir mulls that:

> Someday the boy will have his own business and sell all the food in waxed papers. And that is all. He will marry and teach his children to speak only English. But that is enough. (Geha 18)

Discourses of patriotism like demonstrated in Hanan and the Yakoub brothers who joined the army, thus could be read as a tacit attempt to appeal to America's claimed inclusiveness and thereby reconsider its national identity and demographic identity.

Inheritance of Exile and *Through and Through* also depict a child's perspective of America. In the essay "The Child's Perception of the City", Bruno Bettelheim states that the early experience of the city in a child's life mediated through agency of home and family determines the response to city and urban life in later life; whether they would embrace it or shrink away from it. He explains that the:

> persons who form the child's immediate environment, the relation they establish with him and he with them, what transpires between the parent and the child at home and when together they go out into the city, the places they frequent there and what these mean to each of them—all these shape the child's experience of the world and of himself as a part of it. (222)

Darraj and Geha both have given scope to explore Bettelheim's position as both cycles contain the first person narratives of child characters as well. Geha's "Holy Toledo" embeds the third person omniscient narrator who seems to know the most intimate information about Nadia, a preadolescent girl and her inner emotional and psychological machinations. The narration is interspersed with dialogues that supplements and authenticates the narration. Darraj on the other hand has scattered third person omniscient narrator in forms of flashbacks or timeline shifts working with dialogues. The narrative technique that throws light upon the child psyche in Geha and Darraj is sophisticated as it encounters its problematic identity that lies in close conjunction with the spatial domain in which it is placed. Hanan as a child experiences conflict of her identity as she becomes conscious of her “difference” in school.

Geha’s Nadia mulls over the vastness of America. In her head, the city is monstrous in its measure and character and function. The monster seduces and threatens and consumes in Nadia’s perception of America. Nadia struggles to reconcile between her desire to dissolve into the luring “huge strangeness” along with the American women and the resistance to the city as it threatens “loss and vicious home sickness” (88).

Nadia views the city as a space of confinement as well as freedom. For Nadia she lost her father to the city that swallowed him up and yet gave him the freedom to wander aimlessly in it. The city invites exploration at the cost of being consumed by it. Nadia is initially apprehensive about the possibility of running away from her grandmother’s home, worrying because “what would they do? Who would take care of them out there in America, a girl and her little brother?” (95) when her brother suggests plan at the time they both thought their grandmother was on the verge of death.

The children’s perspective thus shows the trajectory of evolution of the Arab American identity from childhood to adulthood. It highlights the fact that even as children, their multi-ethnic facet of their identity is made conscious to them. They know that there is an *America* and they don’t somehow fit into that label though America is essentially their home.

When the scale tilts to the other polar, where the older generation immigrants dominate, there are displacement anxieties and chronic homesickness, especially among those who were refugees. *Refugee and Immigrant Health* states that:

> Refugees leave their homeland and culture with little return of hope. “Culture shock” is thus overwhelming and for older generations with less ability to adapt, unrelenting. A lifetime of memories, familiarity, and accomplishment is abandoned and completely new and often

> incomprehensible and hostile world is entered. Language customs and value of the new world are not only different from those of the refugee, but also are perceived by some refugees and some people in the country of refuge as superior to the language, customs, and values of the refugee. Adjustment to the culture is more difficult for refugees than immigrants and is often difficult for older refugees. (40)

In *Inheritance of Exile*, Siham, Aliyah, Layla and Huda are all war refugees. In *Through and Through*, Nazir and Samir are portrayed as fleeing from the unstable and riotous Lebanon. “Homesickness” depicts the anxiety and the post traumatic stress experienced by Samir after moving into America. The television images stimulate a traumatic response:

> In silence the picture snaps to a man running down a city street. The man is afraid. This is only a television program, Samir reminds himself…Abruptly, the man drops like a top-heavy sack of flour. Only a television program, Samir reminds himself, but the actor too must have seen such a thing before. Because the body does not fall backward, arms in the air as in cowboy movies, but forward, in a heavy crumple; the weight of the human head and chest does this, even in children….Only when he thinks for sure that the tears will begin again does he switch the channel (Geha 153).

Samir is reminded of the gruesome scene he had witnessed in the war through the scene and he comes to America, in the hope of not living in fear and in hope of being a part of the culture but the process is slow and tedious and memories of his homeland comes back to him involuntarily. Therefore, Samir portrays how for refugees who come in exile assimilation was not an easy option even if they volunteered to. However, in the women in *Inheritance*, they choose to retain their heritage than be subsumed by America.

2.4 Reconstructing Worldviews of Family

These opposing ideologies of assimilation and affirmation led to intra-familial tensions. It disrupted bloodline and traditions from within. Thus worldviews and normative notions about institutions of marriage and family had to be reconstructed and redefined.

Nabeel Abraham's exposition on the Arab American posits that they maintain strong affiliation to their Arab traditions and the intensity varies across the generation. Abraham reinforces that the Arab American convention of family is close knit and it espouses arranged marriages and that the American form of "dating is virtually non-existent among all but the most assimilated Arab Americans" and that divorce "once unheard of in Arab society, is increasingly making a presence among Arab Americans although it is nowhere near the proportions found among mainstream Americans."

The cycles show how characters in the family of recent immigrants marry outside the community and earns their community's censure. Haleem recalls his family's reaction to him marrying an American and later divorcing her: "The family felt it was bad to marry an American, but they felt that divorce was worse. My mother stopped writing…" (Geha 45).

Hanan not only marries an American but gets pregnant out of the wedlock. This infuriates Layla and the two end up not speaking for a long time. Arab American communities had to thus cope with cultural transgressions within their community and accommodate notions of dating, pre-marital sex and interracial marriages.

The recent arrivals also had to face the sudden disbanding of their joint families into nuclear systems. They tried to allay the sudden change by connecting with other Arab families in the neighbourhood. Remote connections in the homeland accelerated the bond. Lamis talks about how a small anecdote about her meeting with Siham's father back in the old country cemented their relationship on their first meeting and thus easing the pain of separation from family and friends:

> I told Siham that story when I was first introduced to her, when she moved into the neighbourhood, and she almost wept. We hugged right away, and talked for hours about those we had left back home: she missed her parents, and I missed many of my friends and cousins. We talked about how we could arrange visas for them to come to the States, and so we bonded that first day. We became sisters.

> (*Inheritance* 97)

2.5 Citylore: Model of Folklore

Inheritance of Exile and *Through and Through* spin yarns of the city folks and thus attains a citylore quality. The functionality of the citylore can be compared to that of the folklore. These cycles pay close attention to the individual and the individual's proximal space. Roxanne Harde in *Narrative of Community: Women's short Story Sequences* says that:

> Zagarell sees narratives of community as a tradition of coherent response to social and cultural changes, although these coherent responses come out of texts that are often fragmented or episodic. They are collective, continuous, and bear the culture of community through a focus on the details of local and domestic life. (2)

The stories in the cycle built a certain modern citylore that performs similar functions of a folklore. Basing citylores of these minority groups on Bascom's model of folklore's functions; in which folklore "reveal man's frustrations and attempts to escape in fantasy from repressions imposed upon him by society" (343), is a pedagogical device to impart moral values and code of conduct, it validates "culture, in justifying its rituals and institutions to those who perform and observe them" (346) and it is also a means of social control that keeps in check its community's conformity to norms; it results in a re-interpretation of cultural values and code, conventions and norms since these establishments are not stagnate enterprises but temporal and malleable productions. *Inheritance of Exile* and *Through and Through* fights the structures that stifle them in their rendition, they cultivate a unique culture and tries to educate the outsiders, break stereotypes and mythos wrapped around them. It attempts at self-preservation by activating the internalization of a culture of the specific community. The stories explore the inconsistencies of their fractured diasporic identity thereby in its effort to resolve the conflict the very mechanism becomes an inevitable precipitate that settles into their identity matrix. The narratives resist blind full blown assimilation as a solution instead tries to carve out a space by embracing its idiosyncrasies.

Geha's afterword resonates these assumptions. Geha not only teases out the aforementioned paradox but he also muses over the intricacies of being Arab American; how he had been confronted with the question his whole life: "*Where are you from?*" and the guaranteed follow up "*No, but I mean, where originally*?" (156). His afterword is in thematic synchronization with his own stories as well as the ones in *Inheritance of Exile.* He addresses the issues that the cycles dealt with; the conflicts persistent in the members of the community. Like most of the characters, Geha too admits how the early stages of his life was a constant effort of escaping his Arab roots and questions of his origin were reminders of his failure of this ambition. He recounts how when he started off school, he was teased for his differences—the food and the accent. However, eventually he assimilated into the mainstream culture, demanding American food at home and his faded Arab twang the obvious marker yet also the marker of the gaping difference between him and his parents' articulation that Geha was embarrassed of.

Geha talks about his initial writing experience in college where he exempted his personal experience to avoid exposing his immigrant heritage as he knew writing from his own experience would mean identifying with a heritage he avoided like a disease. As he got his first teaching job in Missouri he was sure that he had "located the real America …and was determined to belong" (162) and yet found himself wavering and settling on "being different" on his terms. In Missouri he found himself enveloped in nostalgia of his home in Monroe Street in Ohio and he began to develop same impulses in his writing.

Geha talks about the agency of fiction to facilitate *world travel*[6]and making it possible to empathize with the predicament for instance of an Arab American immigrant and subsequently learn that he/she is "a complex person with human frailties as well as human virtues defeats the possibility for sentimental simplifying: good or bad, black or white, us or them." Geha argues that such world travelling is of crucial importance in a turbulent socio-political scene of America whose student population cries 'Death to all Arabs" (163) during the Gulf war. Depreciation of empathy ensues in intolerance for the unfamiliar and narcissistic self-absorption, warns Geha. Geha in his summing up resolves the immigrant dilemma. He proposes:

---

[6] Maria Lugones in her essay "Playfulness, "World"-Travelling, and Loving Perception" talks about world travel which is moving from one cultural world to another thsrough mode of empathy.

> After all, who said America must be a melting pot into which we drain and disappear? The nineteenth century, that's who. The Great Melting Pot has always been a nineteenth-century notion, and I'd just as soon it stayed there, along with the know nothings and Manifest Destiny. I prefer instead an image I've come across more and more in recent years—that of the mosaic. The American Mosaic. Common sense tells us that the American immigrant experience resulted not from melting down the uniqueness in each separate one of us, but from arranging those pieces and joining them together toward the design of a larger, more complex picture, one that makes use of differences to create richness and power and harmony. The achievement of which is the promise of the Ellis Island. And in the stories I have written, the struggle for which is what America is all about. (165)

Geha's summation augments the argument for city lore's function as a rehash of folklores'. He acknowledges how the fiction becomes a world of if not escape an opportunity to advocate a certain discourse that enables in reconstruction and demystification of concerned identities. Parallel to identity remaking, it also asserts it difference and propagates the idea that its difference is permissible and inevitable and it appeals to retaining the opposing or dual identities than disappearing into the melting pot as Geha puts it. In other words, it favours the community adhering or conforming to a certain identity framework that is intrinsic to the group in question. It also recognizes its potential to educate the spectators of the narrative by shattering their prejudices and racial bias. Within the community it bolsters the spirit and fraternity amongst the individuals. It also instructs its participants not live in denial or dejection but to celebrate their complex and rich multiple heritage. Geha's autobiographical testimony validates the themes in the fictional cycles. Thus the characters and themes in Geha's short stories are without question a result of his ethnic identity.

The short story cycles embody another unifying element of theme. Themes of their multifaceted identities and the adapting process to the displacement environment of the new arrivals and the identity crisis of the second generation born to the diasporic generation are recurring themes in the cycles of Darraj and Geha. The everyday is riddled with predicament that are born out of their identity. Sometimes the dual worlds oppose one another and yet at other times they collate together. A lot transpires in the expression of their selves in the everyday. The next chapter focuses on the challenges and its tackling on an everyday basis.

Chapter 3. Negotiation of the Quotidian

The Arab American ethnic community faces multiple challenges by virtue of their multi-ethnic minority identity in American demographical and geographical matrix. Their everyday is fraught with negotiating these challenges that are invisible and visible both. From the sense of self-consciousness that is felt in the presence of the dominating white components to the overt racial slurs showered upon them; from the identity dilemma to being subjected to exoticisation; the Arab American has to fight these elements in their everyday lives. The Arab American identity is not an ossified abstraction but one that is in constant flux as seen in the ideology of the different wavers. Consequently, different generation of migrants had different challenges meted out to them and also the challenges varied with the immigrant community and their successive generation. Geha and Darraj in their cycle depict the dealing of these challenges. Additionally, the portrayal of the community’s interaction with the quotidian institutions and conceptions like family, marriage, death, aging, religion is a blanket theme spread across the cycle.

3.1 The Challenges of the Everyday

The recent arrivals encountered several roadblocks and challenges stimulated by the cultural chasm and their progeny though better attuned to the American culture were not without their share of trials and tribulation. Biological Arab descent and demographic American pedigree mixed and opposed forging a complex conflicting yet amalgamated psyche that at once sways between and combines together the Arab and American cultural circuit. The gamut of challenges spanned across differences in nature to culture (hostile weather to existential angst). These motifs permeate through both *The Inheritance of Exile* and *Through and Through.*

The Arab immigrants did not just undergo culture shock but also nature shock as they were not accustomed to certain natural conditions that existed in America. Naff claims there are accounts of Arab peddlers who testified that the climatic conditions were unfavourable for their business. In “Almost Thirty” Habeeb Yakoub recalls how his father Rasheed Yakoub “never got used to the snow and the long winters” (Geha 32) of America and reserved lengthy Arabic curses to the weather. It wasn’t always the case that the nature repelled them nor that it repelled every one. Siham intrigued by the leaves that “retained their shape, became muscular in texture and turned red, orange and gold” (*Inheritance* 23) slipped a couple into the envelope to send it across the ocean to her youngest sister Nadia.

Language barrier was one of the foremost challenges recent arrivals faced, especially women. Language learning was gruelling as there were alien sounds of *p* and *v* in English which was tedious to master. Siham devoted hours to practicing English especially “words with the letters “p” and “v”, which did not exist in the Arabic alphabet” (*Inheritance* 17). Men had the opportunity to improve their language skills as their business demanded interactions in English. Women were inhibited from moving out of their domestic space due to language hurdles. It gave them limited social mobility confining them to restricted space and community. Siham’s personal date book was filled with household chores instead of social appointments. Entries read “[w]ash windows and dust ceiling fan” and “[s]hine floors and do English exercises” (17). Sofia finds herself having difficulty being understood and understand in her interaction with English speaking Americans. She has episodes of frustration spawning from boredom and loneliness. Amos assesses his wife’s occasional acting out as a result of ennui induced by unfamiliarity and alienation Sofia experienced in the strange land:

> Especially one so often ignored, left to herself here in a tiny flat above a tiny store, surrounded by taverns and pawnshops and the blue-eyed bums asking for wine. America was hardly what a child must have expected it to be. A child, he told people, given to petulance when things were boring, when weather was hot and there was nothing do. (Geha 66)

Sofia’s sense of loneliness is resonated in Siham as she strolls around her neighbourhood that she felt was “an island, lonely despite the flow of people” (*Inheritance* 18).

Rudimentary English language skills also tampered with business at times whenever it demanded translation from Arabic to English as depicted in “And What Else?” in an expansive passage that demonstrates the tortuous process of translation between the husband Elias Yakoub who did the wrapping at the grocery store and translated the prices in English to Arabic for his wife Maheeba at the cash register who in turn translated the Arabic into French. When Maheeba had suffered from her chronic headaches, they swapped roles and the “work went slow, then, for Aunt Maheeba was not quick at wrapping, an Uncle E, who found it difficult translating Arabic numbers to English, took his time” (Geha 103).

The new immigrants had to get used to the spatial and temporal arrangement in America. Most of them came from villages or mountains and were owners of vast farmlands before they sought refuge in America. The vast panorama their visual and tactile cognition was used to was abruptly snubbed by the crammed urban neighbourhoods they moved into. That the spatial crunch is a repetitive attribute in narrations in both cycles, commands review. In *Inheritance* spatial descriptive phrases are several: “small apartment”, “crammed together”, “tiny apartment”, “paltry 10’ by 10’” size”, “tiny room”. Lamis regrets how her father had “owned half the farmland in the village” (64) before they sought exile. Huda’s makes a reference to her father’s field and their grove where oranges grew. Braheem Yakoub and his closest relation were from the same village. Tonia’s father Azar was a villager from the mountains. In America, the small spaces rented or bought were scrunched into being both business outlet and home. There is a claustrophobic suffocation individuals are seen subjected to not just by the tangible constrictions of space but also the impalpable restrictions of social space that was either cordoned off from within or not accessible from outside. There is constant effort to escape from the claustrophobia as they aspire to expand material space and otherwise. Braheem Yakoub starts a restaurant chain in the neighbourhood. Nader promises to move into a better neighbourhood.

Adjustments had to be extended to sense of time as well. The Arab notion of time was at variance with the American concept of time. “The first-generation newer immigrants feel the pressure of adapting to U.S. time”, observes Kelly D. Hay and Susan L. Kline in their essay “Traveling Identities in Joking Performances” (212). For Americans as the axiom goes “time is money” while the Arabs believed in prioritizing time for people and relationships. Also Arab sense of punctuality was different from American. While America stuck diligently to schedules, Arabs flouted their appointments as to arrive early was an indicator of low status. The American temporal framework demanded taxing working hours from the new immigrants who aspired to be successful in their business venture. Men worked round the clock and returned home late, thus robbing them out of the possibility to spend time with their family. Hanan talks of her father's hectic schedule: "He worked such long hours, leaving the house at 5 A.M. and returning late, that the two of us hardly saw him at all" (*Inheritance* 108). Nadia remembers her first date with George, a Syrian resident at the local hospital: "We met at the Melitta Café on Soth Street the following day. I arrived earlier than he did—later I would larn that George, in a typically Arab way was running late…" (42). The American work culture also advocated late night diners. When once Haleem tried to get his cousin George over the phone close to midnight, Aunt Anissa, George's mother informs him that George was helping out at the restaurant to close up (Geha 35).

Most Arabs as they arrive settle into ethnic neighbourhoods that are affordable to them. The Palestinians who came in exile fleeing their war inflicted country arrived leaving everything behind. Some had to stay in UNRWA camps before they could arrange their travel. Layla and Huda were in the UNRWA before America. They gave up their private land and homeland and started from the scratch in the new world. The Lebanese populace too came as refuges of the instability in Beirut. They move in crammed row houses like the one the characters in *Inheritance of Exile* settles into. They rely on sales, garage sales and often make second hand purchases. Priced furniture is covered in plastic and only unveiled on special occasions. "The blue, French-style furniture had been in plastic since she had been a child. Only when guests come over, and even, then, only very old or important ones—was the plastic peeled off and the fabric permitted to breathe. Food was never to be wasted—"Clean your plates. Never waste food"—was Aliyah's childhood mantra (52). Lamis suffers from class consciousness. She is conscious of her dialect in the presence of her Lebanese friend whose crispy Lebanese accent "glittering with French words" put her "guttural village dialect" to shame (62).

Class consciousness causes intracommunal tensions as Lamis is distraught by Siham's economic growth and often her showing off of it. Lamis is offended by

Siham's purchase of a dishwasher as she deems it a luxury, unnecessary and something Siham could have done away with. At times, she worries whether Siham, the "closest thing to bourgeoisie" (57) in Lamis's neighbourhood would move closer to the Center City, the posher part of the city. She feels threatened by Siham's economic ambitions as fears it would disrupt the secular equilibrium:

> Our religion doesn't matter here, the way it used to matter back home before eeryine—Jew, Christian, Muslim—thought he had answer to everything. Here, in America, our water comes in from the sane pipe and our sewage exits from the same pipe—here we are all the same…At least, until Siham went and convinced Nader that she needed a dishwasher. (58)

Siham's "fancy, expensive new machine" reminds Lamis of her loss induced by war and Lamis thought of the miserable past they shared was their "only salve" and Siham's transgression of it would upset the balance.

There are intra-familial tensions as well owing to the generation/ assimilation gap. The younger generation, especially children born and raised in America grew up internalising American values and culture and also with a deep rooted sense of nationalism. This clashed with the ideologies of the lesser assimilated or isolationist parents that was deeply seated in Arab sensibilities and culture. The strain that comes in parent-child bond has been discussed in the previous chapter.

More established Arab Americans became in America, there also evolved a parallel sense of home. There was generally a divide of home/homeland in them fashioning two spatial systems that represented kindred concepts. It jerks out the common assumption that the ideal corporeal ancestral home that embodies the spirit of homeliness and the history attached to it can only be in homeland and dislocation from it to other homes become a replication of that original space. The recent arrivals who ran away from war still clung to their Arab heritage despite accommodating themselves into the American plateau. This home/homeland divide is seen in "Back to the Surafce". When Nadia's grandmother dies there is contestation as to where she ought to be buried. Nadia's aunts and uncles from the old country claimed she had to be buried back in Jerusalem because that was home. However, Siham insists her mother be buried in Philadelphia as her last years of life was spent with Nadia and herself and she had left Jerusalem for their sake, she wouldn't want to leave them after her death. Siham's argument implies that her mother would be at home if she were to be buried in Philadelphia. Reema is frustrated that for her mother Huda home is in Haifa. For the second generation, the home is nowhere but in America. This conflict of conception of home within the same familial space befuddles the younger generation as their knowledge of home was not in synchronisation with their parents'.

There are dual cultural hemispheres in the American identity make-up whether they resist or embrace singularly either Arab or American portion in them. Siham, Aliyah, Hanan and Reema acknowledge their duality. Each one of them handles the double persona in their own way. Haleem and George Yakoub sway between Arabic and English; they marry American women and teach their American wives the Arab *debkee* dance. Aliyah visits her Arab ancestral home looking for answers. Reema's Ph.D thesis investigates "the culture created by war, and examine how victims cope in the new worlds" (172). At times they want the Arabness to disappear like Reema who wanted to "just wake up blonde and green-eyed", like Tonia who wanted to be a "tall cowgirl with smooth blonde hair", like Hanan who wished she was named Laura or Miranda; like Barbara who wanted breast reduction.

Tseng and Chuang in their seminal work regards the identity crisis experienced by Korean Americans. The same is true of Arab Americans as:

> they enter young adulthood, many reevaluate their narrow preoccupation with their ethnic identity and culture and look for balance seeking to develop a bicultural identity. However, even as they aim for this balance, many feel that this goal is driven not just by their desire "to combine the best of both worlds", but also by the sad realization that they feel at home neither in mainstream society nor in their own ethnic setting.

The Arab American consciousness arguably suffers from a postmodern existential crisis. "To be or not to be" is their everyday dilemma. The decision to make cultural decisions and choices of allegiance to one culture over another becomes exhausting; anxiety and confusion prevails of not being able to make sense of the chaotic world around them of not being able to reconcile the conflicting identities within them most of the time. As identity informs ideology and worldview, the Arab Americans are seen grappling with making sense of their daily lives. They struggle with deaths of dear ones, marriages and rites of passage into adulthood. There are bouts of depression and episodes of distress are not uncommon. Women of recent arrivals suffer from lack of purpose. The absurdity and mundane quality of life becomes prominent.

Tonia in “Something Else” struggles to understand marriage and death. For her, her marriage has been as “ordinary” as her father’s demise. The cultural markers of a funeral and a wedding aspire to make the two entities to mean something special with their ceremonial extravaganza, with their corresponding decorations, yet fails in retrospection. Tonia’s image of her father’s death is thus:

> It was normal. He was sick for a long time, he died. Normal despite candles and flowers, purple vestments, incense, and the altar sodality all kneeling together for the rosary. (Geha 58)

Tonia is scared and overwhelmed by the banality and is comforted only by religion’s promise of deliverance of her father’s soul into heaven. As a child she believed it and yet she knew she was deluding herself. Her delusion is exposed as she prepares for her wedding:

> And years later, flourishing the diamond and fussing over the selection of bridesmaids’ dresses, she must have been a child then too; she had tried to make it all seem so special. It was not. Of course not—even then, in the very effort of her excitement, she had known that it was really only normal, as ordinary as, after all, the death of her father had been ordinary. (58)

The staggering plainness, Tonia realises as the story winds up, seeps into everything—the honeymoon and the life after, the future children, family picnics, reunions and funerals. Tonia grew up listening to her mother’s anecdotes of her marriage where it was a practical choice that she was cajoled into making by her mother’s insistence. Hence, Tonia remembers her parents’ marriage as not based on love like the popular notion but based on “something else”.

Haleem Yakoub is suicidal at age of thirty. Spurned by his family for marrying an American woman and divorcing her two years later, Haleem is lonely and dejected in his apartment. “Almost Thirty” becomes a therapeutic telling for Haleem:

> What I have to tell has to do with my father Rasheed….and my cousin George who grew up several years behind me, like a little brother; George who, as he stumbled toward his mid-twenties…suffered from bad dreams and worried about his health, counting the beats of his heart and the breaths he took by the minute; who could not dance, neither the ballroom waltz nor the stamping, snake dancing *debkee* of our own mother country, Lebanon. Especially, this is about dancing and a family picnic in 1969 when George Yakoub threw down an egg salad sandwich and, letting his heart and ungs and feet do what they would, danced. (Geha 33-4)

Haleem is shaken by his father’s death around the time he was about to be thirty. His father’s death coupled with his anxieties of passage into middle age, Haleem becomes pensive and brooding spending nights immersed in thoughts, as is rendered unproductive as he “could not read or study” anything. He breaks into memory of his father; he remembers how his father used to say “We are all damned fools” and its other variant “We are all damn fools” (43). The philosophy the assertion held was the predestined doom waiting man and also man’s ignorance. Haleem is affected by the declaration presumably as its etched in his memory. The pessimistic view of his father clearly questions life, individual’s control over it and its meaning. His other dominant memory is how his father never made peace with the bitter winters of America. Haleem eventually as he passes thirty realises that he cannot control life but he can make peace with it. When says, “I knew, whether I like it or not, the time had come for flowers”, he means the illusion of control is forgone for a reconciliation with lack of it.

George too is fatherless at a young age. The absence of a masculine figure, George suffers from problems relating to his sexuality and masculinity. He began having nightmares and anxiety attacks in sleep. One of the doctors suggests occasional sexual intercourse for allaying his condition. George’s inability to dance always stood out as a stump against his opportunities to socialise with the opposite gender and his indulging in the family’s traditional dance. George however outdo both challenges—he finds himself an American wife and in 1969, he jumps into a frenzy of snake dancing for the first time.

Arab Americans were conscious of their difference from the mainstream whites. Such differences often became challenging in interethnic marriages as discussed in the previous chapter. Arab Americans were also subjected to insults and racial slurs. Labels like “terrorist”, “sand-eater”, “camel jockey”, “towelhead”, “gypsies” were used to offend them. Apart from the negative image stereotyping, they were also prone to exoticisation, especially the women. Reema in “Chasing Valentino” dates a white man Alex who finds her exotic and fetishizes over her culture. He introduced her as “his beautiful harem girl” the first time she met his friends to break the ice. Reema since her understanding of what “exotic” meant was bothered by people calling her so. Alex fantasises himself as the sultan Shahrayar of *Thousand and One Nights* and Reema assumed that that made her Scheherzade.

3.2 Negotiating the Quotidian

Nabeel Abraham talks of various stratagems employed by the Arab/ Arab Americans to surmount the testing conditions they were lodged in. These ploys sometimes included adhering and at other times flouting of the dominant norm. He lists *ethnic isolation*, *ethnic denial* and *ethnic integration* as the means through which they coped the quandary America posited before them. The operators of these devices varied depending on the wave and social identity (whether their citizenship was acquired through naturalization or by birth); these strategies necessarily overlapped and “several factors entered into the decision to favour one strategy over another—recency of arrival, ethno-religious make-up, socio-economic class, place of residence (whether one lives in a predominantly “Arab” neighbourhood)”, along with other “variables such as political awareness, experiences in the home country, encounters with prejudice and discrimination, as well as individual idiosyncrasies can influence the eventual choice of strategy” (23). The strategy also varied depending on the level and domain in which it was being performed; whether at the community or individual level, whether in the domain of home, school, work; it shuffled, shifted and overlapped. Abraham states that at the community level there existed a singularly dominant strategy.

Ethnic isolation was a defensive strategy where they fortressed themselves from their exterior environment and held tight onto their ethnic values and traditions. It catered to an exclusionist ideology using their ethnicity as a shield against the external elements. The isolation perpetuated and embraced its own *difference* and thereby inverted the agency of their marginalization into their agency of negotiation. It was a popular strategy among the recent arrivals in the first wavers who belonged to the lower economic strata, were uneducated, unskilled and were from villages and rural parts of their homeland. Since these immigrants came voluntarily with the intention of returning to their homelands, they never had the incentive to alter or assimilate their identities. At other times their socio-economic limitations curbed the scope of assimilation. The second and third wavers who adopted it did it due to political reasons. The political dynamics of American and Arab countries at the period influenced their strategy; their homeland's conflict with their host country induced them to stand against America's pro-Israel policy vehemently and in solidarity. So they preserved their Arab identity and projected it outward than camouflage it. Also there was a sense of resentment toward their host country. Ethnic isolation presupposes its practitioners sense of self pride and self-esteem was hardly marred.

In "*HolyToledo"*, the "Little Syria" is the prototype of the isolationist community. The old people especially clung to their Arab roots without even weeding out its superstitions:

> It was usually just the old people who were careful not to point at certain stars, who never ate from a yellow dish or left a slipper upside down with its sole stepping on God's face. Once, Nadia told her uncle about how Mikhi had imitated the ritual that old people had of kissing a piece of bread that had fallen to the floor. (Geha 89)

In the story "News from Phoenix", Issac's mother Sophia was resistant to assimilation. She had strong anti-Semite sentiments nurtured during her childhood in Damascus by her archimandrite uncle who told macabre stories of child-murdering Jews for secret rituals. "Damascus remained fresh in her, the dark evenings huddled with her sisters, fearful and giggling around the brazier while her uncle told stories" (Geha 64). She is mortified by her husband Amos's indifference to Jews and his solicitation with his Jewish attorney and his wife, Erwin and Charlotte Klein. Though initially she resists any association with them, gradually the bias breaks down though not entirely as she couldn't resist baptising the dead foetus of Charlotte without her noticing. She tries to breed the same anti-Semitic sentiments in her children but fails. Even after her three years in America she spoke only rudimentary English and "she wasn't trying to learn" was the common assumption. She shirked the opportunity offered by Charlotte to "drive her to high school where English was taught at night" (68) under the pretext of refusing to leave her children alone.

For Nazir, who came to America in 1945 due to the Beirut civil war, his seemingly isolationist strategy is on large part involuntary. Six years later and Nazir has hardly changed except that he was a widower now. Nazir is referred to as his nickname Zizi throughout the narrative. Zizi was a boyish nickname as Zizi never grew into a man. He is seen to be more helpless than his six-year-old son Jameel and often "too slow or too clumsy, too easily confused" at work that he was sent off "to do something simple, to bus dishes or wipe down the lunch counter" (Geha 4). Samira his wife when alive made him feel at home evoking memories of his home in the old country. She tended to all his physical and psychological needs and her death takes a toll on him as he is rendered helpless without a caretaker and considers remarriage within five months of his wife's demise. Despite the constant efforts on the part of his cousin Braheem Yakoub to reform him into a "practical man" with western sensibility, Zizi disappoints his cousin's endeavour.

In *Inheritance*, the mothers of the four protagonists adopt an isolation scheme on large scale bordering on integration. The integration inclination has varying degree of extent and affinity amongst the four mothers ruled by their social and economic background and their individual past. More than social acceptance the integration impulses are spurned out of the need to climb up the class ladder. It is driven by economic ambitions than social ones. The interrelation between the two is not overlooked but the proposition being that these women did not want to be identified as American but they strove for vertical economic mobility. They fled from their war inflicted home country seeking security and a better stabilised life. They revered and conserved their Arab legacy and tried to inculcate the same in their children. As part of their efforts even Christian children were sent to mosques on Sunday to learn Arabic through Quran like. Hanan in “Preparing a Face” recalls her parents’ futile attempts to make her learn Arabic by sending her to a local mosque in North Philadelphia. Fathers too played their part when on “Saturday afternoons…they took the boys and went to the Lebanese bookstore and coffee shop on 9th Street” (58). The Lebanese bookstore becomes a centre for the boys to partake in their culture and the coffee shop visit implies the conversations the fathers and the sons would engage in about the old world to keep the youth abreast of their ancestral culture. Coffee drinking amongst men in Arab society is a traditional custom where they relax, mull over the current social and political issues and for recreation[7].

They chided their children in instances of cultural transgression. Hanan is censured by her mother on several occasions when she defied customs like when she served drinks to children first when they were supposed to serve in the descending order of seniority; when she offended an old uncle by pointing the sole of her feet toward her him; when she moved out from her home and finally she made the most unforgivable transgression when she married an American, John, while being pregnant with his child. For almost a year they never spoke to each other. They looked upon America with suspicion and disdain. They acknowledge the irreconcilable differences in the two cultures and thinks it the best each kept to itself. “He won’t understand our culture”, Sitti in “Back to the Surface” insists firmly about Kevin, her daughter Nadia’s fiancé. Nadia’s grandmother refuses to directly refer Aunt Nadia’s American husband Kevin and frowns through their wedding ceremony; she also tried to infect her family with her “bad vibes”. Within the family he came to be known as the “non-Arab” or “Nadia’s husband” or “al-amerikani” by his name. Siham makes a reference to Hanan’s friend John as “the American boy”. While America took to stereotyping Arab men as oppressive patriarchal wife abusers and their women as harems and morally questionable, there was a similar myth making by Arabs of America. The girls were prohibited from watching the *Days of our Lives* as it showed “filth” and would “ruin” them. Hanan is certain that her aunt Warda might have warned her cousin Rola in Palestine about “the dark terrain of wild

---

[7] John McHugo in his article “Coffee and qahwa: How a drink for Arab mystics went global” that was published in BBC’s online news magazine traces the institution of coffee drinking by men in the sixteenth century.

America” and “the irreverent Americans” (*Inheritance* 82). Therefore, the cynical Arab mothers try their best to discourage assimilation in their children. They try to restrict their younger ones from marrying into the American culture literally and figuratively. Reema had to swear to her parents that she would never marry outside the community.

Among the four mothers, Siham was the one with most integrative tendencies. Siham displays conflicting temperament with regards to her perception of America. She is seen to look upon Nader with contempt for him as she regards him as one of those “*returning American Arab* nouveau riche” (19) that sickened her in their first encounter in Jerusalem market. She believes in the power of the blue stones indigenous to her culture to protect her from Evil Eyes. She gets upset over her sister Nadia’s decision to divorce. She empathises strongly with the Syrian sentiment of having grandchildren of their own bloodline as a question of family honour and advices her daughter to sacrifice her relationship with her boyfriend George, who had intended to marry her soon, when Nadia scars her uterus in an accident killing all the possibility of bearing a child. However, after their marriage as she moves to America with him she tries to assimilate. She stocks up Barbie dolls that are gifts from Nader, tries to be the American wife who never pried on her husband as “marriage was a friendship in America, not a spy operation and takes to learning English religiously as “she practiced her verbs for at least an hour every morning” (17). She buys commodities like the television and the dishwasher as an attempt to be modern and to up her economic status.

Layla tries to assimilate just enough for her husband’s sake who lived his whole life in America yet had affinity for his Arab legacy. Layla’s assimilation happens on a small scale as her husband didn’t expect anything different from her and was easily satisfied with her small accomplishments. Layla recalls how little things made Michel happy:

> My repeated attempts to fry chicken without burning it. The A’s I bring home from my ESL classes at the community center. The fact that I’ve taken to Bruce Springstein (which really was not as tough as I’d made it seem) and listen to Hanan’s tapes. (102)

Ethnic denial is expressed strongly by Hanan. She gauges herself to be more American than Arab. She barely speaks Arabic, struggles to relate with her mother's Arabness. Even as a child, Hanan was partial towards America. America was her home as America is where she was born just like her father had been born. She belonged to the southwestern part of the city, "her city, her home and roots" (82). Her denial of access to her mother to enter into her world is an instinctive denial of her Arab side. She is embarrassed by her mother's accent and personality even as a kid and bluntly tells Layla not to turn up at her school on Parent's Day. "Because you'll talk differently from other parents and that'll get me teased for at least a month" (98) was the explanation Hanan gave her mother. Her social circle used to include other kids beyond the neighbourhood presumably white as Nadia, Aliyah and Reema were the only other girls in the school of Arab descent, until her father's assault that turned Layla paranoid about her family's safety and disallowing her from going beyond the neighbourhood or mingling with people outside their community. She is the only one among the four in the cycle seen to have an American friend, John, whom she later marries and separates from. She socialises in dance clubs which according to her mother is very American and hence not to be frequented. Despite her self-definition as an American, she is conscious of her Arab side too especially in John's familial and social circle. Many a times The closest Hanan is seen in cohesion with her Arab tradition is her basket weaving craftsmanship which she learned from her mother and enjoyed doing.

Nadia, Aliyah and Reema are on the other hand in the integration level on the stratagezaiion spectrum. Nadia effortlessly straddles between the Arab and American dimensions. She is seen neither denying her Arabness nor is she seen over embracing Americaness. In fact she picks from both, relishing in the best of two. This is visible in the way she is bonded to her grandmother, having visions of her after her Sitti's death. She falls in love with a Syrian migrant George who is resident at the neighbourhood hospital. Aliyah on the other hand tries to explore her identity. She seeks to find a balance between the two and in the endeavour visits her ancestral home in Ramallah. The journey makes her realise of her inherent Americaness that acts as a barrier to her interaction with the Arab world. She eventually returns having found an inexplicable connection with the culture albeit her unsuccessful relationship with George. Reema too has her own battles. There are sporadic episodes of Arab loathing and denial when:

> she lacked interest in her Arab-ness, when she wanted it to disappear and just wake up blonde and green-eyed, with a live-in, stock-broker boyfriend who watched football on Sundays while she read Time magazine on the couch beside him. (175)

There were times when she felt dissociated with her Americaness. There existed in her a cultural competition which she anticipated if not regulated could end in her redundancy. There were times:

> when she'd hated her mother and father—their sad faces, their accents, the way they always spoke wistfully of home, as much as she felt awkward around co-workers who couldn't wait for Fridays but trudged in with Monday morning hangovers. (176)

The integration is complex process that develops and evolves over time. The determination of what elements to discard and what to retain happens over time and sometimes choices are reversed. Barbara in "Everything and Everything" only in her twenties realise that she wants to have a breast reduction surgery. Her large bosoms, inherited from her Arab mother was always a subject of mockery and ridicule in school. Her physicality differentiated her from the other girls who developed breasts of normal size later than her. Her deviation from the so called norm develops in her a desperation to undergo normalization. However, Barbara is unsure whether she should do undergo a procedure that make irreversible changes in her persona. Habeeb and George Yakoub cousins in Toledo also integrated into their selves both Arab and American identities. They both married American women, played the *debkee*, the Arab snake dance in picnic, although it was probably George's first time in his thirties as he could never dance. Tonia in "Everything Else" too marries and an Irish American but it's a short-lived marriage.

One of the most common and immediate form of assimilation was Americanizing their Arab names. Habeeb was Hank, Jameel was Jimmy, and Samir was Sam. Often children of immigrant parents found their Arab names frustrating as the American community never pronounced it right and in schools they were often teased for their unusual sounding names. Hanan's name is always mispronounced as a Chinese city and she is exhausted correcting pronunciations. School and colleges becomes an important agency of assimilation as children learn how to speak English with American accents and pick up on American culture.

Sports became an important channel of assimilation. Sports was entrenched in American culture and became an expression of its nationalistic spirit and consciousness. Arts and mass media helped in propagating the patriotic spirit by reaching out to its people in their daily lives through television, radios, newspaper, films, songs, theatre. S W Pope relates how sports enabled assimilation:

> Sporting traditions were invented to assimilate masses of immigrants into the American way of life. Those who "played the game" embraced and affirmed their place in the American community. Residual class and ethnic elements were sustained in one form or another in established national sporting traditions, but ultimately the dominant cultural meanings prevailed—rationality, productivity, meritocracy, bureaucratic organization, corporate ownership, exchange principles, upward mobility, hero worship, fair play, patriotism and consensus. (17)

Habeeb and Jameel sermons their newly arrived Arab cousin Samir about the value American placed for sports. "Sports are big in America" (Geha 145) remarked Jameel. "Very big" added Habeeb for emphasis. The institutionalization of sports becomes evident as Habeeb explains how social and religious establishments advocate the culture: "In America all the schools have baseball teams. Even the *churches*, some of them. Even businesses!" Hank assures Samir that if he picks up baseball, "the all-American pastime", he would subsequently become "All-American" himself.

Children of immigrant parents were taught to play baseball. Nadia's most live memories of her late father Nader is when he played baseball with her and when he sang songs during their road trips. The cherished image of their baseball game as a significant memory of her father conveys the fundamental role the game played in commonplace American life and how it intertwined with their lives essentially on a personal level.

Mass media and consumerism accelerated the assimilation process. American TV was both a commodity and culture. Television heightened sensitisation of American values and furthered their English language learning. It was also a status symbol along with other home appliances and commodity like the dishwasher and cars. Ownership of houses and these consumer products were indicators of having arrived in America. “Settlements, generally located in ethnically mixed low-income neighbourhoods, ultimately matured into stable communities as immigrants bought homes and acquired middle-class symbols such as home appliances and cars” (Naff 31). Jameel instructs his cousin Samir to “save up for a television first” (145) and then maybe a car eventually as all Americans owned one. Samir put away a considerable portion of his salary for the purpose. Television was expected to fulfil double fold purpose of assuaging the loneliness he experienced alone in his flat and also as an English language acquisition tool. Samir “expects laughs from it, and singing, a relief from the silence of nights in the flat” and his sponsors in Beirut, “members of a peace network, had told him that English would improve rapidly if he listened to the radio and *le television”* (145). The transformative power of television is acknowledged through the regulation of its viewing by the parents who didn’t want their children to erode their Arab heritage into extinction as illustrated in Aliyah’s recounting of the mothers’ prohibition on watching American shows. Subscription to English newspapers and listening to American music aired on radio or through records were supplementary assimilative practices. Lamis subscribes to *Money* magazine, *Good Housekeeping, Time* magazine, and *New York Times* daily.

The community liked to flaunt their progress up the economic ladder as they displayed eagerly their newly brought machinery in their social circle evoking envy of their lesser fortunate companions. In “Reading Coffee Cups”, Lamis is indignant at Siham’s tacit efforts to flaunt her new dishwasher to close friends. Lamis recalls Siham’s earnest endeavours to procure American gadgets as she never waited for the sale at which they could be brought for a cheaper rate. Lamis and Siham are the only ones in their group to own a VCR and she recalls Siham’s impatience in procuring it: “…I bought mine the week after she did, but I paid much less for itall she had to do, I told her, was to wait for the sales, and not be too hurried to spend” (*Inheritance* 59).

The coffee or tea cup reading practice was popular among the Arab women. This mystical practice acted as a morale booster at times of uncertainty. Especially when they migrated to a foreign land fraught with a lot of precariousness, cup reading practices in women’s social gathering spurred comfort and confidence. Kris Kissma in her essay “The Role of Fortune Telling as a Supportive Function among Icelandic Woman” talks about fortune telling bore semblance of psychological healing and hence was a therapeutic experience too. In “Reading Coffee Cups”, Huda reads the cups of her friends at Siham’s house for amusement, nevertheless not without total trust. She sees a man in Layla’s cup who would be for her daughter, windows in Lamis’s cup that were “[s]ymbols of opportunity ahead” (60) and oval shapes in Siham’s that were ambiguous and resisted interpretation. Despite the obscurity of the oval shapes, the group decides on a positive interpretation of a polka dress. The session somehow cheered the women up and gave them a sense of optimism. In “News from Phoenix” Sofi reads the cups in a friends gathering. She sees “journeys, money and love” (Geha 80). Her friends, the Erwins, were leaving the state voluntarily and a journey was on the cards anyways but reiterating it in the cup reinforces support and good will.

Magic and charms were a strong part of the Arab belief system. Blue stones were supposed to fight the Evil Eyes. The Evil Eye is a malicious eye that can be casted upon people to inflict them with misfortunes like loss, disease and death. The Evil Eye motif runs along both the cycles thus revealing the role the superstition plays in the lives of the Arab community. The superstition prevailed amidst the lesser assimilated group in the community, the older generation prominently. Siham is obsessed with the superstition essentially after her encounter with Nader’s American ex-wife whom she looks upon as “Homewrecker Barbie”, the manifestation of evil, and hangs the blue stone charm she imported from the old world all around the house to ward off similar evil. Bronislaw Malinowski saw magic catering to psychological need and social functions. According to him “magic was a system of beliefs and practices that provide emotional responses to situations of frustration” providing “answers for the “gaps” in technical and, or practical knowledge or failure to control a situation” and thus instilling confidence in the individual (qtd. in Sindima 124). Sofia chants prayers against the Evil Eye of her Jewish American neighbours’ gifts for her children. Uncle Eddie in “Holy Toledo” wore the charm for luck during his time in navy that belonged to his mother as a child in Syria.

Visionary dreams were harbingers of future. They were signs indicating the future and sometimes were vehicles of forewarning and guidance. The interpretation of dreams, thus was in discordance with the western Freudian psycho-analytical approach of interpreting dreams. Nadia's dreams were sometime also a portal for communicating with her dead grandmother. She summons her grandmother willing and asks for her wisdom on issues confronting her at the time. Her grandmother warns her not to go on the skiing trip. Though Nadia had interpreted it as her grandmother's disapproval of going with her boyfriend, the real insinuation was the impending accident. The grandmother thus becomes an oracular figure from the nether world with nuggets of information and in/foresight. Nadia talks about it nonchalantly thus giving it a streak of naturalness than a supernatural air. Séance or contact with the dead is blasphemous and is in the realm of witchcraft in the western sphere. Though Nadia is a Maronite Christian, her worldview accommodates such infringements. Nadia gets advices and warnings from her grandmother in her dreams. Nadia's dreams also forecast her future as she meets her real life boyfriend the first time in a dream. Sofia in "New from Phoenix" believes in the prophetic power of dreams as her foretelling of Charlotte finally conceiving a baby comes true. The medium of her prescience was her dream about death, which for her signified birth. However, her augury doesn't attain completion as Charlotte loses her foetus.

Oracles always were medium of advice and warning and the culture predates Christianity and can be traced to ancient Syria. The modern world has become more obsessed with fortune telling and predictions as evident in the booming industry of astrology with its horoscopes and numerology. The new migrants' sense of insecurity spiked as they entered a foreign environment bristling with questions of survival. Under such circumstances their unscientific belief systems did not wash out but became more vigorous as they were coping devices on a psychological level. Non empirical knowledge systems always swoop in when empirical science fails to provide answers. There is no assumption here that such alternate belief systems are void but only an attempt at understanding their social function.

The women to kill boredom inflicted upon them by language and cultural barrier found methods to keep themselves occupied and distracted. Siham sold her embroidery to make extra cash and move on to work for a textile manufacturing company, Huda helped her neighbours out by babysitting for them and made some money through it, Aunt Maheeba and Sofia helped out their spouses in the business and Lamis and Layla engrossed themselves in their domestic responsibilities. Lamis gave her teaching job to become a full time mother taking care of her four children. Layla is kept busy playing the perfect hostess to her frequent guests at home.

Palestinian women often used their craftsmanship to earn some money. They exploit the exoticisation endowed upon them by the Americans and used it to their advantage by making marketing it. The western penchant for exotic goods thus becomes a commercial opportunity for them. Nadia in “Holy Toledo” mocks at the awe of olives the silly American women expressed as they drifted into the Syrian neighbourhood in hope of buying exotic Arab goods.

Thus the diasporic Arab American community’s dual impulses have to be coordinated to negotiate their everyday challenges. Their postmodern plural selves have to acknowledge its diversity otherwise as Reema voices it the competing culture would pave a foggy future. The Arab Americans are often tormented by their conflicting impulses and if these urges don’t reconcile, their volatile identities would haze their ideologies and worldviews, suck them into a vortex of confusion and disenchantment with life. These selves are symbiotic, coexisting together and one needing the other for the preservation of the whole. They strive strike a balance as in Issac’s and his mother’s ambidextrous pouring of the *yensoun* and the cream together into the cup as to prevent the cream from curdling; as in Hanan’s weaving of the gold strips into the bottom and sides of the brown basket and like the wordless song of the *oud*—“ alternating and conflicting notes that formed a harmonious wave” (55).

Chapter 4. Conclusion: Gender in the Everyday

Transantional and multi-ethnic identities like that of Arab American weave in and out of its multiple cultural systems and in constant flux. Arab American identity like many postmodern entities eludes straitjacketing and therefore only certain premises or overall semblance of it can be considered as an entry point into understanding them. The *Arab* unit is multifaceted, and within its various ethnic variations say Palestine or Syria, there are subcultures. Sub culture is a phenomenon that like the Chinese box has layers of other sub- subcultures and so and so on embedded in it. To analyse and examine however, means taking into consideration of broader categories with its identifiable definite parameters.

This study looked into the texts *Inheritance of Exile* and *Through and Through* within the genric framework of short story cycle. As the genre has been argued by scholars to be an appropriate form for the ethnic identities' doubleness that exists in-between like the genre itself (between novel and short story); the *Inheirtance of Exile* saw its characters cut across the past and the present, across two cultures *Arab* and *American*, and developing a trajectory of evolution in them. *Through and Through* displays how there are various degrees of adaption among individuals to the new environment from a close knit community.

The theme of assimilation, the titular project showcased the plethora mechanism of negotiating and also not always through assimilation but also through its antonym isolation. There is an overtone of resisting the extremities of either and instead of disappearing into the pot as Geha voices it, there is an attempt to maintain a balance between the two cultures. Gender is a quotidian part of identity and examining the Arab American culture and community from a gender vantage point would nourish the understanding of Arab American identities. Naber corroborates the view as she says:

> Within the dominant middle-class Arab immigrant discourse that circulated in my interlocutors' homes and community networks, gender

> and sexuality were among the most powerful symbols consolidating an imagined difference between “Arabs” and “Americans”. (*Arab America* 7)

As the perceived differences in the Arab and American culture and the subsequent identity and cultural conundrum that arose in their everyday is the essential focus of this research, Naber’s input aligns gender as a primal component that influences the transmutation of the community in their social setup.

4.1 Gender in Arab American Context

Patriarchal societies structure their social norms and convention from a male perspective and they determine the gender performative. Therefore, the masculine and feminine vary across culture. The gender identities femininity and masculinity has now largely been accepted as social constructs than inherent biological configuration. Hence, the notion of what constitutes feminine and masculine varies across cultures. *Men and Masculinities* informs that some culture define masculinity through “sexual conquest” and through stoicism while others base it on “civic participation, emotional responsiveness and collective provision for the community’s needs” (Kimmel and Aronson xix). The book also lists other two factors that contribute to the evolving definition of masculinity: one being the social changes within a country as in the pre-industrial and post-industrial phases in America that constructed different images of masculinity and the other being the individual self-definition that evolves with age; a teenager’s sense of masculinity is different than that of a middle aged man.

Whittaker Wigner Harpel in his work *Conceptions of Masculinity Among Arab Americans* ventures to explore how masculinity is conceived by Arab American men. Based on his study of an Arab American community in Tacoma, Harpel argues that the community’s notion of masculinity revolves around “self-sufficiency, decision-making and family”. Though they seem to resemble the Euro-American masculinity, Harpel asserts they are remarkable differences as the Arab American masculinity is a transnational hybridised concept that in constant flux. Family honour and shame constituted patriarchal supervision in Arab communities. However, Harpel proposes that Arab American men redefined and restructured their masculinity and patriarchal roles as a reaction against:

> the changing ideas of femininity and of women’s roles by reconstituting and reestablishing ideas of honor and shame to fit within this new transnational setting. The reason for this is that women's roles changes more radically than masculinity within the transnational arena, and in the case of Arab-Americans it means that honor and shame are being reconstituted in response. (5)

In reshaping the ideas of *honour* and *shame*, they preserve the pre-existing hierarchy in the society.

Femininity/ feminism too cannot be pigeonholed into a definitional structure as it eludes being pinned down to generalizations. Femininity naturally like the masculine varies across cultural borders and so do feminism. Third world feminism has backlashed against the western Euro-American white feministic institution by exposing the stark difference of the primary concerns between the two schools. Third world feminism do not just address women’s oppressions due to patriarchy its ambit of concern extends to other facets of women’s needs like education, food, health and most importantly survival in adverse conditions. Chandra Talpade Mohanty relates third world women’s struggle is the struggle of women of all colours including white women in opposing political “forms of domination that are not only pervasive but systemic” (4). Darraj’s Arab American feminism stems from the third world feministic framework as she felt the upper-class white feminism did not sit well with her as it criticised aspects of her culture which she valued for instance the Arab culture did not see domestic work as oppressing or delimiting instead it took pride in efficiency in the domestic sphere of women (and men). As she says in ‘“We All Want the Same Things Basically: Feminism in Arab Women’s Literature’:

> In essence, I understood that a woman could not carry both a briefcase and a diaper bag, and still be a feminist, because independence often meant *independence from* men and from family, which created an “either/or” dilemma: either be independent or be a mother/wife/etc., and feminism became acquainted with “anti-family”[…] (80).

4.2 Gender and Identity

Arab American feminism tries to retain both the cultures' facets and these women live in "third-time spaces", which enables them to mix it with both cultures, breaking down all dichotomies between an essentialized self and other while retaining and celebrating their differences. Lisa Majaj says in the *Post Gibran Anthology of Arab American Writing*:

> As hyphenated Americans we seek to integrate the different facets of ourselves, our experiences and our heritages into a unified whole. But the schism in our vision often affects our balance: as we turn our gaze into two directions at once, we sometimes lose sight of the ground beneath our feet" (67).

This amalgamation process is exhibited in *Inheritance* women characters like Siham and Hanan as they turn a commonplace craft skill into a commercial business. Weaving and embroidery skills were taught in domesticities by mothers in Arab societies and the immigrant women mutates this domestic skill into a commercial one in America; their domesticity converts into a commodity in America.

The men could not circumscribe to the Arab business sensibilities in America. They had to adapt to the American mode of business. Arab societies often mingled business with pleasure and business etiquette was both personal and impersonal. As Margaret K. Nydell notes for the Arabs in "the business relationships, personal contacts are much valued and quickly established" and "do not fit easily into impersonal roles" (22). They readily respond to "personalized arguments" than to logical ones.

There is a certain leniency and casualness in Arab markets as opposed to the fixed price culture in America. Siham laments how her bargaining talent that worked well in Jerusalem market was redundant in Italian Mareket where "the price was set" (*Inheritance*18). American business man is a "practical man" as Braheem Yakoub upholds frequently in "Almost Thrity". The practical man manipulates his customers as Braheem explains to Nazir: "…I tell you, Cousin, customers want to believe. That's why a practical man can fool them." (Geha 13). Arab business ethics was centred on honesty and scruples. Siham's father the village doctor saw his practice more like a social service than a business “often stitching the wounds of villagers without taking money and even without making them feel indebted” (*Inheritance* 16).

Adolescence and youth which are conventionally considered to be the formative stages of identity and usually punctuated with streaks of rebellion and defiance is a battleground of culture for Arab Americans. Naber notes how the “banalities of adolescent rebellion became a battle between two “cultures” between rigid versions of “Arab” and “American” value.” (*Arab American* 1) Mothers strove to cultivate the *Arab* morality in their daughters while the daughters were inclined towards the America liberal code of conduct in women.

Naber’s essay “Arab American Feminities: Beyond Arab Virgin/Americani(zed) Whore” explores a related binary of “good Arab daughter vs. bad American(ized) daughter, or Arab virgin vs. American(ized) whore” that “reproduced a masculinist cultural nationalist assumption that if a daughter chooses to betray the regulatory demands of an idealized Arab womanhood, an imagined Arab community loses itself to the *American.*”

The mothers in *Inheritance* expresses concern about their daughters’ chastity and flouting of the norm was seen as shaming of the family. American dating culture was not common in Arab American teenagers, especially the girls as their parents imposed strict restrictions. As Ernest MacCarus delineates:

> A Palestinian woman seen in public with an unrelated man, or behaving in an unsubdued manner around unrelated men, is subject to community gossip and will be labelled as a woman with loose morals. Marriage within the community then becomes difficult. Palestinian women should be virgins when they marry; their parents expect this as do most of their potential spouses (qtd. in Abdelrazek 156).

The same holds true for its neighbour state Lebanon. In Geha’s “Monkey Business” there are patriarchal code of conduct expected out of women in the old country: “On the wedding night Samira was expected to know nothing, like most brides in the old country” (Geha 2). In the same story Nazir is expected to call off his engagement with Uhdrah as she behaves inappropriately in an attempt to revive a dead old man, a verdict dictated by patriarchal conventions:

> …Her hands move gently along Asfoori's arm, the shoulder, the neck, the face…the chest, down the belly, the waist.
>
> "What'cha bet," someone says in a loud comic whispers," she's gonna crank up his Oldsmobile too!" (Geha 16)

The Oldsmobile is a reference to the male sex organ. Nazir's cousin Braheem assures him that he is "better off" and he "shouldn't have 'a let her do that to Asfoori" (16). The *let* thus connotes the authority the male holds over women's conduct. Harpel reinforces the view as he says:

> Honor and shame largely center on the controlling of (female) sexuality and the separation and regulation of male and female interactions. Shame is tied up with a cost to social capital. (19)

Rola, Hanan's cousin seeks refuge from the persecution that would entail if her pregnancy was made public in her homeland. Rola comes to America in the hope that she will not be judges for her moral transgressions. But Hanan disillusions her by stating that there are anti-abortionist movements in America and single mothers are stigmatized in so called liberal America too. Hanan, on the other hand subverts the patriarchal standard of chastity by getting pregnant out of the wedlock.

Honour is not just invested in the female chaste sexuality but it also related to expectation based on class. Rita Mae Brown's analysis that: "Class involves your behaviour, your basic assumptions about life, your experiences (determined by class) validate those assumptions, how you are taught to behave […] (quoted in Hill and Ballou 80) could be read in the context of how female behaviour is measured through the yardstick of patriarchal standards. This notion of women belonging to a certain class is a "lady" as opposition to un-lady like women from the lower strata who lack a certain sophistication and refinement and a comparatively compromised dignity is a construct of patriarchy. In "The New World" Siham offers to work along with Nader in his food truck business to which:

> Nader had said that his wife was a lady and he didn't want her hands to get dirty. "What about Michel's wife?" she had asked, but Nader said that she had lived in a refugee camp and was used to dirt. "Plus she's a little loose in her head," he added. (*Inheritance* 16)

Arab American women were also objectified as exotic sexual objects by the white man. Darraj in her article “Understanding the Other Sister: The Case of Arab Feminism” expresses her anger at “Western conceptions of the East as lazy, sensual, exotic, and willing to succumb—the same image that Arab women writers like Ahdaf Soueif and Leila Sebbar seek to reconstruct.” In what she phrases as “the rejection of the odalisque”, a way to dissolve the prevalent image of the Arab women as a concubine in whom the sexuality availability is manifested, Darraj herself employs the mechanism in one of her stories. This is exhibited in “Chasing Valentino” where Reema who was always “bothered by the fact that people told her that she looked *exotic”* (175) struggles to delude herself that Alex may not be fetishizing her to the degree she perceived but finally it becomes too much for her that she breaks it off with Alex. Alex is clueless what provoked the reaction in Reema and his confusion only reveals how extensively men have internalized their fetishes that they are not even conscious of the implications of their actions and attitude.

4.3 Shades of Arab American Feminism

Another topic of contestation amongst feminist have been the domestic figure of women. While western women thought of women being in a domestic space as demeaning, Darraj showcases how in Arab/Arab American school of feminism this view is dramatically in opposition. She argues: “I didn’t view housework as a mark of oppression. There was a certain sense of pride placed on a clean, welcoming home, and both my parents have placed value on it” (it’s not an oxymoron 296). This inversion of the domestic space as a space of oppression to as a space of emancipation is found in *Inheritance of Exile* as women characters assert their domestic identity like Lamis. Belittling domestic roles of wives/ mothers suck out the gravity of the labour the roles demand. ”I stayed at home to raise my four, and that was *enough work* (emphasis added), thank you” (58), says Lamis as she puts herself on par with her other friends who were earners. Lamis recalls how she gave up her *other* job as history teacher in school to become a full time mother and housewife.

In Geha, however, the women seen participating in the family business does so without remuneration. Aunt Maheeba who worked at the cash register in her husband Elias’s store ironically “never had any money”. Sofia scuttles between her domestic and her limited public chores as the domestic and business spaces were appended.

Women in both *Inheritance of Exile* and *Through and Through* are seen as agency of stabilizing and recreating the homely atmosphere in America. They enabled nostalgia of home and made the transition of settling into the foreign land easy and comfortable with their pampering, caring and cooking. They cooked Arab meals that were savoured by their homesick husbands who came home tired from work. Zizi recalls how Samira had given him the confidence that he carried in his father's home in Beirut. Layla played a perfect hostess to her small community as she served them Arab feasts and these get-togethers rekindled their Arab spirit as they chatted in Arabic, cracked jokes and recalled stories. It became a space to re-establish customs especially, to wavering children who were given lessons like "when you serve coffee to guests, you start first with the oldest person" or that it's "an insult to show someone the bottom of your foot" (*Inheritance* 80).

Home/homeland and heritage is an integral part of the lives of Arab American women. Especially for Palestinian American women asserting their Arab identity was crucial in America where Palestine is never acknowledged geographically. Thus to reclaim their land and its history prior to being usurped by Israel, the narratives of their homeland as reference to Palestine becomes a pivotal cause for these women to prevent the erasure of an inherent identity. Another project is to demythify the notion that all Arabs are muslims. Darraj in her blog mentions how as a sophomore in Rutgers University in a Middle East history class, her professor read from his notes: "There was no Palestine and there were no Palestinians....the Palestinians didn't have an identity until the Israel question came." Darraj goes on to exert her perturbation:

> It was most devastating because it had always been difficult, as a Palestinian-American, growing up in the United States, to talk about my ethnicity. Most people didn't really know what Palestine was, and it's not like I could show it to them on a map. The people who did have a glimmer of what "Palestinian" meant usually also had some negative associations with the term: terrorism, bombs, oppressed women.

She then admits that her work *A Curious Land* that came out in 2015 was a mission to thwart the existing misconceptions about Palestine. *Inheritance* too arguably functions to do the same with its characters and their attachment to their homeland. “Haifa would always be our real home” (192), asserts Huda.

Inheritance of Exile also fits into the genre of regional literature. It contains a palimpsest narrative where they overturned the dominant historical narrative in its outburst of suppressed histories. They lent a platform for unheard voices and consumption of it broadened the definitions of several institutions. It questions the make of a nation and national identity. It taunts homogeneity and questions singular traditions*. Cultural Work of American Regionalism* postulates that:

> Feminist retrievals of individual women regional writers focused on the alternative literary tradition that women’s regionalism might help critics to imagine. The values of such a tradition – community, nature, family, cooperation, communication, and a tradition of feminine knowing – are alternatives to the values of an urban, competitive, male-dominated sphere. If regionalism posited such alternative values in its texts, it also, for these critics, helped to redefine the importance of a feminine tradition of women’s writing, moving to its center people and places who had once been considered marginal (33).

4.4 Shifting Gender Roles

Women in *Inheritance* are seen to traverse into the so called masculine domain of tackling extreme hardships and men sometimes display vulnerability. In *Through and Through*, there are male characters who are viewed as less masculine in comparison to others. Men are often stereotyped as strong and as “heroic fighters and sturdy oaks”. This stereotype propounds the image of men as incapable of experiencing “fear or doubt” and advocates in them the qualities of being “active, courageous, brave, strong, forceful, dominant and even violent”. The sturdy oak image similarly suggests that he is “tough and able to hold strong while facing whatever challenges come his way”. Women on the other hand, fostered by the Judeo-Christian belief of “piety, purity, domesticity and submissiveness” are considered to reach the summit of their virtue when “vulnerable, dependent and weak" (*Encyclopedia of Gender and Society* 379). *Inheritance* and *Through and Through* negotiate these stereotypes.

In *Inheritance of Exile*, the men display moments of weakness that are so often associated to femininity. Michel is upset when Layla takes him to the refuge sites where she spent her childhood. Layla recalls how his "hands shook when he saw the children playing in the open sewers, and the holes, like gaping mouths filled with jagged teeth, that opened the surfaces of many home" (101). Michel' is rattled after the assault in the city and Hanan detects the change in her father whom she doubted could ever be scared until:

> in the refrigerated meat department in the rear of the store, his face blanched as he watched the butcher wrap the headless bird in plastic, and I thought he would faint at the sight of the other butcher, trimming the fat off blocks of red meat, bright blood smeared over his white apron.

Nader is helped by his wife Siham to resolve the debt he owed to his first wife of green card marriage. Nader apologised to Siham and "even cried with her a little" (31).

These scenes often go against the myth of "sturdy oak" and fearless men who can brave any adversity stoically. The "damsel in distress" is reversed to the dude in distress in Nader's case where his wife comes to his rescue. The female characters also display defensive violence as in the instances of Aliyah who as a girl in retaliation of her brother's broken nose and him being called "dirty Arab" right before, "sprinted the six blocks…to beat up the kid and his two cousins with the bat" (68) and Hanan who punches a classmate who hurled the insult "sandeater".

In Geha the immasculine is represented through the *muskeen* (poor fellow) in reference to George Yakoub, *h'marr* (donkey) in reference to Samir and in the boyish nickname Zizi of Nazir. George is a *muskeen* because of his chubby physical stature—chubby, round belly and curly hair; because he dislocates his hip while playing football as a kid; because he can't socialize with women. Samir is referred to as *h'marr* by his cousins due to his Arab rustic naiveté who appears helpless in the modern America due to the cultural gap. The *h'marr* sets itself against the American standard of masculinity which doesn't "flinch at the sudden buzz of the baggage carrousel” in the airport; which is not partially deaf; which speaks fluent English and has no trouble getting around in America.

George is troubled by his endangered masculinity and begins having anxiety attacks. The doctor’s advice of “having” a “woman” shows women are seen as medium through which men claimed their masculinity. Haleem assures him that “there is no shame in buying it.” Samir is overwhelmed with loneliness and is still, even after coming to America, haunted by the war back home in Beirut and breaks into tears sporadically. Zizi struggles to be the “practical man” buy is still stuck in his boyhood dependency.

Zizi, the widowed man is almost helpless after being widowed as his confidence rested with his wife’s tending his needs. Uncle Elias too dejected by Aunt Maheeba’s death soon falls into a period of silence and sickness and provoked the comment: “That is not like Elias at all. He has lost weight. His face is all eyes” (110). Siham on the other hand, keeps herself together and with the help of her mother survives her widowhood.

4.5 Conclusion: Review and Scope

Ethnicity also influenced the character’s assimilation into the American social framework. *Inheritance* is about Palestinian women and *Through and Through* embodies Syrio-Lebanese characters. The two groups had different historic makeup and that in turn influenced their attitude to assimilation in America. The Palestinian were exiles from war while a lot of Syrian came voluntarily to prosper in America. Naff observes how there was no significant event that unleashed Syrian immigration. As Palestinians came as form of refuge and to start over their shambled lives, Syrian came with open minds of embracing America. The Lebanese however came escaping from the political turbulence and riots.

Arab Americans keep switching their cultural frames as they shuffle between Arab and American framework. Most Arab Americans swap between Arabic and English languages and since language embodies the worldview of the host culture, the hyphenated identities straddle across two worldviews. As Nuha, an Arab American expressed the bafflement:

> Sometimes it can make you crazy as you can't get out. I have so many worlds and every world is a whole other world. But in your mind they are totally separated, but then they are all in your mind together. You get to a point you are about to explode. (*Arab American* 5)

Inheritance and *Through and Through* dealt with this duality and conflict. The analysis of the cycles reveal that they raise questions about diasporic identities and they acknowledge that answers are not simple or single. The multiple worlds Nuha addresses need not be condensed into one but only need to accommodate one another. The negotiation of the diverse worlds in multi-ethnic identities submerged in their consciousness also reflects the external racial tensions that exist in the world outside. Another way of looking at it is that not all immigrants face the same challenges, immigrants who are more aligned to American culture and language, or who share the same white status, like many European communities, have it far easier than the coloured communities. Thus, the part of the identity struggle is also imposed by power politics of white/coloured dichotomy.

Though the Arab communities come from different denominations with varied histories and cultures, and since the first wave they have evolved and progressed in the American society. They are embedded across various economic and social strata and "have come a long way from their humble beginnings of pack peddling to become wealthy entrepreneurs, scholars, reaching heights in most professional careers" (Al Shamiri 4). They share a sense of fraternity and has formed activists group that fight against the marginalisation. Arab American writers especially are trying to forge a literary venue for the community to demarcate their issues and struggles from other minority groups. Transnational identity doesn't equate with only disadvantaged and minority multi-ethnic identities in America. The permutation of multi-ethnic identities is infinite in a globalised world.

Arab American post 9/11 has become more vulnerable to attacks and several literary productions came out to combat the negative stereotyping of the Arab community as a whole. *Inheritance* and *Through and Through* was published post 9/11 in 2007 and 2009 respectively and yet it does not make a reference to the crucial event as the stories are set in a period before that. These works evoke the past of Arabs in America and focuses on the subtleties of existence as a dual identity. In addressing the quotidian experience, the cycles demonstorize the American demonising of Arabs as uncivilized and barbaric.

Any research seated in diasporic, transnational or multi-ethnic culture spirals into possibilities for infinite more. As Arab American have only begun to nurture a niche for them in the literary sphere, not many works exist that compares them with their sister identities like the Latino/ Native/ Black/Asian American identities. In fact, comparative studies between them and even mainstream American literary canon is scant. Such research ventures can help enrich the existing knowledge of immigrant literature and their discourses. With proliferation of new media, Arab Americans' movement for claiming equal rights are gaining momentum and there is a reconstruction and deconstruction of popular notions about the Arab/Arab Americans through such media.

Works Cited

Primary Sources:

Darraj, Susan Muaddi. *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly*. Notre Dame, IN: U of Notre Dame, 2007. Print.

Geha, Joseph. *Through and Through: Toledo Stories*. 2nd ed. New York: Syracuse UP, 2009. Print.

Secondary Sources:

Abdelrazek, Amal Talaat. *Contemporary Arab American Women Writers: Hyphenated Identities and Border Crossings*. Youngstown, NY: Cambria, 2007. Print.

Abdul-Baki, Kathryn K. *Fields of Fig and Olive: "Ameera" and Other Stories of the Middle East*. N.p.: Three Continents, 1991. Print.

Abinader, Elmaz. "Children of Al-Mahjar: Arab American Literature Spans a Century." *U.S Society and Values* Contemporary US Literature:Multicultural Perspectives 5.1 (2000): 12. Feb. 2000. Web. 30 Dec. 2015.

Abraham, Nabeel. "Arab Americans." *World Culture Encyclopedia*. N.p., n.d. Web. 1 May 2016. <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/A-Br/Arab-Americans.html>.

Abraham, Nabeel. "Arab-American Marginality: Mythos and Praxis." *Arab Studies Quarterly* 11.2/3, Arab Americans: Continuity and Change (1989): 17-43. *JSTOR*. Web. 8 Mar. 2016.

‘Akash, Munīr, and Khaled Mattawa. *Post-Gibran Anthology of New Arab American Writing*. Vol. 11. West Bethesda, MD: Kitab, 1999. Print. Ser. Jusoor.

Al Shamiri, Mohammed Ahmad Ameen. *Voices from the Periphery: Twentieth Century Arab American Poetry in English.* Jawaharlal Nehru University, 2014. *Shodganga*. Web. 5 Apr. 2016.

Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso, 1991. Print.

Asher, Robert and Charles Stephenson. "American Capitalism, Labor Organization, and the Racial/ Ethnic Fatcor: An Exploration." Introduction. *Labor Divided: Race and Ethnicity in United States Labor Struggles, 1835-1960*. Ed. Asher and Stephenson. Albany: State U of New York, 1990. 2-9. *Google Books*. Web. 11 May 2016.

Bakalian, Anny P., and Mehdi Bozorgmehr. *Backlash 9/11: Middle Eastern and Muslim Americans Respond*. Berkeley: U of California, 2009. Print.

Bascom, William R. "Four Functions of Folklore." *The Journal of American Folklore* 67.266 (1954): 333-49. *JSTOR*. Web. 12 Jan. 2016.

Bendixen, Alfred. "The Emergence and Development of the American Short Story." Ed. James Nagel and Bendixen. *A Companion to the American Short Story*. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 3. Print. Blackwell Comapnions to Lit. and Culture.

Bettelheim, Bruno. "The Child's Perception of the City." *Literature and the American Urban Experience: Essays on the City and Literature*. Ed. Michael C. Jaye and Ann Chalmers. Watts. Manchester: Manchester UP, 1981. 219-32. Print.

Boccaccio, Giovanni, Guido Waldman, and Jonathan Usher. *The Decameron*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.

Boggs, James. "Uprooting Racism and Racists in The United States." *The Black Scholar* 2.2 (1970): 2-10. *JSTOR*. Web. 27 Apr. 2016.

Brown, Julie. *Ethnicity and the American Short Story*. New York: Garland Pub., 1997. Print.

Brown, Laura S., Laurie E. Riepe, and Rochelle L. Coffey. "Beyond Color and Culture Feminists Contributions to Paradigm of Human Difference." *The Foundation and Future of Feminist Therapy*. Ed. Marcia Hill and Mary B. Ballou. New York: Haworth, 2005. 63-92. Print.

Carlisle, Rodney P. "Beginnings in America: Precolonial to 19002." *The Arab Americans*. Vol. 2. New York: Facts On File, 2011. 4. Print. Ser. Multicultural America.

Cha, Peter T. "Identity Formation in the Second Generation Korean American Church." *Conversations: Asian American Evangelical Theologies in Formation*. Ed. D. J. Chuang and Timothy Tseng. Washington, D.C.: L Foundation, 2006. N. pag. *Google Books*. Web. 19 Feb. 2016.

Chaucer, Geoffrey, and A. C. Cawley. *Cantebury Tales*. London: Dent, 1960. Print.

Curiel, Jonathan. "New Attention for an Old Literary Tradition." *SFGate*. N.p., 14 Apr. 2003. Web. 9 Nov. 2015. <http://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/New-attention-for-an-old-literary-tradition-2655066.php>.

Darraj, Susan Muaddi. "It's Not an Oxymoron: The Search for an Arab Feminism." *Colonize This!: Young Women of Color on Today's Feminism*. Ed. Daisy Hernandez and Bushra Rehman. Emeryville: Seal, 2002. 294-309. Print.

----. "Understanding the Other Sister: The Case of Arab Feminism." *Monthly Review* 1 Mar. 2002: n. pag. Web. 7 Apr. 2016.

----. "We All Want the Same Things Basically: Feminism in Arab Women's Literature." *Women and Language* 26.1 (2003): 79-82. *EBSCO*. Web. 9 Jan. 2016.

----. “Words That Have Haunted Me." Web log post. *Susan Muaddi Darraj*. Darraj, 21 Nov. 2015. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.

Davis, Rocio G. "Identity in Community in Ethnic Short Story Cycles: Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, Louise Erdrich's *Love Medicine*, Gloria Naylor's *The Women of Brewster Place*." *Ethnicity and the American Short Story*. Ed. Julie Brown. 1940 ed. Vol. 16. New York: Garland Pub., 1997. 4. Print. Ser. Wellesley Studies in Critical Theory, Literary Hist. and Culture.

-----. "Negotiating Place/re-creating Home: Short Story Cycles by Naipaul, Mistry, and Vassanji." *Telling Stories: Postcolonial Short Fiction in English*. Ed. Jacqueline Bardolph. Vol. 47. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2001. 323-32. Cross/Cultures. *Google Books*. Web. 26 Mar. 2016.

Erian, Alicia. *Brutal Language of Love*. London: Headline Group, 2014. Print.

Foote, Stephanie. "The Cultural Work of American Regionalism." *A Companion to the Regional Literatures of America*. Ed. Charles L. Crow. Malden, MA: Blackwell Pub., 2003. 25-41. Print.

Giles, Paul. "The Deterritorialization of American Literature." Introduction. *The Global Remapping of American Literature*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton UP, 2011. 1-28. Print.

Haddad, Yvonne Yazbeck. *Not Quite American?*: *The Shaping of Arab and Muslim Identity in the United States*. Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2004. Print.

Haney-López, Ian. "A Note on Whiteness." Introduction. *White by Law: The Legal Construction of Race*. 10th Anniversary ed. New York: New York UP, 1996. xxi-xxii. Print.

Harde, Roxanne. “Introduction”. *Narrative of Community: Womens Short Story Sequences*. Ed. Harde. New Castle: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2007. 1-13. Print.

Harpel, Whittaker Wigner. "Conceptions of Masculinity among Arab Americans." Diss. Washington State U, 2010. Web. 4 May 2016. <http://www.dissertations.wsu.edu/Thesis/Summer2010/w_harpel_042910.pdf>.

Hassan, Salah D., and Marcy Jane Knopf-Newman. "Introduction." *MELUS* 31.4, Arab American Literature (2006): 3. *JSTOR*. Web. 20 Apr. 2016.

Hay, Kellie D., and Susan L. Kline. "Traveling Identities in Joking Performances: Peril and Play in an Arab-American Community." *Transforming Communication about Culture: Critical New Directions* 24 (2001): 189-218. *Google Books*. Web. 15 Oct. 2015.

Hughes, Langston. *Autobiography: The Big Sea*. Ed. Joseph McLaren. Vol. 13. Columbia: U of Missouri, 2002. Print. Collected Works of Langston Hughes.

Ingram, Forrest L. *Representative Short Story Cycles of the Twentieth Century; Studies in a Literary Genre*. The Hague: Mouton, 1971. Print.

Kadi, Joanna, ed. *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*. Boston, MA: South End, 1994. Print.

Kayyali, Randa A. "The Arab World: The Geography, History, People and Cultures." *The Arab Americans*. Westport, CT: Greenwood, 2006. 2. *Google Books*. Web. 14 Apr. 2016.

Kemp, Charles, and Lance A. Rasbridge. "Mental Health." *Refugee and Immigrant Health: A Handbook for Health Professionals*. Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge UP, 2004. 37-49. *Google Books*. Web. 17 Feb. 2016.

Keppel, Gilles. "It Matters." Comp. Ahdaf Soueif. *Mezzatera: Fragments from the Common Ground*. London, Berlin and New York: Bloomsbury, 2004. 278. Print.

Kertzer, David I., and Dominique Arel. "Census, Identity Formation, and the Struggle for Political Power." *Census and Identity: The Politics of Race, Ethnicity, and Language in National Census*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge UP, 2002. 10. Print.

Kimmel, Michael S., and Amy Aronson. "Introduction." *Men and Masculinities: A Social, Cultural, and Historical Encyclopedia*. Vol. 1. Santa Barbara, CA: ABC-CLIO, 2004. xv-xxvi. Print.

Kissman, K. "The Role of Fortune Telling as a Supportive Function among Icelandic Women." *International Social Work* 33.2 (1990): 137-44. *Sagepub*. Web. 18 Apr. 2016.

Lieven, Anatol. "Antithesis Part II: Fundamentalists and Great Fear." *America Right or Wrong: An Anatomy of American Nationalism*. New York: Oxford UP, 2004. 130. Print.

Ludescher, Tanyss. "From Nostalgia to Critique: An Overview of Arab American Literature." *MELUS* 31.4, Arab American Literature (2006): 93-114. *JSTOR*. Web. 22 July 2016.

Lugones, María. "Playfulness, “World”-Travelling, and Loving Perception." *Hypatia* 2.2 (1987): 3-19. *JSTOR*. Web. 1 Apr. 2016.

Lynch, Gerald. *The One and the Many: English-Canadian Short Story Cycles*. Toronto: U of Toronto, 2001. Print.

Majaj, Lisa Suhair. "Beyond Silence." *Homemaking: Women Writers and the Politics and Poetics of Home*. Ed. Catherine Wiley and Fiona R. Barnes. New York and London: Garland Pub., 1996. 43-52. Print.

-----. "Of Stories and Storytellers." *Saudi Aramco World: Arab and Islamic Cultures and Connections* Mar.-Apr. 2005: 24-35. *Saudi Aramco World: Arab and Islamic Cultures and Connections*. Aramco Services Company, Mar.- Apr. 2005. Web. 6 Mar. 2016.

------. *Transformative Acts: Arab American Writing/ Writing Arab America*. Diss. U of Michigan, 2012. *University of Michigan M Library*. Web. 29 May 2016.

Malek, Alia. Foreword. *A Country Called Amreeka: Arab Roots, American Stories*. New York: Free, 2009. xi. Print.

Mann, Susan Garland. *The Short Story Cycle: A Genre Companion and Reference Guide*. New York: Greenwood, 1989. Print.

Marrouchi, Mustapha. "Introduction: Colonialnism, Islamism, Terrorism." *FPO IP Research & Communities*. N.p., 1 Jan. 2003. Web. 6 Nov. 2015.

Mattawa, Khaled. Introduction. *Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction*. Ed. Pauline Kaldas and Mattawa. Fayetteville: U of Arakansas, 2009. xv-xx. *EBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*. Web. 9 Nov. 2015.

McHugo, John. "Coffee and *Qahwa*: How a Drink for Arabs Went Global." *BBC*. BBC News, 18 Apr. 2013. Web. 4 Mar. 2016.

Mills, Charles W. "White Ignorance." *Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance*. Ed.and Comp. by Shannon Sullivan and Nancy Tuana. Albany: State U of New York, 2007. 11. Print.

Mohanty, Chandra Talpade. "Cartographies of Struggle: Third World Women and Politics of Feminism." *Third World Women and the Politics of Feminism*. By Mohanty, Ann Russo, and Lourdes Torres. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1991. 1-50. Print.

Naber, Nadine. "Arab American Femininities: Beyond Arab Virgin/ American(ized) Whore." *Feminist Studies* 32.1 (2006): 87-111. *JSTOR*. Web. 24 Sept. 2015.

------. "Articulating Arabness." Introduction. *Arab America: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism*. New York: NYUP, 2012. 2. Print.

Naff, Alixa. *Becoming American: The Early Arab Immigrant Experience*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1985. Print.

Nagel, James. *The Contemporary American Short-story Cycle: The Ethnic Resonance of Genre*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2001. Print.

------. "The Twentieth Century: A Period of Innovation and Continuity." *A Companion to the American Short Story*. Ed. Alfred Bendixen and Nagel. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010. 217-23. Print.

Noble, Frances Khirallah. *The Situe Stories*. New York: Syracuse UP, 2000. Print.

Nydell, Margaret K. *Understanding Arabs: A Guide for Modern times*. 4th ed. Boston and London: Intercultural, 2006. *Internet Archives*. Web. 4 May 2016.

O'Brien, Jodi, ed. "Gender Stereotypes." *Encyclopedia of Gender and Society*. Vol. 1. Los Angles, London, New Delhi, Washington DC: Sage Publications, 2009. Web.

Orfalea, Gregory, and Sharif Elmusa, eds. *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab American Poetry*. Salt Lake City: U of Utah, 1988. Print.

Pacht, Michelle. *The Subversive Storyteller: The Short Story Cycle and the Politics of Identity in America*. Newcastle upon Tyne: Cambridge Scholars Pub., 2009. Print.

Patea, Viorica. "The Short Story: An Overview of the History and Evolution of the Genre." Ed. Viorica Patea. *Short Story Theories: A Twenty-First-Century Perspective*. Amsterdam: Rodopi, 2012. 7. Print.

Pope, S. W. "Americanizing Sport for a National Culture: Sport and American Identity." *Patriotic Games: Sporting Traditions in the American Imagination, 1876-1926*. New York: Oxford UP, 1997. 1-17. Print.

Said, Edward. "Backlash and Backtrack." *www.counterpunch.org*. N.p., 28 Sept. 2001. Web. Apr.-May 2016.

Salaita, Steven. *Modern Arab American Fiction: A Reader's Guide*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse UP, 2011. Print.

Serageldin, Samia. *Love Is Like Water and Other Stories*. New York: Syracuse UP, 2009. Print.

Shakespeare, William. *Hamlet*. Ed. Roma Gill. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2002. Print.

Shakir, Evelyn. *Remember Me to Lebanon: Stories of Lebanese Women in America*. New York: Syracuse UP, 2007. Print.

Shereen, Laila. "On Becoming Arab." *Mizna* 6.1 (2001): n. pag. *Mizna*. Web. 17 Apr. 2016.

Sindima, Harvey J. "Magic, Sorcery and Witchcraft." *Introduction to Religious Studies*. Lanham: U of America, 2009. 119-42. Print.

Singh, Amritjit, and Peter Schmidt. "On the Borders between U.S Studies and the Postcolonial Theory." *Postcolonial Theory and the United States: Race,* *Ethnicity, and Literature*. Ed. Singh and Schmidt. Jackson: U of Mississippi, 2000. 3-72. Print.

Smith, Jennifer J. *One Story, Many Voices Problems of Unity in the Short-story Cycle*. Diss. 2011. Print.

-----. "Locating the Short Story Cycle." *Journal of the Short Story in English* 57 (2011): 59-79. *OpenEdition*. Web. 11 Feb. 2016. <http://jsse.revues.org/>.

Sue, Derald Wing. *Microaggressions in Everyday Life: Race, Gender, and Sexual Orientation*. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley, 2010. Print.

Suleiman, Michael W. "Islam, Muslims and Arabs in America: The Other of the Other of the Other..." *Journal of Muslim Minority Affairs* 19.1 (1999): 33-47. *Taylor and Francis*. Web. 27 May 2016.

Wise, Tim. "Professional Development." *White Like Me: Reflections on Race from a Privileged Son*. Brooklyn, NY: Soft Skull, 2005. 170. Print.