People's Democratic Republic of Algeria

Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research

University of Oran

Faculty of literature, Foreign Languages and Arts

Department of Anglo-Saxon Languages

Being and Space Representation

Dislocation and Identity Malaise of Exiled Characters in Ethnic American Fiction

Case Studies:
Dreaming in Cuban (Cristina Gracía), *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (Mohja Kahf), *The Bluest Eye* (Toni Morrison)

A thesis submitted in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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2014

ABSTRACT

The present thesis presents a critical study of how three contemporary ethnic American women writers present three exile cases and counter hegemonic discourses throughout them as regards notions of belonging, home and identity. The process of identity making is discussed through an examination of the female protagonists' development in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. I have chosen a Cuban American, an Arab American and an Afro-American writer as typical representatives of the cultures of the "other" in the USA in order to back up the argument of alterity.

In the discussion of these works, the focus is on how the protagonists construct new meanings of exile that challenge previous conventions regarding the concept. While the protagonists resist conventional meanings of exile as well as gender roles and patriarchy; throughout their works, the authors react against imperialistic and supremacist structures and seek to recuperate the sense of pride in cultural difference. In this research, I attempt to highlight how these three literary works are counter-narratives at many levels. On the one hand, the protagonists celebrate the feminist call for gender equality and defy the patriarchal structures in their respective societies; and thus create a counter-narrative regarding gender issues. On the other hand, they create counter-narratives regarding the histories of their respective homelands that are hitherto narrated by the omniscient Western narrator. At yet another level, the protagonists present counter-narratives regarding their cultural practices that have hitherto been regarded as archaic, backward, and not fit to adapt to the avant-garde changes of the Western world.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

A work that has taken more than four years to finish accumulates enormous debts of gratitude. First, I would like to express my utmost gratitude to my thesis director Professor Abbés Bahous who was always available. His guidance and insights are invaluable as they helped me enrich my study in different ways. His knowledge and passion for literature constantly remind me of the privilege that it is to work under his direction.

Besides my advisor, I would like to thank my committee members: Pofessor Yacine Rachida, Professor Lakhdar Barka Sidi M'hamed, Dr. Djemai Fouad, Dr. Guendouzi Amar, and Dr Kaid Fatiha for serving as my committee members. Your brilliant comments and suggestions will make my defense an enjoyable moment.

Special thanks go also to my colleague and friend Talbi Abdelkrim who constantly showed his support and added to my strength and determination.

Dedication

I have received constant support and encouragement from my father M'hamed who taught me to never give up and resist all pressures, and from my mother Fatima who spared me household chores in order to devote more time to work on this humble thesis. Special thanks go to my soul-mate and husband Mounir. His love, support and patience are impregnable as he put up with all sorts of inconvenience and never stopped supporting me. My other great supporter is my sister Amina who has often played the role of the devil's advocate to help me approach counter-arguments that were often enlightening.

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INTRODUCTION

Exile has been one of the major productive literary topics in twentieth century literature. Together with related themes of displacement, diaspora and alienation it features prominently in the works of writers who quitted their homelands due to suffocating totalitarian regimes. More recently, the notion of exile has been adopted in postcolonial literature as a central theme. Therefore, one of the major purposes of this study is to examine the distinct meanings of exile from an ethnic-American postmodern viewpoint.

In its conventional sense, the notion of exile pertains to geographical displacement. It has often been discussed in spatial terms as a composite of the prefix "ex" meaning "out" and "ile" meaning island. It is noteworthy, at this level, to recall that etymologically the term 'exile' stems from the Latin word *exilium* where the prefix "*ex*" means "out" and the root "*solum*" refers to "ground, land, or soil". However, postmodern literature on exile provides a new interpretation of the concept of exile in which "ex" means "previous", and connotes life in the past and its incongruity with the present. This is particularly due to mass mobility that has fragmented the sense of attachment to local communities.

As so well explained by different exile writers such as Edward Said, exile is difficult to experience especially when its subjects are urgently obliged to adopt a new culture in a new home. However, exile is also enriching in a transcultural sense. Its most deplorable form might be spotted in Joseph Conrad's short story *Amy Foster* whose tragic end evokes the abominable condition of exile. By the end of the story, Amy's

husband, the shipwrecked Yanko Gooral, is severally feverish and raves in his native language asking for water on his deathbed but is not served by his English wife because of incomprehensibility. Therefore, dying literally of fever and thirst, and metaphorically of linguistic incomprehensibility presents exile under its worst circumstance. On the other hand, exile's most advantageous form can be noticed in the experience of the British-Indian writer Salman Rushdie after the fatwa issued against him by Ayatollah Khomeyni. Rushdie's exile is positive in an ontological sense, since exile was his own way to escape death threats.

Because there is a multitude of works profiling the hardships of exile subjects, this work is devoted to probing into the lives of a different generation of exiles. This category assembles exiles that were born in their homelands but are educated and come of age in the hostland because their parents are exiled or voluntarily choose to self-exile. These exiles constitute what Ruben Rumbaut calls the "one and half generation". Although not directly shattered by exile, this generation experiences the exile of the previous generation, albeit differently. Therefore, this work is an attempt at answering interrogations related to the formation of identity in the face of estrangement and thus this thesis is entitled "Being and Space Representation: Dislocation and Identity Malaise of Exiled Characters in Ethnic American Fiction".

This thesis centers on female-exile subjects and the three major works under consideration are Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992), Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1970). Using exile theory along with feminist discourse, the three writers commit their respective works to drawing the trajectory of under-recognized female characters, socially hyphenated because of their parents' exile and their gender roles. The characters in question have no control over their status. However, they experience the hardships of hyphenation

because of the choice of their parents to self-exile and the biased status dictated on them by their social traditions. By offering readings that focus on the representational discourses of exile-gendered identities within these three texts, this analysis situates the negotiations of exile within a broader nexus of political and cultural discourses in which women's struggle for recognition intersects with complex issues of contested notions of identity.

Throughout the examination of topics that pertain to displacement and nostalgia in the three literary oeuvres at work here, this work aims to answer the following interrogation: is the postmodern exile a temporal or a spatial experience? Noting that the displaced subjects often live through hope of an eventual return, do the one and half exiles hold place-bound identities like first generation exiles? To put it otherwise, do the one and halfers share their parents' historical allegiances and prospects or form their own without taking into account their parents' place-bound memories? In trying to answer this interrogation, a new and closely related question springs to mind: Is exile, in the case of the one and halfers, an enriching experience or a damaging one in the postmodern globalized world? In fact, these questions address the perennial and fundamental dichotomy of space vs. time in theorizing exile.

In probing these questions, three hypothetical scenarios are envisaged.

First, taking into account the gender of the characters under study here and given the patriarchal and phallocentric traditions of their motherlands, it is more likely that the characters will take alternate routes and try to detach their identities from these restrictive places that are, according to the one and halfers, historical entities rather than geographical ones.

Second, taking into account the close bond between parents and children and the impact of this parental relationship on the formation of children's identities; it is

suggested that the one and halfers are likely to share the nostalgia and nationalistic ideals of their parents.

Third and last, taking into account the fact that the one and halfers, unlike their parents, grow up in the hostland they are more likely to consider it as a homeland, albeit feelingly. Culturally speaking, however, it is suggested that due to the nostalgic stories they learn from their parents and that partly shape their identities, the one and halfers are likely to create their new hybrid identities that combine the host and home cultures.

The reason that sustains the choice of the present topic is the ambiguity that surrounds the notion of identity in ethnic American studies, in general, and American literature of exile, in particular. Following this line of understanding, the moot point is whether exilic subjects living in the United States self-identify as assimilated Americans, or content themselves with the status of hyphenated Americans. Ethnic American literature demonstrates different points of view. Some writers favor assimilation that, according to them, is inevitable and beneficial for the psychological well being of the exilic subject. Others consider assimilation a disloyal act and insist on preserving ethnic heritage and taking pride in it.

Moreover, the main interest of this work is to highlight the way throughout which the homeland that is left behind, in exile theory of the globalized era, is defined throughout historical determinants rather than geographical ones. The homeland for the one and halfers is no more than a temporal entity represented by history. Therefore, the question to be raised here is: as a historical entity, does the homeland call for a geographical comeback or a historical archiving? The answer to this question will be provided throughout the different exile cases discussed in this work.

It is necessary to clarify at this level that this work will be dealing with different forms of exile. In some cases, exile is experienced without the effect of

geographical displacement and might often be metaphorical. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, the novel by Cristina Garcia, exile is treated in its conventional form of geographical displacement; although Garcia gives it a new meaning in the Cuban agenda. In Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* exile connotes diaspora as the novel is populated by a multifaceted Muslim community whose members seek to overcome the ostracizing Islamophobic values of American society. Last, Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* profiles the racial dimensions of banishment as well as exile's connotation of refuge, since madness constitutes refuge for the deranged protagonist in the novel. This work displays how many paradoxes exist as regards the notion of exile in the era of mass migration to the point that exile might be experienced in one's homeland.

This research is organized into four chapters.

Chapter one entitled "Exile, Identity and Belonging in a Liminal Space" is devoted to the theoretical background related to the notion of exile. Before attempting to analyze the characters' experience of exile, it is necessary to investigate, theoretically and critically, some key words of displacement that will be recurrent in this work, namely refuge, immigration, nostalgia, homelessness and displaced identities. This chapter provides a diachronic study of the phenomenon of exile as it goes back to the Latin and Greek origins of ostracism and banishment, and advances throughout the historical changes that the term underwent up to the twentieth century. It, furthermore, investigates concepts related to exile that are fundamental in the explanation of identity making as regards exiles.

The section entitled "Exile and Home Matters" aims at explaining the phenomena of dislocation and relocation and the way they affect meanings of belonging. In so doing, it is necessary to explain theoretically the politics of nationalism and transnationalism that will finally require an examination of the identification

process of exiles. As it is hypothesized in this work, exiles either choose to identify nationalistically through nostalgia for the homeland or opt for the advantages of transnationalism in order to alleviate the bitterness of "*le mal du pays*". This chapter will end with a ruminative reflection on exile writing that has hitherto fluctuated between nostalgia and creativity. This analysis builds on the work of Claudio Guillén who in his work *On the Literature of Exile and Counter Exile*, distinguishes two divergent paths an exile subject might take. As explained by Guillén, an exile chooses either to live by the nostalgic memories of the homeland (like Ovid) or to forget about the past and counter the losses of exile with creativity (a remedy preached by Plutarch).

Chapter two is devoted to the analysis of the theme of exile in Cristina Garcia's novel *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992). This chapter opens with an overall comment on the disparate forms and meanings of exile in the novel. In the Cuban context, exile is the major force defining identity crises. This section will be followed by a close examination of themes that pertain to exile such as nostalgia and language loss. After discussing the considerable losses of exile, a detailed treatment of the impact of exile on the formation of the protagonist's identity will be profiled, taking into account her belonging to the one and half generation.

In the section entitled "*Identity Malaise and the Poetics of Disease*", the close link between disease and identity formation is highlighted. *Dreaming in Cuban* presents dis-eased characters relocated in new homes. This discourse of disease urges these disabled characters to return to the past that is metaphorically regarded as the cradle of healing. Notwithstanding the fragmentary matrilineal bond between her and her mother, the protagonist Pilar decides to visit Cuba, and herein lies the turning point in the novel. Pilar's return to Cuba is enlightening for her and the reader who is given an objective account of Cuban historical reality that in turn motivates Pilar's final return to the USA.

Although Pilar's ultimate decision is to go back and settle in the United States, she is not remiss in her duty of recording the history of her family. She, thus, becomes the archivist of the family's history. Then, this chapter shifts to a reflection on how the one and halfers can bridge the gap between Cubans and Cuban Americans, like Pilar does in the novel, and the way it enables the effacement of stigma in both Cuba and the USA. This section displays the role of Cuban one and halfers in establishing a dialogue between Cubans in the diaspora and those in the island.

The chapter ends with an examination of the Cuban exile category in the USA, and the reasons behind its treatment as an ethnic category. Throughout *Dreaming in Cuban*, Cristina Garcia gives a new significance to the notion of exile in a globalized age by offering the possibility to transplant the culture of the homeland into a multicultural hostland. Thus, the *deterritorialization* of one's culture and its transplantation into the hostland redefines many notions related to the state of exile, most notably the state of nostalgia.

Chapter three is dedicated to an examination of the way exile helps the Arab Muslim community in the diaspora to fend off the Orientalist discourse. Furthermore, it features how Muslims in the diaspora counter this discourse with the new trend of Occidentlism that in turn explains Muslims' recalcitrance to assimilate in the host culture. Henceforth, this analysis builds on the theoretical background already set out by Edward Said in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978). Taking into consideration that this work deals with exile female characters, it is no wonder that this chapter will be rife with stereotypes due to the combination of Islam with femaleness. The choice of Mohja Kahf's novel *The Girl in the tangerine Scarf* (2006) is motivated by the author's sense of challenge to the deep-seated prejudices set against Muslims. The chapter begins with a description of the dynamics of exile in the novel. Then, it shifts to highlighting the

process of "othering" Muslims in the diaspora making use of the Orientalist discourse. Suffering from Islamophobia during her teenage years, the novel's protagonist Khadra fashions the same Occidentalist discourse as her parents and plunges in a black-and-white vision of the world leading her to view Americans as evil (*kuffar*) and Muslims as virtuous. Khadra's first visit to Saudi Arabia to perform Hajj with her parents acts as a catalyst in the novel. There, Khadra soon becomes disillusioned as she learns about the hypocrisy of her parents and the Muslim community at large. Although Khadra makes many visits to Arab countries, notably Syria (her ancestral homeland), she ends up making the same round trip as Pilar in *Dreaming in Cuban*, conceiving of America as the only appropriate home.

The nub of the matter in this novel is the veiling practice in Islam and that Khadra is an observant Muslim. Veiling acts as an impairing barrier to assimilation in a Western modern society that regards Muslims as backward. Henceforth, the adoption or abandonment of *hijab* acts as an ideogram in the novel. While hitherto Western representations of the Muslim woman and *hijab* have been stigmatizing, an ideal image of an Occidental modern woman is being set up. Therefore, the symbolic significance of *hijab* as an identity marker is being effaced by the contemporary Western discourse. Following this line of understanding, Muslim women's "otherness" is relative to Occidental women's "familiarity". These representations of an Occidental woman as opposed to the Oriental Muslim woman in terms of modernity have generated what is often named "gender apartheid". To counter such a discourse, Mohja Kahf creates a narrative of resistance, throughout her novel *The Girl in the tangerine Scarf* , that defies Western interpretations of the veil. Although the protagonist becomes less observant by the end of the novel, she ultimately creates a new identity without completely abandoning her original one. This chapter tries to answer interrogations related to the

in-between identity that Khadra is likely to construct in her adult years, far from the influences of either her parents or the Muslim community at large.

Chapter four entitled “Exile into Madness in Toni Morrison’s *The Bluest Eye*” aims at exploring the bodily criterion of identity. It features how the White supremacist ideals of beauty are set against blacks who are metaphorically excluded from the beauty pageant. This chapter begins with a presentation of the history of the rejection of Blackness in the West, and the way Toni Morrison features it throughout the genealogy of the Breedlove family. The section entitled “the Homelessness of the Homely in *The Bluest Eye*” displays the protagonist’s sense of homelessness as she became an outdoors after her father had set the house on fire. Pecola believes that the major motive behind her homelessness is her ugliness. Her belief is grounded in the way she compares herself to beautiful white girls who live in nice houses and hence her negation of blackness and strong desire for blue eyes, used in the novel as a metonymy for whiteness. The chapter then shifts to an analysis of the White supremacist discourse of aesthetics that excludes blackness and presents it in stereotypical and stigmatizing terms. Therefore, it is this racist discourse that urges Pecola to cognitively abandon her blackness, conceived as an embodiment of otherness, and become a renegade who longs for blue eyes that enable her to join the White race.

In fact, *The Bluest Eye* narrates the story of a little girl entirely remade by the story that is told to her by Soaphead Church. The latter makes Pecola believe that if anything happens to the dog he asks her to feed with poison, without having her know, then that would be a sign that God has answered her prayer for blue eyes. Consequently, Pecola’s belief that her eyes turned blue following this deus ex machina is a form of therapeutic exile that frees Pecola from all the constraints of her society.

In fact, orchestrating this work by first analyzing Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*, then Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and finally Toni Morrison's *The Bluest eye* explains exile cases from the more conventional to the newest exile experiences. *Dreaming in Cuban* represents exile in its more orthodox form throughout the geographical displacement of the del Pino family following Fidel Castro's Revolution. Although *The Girl in the Tangerine Scaf* is also dedicated to the representation of exile through the Shamy family exiled from Syria because of Hafiz al Assad's persecution, the author redirects the reader's attention to the whole Muslim diaspora community, represented by the Dawah Center, sharing the same losses as the Shamy family. Therefore, exile in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is not defined through the conventional national and extra-national determinants but through religious differences that are not inscribed in the legal codes that govern nationalistic attachments. In *The Bluest Eye*, however, exile is included under an avant-garde rubric that thoroughly disregards the geographical determinant of exile and presents it throughout the placeless character of Pecola who is not able to situate herself in the real world due to its ostracizing character. Therefore, Morrison highlights exile as a utopian space that might be inhabited by ostracized subjects.

One of the key conflicts explored in the examination of the works by Cristina Garcia, Mohja Kahf, and Toni Morrison is the conflict between feminism and community affiliations and the way they intersect with the meaning of exile for their protagonists. In fact, the protagonists of the three novels strive to create a feminist space where they are not constrained by the cultural and patriarchal norms already set either by the hegemonic culture or by their national cultures. They struggle to form their own feminist identities that are independent, yet deeply connected to their cultural origins.

In an attempt to advance this argument, the choice of these three feminist writers was appropriate. This is because Kahf, Garcia and Morrison are writers who commit themselves to oppose and resist hegemony, colonization and imperialism

throughout their literary productions. What binds the works of these three contemporary hyphenated American writers to each other is the way they counteract different forms of oppression and counter-narrate different histories related to economy, society, patriarchy, colonization and imperialism.

While extensive theoretical research has been conducted on exile and feminism, very little was written about Cuban exile, Arab Islamic feminism or Black feminism from an insider's point of view, up to the 1970's. Accordingly, there is a gap in the body of research available on ethnic groups issues that only people belonging to these groups can fill by providing their own version of history. In fact, this particular idea justifies the choice of the three novels at work here, because they present history to the reader from the point of view of the victimized. The three specific reasons leading to the oppression of the three female protagonists: Pilar, Khadra and Pecola are the communist tradition, the veil and blackness, respectively. Therefore, the main contribution of this work is to shed light on the way the three writers explain how the act of abandoning one's culture and traditions qualifies the actor as an accomplice who helps the White supremacists in engraving stereotypical histories written and recorded by the West. In contrast, the three authors offer the possibility of rewriting history through their literary pieces in order to offer a more objective and thorough view of their histories. These authors present a new and hitherto unrecorded history of their respective nations and communities. Instead of regarding difference as a form of otherness that might conjure up abhorrence, these writers deal with difference in a celebratory way.

A prolific scholarship and research done about the notion of exile from a sociological point of view was available. Works like Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile*, Sophia McClennen's *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space*

in Hispanic Literatures, Paul Tabori's *The Anatomy of Exile*, John Newbauer's *Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century*, or Michael Hanne's edited collection of articles entitled *Creativity in Exile* were very instrumental in the discussion of exile and related concepts. Since this work is dedicated to an examination of the state of exile in literature, Claudio Guillén's article "On the Literature of Exile and Counter-Exile" forms the basis of the theory advanced in this work since it distinguishes two categories of exile writing.

With regard to Cristina Garcia's work, a good number of articles written about her novel *Dreaming in Cuban* were consulted. Often dealing with an acute sense of exile that parallels the Cuban national trauma of exile, these works include Elena Machado Såez's "The Global Baggage of Nostalgia in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*" or April Shemak's "A Wounded Disease: The Poetics of Disease in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*". Although this chapter examines exile and related themes in *Dreaming in Cuban,* its fundamental aim consists in highlighting the way Cristina Garcia blurs the lines between Cubans in the diaspora and Cubans in the Island by ethnicizing the notion of exile, and reconciling anti-Castro Cubans in the USA with pro-Castro ones in Cuba. To back up this argument, Katherine Payant's article "From Alienation to Reconciliation in the Novels of Cristina Garcia" was beneficial.

The third chapter had one preset limitation to the latitude of the research. Although Islam, as a religious issue, triggers a very heated debate in the West, Muslim literature constitutes a new trend. In fact, this might be justified by the few resources available on Mohja Kahf's works, in general, and her novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, in particular.

Although there is a plethora of scholarship on Toni Morrison's works and most particularly *The Bluest Eye*, the fourth chapter aims at exploring what seems to be a

hitherto virgin area of research on this novel. The latter consists in an arguable interpretation of the protagonist's madness into a form of a therapeutic exile. While discussing the issue of the negativity of Blackness, Harold Bloom's collection of articles on *The Bluest Eye* has been very useful. In order to back up the argument advanced in this chapter, Jacques Lacan's theory of "the mirror stage" is used to explain the identification process of the deranged protagonist, Pecola. To explain ontologically Pecola's exile, Sartre's concept of "bad faith" has been profitable.

With regard to the manuscript format and rules of writing used in this thesis, we have agreed, my supervisor and me, to use the updated sixth edition of the Modern Language Association (MLA) formatting and conventions of writing (2009) currently required in most English and Humanities classes.

In conclusion, the choice of three women writers and three female protagonists is motivated by an eagerness to deal with exile and negotiate its workings on the same gender category in order to give more plausibility to the argument advanced in this work. Dealing with three protagonists originating from different ethnic groups but sharing the same losses; albeit with different degrees, greatly helps to clarify how the exile community can form what Chris Abani calls "an international identity".

Chapter One:

Exile, Identity and Belonging in a Liminal Space

The theme of exile lies at the heart of many sociological, ontological, literary as well as historical works in the postmodern age. Many writers choose literature as a venue to express their feelings of exile and uprootedness that is no more discussed in the same way it used to be in the past. Whereas exile in the Roman or Greek epochs was hard to live because of the particularity of each nation state and the impossibility for the exile subject to adapt to the radical changes of the host nation state, many critics presently view exile as no more than a form of displacement akin to immigration because of globalization and mass immigration.

Therefore, this chapter seeks to display the portrait of the modern exile subject by way of comparing him to the canonical political exile of the Roman and Greek epochs. Because exile is closely related to feelings of attachment, a section will be devoted to the discussion of home matters in the case of exile subjects. This chapter also provides a theoretical approach about the process of identification of exile subjects who are torn between two homelands. It examines the three possible identification processes of displaced subjects, most notably, assimilation, nationalism and hybridity. The last section in this chapter presents a brief rundown on exile literature and the way it profiles exile subjects.

I.1. The Notion of Exile

The notion of exile is polysemous and can be discussed from multifarious perspectives. While exile is originally related to geographical displacement, some writers and critics discuss feelings of exile even though they have never quitted their homelands. In this sense, exile cannot be confined to spatial uprootedness, however its definition can rely on other parameters such as time. Conveniently, many scholars deal with the experience of exile in terms of their nostalgia for, what Marcel Proust calls, "times past." Concepts of mobility and displacement lie at the center of the Western canon beginning with the idea that to be a human is to be exiled from God[1]. In terms of ontology, some critics like Ian Buruma regard the entire human race as an exiled race:

> Exile as a metaphor did not begin with the Jewish Diaspora. The first story of exile in our tradition is the story of Adam and Eve. No matter how we interpret the story of their expulsion from the Garden of Eden – original sin or not – we may be certain of one thing: there is no way back to paradise. After that fatal bite of the apple, the return to pure innocence was cut off forever. The exile of Adam and Eve is the mark of maturity, the consequence of growing up. (3)

The theme of exile has floated through myriad scholarly texts by authors like Edward Said, Homi Bhabha, Theodor Adorno, Salman Rushdie among many others whose aim was to report various experiences of exile and analyze its consequential losses from different perspectives. Depicting exile as a condemnation, Paul Tabori begins *The Anatomy of exile* with "Song of Exile" wherein he writes:

> Exile is a song that only the singer can hear.
>
> Exile is an illness that not even death can cure—for how

---

[1] Cf. John Durham Peters, "Exile, Nomadism and Diaspora: the Stakes of Mobility in the Western Canon". Ed. Hamid Naficy, *Home, Exile, Homeland*, New York, Routledge, 1999: (17-41).

can you rest in a soil that did not nourish you?

Exile is the warning example to those who still

Have their homes, who belong

But will you take heed of the warning? (Lines 1-6) (9)

Identifying exile as an incurable illness, Tabori overlooks any opportunity of well-being offered in the hostland and discusses exile in terms of Ovidian nostalgia. Similarly, Edward Said, himself a Palestinian exile in the United States, is no less pessimistic than Paul Tabori and opens "Reflections on Exile" with a morose description of the experience of exile as being:

> Strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home; its essential sadness can never be surmounted. And while it is true that literature and history contain heroic, romantic, glorious, even triumphant episodes in an exile's life, these are no more than efforts meant to overcome the crippling sorrow of estrangement. The achievements of exile are permanently undermined by the loss of something left behind forever. (173)

Although Said's portrayal of exile emanates from his personal experience, it is far from being subjective since it is universally agreed upon the tormenting tribulations of exile. However, exile in the postmodern age has conversely come to signify relief from strenuous life conditions in the homeland, or is synonymously used with the term refuge. It has also come to denote not a fragmented identity but an "international one" to use Chris Abani's terms. In the postmodern globalized age marked by transnationalism and multiculturalism, exile becomes a source of creativity rather than a source of despair. Taking into account the multiple enclaves in the United States, for

instance, an exile subject's strangeness in the hostland is no more as acute as it used to be in the past. In this typical case, his difference is allowed and tolerated in the sense that his cultural practices are no more regarded as awkward.

I.1.a. Key Words of Exile

In the past, the notion of exile was associated with the image of individuals having oftentimes an intellectual or scholarly character. Currently, however, the notion of exile embraces supplementary new variables i.e., collectivities banished or moving from the homeland voluntarily. This variable is distinguished from the movement of individuals as Diaspora[2] that refers to a group of people *deterritorialized*, to use Gilles Deleuze's and Felix Guattari's term, and dispossessed of national ties.

In fact, exile that once denoted the political expulsion of an individual in the Ovidian sense of the term presently bears more than one connotation. The losses and nostalgia of exile can no more be confined to the prototypical experience of the political exile. However, these are also sensed through the adventures of war refugees, expatriates and immigrants. This is mainly because in all of these cases home is left behind and the displaced subjects have to adapt to the changes of the hostland.

Thus, the discrepancy between earlier exiles and contemporary ones, Edward Said stresses in "Reflections on Exile," is that "Our age – with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi-theological ambitions of totalitarian rulers – is indeed the age of the refugee, the displaced person, mass immigration" (174). Despite the

[2] Apart from the classical form of diaspora that refers to forced movements and the inability to return of notably Jews exiled to Babylon and Africans exiled to the Americas, Diaspora here is used in its contemporary sense pointing to ethnicity, immigration, settlement and race as notions that intersect and scrutinize conceptualizations of diaspora. More importantly, one may agree with Khachig Tölölyan who writes in the introduction to *Diaspora: A Journal of Transnational Studies*, "we use diaspora provisionally to indicate our belief that the term that once described Jewish, Greek, and Armenian dispersion now shares meanings with a larger semantic domain that includes words like immigrant, expatriate, refugee, guest-worker, overseas community, ethnic community" (3-7).

dissimilarities explained so far, exiles across different generations share the same cross-cultural and transnational visions, and suffer similar frustrations and anguish related to their displacement. It bears stressing that in the contemporaneous globalized age the meaning of exile has become more generic and can thus encompass all experiences of displacement. To put it otherwise, experiences of displacement are being revised as both the meaning and feeling of homelessness are currently less strenuous. In fact, this is due to the technological advances that reduce the effects that distance and estrangement can have on the migrant[3]. This terminological shift from the specific to the general explains the new varieties of exile analyzed in sociological theory i.e., internal exile, self-exile, voluntary exile and other varieties yet to be mentioned in what follows.

A more accurate distinction between exile and immigration can be made. While immigration delineates peoples' voluntary choice to migrate, immigrate or emigrate, exile generally pertains to forced dislocation. More precisely, whereas exile oftentimes features political expulsion, immigration is generally motivated by economic reasons. Henceforth, the latter can be viewed as an "economic expatriation" to use Sophia McClennen's categorization of immigration. Indeed, exile can be voluntary. In this case, it is closer to the sense of immigration than to the prototypical political significance of exile. To put it otherwise, voluntary exile, according to Bettina L. Knapp, is a situation where one flees stressful circumstances or persecution, or forms a new life for oneself[4]. Worth mentioning in this context is Halim Barakat's definition of exile. The latter explains, "My definition of exile is not restricted to forceful banishment by political authorities. The literature in this area of research has often distinguished

[3] "In contemporary times of technology and increasing human flows, the significance of boundaries and their relevance in the process of constructing one's sense of 'homeness' is undoubtedly changing … What does geographical distance effectively stand for when just about everything and everyone is one phone call or one mouse click away?" (Gonçalves and Oliveira de Morais 16).
[4]Cf. Bettina L. Knapp, *Exile and the Writer: Exoteric and Esoteric Experiences in a Jungian Approach*, Pennsylvania University Press, 1991.

between involuntary and voluntary forms of exile" (Qtd. in Abdel-Malek and Hallaq 306).

Although etymologically the notion of expatriate and exile share the Latin prefix "ex" meaning "out", the roots of the two words are different. The root for exile is *solum* and it refers to "ground, soil or land," whereas the prefix of expatriate is joined to *patria* meaning "fatherland or native land". However similar they can seem, scholars of exile still distinguish between the two. Sophia McClennen, to cite one, explains in *The Dialectics of Exile*, "Even though these words [exile and expatriate] share a similar etymology, "exile" typically refers to one who has been forced to leave one's country, whereas "expatriate" suggests that the separation is voluntary" (15). What is problematic is that none of these concepts has a clear-cut definition. Furthermore, definitions of such concepts can vary from one source to the other, and can even contrast.

While McClennen, among others, emphasized the voluntary aspect of expatriation and the absence of choice for exiles, dictionary definitions of exile are often inclusive of the idea of voluntary absence from the homeland. In the 8th edition of the Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary, for instance, the definition of the noun "exile" refers to the political punishment of a person by sending him/ her away from home. However, "exile" as a person is defined as the one "who chooses, or is forced to live away from his or her country: political exile, tax exile." Worth citing in this concern is that politics is the basic cause leading to the experience of exile. However, its effects and weight are minimized in the definition of exile: the subject. In the latter definition of exile, political exile is no more than a variable that can be compared to other variables, notably, tax exile, either willing or forced to leave the country. Paul

Tabori goes in the same direction as McLennan as he explains in *The Anatomy of Exile* that expatriate, when used as a noun "emphasizes its voluntary character" (23).

Although one may agree with Sophia McClennen in her distinctive definition of immigration as an economic expatriation, the movement of immigration would not be definitely judged as not being linked with the land. First, McCLennen defines immigration as an "economic expatriation" and expatriation is related to the land. Second, although immigration may seem a choice for many, it might oftentimes be the last resort especially if it is motivated by economic reasons. Henceforth, it should not be dismissed out of hand that immigration is not always a voluntary choice.

The idea of forced exile applies also to contemporary migrations. It is useful at this level to point to the idea of force as an incentive for migration highlighted by Virinder Kalra et al. in *Diaspora and Hybridity*:

> Migration of all sorts carries with it varying degrees of compulsion, these may not be directly traced to the actions of a nation-state, but do relate to the inequalities created by capitalism, such as the demand for labour, the rise of poverty or famine and the basic demand for better social and economic conditions. (11)

Although migration does not necessarily imply that going back home is barred and the act of leaving the country is not politically or legally but economically foisted upon immigrant subjects, immigration as a variable comes under the rubric of "exile" due to the minimum amount of duress present in the act of leaving one's country. Amy Kaminsky's reflection is illuminating in this concern as she states, "Exile as I use the term is always coerced. "Voluntary exile" is, I believe, an oxymoron that masks the cruelly limited choices imposed on the subject" (9). The events in Algeria during the Black decade (1990's), for instance, witnessed forced movements and resettlements of

Algerians in some parts of Europe, notably France. Another example of this is the partitioning of former Yugoslavia into Bosnia, Kosovo, Serbia, Croatia, Macedonia, Montenegro and Slovenia, which resulted in the fact that many people reside near their former homes, yet are not capable of returning.

Although the terms exile, refugee, expatriate and immigrant relate because they all refer to some sort of displacement either forced or voluntary, some scholars emphasize the difference between these. Edward Said, in "Reflections on Exile," focuses on the morose and solitary conditions of an exile as opposed to the conditions of refugees:

> Exile originated in the age-old practice of banishment. Once banished, the exile lives an anomalous and miserable life, with the stigma of being an outsider. Refugees, on the other hand, are a creation of the twentieth-century state. The word "refugee" has become a political one, suggesting large herds of innocent and bewildered people requiring urgent international assistance, whereas "exile" carries with it, I think, a touch of solitude and spirituality. (181)

Although one can agree with Edward Said in that the labels "exile" and "refugee" are different in many respects notably terminological ones, life conditions in the host country foster feelings of alienhood and outsider status not only for exiles, but also for refugees, expatriates and immigrants.

In many cases, immigration is seen as a refuge and here one can take Paul Tabori's part in that the two terms "exile" and "expatriate" are political and ethical, but not legal. Legally, according to Tabori, the exile will be referred to as a refugee, rooted in the Latin word *refugiare* that means, "to flee, run away, escape." Although little attention is relatively paid to the question of legality in this work (mainly designed as a

literary study of forced displacements), clarification over terminological matters is deemed necessary for it stands as a background for the understanding of what follows. Refugee, thus, in a legal context is defined in Article 1 of the 1951 United Nations Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees as:

> [A person who] owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality and is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of his former habitual residence as a result of such events, is unable or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it.
>
> (www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm)

Thus, the four terms exile, refugee, expatriate and immigrant overlap and are often epiphenomenal. Following this line of thought, the literature of immigrants can be interestingly compared with the literature of refugees, expatriates and exiles particularly owing to the common themes that might be approached.

A further distinction has been made by Leon and Rebeca Grinberg in *Psychoanalytic Perspectives on Migration and Exile*. According to them, "Migration and exile create similar problems for the transplanted individual, but the case of exile is "unique" because the exile's condition is involuntary and return is impossible" (2). Here, once more, the impossibility to return is a defining characteristic of exile but not a definite one. Many instances show that return, however unusual, is not always impossible. Worth to be cited here is the case of African-Americans' return to Liberia at the behest of Marcus Garvey in the 1920's[5].

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[5] Marcus Garvey (1887-1940) was a Jamaican notorious advocate of Black Nationalism and Pan-Africanism. Persuaded that Blacks should have a permanent homeland in Africa rather than being

The question of return is of high significance in the discussion of exile. In the past, the term exile was synonymous with banishment that is definitely accompanied with the probable impossibility to return to the homeland. Nowadays, however, and due to the nuances between the conceptualization of exile and many other forms of displacement, return for many voluntary exiles is not envisaged. The only priority in their case is how to adapt to the changes of the hostland, unlike the conventional exiles who desperately used to spend their time agonizing and reminiscing about the past.

1.1.b. A Historical Approach to Exile

As a primary human experience, exile is inscribed into Biblical banishment from Paradise as well as in other religious legends. In the history of Europe, people have been constrained to leave their homes due to religious persecution or the desire to efface ethnic and minority groupings for the benefit of national debates. In addition to ejections foisted on whole groups, many forms of individual displacements existed, the most famous of which we can cite the Greek practice of Ostracism and Roman, Medieval and Renaissance practices of banishment.

Exile in Ancient Greece took many forms and its conception has been renewed constantly. The most famous kind of exile in Ancient Greece was the practice of ostracism that was introduced to redefine and alter the violent practice of intra-elite politics of exile. The latter meant that the political power of the ruler was in some sense the power to expel one's political opponents. Ostracism, however, was a two-stage procedure that involved an initial vote on whether to hold an ostracism, conceived as a ritual, followed months later by ostracism per se in case the first vote was affirmative.

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scattered like the Jewish Diaspora, Garvey launched the Liberia program in 1920 seeking to develop Liberia.

The difference between the two practices is that the power to exile through the intra-elite politics was in the hands of the elite, while the basic significance of ostracism, writes Sara Fordsyke in *Exile, Ostracism and Democracy,* is that "Non-elites simultaneously took control over decisions of exile and established themselves as the dominant political force in the polis" (150). Fordsyke further provides a distinctive analysis between the two practices in the following passage:

> In particular, ostracism allowed for the expulsion of a single individual for the limited period of ten years. While a term of exile of ten years may not seem moderate to a modern observer, it is nevertheless vital to recall that the norm of intra-elite politics of exile entailed violent expulsion of a political leader, his associates, and their families for a potentially unlimited period of time, with total loss of property and power in Athens. Under those conditions, as we have seen, there was a great incentive for those exiled to attempt to return by force. By contrast, a person exiled by vote of ostracism not only lacked the support of a group of fellow exiles, but also was assured that he could return to Athens after ten years with his property intact and citizenship rights restored. (152)

To illustrate such arguments, Fordsyke mentions cases of ostracized individuals who served in significant public offices after their return from exile. These cases include Megacles, Xanthippus and Aristides who were recalled from exile when Athens was menaced by the second Persian invasion in 480, and performed substantial public roles[6].

While ostracism was the most popular form of exile in democratic Athens, since it served to stabilize the political balance between the patrician and plebeian

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[6] Xanthippus commanded the Athenian fleet at the battles of Mycale in 479 and Sestus in 478. Aristides served as a general at the battles of Salamis and Platea.

classes, other forms existed. Traitors, for instance, were subject to severe penalties for treason that could range from banishment (an extreme form of exile) to condemnation to death. Unlike victims of ostracism, "traitors suffered total loss of property and loss of the right to burial in the territory of the polis" (Fordsyke 155). Scapegoating was also related to the practice of exile in ancient Greece. In this ritual, Fordsyke writes, "One or more persons were expelled from the community in order to purify it and prevent the gods from harming its members. Failure to expel pollution from the community was thought to cause pestilence (*λοιμός*) and famine (*λιμός*)" (157).

Those expelled through the scapegoating ritual were oftentimes culpable of religious offenses that Athenians believed could pollute the whole community. This can be paralleled to the excluding aspect of the Salem Witchcraft Trials in the United States, although penalties in the latter case were either execution or lifetime prison. Another analogy could be made between the practice of scapegoating and the exclusion of communists from the USA during the Cold War as they were seen as "polluting" individuals to Capitalist USA.

The Roman custom of exile has been distinguished since it opposed the voluntary nature of Roman *exilium* to the penal aspect of exile in laws of other nations. In his description of the Roman constitution, the historian Polybius reports the details of the procedure of exile as follows:

> Therefore, the people often judge crimes punishable by a fine when the defendants have held the highest office, and the people alone judge capital cases. Concerning the latter, they have a practice which is notable and deserves mention. Their custom allows those on trial for capital offenses the freedom to depart openly when found guilty, thus sentencing themselves to voluntary exile, even if only one of the "tribes" has not yet

> given their verdict. There is safe refuge for these exiles in Neapolis, Praeneste, Tibur, and other states which have treaties with the Romans. (Qtd. in Kelly 17)

Thus, rather than being a kind of punishment as in other nations, *exilium* in the Roman republic was a form of allowing criminals to escape punishment by choosing voluntary banishment[7]. This conception of *exilium* has been considered as an essential element in the understanding of *humanitas Romana* whose principles rest on a civilized behavior and attitude free from acts of inhumanity toward members of the human race. As a voluntary act through which a citizen could avoid punishment, *exilium* is considered by R.A Bauman to be "one of Rome's greatest contributions to human rights."[8]

After a criminal subject had escaped punishment, he could return to Rome but had to wait until the threat of renewed prosecution had faded. In another case, exiles could not return to Rome especially if a post-exilic plebiscite is held to enforce the *aquae et ignis interdictio* translated as interdiction from fire and water. This procedure, writes Gordon P. Kelly in *The History of Exile in the Roman Republic*, "was thus used by the plebs to prevent the subsequent return of a fugitive from Roman justice" (32). Without this post-exilic sanction, an exile who fled before formal condemnation could go back to Rome after the legal issues of his trial had passed.

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[7] Cicero says in this concern, "*Exsilum enim non suppliciumest sed perfugium portusque supplicii ... itaque nulla in lege nostra reperietur, ut apud ceteras civitates, maleficium ullum exsilio esse mulctatum.*" (Exile is not a punishment, but a sanctuary and refuge from punishment. Thus in no law of ours is exile found as punishment for any offense, as it is among other nations). Cicero delivered this speech in 69; six years later, his own *lex Tullia de ambitu* would initiate the use of exile as a penalty, albeit for a period of ten years"(Kelly 19, fn. 9).

[8] For more details see R.A Bauman, *Crime and Punishment in Ancient Rome*, New York, 1996, pp.13-14 and *Human Rights in Ancient Rome*, New York, 2000, pp. 44-46.

The Greek and Roman conceptions of exile as a political variety[9] were revived during the late Middle Ages and Renaissance. Exile, Vladimir Zoric writes in "Metaphoric Aspects of Exile," was the fate of "members of royal families who were defeated in the contest for the throne and by dignitaries who were overpowered in strife for influence in a court or for a public office" (11). Dynastic disputes resulted, for instance, in the expulsion of a number of such important royal figures as Henry IV who was exiled for ten years by King Richard II in 1398. However, unlike the democratic principle of exile in Ancient Greece, the medieval practice of exile depended instead on the privilege of power. In the ecclesiastical sphere, two forms of exile can be identified. First, monasticism could be seen as a spiritual and oftentimes permanent self-exile from the amoral secular world. Excommunication was a sort of punishment exercised by the church to expel persons from the Christian community as was the case of the Germanic emperor Henry IV.

In pre-modern ages, exile referred to experiences of individuals or, to a lesser degree, groups of people who were expelled. Through Renaissance and the period that followed, increased masses of people were evicted and the term "refugee" was introduced to refer to groups of people who were eager to escape persecution by asking for asylum in other countries. Cases of such a variable include the French Huguenots, the French Acadians ejected by the British from Nova Scotia, and the refugees or émigrés escaping the French Revolution.

During the Reformation and counter-Reformation of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, the religious incentive for exile gained momentum as masses of people fled religious persecution all over Europe. The English Protestants who fled the

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[9] The central role of the Greek practice of Ostracism was to deter violent intra-elite conflict and maintain peace in the state. Likewise, Roman exilium offered the opportunity to people to exile voluntarily and helped to promote the political ideal of *Concordia* that "stressed political harmony among individuals and social classes to ensure the smooth governance of the state and was generally expressed in terms of cooperation between patricians and plebeians or senators and equestrians" (Kelly 9).

persecution of Queen Mary and left for North America best represent this religiously induced self-exile.

Expulsion in the conventional sense became relatively scarce in the twentieth century, although it was intermittently practiced in some parts of the world, notably the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. The methods of eviction differed from one country to the other. Some dissidents were simply evicted, others were denied reentry after a trip abroad, and others were forced to leave due to job expropriation or deprivation, publication prohibition –in the case of writers – and many other kinds of harassments.

John Neubauer described twentieth century East-Central European exile in *Exile: Home of the Twentieth Century* as a new conception of this form of displacement:

> In twentieth-century East-Central Europe exile usually meant a self-motivated or occasionally forced departure from the home country or the habitual residence because of a threat to the person's freedom or dignified survival, such as an imminent arrest, sentence, forced labor, or even extermination. The departure was for an unforeseeable time irreversible. (8)

Despite the fact that Neubauer restricts his definition of twentieth-century exile to East-Central European experiences, his definition still applies to other groups and individuals especially those who left home "because of a threat to a person's freedom or dignified survival," most notably individuals or groups escaping totalitarian regimes or dictatorships. To this core group of exiles, John Neubauer has added those to whom the fundamental standards of "immediate threat" and "no return" apply partially: the émigrés and expatriates. "*In Praise of Exile,*" Leszek Kolakowski states in this concern:

> More often than not, modern exiles have been expatriates, rather than exiles in the strict sense; usually they were not physically deported from their countries or banished by law; they escaped from political persecution, prison, death, or simply censorship. The distinction is important insofar as it has had a psychological effect. Many voluntary exiles from tyrannical regimes cannot rid themselves of a feeling of discomfort . . . . A certain ambiguity is therefore unavoidable and it is impossible to draw up any hard-and-fast rules to distinguish justifiable from unjustifiable self-exile. (55)

Since it is unstated in this passage through what standards a self-exile is unjustifiable, the latter being a qualifier open to many interpretations, it would perhaps be appropriate to discuss the kind of departure that is not induced by political coercion. The argument advanced in this work agrees with that of Kolakowski in that earlier exiles were evicted whereas modern ones enter oftentimes a self-exile. Following Kolakowski's argument, once and again, it is emphasized in this work that when life conditions become suffocating, self-exile remains the only self-defense.

Following this line of understanding, immigrants, refugees and expatriates can be limped together in a flexible and multifaceted category that is postmodern exile. The decision over the exile status of a person rests on some key factors among which John Neubauer prioritizes "the socio-political conditions at the time of departure and the original intentions of the departing person" (9)[10]. Still the cited cases do not cover all types of displacements. Twentieth-century European and Latin American dictatorships,

[10] The case of Eugéne Ionesco is an exemplar of such an argument. Ionesco left Romania as an expatriate but then became an exile when his play *Le Rhinoceros* came to be viewed as an allegorical work pointing to suppressive states like Romania. More illustrative perhaps is the self-exile of Rodolphe Boulanger in Gustave Flaubert's *Madame Bovary*. Rodoplphe Boulanger quitted Emma with this farewell statement, "I punish myself by exile for all wrong I have done you. I leave. Where? I don't know. I am mad. Adieu" (Flaubert 230). Boulanger's departure is categorized as self-exile as "it is not enforced but self-imposed because in leaving Emma he did not act by an external influence but by free will" (Zoric 6).

to add some other cases, opted for keeping their critics and dissidents at home rather than sending them abroad. At home, these political opponents could be subdued, silenced, locked up in prisons, or simply killed. Abroad, it is maintained, “They [dissidents] could rally politicians and public opinion against the dictatorial regime” (Neubauer 8). In this context, exiles are usually not expelled from their home country; instead exiles flee by their own volition to evade the threats posed on their lives, survival or dignity.

Following the 9/11 events and the drastic changes they brought about to Muslim communities all over the world, a new designation of displaced individuals comes under the rubric of exile insofar as the notion of exile conjures up forced displacement. This twenty-first-century new form of exile is the repatriation of Muslims, or what might be called in this work “post 9/11 Muslims’ double-exile”[11]. Even though repatriation could seem to many the opposite of exile being primarily concerned with the notion of return, it might be considered as a form of exile. This is mainly because exile is experienced twice. First, when the individual is forced out of the homeland, and second, when he/ she is forced out of the host country after being exiled into it.

[11] The condition of double exile is neither specific of nor limited to the Muslim community of post-9 / 11, there have existed more painful forms of exile in terms of the number of times of displacement. Kolakowski, for instance, evokes the case of Baruch Spinoza who “was excommunicated from the Jewish community which established itself in Amsterdam after the expulsion from Portugal, where they had lived as exiles from the Eretz given them by God as a place of exile from Ede” (58).

I.2. Exile and Home Matters

One of the basic concepts explaining the condition of exile is the feeling of homelessness. The latter points to an individual's feelings of anguish and estrangement while out of home. But what does home mean? Is it necessarily the place where one is born and brought up? Or a place where one feels security and exercises all liberties and enjoys all rights? If we take the first alternative into consideration, homelessness is felt outside the geographical contours of one's country of birth. It places a great emphasis on the politics of nationalism that will be developed in one of the following sections. The second alternative, however, puts a link between one's well being and feelings of homelessness. In this sense, home is not a place but a space. In a precisely distinctive manner, Yi-Fu Tuan points to the difference between place and space in his seminal work *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience*:

> Space that is stretched over a grid of cardinal points makes the idea of place vivid, but it does not make any particular geographical locality the place. A spatial frame determined by the stars is anthropocentric rather than place-centric, and it can be moved as human beings themselves move. (150)

Therefore, conceptions of home are problematic. Home, following Tuan's logic, refers either to a country or to a particular locus that one occupies, and is a signifier of homeland, or as Yi-Fu Tuan put it in *Space and Place*, "Homeland is an important type of place at the medium scale. It is a region (city or countryside) large enough to support a people's livelihood" (149).

So, rather than concretely defined through geographical contours, home has become an abstract notion reflecting a feeling of belonging in a space and not a place where someone belongs. Edward Said provides a good example for this argument in

"Reflections on Exile," although non-referential of the link between home, belonging and space. In a quite narrative mode, Said tells his readers about the time he spent with Faiz Ahmad Faiz, the most distinguished of Urdu poets who was exiled from Pakistan by Zia's military regime and found shelter in strife-torn Beirut. Said explains that despite the affinity of spirit between Faiz Ahmad Faiz and his Palestinian closest friends, nothing really matched – language, life history, culture or poetic convention. After providing his reflections, Said moves to the cathartic event that he describes as follows:

> Only once, when Iqbal Ahmad, a Pakistani friend and a fellow-exile, came to Beirut, did Faiz seem to overcome his sense of constant estrangement. The three of us sat in a dingy Beirut restaurant late one night, while Faiz recited poems. After a time, he and Iqbal stopped translating his verses for my benefit, but as the night wore on it did not matter. What I watched required no translation: it was an enactment of a homecoming expressed through defiance and loss, as if to say, "Zia, we are here". ("Reflections on Exile" 175)

Although Faiz was in the same place, the "dingy restaurant" being situated in Beirut, he was in a different space ambient with the homecoming atmosphere that the presence of Iqbal Ahmad fostered. Thus, both feelings of homelessness and belonging have been felt in the same place that is not Faiz's native homeland. Yet, they have been experienced in different spaces.

Understandably, twentieth-century exiles' feelings of estrangement and homelessness are also different from pre-modern conceptions of homelessness. This means that in a globalized world characterized by constant displacement, either urged or

voluntary, and where cultural as well as national borders tend to dissolve, the feeling of homelessness tends to be present constantly and everywhere.

In *The Need for Roots*, Simone Weil contends, "To be rooted is perhaps the most important and least recognized need of the human soul" (40). Modern mass dislocations have become defining factors in connection with feelings of belonging. Displacement also generates feelings of homelessness that can be psychologically as well as socially destructive for exile subjects.

Let us recall that home is not necessarily a physical structure or a geographical location but always an emotional space. Moreover, it is among the most emotionally complex and resonant concepts in our psychic vocabularies. In a pre-global epoch, identifying a place as home could be delineated through the feeling of belonging in a specific place, whereas the lack thereof translates into feelings of homelessness. The feeling of belonging is relatively linked to experiences of exclusion or inclusion. The sense of being at home and the sense of harmony between one's innermost self and the cosmos obviate the need for political markers of identity to feel belonging in a specific home.

At this level, some questions can be raised: Is home where one's family is? Where one has been born and brought up? Is home the place from which one has been displaced? Or is it where the displaced person finds himself after exile? How does the to and fro between one's adopted home and one's original home model and, at times, alter one's view of home? In order to answer these questions an elementary answer to the substantial question "what makes a place home?" should not be dismissed out of hand.

A human being feels home or "has roots," according to Simone Weil, "by virtue of his real, active and natural participation in the life of a community which preserves in living shape certain particular treasures of the past and certain particular

expectations of the future" (40). By "treasures of the past," Weil may well have referred to heritage. Therefore, home can be seen as a place where a community shares history, religion, culture, and the rhetoric of belonging. Alternatively, as Liisa Malkki explains, "The metaphorical concept of having roots involves intimate linkages between people and place – linkages that are increasingly recognized in anthropology as areas to be denatured and explored afresh" (24). This collective ethos forms and refers to what Pierre Bourdieu names the *habitus*, the consistent composite of practices linking habit with inhabitance[12].

A defining element of exile is a blockade to "return" i.e., that there is a ban, either de facto or de jure, on returning to the homeland and hence feelings of longing and nostalgia. Exile is oftentimes analyzed according to the dialectic scheme that opposes home and abroad from psychological, sociological and cultural viewpoints.

Pragmatically, ejection from home need not necessarily result into displacement to another country. It also involves internal exile i.e., the expulsion of a person to some distant part of an empire or a country. Examples of such a variable are Ovid's banishment to Tomis, Napoleon's to Elba, and Dostoevsky's to Siberia. This practice continued well in the twentieth-century when "various countries sent their people into an internal exile that involved confinement to a certain village but not to a camp" (Neubauer 6).

Home, in the latter sense, also refers to dwelling. According to Adorno, himself an exile, "Dwelling in the proper sense is now impossible" (38). Feelings of homelessness that are brought about by war and modern technologies are resumed in his phrase "the house is past" through which he eloquently indicates:

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[12]In *The Logic of Practice*, Bourdieu explains this linkage in these words, "As an acquired system of generative schemes, the *habitus* makes possible the free production of all the thoughts, perceptions and actions inherent in the particular conditions of its production – and only those . . . . Because the *habitus* is an infinite capacity for generating products – thoughts, perceptions, expressions and actions – whose limits are set by the historically and socially situated conditions of its production" (55).

> They attempt to evade responsibility for one's residence by moving into a hotel or furnished rooms, makes the enforced conditions of emigration a wisely-chosen norm. they live, if not in slums, in bungalows that by tomorrow may be leaf-huts, trailers, cars, camps, or the open air . . . . The bombing of European cities as well as the labour and concentration camps merely proceed as executors, with what the immanent development of technology had long decided was to be the fate of houses. (Adorno 38-39)

From a clinical point of view, one's home can also be one's memories. Take for instance, people affected by Alzheimer's disease. These people feel estrangement vis-à-vis the time they are living and their sense of "homeness" or "placeness" is to be found in their memories. Therefore, this consolidates the argument that the concept of exile is not only related to places, but pertains to spaces and time as well.

As a result, conceptions of home can be framed within geographical as well as historical contexts. Exile narratives, in their earlier forms, emphasized the impossibility to separate history from its geographical context or more appropriately the place of its birth and emergence, and hence the sorrow of earlier authors of exile. Modern narratives of exile, however, seek to create their own histories in new geographical locales. Thus, contemporaneous representations of home in exile narratives pertain more to the way history can be transplanted in geographical locus. This new approach has been made possible by multiculturalism and globalization. An instance of this is the *reterritorialization* of Cuban culture in the American city of Miami.

For these particular reasons, this work aims at a postmodern geocritical study of contemporary exile narratives. Geocriticism, as Bertrand Westphal states, explores the inter-relations between the "the geography of the real" and the "geography of the

imagination" by "drawing on theoretical insights that tend to reduce the distance between the referent and representation, geocriticism aims to explore the interface between these two dimensions, the real and the fictional"[13] (Trans. in Tally 4). Thus, the reading of exile narratives in this work depends heavily on the geocritical discourse of postmodernism that has particularly stressed the significance of space, geography, and cartography, and "calls for the orienting and reorienting efforts of mapmaking" (Tally 2).

I.3. Exile and the Politics of Belonging

Conceptions of belonging can vary in scope. Belonging either relates to group memberships that are either limited or broad in spatial scope. In the first case, individuals can claim membership within a group of individuals who share sameness with them in terms of specific representations, like professional ones. In the second case, individuals deliberately claim membership within a group of individuals who share sameness with them in terms of historical experiences, language, culture and territory. At this level of analysis, a question may arise: what group do exiles claim membership in? Do they feel they belong to the international group of exiles, the transnational group of hybrid citizens or the nationalistic nostalgic group of those dreaming of returning home? This orients the study toward the concept of nationalism and the way it pertains to feelings of belonging among exile subjects.

I.3.a. The Politics of Nationalism

Nationalism is associated with exile in that it represents belonging in and to a place, a people, a culture and defines membership by distinguishing members of the

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[13] « *Appuyée sur des soutènements théoriques qui tendent à réduire la portée de l'intervalle entre le référent et la représentation, la géocritique a pour ambition de faciliter l'exploration de l'interface entre ces dimensions que l'on s'est ingénié à cliver* » (Westphal 274).

nation from outsiders. What is at stake for the exile subject is the ambiguity surrounding the notion of group membership. To put it otherwise, where does an exile belong as the status of "outsider" becomes confirmed? Feelings of belonging are delineated by geographical lines i.e., frontiers that separate "us" from "them", and "just beyond the frontier between "us" and "them"", Edward Said explains, "is the perilous territory of not-belonging" ("Reflections on Exile" 177).

Before moving to nationalism, the concept of nation has to be defined in order to be able to carry out the debate on nationalism that is by essence a feeling of belonging in and to a nation. Nationalism literature consists in different approaches to defining the concept of nation. In his work entitled *Nations and States: an Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Hugh Seton-Watson is rather skeptic than simplistic when defining the concept of nation. He says, "All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one" (5). Benedict Anderson follows the same path as Hugh Seton-Watson, in *Imagined Communities* when he defines the concept as "an imagined community" since "the members of the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (Qtd. in Seton-Watson 6). Anthony Smith, in *National Identity* defines nation as, "A named human population sharing an historic territory, common myths, and historical memories, a mass public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties for all members" (14).

Nationalism and nation have proved difficult to define. Hugh Seton-Watson, author of the most comprehensive work on nationalism concludes that it is impossible to assign a clear-cut definition to the notions of nation and nationalism. After carrying

extensive research on the subject matter, he concludes that there can be no "scientific definition" of the word nation although the phenomenon has existed and still exists[14].

Nearly all political scientists emphasize two main factors in their definitions of nation. First, a nation has the right to control territorial boundaries, and second, there are membership boundaries of the population that makes up a nation. The notion of territorial self-determination is an important element in the definition of nation and nationalism. The importance of the belief in territorial self-determination for the group is cardinal in defining "nation", in the nationalism literature, and provides a significant norm in the differentiation between nations and other social categories. As Haas put it, "A nation is a socially mobilized body of individuals, believing themselves to be united by some set of characteristics that differentiate them (in their own minds) from outsiders, striving to create or maintain their own state" (726). It, then, becomes problematic whether to use the concepts of "nation" and "state" interchangeably or separately.

While some theorists may not conceive of a nation as pursuing its own state, the idea of territory is pivotal to the understanding of the concept of nation. Taking into consideration these ideas, some of the common strands of the definitions of nation in the nationalism literature revolve around the idea that a nation is a collective of people. This is an essential detail, yet it does not help us draw a distinction between nations and other social and political constructs. Thus, nations are groups of people connected by unifying traits and the will to control a territory that is believed to be the group's national homeland. The idea of territorial control and its conception as a right is necessary in making distinctions between nations and other collectives. We should also point out that nations are not just unified by culture, be it civic or ethnic, they are unified by a sense of

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[14] Cf. Hugh Seton-Watson, *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism*, Boulder, Colo: Westview Press, 1977, p.5.

purpose as well i.e., to control the territory that the members of the group think to be theirs. In sum, a nation needs a "territorial referent"[15].

If a nation is a community of people who share history, culture and beliefs that are confined to geographical limitations which determine the state, what, then, is nationalism? As in the case of nation, a variety of definitions is available for the concept of nationalism. Ernest Gellner rules in *Thought and Change*, "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness; it invents nations where they do not exist" (169). Like Edward Said who believes that, "All nationalisms in their early stages develop from a condition of estrangement" ("Reflections on Exile" 176), Sophia McClennen sees nationalism as a concept that "has been used to construct nations, as in the case of wars of independence or in revolutionary rhetoric, and has been used to maintain nations . . ." (20). Henceforth, a basic element in the understanding of nationalism is a people's claim for a territory.

Nationalism calls into question a sense of national identity that determines characteristics that shape the cultural link between a people and their land. National identity is the basic step in an argument for nationalism that can be distinguished as a more direct call to action or defense.

National identity, as opposed to other categories of identity, invokes more open self-understandings; including some sense of connectedness, affinity, or commonality and affiliation to particular others. Brubaker and Cooper consider national identity as invoking three main ideas: commonality, connectedness, and groupness. In "Beyond Identity", they define commonality as, "The sharing of some common attribute, connectedness as the relational ties that link people, and groupness as the sense of belonging to a distinctive, bounded, solidary group" (20). According to the authors of

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[15] A term used by Anthony Richmond in "Ethnic Nationalism: Social Science Paradigms", *International Social Science Journal* 111, (3-18).

the article, neither connectedness nor commonality alone generates groupness that in this context alludes to national identity. To achieve a sense of groupness, a third element should be supplemented to commonality and connectedness. It is what Max Weber calls '*zusammengehÖrigkeitsgefühl*', translated as "a feeling of belonging together". National identity, in this sense, is defined through the "analytical triad" or "dynamic nexus" of "identities-borders-orders"[16]. Yosef Lapid is illuminating in this concern as he writes:

> Processes of collective identity formation invariably involve complex bordering issues [...] Processes of identity, border and order construction are therefore mutually self-constituting. Borders, for instance, are in many ways inseparable from the identities they help demarcate or individuate. Likewise, they are also inseparable from orders constituted to a large extent via such acts of individuation and segmentation. (Albert and Lapid 7)

A sense of collective identity, or in this case national identity, characterizes a people and their identity that is coterminous with a territory. The latter is delimitated by a border within which laws define a particular social and political order that is conceived to be different from orders outside the border.

Generally, the definition of national identity depends on the way the concept of nationalism is interpreted in each state. Some definitions of nationalism tend to emphasize cultural features more than political ones and vice versa. More acutely, a distinction is made between two nationalisms that can operate separately or jointly i.e.,

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[16] This phrase is borrowed from *Identities, Borders, Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory*, edited by Albert, Mathias, David Jacobson, and Yosef Lapid,

cultural nationalism and statist nationalism[17]. In *The Limits of Nationalism*, Chaim Gans identifies the two kinds of nationalism as two families:

> One family is that of *statist nationalism*. According to this type of nationalism, in order for states to realize political values such as democracy, economic welfare and distributive justice, the citizenries of states must share a homogeneous national culture. It must be noted that the values in question do not derive from specific national cultures. Nor are they aimed at their protection. The second family is that of *cultural nationalism*. According to this nationalism, members of groups sharing a common history and societal culture have a fundamental, morally significant interest in adhering to their culture and in sustaining it across generations. This interest warrants the protection of states . . . . Within statist nationalism, the national culture is the means, and the values of the state are the aims. Within cultural nationalism, however, the national culture is the aim, and the state is the means. (7)

Chaim Gans further clarifies that in statist nationalism any national culture could be the mode for fulfilling the political values of the state. Within cultural nationalism, on the other hand, states act as the providers of the mode for maintaining the particular national cultures of their citizenry or parts thereof.

Statist nationalism refers to the civic culture of a state and evokes the notion of citizenship that is another constitutive element of nationalism and national identity, albeit civically defined, and whose relationship with feelings of belonging is so difficult to discern. Citizenship would define the national boundaries of belonging for the residents of a state. Those out of these boundaries would be considered aliens and

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[17] Statist nationalism represents the type of nationalism that historians and sociologists call *territorial-civic* nationalism, while cultural nationalism expresses the normative essence of the kind of nationalism historians and sociologists refer to as ethno-cultural nationalism.

nonmembers of the state. Conveniently, if statist nationalism were the defining ideology of a state's nationalism, citizenship (devoid of cultural and ethnic bearings) would be prominent in the understanding of national identity. Although, statist nationalism and cultural nationalism are different and have different constituents, they are complementary and altogether define a stable identity. If detached, these elements may lead to identity crises. Imagine for a moment a French person was born in Algeria in the 1940's and moved to France in the 1960's then immigrated and became a citizen of the United States in the 1990's. Which country does this person really feel he belongs to and in? All we can say about the identity of this person is that it is problematic and difficult to determine given the identity crisis that the person might experience.

With the explanations brought so far, the question that is raised is where do exiles stand in this labyrinthine terminology? Which categories do they belong to? In exile debates, a sense of both national identity and nationalism are cardinal. The reason that stands behind such eminence is that without the assurance that there is a bond between a person and a place, the notion of exile is meaningless.

In terms of citizenship, exiles experience shifts in their political loyalties. Not very different from exiles in the ancient Roman republic[18], being an exile in the modern epoch deprives the displaced person from all his citizen rights and exempts him from all his citizen duties in the homeland when he finds refuge in another country and takes up the franchise of the new state. This passive condition of exiles neither participating

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[18] When a Roman citizen quitted his homeland to avoid a legal penalty, he was always considered as a *civis Romanus*. Even when the *aquae et ignis interdictio* was applied against him, he did not cease to be a citizen of Rome, unless he willingly put his Roman citizenship aside and adopted another one. Cicero best explained the relationship between exile and citizenship in the Roman republic when he stated, "*Qui si in civitate legis vim subire vellent, non prius civitatem quam vitam amitterant: quia nolunt, non adimitur iis civitas, sed ab iis relinquitur atque deponitur. nam quum ex nostro iure duarum civitatum nemo esse possit, tum amittitur haec civitas denique, quum is qui profugit receptus est in exsilium, hoc est, in aliam civitatem.*" "If any citizens wish to suffer the execution of the law, they would not lose their citizenship before they lose their lives. Because they do not so wish, their citizenship is not taken away from them, but they abandon it and put it aside. Since no one can be a citizen of two states under our law, Roman citizenship is finally lost at that point when a fugitive has been received into exile, that is, into the citizenship of another state" (Kelly 45-46).

in nor taking profit from the political institutions of their homelands makes of them "outsiders" in their homelands. After quitting the homeland, exiles go into other countries where they oftentimes become citizens and thus feel politically attached to the host country. Zachary and Sides argue that *distinctive citizens* i.e., those who are not native-born citizens, naturally manifest less attachment to the locus of residence than native-born citizens because of two reasons. First, foreign born residents of a country may not, because of being immigrants, have been acquainted with the standard "socialization process" that cultivates national attachment in native born citizens. Thus, foreign born citizens may retain national attachment and loyalty to their countries of birth. It is further argued that even native born citizens; distinctive in racial, cultural, linguistic, and religious terms, may feel the same as foreign born citizens in terms of national attachment. These feelings may be rooted in the implicit or explicit "exclusionary content" of the concept of national identity[19].

To the category of immigrants we may add exiles, since they also, by virtue of being outsiders, might become distinctive citizens in a non-homeland state. Although attachment to the host country, in the case of exiles, may vary in degree, it is conceived as a source of dilemma. In this sense, being politically attached to the host country is not necessarily conducive of any other particular kind of attachment i.e., love or pride to cite only some. Thus, an exile might feel contrastive attachments: political attachment to the host country and cultural attachment to the homeland that might in turn produce an identity crisis.

Cultural nationalism, on the other hand, plays a significant role in the cultural production of intellectual exiles. Benedict Anderson argues that cultural products are necessary in the shaping of nationalism. He further explains that the attachment people

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[19] For further details about the exclusionary aspect of national identity see Zachary Elkins & John Sides, "In Search of the United Nation-State: National Attachment among Distinctive Citizens", p.4.

feel for their nation requires cultural products of nationalism that he calls in *Imagined Communities* “inventions of their imagination” such as music, prose fiction, poetry and plastic arts. These products, namely, literature, anthems, flags, and the arts shape the cultural framework of the nation and foster love for the nation or, as Anderson put it, “self-sacrificing love” that is shown “very clearly and in thousand different forms and styles” (141).

Considering cultural nationalism as a reason for the probable expulsion of citizens, Sophia McClennen writes:

> Insofar as exiles are challenging the official culture of their nation, they must argue for an alternative cultural nationalism. This position typically maintains that there is a story that is being suppressed by official versions of cultural identity, which the exile must tell. The narrative of exiles attempting to counter official versions of their nation’s culture includes stories that are no longer told within their countries and which exiles hope will reach their compatriots. (23)

Although McClennen refers here to political and intellectual exiles only, expatriates leave their countries for mainly the same reasons. Take, for instance, the case of American expatriates of the Lost Generation, namely Gertrude Stein and Scott Fitzgerald who immigrated to France and wrote about America of the twenties highlighting their disillusionment.

For other categories of exiles such as self-exiles and refugees, the cultural products Anderson refers to as “inventions of our imagination” are inherent and can never be erased even if the exile subject assimilates into another culture. This can be seen throughout the majority of *distinctive citizens* in France, for instance, who do not learn La Marseillaise by heart, or those immigrants in the USA who do not even have an

idea about the title of the American anthem, let alone sing it or feel it, and are moved each time they hear the national anthem of the homeland sung[20].

Anderson explains that while singing national anthems *unisonance* has a substantial effect on the feeling of belonging and groupness. Apart from national anthems, Anderson illustrates with the example of the recitation of ceremonial poetry on special religious occasions that unite people sharing the same religion such as the *Book of Common Prayer*. Other examples may include *Tarawih* Prayer for Muslims in Ramadan, Passover prayers for Jews or Christmas Prayers for Christians.

Statist nationalism among exiles may vanish over time, especially in the case of political opposition. However, the imprints that cultural nationalism leaves in the hearts of exiles are part of an exile's inherent elements of identity much in the same way his / her physical traits are, and are thus ineffaceable. What is problematic, however, is whether feelings of nationalism among exiles are possible without the significant geographical spirit of a territory where one's innermost sense of being is felt and exteriorized without constraints.

However, all these assumptions are to be revised in a global era when according to Appadurai, "'We need to think ourselves beyond the nation because the modern nation-state is in a 'serious crisis' brought on by transnational conditions" (Qtd. in Young et al. 1). According to Appadurai, this global situation has "deterritorialized" the nation and produced a new category of citizens who are the post-national *citoyens*

[20] On the uniting effect national anthems, Anderson states, "Take national anthems, for example, sung on national holidays. No matter how banal the words and mediocre the tunes, there is in this singing an experience of simultaneity. At precisely such moments, people wholly unknown to each other utter the same verses to the same melody. The image: unisonance [...] How selfless this unisonance feels! If we are aware that others are singing these songs precisely when and as we are, we have no idea who they may be, or even where, out of earshot, they are singing. Nothing connects us all but imagined sounds" (145).

du monde i.e., global citizens[21]. Indeed, globalization with its technological paraphernalia, mainly internet and mass communication, has deterritorialized and denationalized national cultures.

I.3.b. The Politics of Transnationalism

Exile and its border-crossing experience is as a rite of passage that marks the life of an exile in different ways. On the one hand, the exile is detached from all sources of national sentiment and belonging. On the other hand, the exile is cast into a new "ethnoscape" that requires the adoption of the new culture in order to avoid the devastating condition of alienhood. Transnationalism is the movement that jeopardizes the survival of nationalism and nation-state, or as McClennen endorses, "Transnationalism renders the borders of a nation insignificant. People, goods and culture flow across borders, which become merely geographic and no longer culturally meaningful. There are no "Others" or "Aliens" and culture, goods, and people are absent of national attachments" (24).

There are coarsely three social fields that can be identified in exile studies:

1- The exile subject who has a sense of collective identity.

2- The spatial context and nation-state where the exile subject resides.

3- The nation-state to which the exile subject maintains feelings of affiliation.

This "triadic relationship"[22] forms a basic element of exile debates and holds a fundamental tension which calls into question two loci, once and again, home and abroad. This idea brings us to the concept of homelessness which is represented through

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[21] For a more exhaustive definition of the global citizen, see Ajun Appadurai, "Sovereignty without Territoriality: Notes for a Postnational Geography". Ed. P. Yaeger, *The Geography of Identity*, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1996.

[22] This phrase is borrowed from William Safran's work, "Diaspora in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return", *Diaspora*, Vol. 1, No. 1, 83-99. Safran uses the phrase "triadic relationship" to refer to the three central features in diasporic formations i.e., the dispersed group, the nation-state where they reside and the one to which they maintain affiliation.

feelings of estrangement rooted in being far from home. Belonging, in this sense, relates to identity. In fact, both identity and belonging are words overused and under-theorized in the context of population movements and translocation. Floya Anthias suggests in this regard:

> A sense of collective identity and a feeling of belonging to the country you reside in are neither necessarily coterminous nor mutually exclusive. You may identify but not feel that you 'belong' in the sense of being accepted or being a full member. Alternatively, you may feel that you are accepted and 'belong' but may not fully identify, or your allegiances may be split. Here it is useful to bring up the issue of multiple identities. (19-20)

Accordingly, and in the case of exiles, the displaced people identify with compatriots of the homeland but do not really feel they belong in the homeland since they are neither full members acting as citizens of the nation-state nor welcome herein. Alternatively, exiles may be accepted in another nation and feel they politically belong in it, but do not necessarily identify with its members on account of the many differences setting them apart: cultural, linguistic, ideological, religious and so on (although these may not happen all together).

Advocates of transnationalism argue that nationalism is coercive, especially when the concept of identity is at work. For them, national identity in nationalism debates is oppressive since it is linked to many aspects, namely geography. Conversely, they view transnational identity as liberating, unlimited and unrelated to anything. Contrary to the coercive nature qualifying the conception of identity in nationalism debates, Sophia McClennen states that transnationalism is less restrictive than

nationalism[23] and that it "posits an alternative way of describing cultural identity that is less geographically restrictive" (25). All forms of displacement in transnational debates show that the physical borders of a country do not always have the importance that nationalist debates accord them. This is mainly because feelings of belonging to the homeland oftentimes persist outside the territorial boundaries of the nation mainly in the form of diasporas.

Transnationalism can be philosophically paralleled to the Heideggerian account of the built object of a bridge and the emergence of banks[24]. Heidegger argues that the bridge induces the banks to lie across from each other and indicates that the environing land on either side of the stream is brought into juxtaposition. Moreover, Heidegger states that bridges produce new social patterns "forming a locale or connecting different parts of a town, or the town with the country, or the town with the network of long-distance traffic, paced and calculated for maximum yield" (Qtd. in Urry 132). In the same way bridges allow for crossing places, transnationalsm crosses territories and cultures.

Two main concepts are at work in the debate of transnationalism: transculturation and hybridity. Transculturation describes the impact that the straddling of two cultures might have on cultural identity. As opposed to acculturation which results in the assimilation of new aspects in the national culture[25], transculturation deals

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[23] McCLennen provided the pros and cons of transnationalism and argued that it can be viewed as a liberating force from the constraints of nationalism and yet it is itself a form of coercion as it "actually refers to an un-even more pervasive spread of Western-based culture". She further explains that, "Transnational corporations are the messenger of Western culture and its mode of production" (24). Other scholars such as Hardt and Negri argue that transnationalism can be more oppressive than nationalism as it is tied to empire and global capitalism.

[24] Cf. Martin Heidegger, *Basic Writings*, (ed.) D. Farrell Krell, London, Routledge, 1993.

[25] Although this may happen at varying degrees. In Milton Gordon's account, for instance, acculturation is the process through which a minority group adopts the host society's core culture, which remains fundamentally unchanged by this absorption. However; Milton Gordon acknowledged the possibility of change at the peripheries that he cites in the following quotation, "Minor modifications in cuisine, recreational patterns, place names, speech, residential architecture, sources of artistic inspiration,

with the "importation of new cultural elements through a local, cultural filter" (McClennen 26). Uruguayan writer Angel Rama provides another definition of the concept of transculturation in his work *Transculturación Narrativa en América Latina* (Transculturation in Latin American Narrative). He describes it as, "The partial loss of the local and the partial gain of foreign elements" (Qtd. in McClennen 26). The process of transculturation produces neo-culture that maintains elements of the original culture at the same time that it adopts elements of the new culture. Transculturation is also used to describe, like multiculturalism, a mosaic of cultural elements where none hold an advantageous position and all coexist in a state of flux and motion.

As opposed to cultural nationalism, transculturation is subject to change. The difference between the two concepts is that cultural nationalism implies the idea of inheritance while tranculturation is a form of recreation and constant change. Transculturation, like transnationalism, is crucial in defining the cultural identity of exiles. On account of their contrastive attachments, exiles oftentimes hold transnational views that result in changes at the level of identification. While the process of cultural identification of exiles demonstrates transculturation and changes at the level of the national culture, exiles do not lose all ties to the latter. McClennen states in this concern, "Even those exiles who reject their nation and embrace transnational culture cannot escape defining themselves culturally in relation to their past, which in their case was very deeply affected by national history" (27).

These conceptions of transnationalism as privileging newness that comes out of cultural contacts threatens the survival of all forms of nationalism and local cultures and puts the emphasis on global debates. As exiles meet in a foreign land and experience the same forms of alienation and sufferings, they develop a sense of groupness that might

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and perhaps few other areas" (100). Thus, acculturation could happen without entailing other forms of assimilation, and the stage of acculturation could last constantly.

result in an “imagined community” of exiles. It is important, at this level, to recall Brubaker’s and Cooper’s conception of identity that signifies, “a fundamental sameness among members of a group or a category. This may be understood objectively (as an experienced, felt, or perceived sameness). This sameness is expected to manifest itself in solidarity, in shared dispositions or consciousness, or in collective action” (7).

Thus, exiles as a general category might well create a community and new identity that are adapted to the post-national globalized age. On the basis of sameness at the level of experience and shared consciousness, exiles might manifest solidarity and feel they belong to the same category. As in exile narratives:

> [Exiles] often seek other lines along which they draw identity that are not merely national – such as gender, race, class, or sexuality . . . . because of their isolation, exiles are in a situation that calls their attention to commonalities that transcend the national and link them to others regardless of nationality, or even historical synchronicity. (McClennen 25)

What, then, is the fate of nationalism in the face of human constant displacement? Is this state of human nomadology altogether with globalization carrying with them meanings of transcendental “homes”, found everywhere in the postmodern world, where “reality is replaced with image”[26] is the future defining aspect of belonging? To put it differently, is the discourse of “endism” regarding nationalism brought by this endless human movement? Definite answers to such questions seem impossible since such concepts as nationalism are flexible.

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[26] This idea is contained in one of Jean Baudrillard’s key theses: *Simulation: the Procession of Simulacra* where he asserts that image is a copy of the real and has ontological priority over reality. Moreover, “Baudrillard offers an apocalyptic characterization of the postmodern in that the construction of the real as film is said to mark the destruction of reality” (Constable 44).

Another key concept relating transnationalism with the anthropological question of exile is, according to Homi Bhabha, hybridity that "entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (*The Location of Culture* 4). In fact, the notion of hybridity occupies a central place in postcolonial and transnational discourses. It is "celebrated and privileged as a kind of superior cultural intelligence owing to the advantage of in-betweenness, the straddling of two cultures and the consequent ability to negotiate the difference" (Hoogvelt 158).

In *Diaspora and Hybridity*, hybridity is defined as follows, "In its most recent descriptive and realist usage, hybridity appears as a convenient category at 'the edge' or contact point of diaspora, describing cultural mixture where the diasporized meets the host in the scene of migration" (Kalra et al. 71). Following the same line of thought, Homi Bhabha defines hybridity as, "The third space which enables other positions to emerge" (*The Third Space* 211). Thus, hybridity signifies the newness that comes out of the mixture of the host culture with the diaspora.

Cultural hybridity is the newness that emanates from the contact of two cultures. It relates to transnationalism and defines its results through the transformations of the process of cultural identification. Although hybridity and transnationalism endorse cultural diversity that in turn becomes the bedrock of multiculturalism, it still lacks efficiency in terms of equilibrium between the two cultures' amount of supplementing the hybrid culture. Hybridity, as defined in the postcolonial discourse by Homi Bhabha, preaches cultural diversity yet shows consciousness towards difference.

Cultural hybridity in the case of exiles takes place in the host nation-states. As the culture of the newcomers i.e., exiles, is fused with the culture of the host members, a neo-culture arises. However, a significant question springs to mind at this level: Who is the agent that controls the changes brought to both cultures and which culture dominates

during the process of hybridity? Homi Bhabha explains that although multicultural states entertain and encourage diversity, they contain it. Furthermore, Bhabha contends that it is the host nation that controls the process of cultural hybridity since "a transparent norm is constituted, a norm given by the host society or dominant culture, which says that 'these other cultures are fine, but we must be able to locate them within our own grid'" (*The Third Space* 208).

Ergo, one should avoid discussing hybridity "outside the parameters of unequal power relations that exist between and within cultures" (Anthias 24). Here once again, McClennen's reflection about transnationaism as even more confining than nationalism is worth considering. Even though hybridity, as explained above, is a form of comfort for the displaced peoples as they are afforded the opportunity to retain vestiges of their national cultures, it is the task of the host nation-state to decide which elements to maintain and which ones to erase. Henceforth, the culture of the displaced is located by the host state according to its needs and taking into account the privilege of its national culture which takes precedence over the cultures of foreigners.

Following this line of thought, even in the process of hybridization the displaced people do not enjoy total freedom to choose what to keep from the national culture. More importantly, exiles' capability to express themselves as they wish is once again subjected to the norms of the host state that regulates hybridization so as the new elements brought to the national culture do not efface the cultural singularity of the host nation.

Worth citing, in this concern, is the case of Muslim women workers who are forbidden to wear the veil in all professional institutions in France. Although France is a cosmopolitan multicultural nation that allows for various cultural practices within its

national borders, still the state is the only agent that determines whether specific cultural practices are practicable or not.

The question that arises at this level is whether hybridity as understood in the Du Boisian context of "double consciousness"[27] is beneficial or detrimental to the exile self. Providing an answer to this question at this level of analysis is deemed early since a discussion of the notion of identity and identification should precede such flexible reflections. Hence, the extent of comfort an exile might find in this state of in-betweenness cannot be decided and generalized as a rule but differs from one person to the other. More importantly, feelings and manifestations of belonging are defining traits of identity and the identification process.

[27]W. E. B. Du Bois's theory that African Americans possess a double consciousness has engendered a great amount of contemporary criticism of African American identity and literature.

I.4. The Practice of Identification of Exiles

Identity and other affiliated concepts have a long history as technical terms in Western philosophy. They have been used to address the perennial philosophical problems of permanence amidst manifest change, and unity amidst manifest diversity[28]. What interests us most, in exile studies, is the definition of identity in postmodern and psychological theories as the case study in this work are late twentieth-century displaced characters. Thus, it is the concern of this work to show that exile and displacement are the prototype of the postmodern fragmented persona.

In a postmodern context, identity is explained through two contradicting concepts i.e., "Idem" and "Ipse" explained by Ritivoi: "In Latin two terms for the idea of identity, although they are perfect synonyms: idem, the first term signifies identity as something permanent in time, while ipse tolerates change, degrees and variations, and thus, includes difference and otherness" (44). The "ipse" is related to Derrida's thoughts about identity as non-static and constantly shifting. Identity according to him is under construction as much as we live. Furthermore, "Ipse" is a postmodern concept of identity that includes multiplicity, fragmentation, and hybridity. It also interacts with transnationalism since the latter calls for difference and change. Likewise, in a Foucauldian post-structuralist, post-modernist context, "Identity is invoked to highlight the unstable, multiple, fluctuating, and fragmented nature of the contemporary self" (Brubaker and Cooper 8).

In psychologizing literature, identity is summoned to point to something supposedly deep and basic. This may be distinguished from more superficial and accidental attributes of the self and is understood as something to be necessarily preserved and valued.

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[28] Cf. Avrum Stroll, "Identity", *Encyclopedia of Philosophy*, Macmillan, New York, 1967, Vol IV), pp.121-124.

Identity scholars discuss the issue of identity stating its relation to numerous features: gender, sexuality, nationality, language, race, ethnicity, culture among many other features. Identity has oftentimes been studied in relation to home, place, border, and frontier. In his work *Identity, culture and the postmodern world,* Peter Brooker states, "Frontier does not merely close the nation in on itself but also immediately opens it to an outside, to other nations" (Brooker 6). Boundaries, he explains, may refer to geographical areas, political or religious ones, occupational categories, and linguistic or cultural traditions delimitating a nation. Therefore, in identity discourses the question that interests researchers is how one does represent oneself? Shall identity, single, hybrid or multiple, be classified through communitarian, regional, family, cultural or national attachments?

In fact, the people included in the exile category have different nationalities. Nationality in this specific context has two layer meanings: (a) feelings of loyalty towards a nation, or (b) citizenship, i.e., the official recognition of a state that someone is a member of the state. Taking into account national identities and citizenships of exiles, at least three types of identification are discernible.

Exiles, when they become citizens of the host nation-state identify with the latter, both politically and culturally. Second, exiles might still identify themselves with and feel loyalty towards their nations of origin despite their political identification as members of another nation-state through citizenship. Third, there are exiles that neither hold the citizenship of the host nation-state, nor do they identify themselves with it. We may cite for instance, within this category, migrant workers who cross borders seeking a particular job without having any interest in the host-nation save economic opportunity.

Thus, it is all a matter of positionality, i.e., the self-identification of a displaced person rests on the position s/he holds in the host society. Being a U.S. born son of an exile, for instance, implies pledging allegiance to the American nation, and thus self-identifying with American principles of freedom, equality, and the work Ethic. These are what we may call political and nationality self-identifiers. Cultural self-identifiers, by contrast, do not rely on politics but rather on internalized factors mainly preserved through family background. Identity, thus, becomes the subjective sense of what group membership means. In this particular sense, the problematic that arises is that one may, for example, identify with Americans but might not self-identify as an American. In an attempt to draw a distinction between political assimilation and cultural assimilation, German philosopher, Jürgen Habermas categorizes two levels of assimilation:

> a) Assent to the principles of the constitution within the scope of interpretation determined by the ethical-political self-understanding of the citizens and the political culture of the country … b) the further level of a willingness to become acculturated, that is, not only to conform externally but to become habituated to the way of life, the practices, and customs of the local culture. (138)

Thus, we can extract from the above passage two kinds of assimilation: political assimilation that seems almost imperative and cultural assimilation that remains a matter of choice and that is generally "epistemically and morally detrimental", to use Paula Moya's words[29].

It has been argued earlier that group membership is of a basic meaning to the self-understanding of any person. Let us first suggest that having an identity stands for

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[29] Cf. Paula M. L. Moya, "Cultural Particularity Versus Universal Humanity: The value of Being Asimilao". Eds., Jorge J. E. Gracia & Pablo De Greiff, *Hispanics/ Latinos in the United States, Ethnicity, Race, and Rights*, New York: Routledge, 2000.

having a particular understanding of "who I am" that brings about awareness of the features that characterize me as a human being. Thus, I may characterize myself as a teacher, a woman, a Muslim, an Algerian and in such an act I express my self-understanding. Note, in this case, that characterization entails association with and membership within a group. Thus, it becomes evident that the understanding of "who I am" is often relational i.e., linked to a set of people. Two aspects of identity-bearing have so far been shown: self-understanding and group membership. Consequently, to have an identity is to have an understanding of oneself marked by the characterization that makes one a member in a group.

The particular matter of inquiry in this section is the status of exiles' self-identification within the framework of group membership. As demonstrated earlier, exiles have, as a matter of fact, various nationalities. Given this complex structure of defining identity through group membership, an interesting question arises: do exiles claim membership to their host nation-states or to their original nationalities? The case studies in this work are exiles of racial, religious and political orders. Exile, one should recall, includes many categories i.e., self-exile, internal exile and so on. Thus, this section limits the scope of research to cover the exile categories that will be discussed throughout the corpus chosen for this work. It will highlight how these particular exiles identify in such liminal spaces.

While trying to steer clear of Foucault and Freud among others, Chris Abani, himself an exile, opines:

> We do for the most part construct our identity, and at an even deeper more ineffable level, the self, from our interaction with our environment … identity is not a 'thing' or 'place' we construct or arrive at, but simply

> a constant flux created by the tensions between the promptings of our internal voice and the external forces of experience. (26)

Furthermore, Abani explains the way exiles identify while taking into account their numerous losses and how they affect their self-identification. Abani explains the way exiles identify stressing the link between identification and the loss of the motherland, "We first begin to understand the confusion facing the exile with regards to identity when we lose someone in our lives to death. This is further complicated by the addition of an unresolved tension or by the fact that we have often based our ideas of who we are in conflict or in opposition to the one lost" (26-7).

This, in fact goes straight to the heart of the questions about identity and how it is constructed in a liminal space. As the notion of exile calls into question two spaces or places: home and abroad, the exile subjects are cast into a status of in-betweenness where identification is neither definite nor facile. The process of identification varies from one case to the other and encompasses three varieties.

I.4.a. Assimilation

First, exiles may totally assimilate in the mainstream culture of the host society because of the unpleasant reminiscences they have about their culture, race, religion or nation in general, and thus identify with people of the host nation and as members of it. Assimilation in this case is both political and cultural. The merit and inevitability of assimilation is considered one of the most hotly disputed issues in multicultural nation-states. Thus, we cannot speak of assimilation without evoking the canonical and authoritative work of Park and Burgess and the one of Gordon. In 1921 Robert Park and E.W. Burgess provided an early definition of assimilation understood as "A process of interpenetration and fusion in which persons and groups acquire the memories,

sentiments, and attitudes of other persons and groups, and by sharing their experience and history, are incorporated with them in a common cultural life" (735).

Park's legacy is closely identified with the notion of assimilation occurring at the end-stage of a "race relations cycle of contact, competition, accommodation, and eventual assimilation". In depicting the "race relations cycle", Park and Burgess refer obliquely to the processes of assimilation in the modern world. *Contact* is the first step in this cycle when immigrants come into contact with host members. *Competition*, then, is the initial unstable result of that contact as groups strive to gain advantages over one another, and this ensues the more stable stage of *accommodation*, whence *assimilation*.

The critical distinction in Gordon's conceptual scheme lay between acculturation and what he termed "structural assimilation" that meant "the entry of members of an ethnic minority into primary group relationships with the majority group" (Alba & Nee 829). Gordon specified seven variables of assimilation:

> 1/ Change of cultural patterns to those of the host society that result in cultural or behavioral assimilation,
>
> 2/ Large scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of the host society on primary group level that define structural assimilation,
>
> 3/ Large scale intermarriage that is called marital assimilation,
>
> 4/ The development of a sense of peoplehood based exclusively on the host society that typifies identificational assimilation,
>
> 5/ The absence of prejudice that engenders attitude receptional assimilation,
>
> 6/ The absence of discrimination called behavior receptional assimilation, and

7/ The absence of value and power conflict that describes civic assimilation. (71)

Structural assimilation is the final stage of integration. In this concern, Gordon hypothesized, “Once structural assimilation has occurred … all of the other types will naturally follow” (80-1). Worth citing in this regard, is the most famous instance of Michael Jackson who completely detached himself from the Black community through his recourse to surgery in order to whiten himself and be fully integrated in the White community. In the case of Michael Jackson, structural assimilation happened first and then all other types of assimilation ensued by way of his denial of his Black origins and adoption of the White culture through racial change.

I.4.b. Exile and Hybridity

Exiles might identify in both cultures so as to create a new culture due to the impossibility to assimilate entirely in a new culture. In an oft-quoted statement of Horace Kallen, it is assured that, “Men change their clothes, their politics, their wives, their religions, their philosophies to a greater or lesser extent ; they cannot change their grandfathers. An Irishman is always an Irishman, a Jew always a Jew” (Qtd. in Huntington, *Who Are We? America’s Great Debate* 131).

In this particular context, newness is defined through the process of hybridization. Kallen implicitly emphasizes the idea that people can change things that are adopted after birth as culture, but cannot alter things that have biological aspects such as ancestral background that is part of ethnicity. To evoke the case of Michael Jackson that raised a controversial debate, did Michael Jackson’s assimilation allow for viewing Michael Jackson as part of the White community? Giving an answer to this question may be as controversial as the question proper. The answer depends on whose

view one is debating. In Jackson's point of view, he was part of the White community since his self-identification was explained by his surgical transformation. Seen from a nativist point of view, this surgical transformation is considered as superficial and could never efface the biological and ancestral traits of Michael Jackson.

Following this line of thought, a great number of displaced people try to join the two cultures into a new culture. People embracing these hybrid cultures are called in identity theories "Third space people" who, according to Ingleby, "have decided to create new routes for themselves as an alternative to defining their roots in a particular community identity" (3). This hypothesis, although not definite, is the most probable one among displaced people as their displacement conjures up ideas of opposition towards the nation's institutions, be they cultural, governmental or social. Thus, displaced people wish to create their own new visions of their nations or national cultures without being influenced by either the host nation or their cultural heritage.

Hybridity is a recurrent theme in contemporary works of literature dealing with identity. It is presently established that authors writing on migration, exile, refuge and diaspora much often engage in a hybridity discourse. Its expression can vary from the hybrid selves constructed through the combination of parental aspects or the combination of two cultures, two linguistic modes of expression and so on.

In *DissemiNation*, Homi Bhabha assumes that hybridity is the process through which one's culture is brought along rather than left behind throughout the gatherings of individuals[30] outside the homeland. To these gathering individuals, a nation becomes a metaphorical concept that they carry with them along the distances. According to Homi Bhabha, "The scattering of people is less a destruction of a culture abandoned (perhaps

[30] "Gatherings of exiles and émigrés and refugees, gathering on the edge of 'foreign cultures; gathering at the frontiers; gathering in the ghettos or cafés of city centres, gathering in the half-life, half-light of foreign tongues, or in the uncanny fluency of another's language […] Also the gathering of people in diaspora: indentured, migrant, interned . . ." (*The Location of Culture* 139).

through force) than the constitution of a culture that one enters by bringing along cultural fragments to a new accumulation of cultural fragments" (Qtd. in Teeuwen 289). Viewed as such, hybridity becomes an agent of cross-cultural contacts resulting in new tolerant and "anationalistic" cultures.

I.4.c. Exile and Nationalistic Attachment

There is a general assumption that some displaced people retaining some hope to return home are usually unwilling to assimilate into the culture of the host society. It thus becomes important to link self-identification, in the case of the displaced, to the horizon of return and the displaced subject's intentions towards both the host nation and the homeland. This alternative is usually probable when the displaced subject regards both assimilation and hybridity as disadvantageous to his/ her identity and psychological well-being. In this case, the exile cannot conceive of his/her identity in the absence of a *territorial referent*, in this case the motherland.

Trying to emphasize the eminence of the motherland, both as a place and a space, in the self-identification of people, Abani provides a metaphor that is highly explicative of the status of exiles. He inquires, "So, for instance, a mother who loses a child faces a real crisis of identity. Who is she now? Is she still a mother? Does she have enough of the self prior to motherhood left over to reconstitute a new one" (27). While Abani inquires about the status of a mother who loses her child, one would additionally inquire about the status of a child who loses his mother to death. How will s/he identify? The answer is to be found in the observation of orphans who experience crises at the level of identification and whose loss of mothers or fathers is manifested throughout behavioral anomies, experienced at different degrees. The same is to be said of exiles who lose a sense of a motherland that is unquestionably primordial for the stability of

the self. In this context, the status of the exile is similar to the one of the adoptee "who has lost its primal family and yet can never really find acceptance or possibly even certain depths of emotional syntax" (Abani 27).

Above all, the negative aspect of assimilation in the view of ethnic minority groups lays in its very definition as, "The decline, and at its endpoint the disappearance, of an ethnic/ racial distinction and the cultural and social differences that express it" (Alba & Nee 863). Cultural assimilation, particularly, is more often than not considered a loss rather than a profit in the view of the displaced. Likewise, hybridity, for such a category is seen as a transgressive element of the purity of one's culture. It is argued, in this concern, that, "Hybridity signals the threat of 'contamination' to those who espouse an essentialist notion of pure and authentic origins" (Coombess & Brah 1).

People willing to return to their homeland generally maintain the umbilical cord attaching them to the homeland unaffected by external influence throughout the extraterritorial maintenance of the cultural practices of the homeland. These are the kind of people who create spaces with national sentiments in places beyond the national contours of the culture. This repudiation of assimilation and hybridization is generally manifested in various forms the most famous of which is the preservation of the use of one's mother tongue in places where the latter is a foreign language.

Thus, at least three possible ways of identification could be discerned among exiles or diaspora communities: the assimilated self, the hybrid self, and the nostalgic recalcitrant self. However, the question that currently confuses scholars and researchers alike is whether one's identification with a nation-state implies loyalty to that nation. Take, for instance, the different diaspora communities that support the football teams of their homeland when they confront the nation-states that shelter them. In fact, one's attachment to the homeland does never fade completely. To conclude this section and

decide over issues of identification among exiles seems an impossible task given the perplexities and varieties surrounding the exile subject. There still remains a question to be answered: is the exile's attachment to the homeland more important than the one to the hostland in the process of identification, or is the exile simply *exilian*, to use Wole Soyinka's term[31], exile being his home, identity and nationality?

I.5. Exile Writing Between Nostalgia and Creativity

The history of exile writing is as old as the history of literature itself. Together with themes of alienation, detachment, diaspora and distance, exile has been one of the most productive themes in literature. Exiled scholars wrote about their experiences, the losses of exile and their sufferings. It is argued that exile as an experience either fosters creativity outside the homeland or causes nostalgia and different crises for the displaced so that his life is consumed in his nostalgic memories. To put it otherwise, "criticism of exile writing has tended to analyse these works according to a binary logic, where exile either produces creative freedom or it traps the writer in restrictive nostalgia" (McClennen 2). In "Reflections on Exile", Edward Said describes exile writing as *contrapuntal* since contrary to "most people [who] are principally aware of one culture, one setting, one home; exiles are aware of at least two, and this plurality of visions gives rise to an awareness of simultaneous dimensions an awareness that – to borrow a phrase from music – is contrapuntal" (186).

Seen from this dialectic vision, exile writing is hybrid and transnational since the writer is aware of two homes, two cultures and two settings. Conceived in a dialectic manner, but from a different perspective, Claudio Guillén distinguishes two kinds of exile writing in "On the Literature of Exile and Counter Exile": exile as nostalgic and

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[31] Wole Soyinka jokingly coined the word *exilian* pointing to the person living in exile, as if exile were a real country and nation-state providing people with real citizenships and nationalities.

counter exile as creative. Later, in *Múltiples Moradas*, Guillén suggests, "Exiled writers can be described as solar (referring to Plutarch) if they tend to look up towards the sun and the stars, or they can look within (like Ovid) and focus on loss"[32] (Qtd. in McClennen 2). While Guillén evokes here exiled writers only, his description of the two categories can be applied to both real and fictional exiles i.e., people, writers, and literary characters alike.

More clearly, Guillén defines exile literature as the one where "exile becomes its own subject matter" and such literature, according to him is exemplified by the writings of Ovid and the open expression of sorrow[33]. In the counter exile literature, however, writers "incorporate the separation from place, class, language or native community, insofar as they triumph over the separation and thus offer wide dimensions of meaning and transcend the earlier attachments to place or native origin" (Guillén 272). While the literature of exile is linked to modern sentiments of nationalism and thus celebrates all aspects of attachment to the homeland, in the literature of counter-exile "no great writer can remain a merely local mind, unwilling to question the relevance of the particular place from which he writes" (Guillén 280).

From this, it follows that what Guillén calls "the literature of exile" stresses the idea that exile is not only physical but spiritual as well and thus nostalgic insofar as this category of literature is linked to feelings of nationalism. What he names "the literature

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[32] In *Múltiples Moradas*, Claudio Guillén proposes a dichotomy in the writing of exile when he writes, "*Arranco de una polaridad. Me propongo destacar dos valoraciones fundamentales. La primera es la imagen solar […] Esta actitud parte de la contemplación del sol y de los astros, continúa y se desarrolla rumbo a dimensiones universales […] La segunda reacción valoritiva, o bien opuesta, denuncia una pérdida, un empobrecimiento*". In Claudio Guillén, "El Sol de los Desterrados: Literatura y exilio", ed. Claudio Guillén, *Múltiples Moradas: Ensayo de Literatura Comparada*, Barcelona: Tusqets Editores, 1998, 30. ["I start from a polarity. I would like to emphasize two fundamental value systems. The first is the solar image […] this attitude springs from the contemplation of the sun and the stars, it continues and develops towards universal dimensions […] The second valuable reaction, perhaps associated with the first or its opposite, denounces a loss, an impoverishment"] . Translated by Sophia McClennen in *The Dialectics of Exile: Nation, Time, Language, and Space in Hispanic Literatures*, p. 32.

[33] See Claudio Guillén, "On the Literature of Exile and Counter Exile", p. 272.

of counter exile", however, insists that exile is physical and that this physical displacement is transcended by creativity in exile. While Guillén described the literature of counter exile as solar he remained silent over providing a label for the literature of exile, a task Sophia McClennen accomplished instead by characterizing the literature of exile as *terrestrial* because the exile "gaze[s] down at the ground, contemplating his material existence far from his native land" (McClennen 32). It follows, thus, that exile writing is either nostalgic or creative.

The feeling of nostalgia while in exile is not a new phenomenon. The word "nostalgia" comes from Greek roots *nostos* meaning "home" and *algia* meaning "longing". Nostalgia therefore is the feeling of longing to home:

> The nostalgic disorder was first diagnosed by seventeenth-century Swiss doctors and detected in mercenary soldiers. This contagious modern disease of homesickness –*la maladie du pays* – was treated in a seventeenth-century scientific manner with leeches, hypnotic emulsions, opium, and a trip to the Alps. (Boym 241)

Feelings of nostalgia may vary in degree and so do their impact on the exile subject. In the Greco-Roman discourse, manifestations of nostalgia differed from one person to another:

> Xenophanes may offer a first certain example of nostalgia in his poem on his home town Colophon [...], and Alcaeus and Theognis not only lament "the toils of vexatious exile" and the loss of their property but also establish the imagery of 'exile as shipwreck', the motif of desertion and that of the exile's wish for death. (Gaertner 9)

Gaertner further argues that there is a variety of motifs and themes of exile among which he cites, "recollection of one's patria, 'exile as shipwreck', wish for death,

desertion, linguistic and cultural isolation" (9). Paul Tabori, following the same line of thought, asked in *The Pen in Exile*, "What else could the exile be except nostalgic and homesick?" (6). Exiled writers, exiled characters, or simply exiles falling in this category tend to be local. Moreover, the feeling of attachment to the homeland among them, although affected by physical displacement, grows stronger and traps them into a self-destroying journey when return to the homeland becomes an obsession. In this case, nationalism becomes a cause.

Other exiles, however, tend to be global and rather than emphasizing the sense of loss, they find solace and empathy among other exiles of different nationalities and thus avoid the torturing effect of nationalism. These exiles are creative and there is a tendency amongst them "to transmute their own bitter experience into an affinity with others in distress" (Hanne 9). Therefore, instead of reminiscing about their past and living in a nostalgic atmosphere that idealizes home away from home, exiles in this case develop a sense of universal empathy or as Chris Abani notes, "The condition of exile allows us to explore an international/ human identity" (28). Exile, following this line of thought, is seen as redemptive and encourages a form of double-mindedness that offers the exiled people substantial creative potential.

Like Sophia McClennen, Chris Abani sees the condition of exile and its discourse as a chiaroscuro between at least two dominant binaries. On the one hand, according to him, are those who regard exile as positive and redemptive, on the other hand are those who consider it negative. Commenting on those who see exile as positive, Abani writes:

> On the one hand are those who celebrate exile as redemptive. Homi Bhabha and Arjun Appadurai speak to the possibilities that displacement and exile offer. Salman Rushdie, C.L.R James, and George Lamming

> believe exile to be a vital condition for writing, a form of alienation that produces a useful double-mindedness. (22)

Many other writers have romanticized the position of exile. Even though Edward Said described exile in "Reflections on Exile" as a "crippling and unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place"; he pointed out a romantic benefit of this condition when he argues, "If true exile is a condition of terminal loss, why has it been transformed so easily into a potent, even enriching motif of modern culture?" (173).

There are exiles who regard their condition as liberating and thus a necessary precondition to creativity or, at a lesser degree, working. Writers like James Baldwin, Halim Barakat or Ben Okri come to mind. Other exiles, Chris Abani included, believe that the condition of exile gives way to an exploration of a broadly international human identity free from the constraints of place as being either "ours" or "theirs". Other exiles treat their host locales with an almost angry reprisal that results in crises at the level of identity. These exiles see their condition as detrimental to their sense of themselves. Worth citing in this concern is Socrates who chose death over exile.

It should be stated that even with the plethora of books and authors examined so far, there is a much more generous number that had to be left out. The argument advanced in this work, however, pivots neither on an exhaustive catalogue of texts dealing with exile and related concepts nor upon a clearly demarcated set of texts, authors, and ideas that together make up the exile canon. Instead, this argument depends on a different methodological alternative whose concern is to facilitate a sociological understanding of exile both as a life condition and as a person. These are the notions that need to be covered now in more analytical detail throughout three exile narratives,

namely Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*, Mohja Kahf's *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*.

Chapter Two:

The Ethnicization of Exile in Cristina Garcia's

Dreaming in Cuban

Dreaming in Cuban (1992), Cristina Garcia's first acclaimed novel, offers a glimpse of three generations torn by the Cuban Revolution 1959. It highlights the sufferings of those exiles in the diaspora as well as those in Cuba and thus redefines the notion of exile. On the one hand, Cubans who left the homeland for the USA are torn between Cuba and America. On the other hand, those who stayed in Cuba are torn between pre-revolution and Post-revolution Cuba. While exiles' plight lies in spatial displacement, Cubans' plight is shown through historical estrangement that characterizes their exile as temporal.

This chapter seeks to analyze the way the experience of exile, be it existential or metaphorical, damages the self for some but helps to redefine the self for others. In this sense, *Dreaming in Cuban* may be read as a bridge between Cubans and Cuban Americans in the hope of reconciling the past with the present. Or to put it otherwise, the novel joins the experiences of those at home with those in the diaspora to shape a Cuban American extraterritorial nation faithful to the legacy of Cuban history. As it has been suggested in chapter one, this section of the work questions the notion of exile and explores its reconfigurations throughout the exiled characters of *Dreaming in Cuban*. Thus, the main problematic raised in this chapter is whether the state of exile contributes to the understanding of the self or complicates the maturation process and engenders an identity crisis. This interrogation is motivated by the fact that exile is synonymous with geographical displacement that forces the exile subject into an outsider position. It follows then that this outsider status either forges creativity by

rendering the exile subject an objective critical observer of his homeland, or it disables the exile subject by hindering his integration in a new location.

II.1. Miscellaneous Exiles in *Dreaming in Cuban*

Exile, as a theme and a trope, lies at the center of *Dreaming in Cuban*. It is the major force defining identity crises experienced by different characters in the novel. Exile is highlighted as the cause of separation as well as a major force driving to a state of reunion. The experience of exile in *Dreaming in Cuban* is not confined to those who left Cuba but also includes those who stayed in Cuba and experienced the tribulations of exile in their "unhomely" homeland. Thus, this section is dedicated to an analysis of the exilic experience of "outsiders", namely Pilar and her parents: Lourdes and Rufino, and then shifts to the more implicit exile experienced by those at home.

Garcia introduces the reader to the del Pino family and admirably depicts three generations of the family's life in both Cuba and the United States. Throughout the novel, the trope of exile is presented as a paradox. On the one hand, those in Cuba see those in the diaspora as exiles. On the other hand, those in the diaspora identify Cuba as an exiled island severed from the world.

In the wake of Castro's Cuban Revolution, Lourdes and Rufino Puente fled Cuba with their two years old daughter Pilar. The Puentes' journey represents the experience of hundreds of thousand Cubans who left Cuba between the first exodus of 1959 and the Mariel boatlift of 1980[34]. Unlike Pilar's parents who willfully self-exiled to flee the dictatorship of Castro, Pilar belongs to the "1.5 generaion" who had no control over their fate as exiles. Ruben Rumbault describes this generation as:

[34] While the first waves of migration were performed mostly by airlifts (1965-73), a switch happened in this migration pattern with the 1980 Mariel boat exodus in which 125,000 Cubans quitted the island. From that time on, many Cubans who have emigrated have done so using the insecure means of small boats or makeshift rafts known as *balsas*, and hence the term *balseros* to describe those Cubans who were using such means to leave Cuba.

> Children who were born abroad but are being educated and come of age in the United States from what may be called the '1.5' generation. These refugee youth must cope with two crises producing and identity defining transitions; (1) adolescence and the task of managing the transition from childhood to adulthood, and (2) acculturation and the task of managing the transition from one socio-cultural environment to another. The 'first' generation of their parents, who are fully part of the "old" world, face only the latter; the "second" generation of children now being born and reared in the United States, who as such become fully part of the "new" world, will need to confront only the former. But members of the "1.5" generation form a distinctive cohort that in many ways they are marginal to both the old and the new world, and are fully part of neither of them. (61)

Pilar is a prototype of this generation since she was born in Cuba and left it at the age of two. Showing her state of in-betweenness as a result of exile, she raises the interrogation at the beginning of the novel, "Even though I've been living in Brooklyn all my life, it doesn't feel like home to me. I'm not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out. If I could only see Abuela Celia again, I'd know where I belonged" (58). This feeling of belonging nowhere associated with the anguish of dismemberment brings the notion of dislocation to the fore. Although Pilar did not choose to self-exile, the state of exile has been forced on her directly by her parents and indirectly by Fidel Castro. It is clear that this lack of choice expresses a serious preoccupation for the "1.5 generation". In this sense, being hurled to exilic condition, the "one and halfers" remain skeptical over whether the decision to leave Cuba was well-grounded or whether it was incumbent on them to take such drastic action. Therefore, unlike her parents who willfully self-exiled

from Cuba, Pilar conceives of her state of exile as being foisted upon her by Fidel Castro and the Revolution he has orchestrated. Pilar indirectly expresses her hatred towards Fidel Castro and politicians who alter her fate throughout the histories they create when she states, “I resent the hell out of the politicians and the generals who force events on us that structure our lives, that dictate the memories we’ll have when we’re old” (138). For this particular reason and like many exiles who strive for a sense of identity by returning to the original homeland, Pilar decides to go back to Cuba and discover her real homeland. In fact, Pilar’s choice of going back to Cuba implies that she cannot feel at home in the United States and that she feels the same alienation as those Cuban exiles of the first generation.

Celia, the matriarch of the family, also experiences various forms of exile; albeit not related to physical displacement. Garcia chronicles significant events in Celia’s life beginning with her childhood, when she is exiled from her parents’ home following their divorce, and moving to her adulthood, when she is estranged from her husband Jorge and her children. In one of her letters to Gustavo, her Spanish lover, Celia further dramatizes her situation and expresses her wish for exile when she admits, “I wish I could live underwater. Maybe then my skin would absorb the sea’s consoling silence. I’m a prisoner on this island, Gustavo, and I cannot sleep” (49). In this passage, Celia conceives of her escape as a form of “osmosis in which she absorbs the therapeutic elements of the sea. Water becomes a symbol of departure and transparency as well as of healing and exile” (Shemak 7). Celia’s most acute form of exile is described shortly after Lourdes’ birth when Celia is institutionalized following a serious nervous breakdown. Celia’s institutionalization is her only form of escape from the mistreatment and abusive behavior of her step-mother Berta Arango del Pino and her sister-in-law Ofelia in the absence of her husband Jorge.

Another form of exile is shown through the character of Felicia, Celia's second daughter, who rejects the realities of the Cuban Revolution and is cast into a state of insanity much in the same way her mother did after the birth of her sister Lourdes. Shortly after Hugo infects Felicia with syphilis, the latter suffers from amnesia. In this case, the loss of memory is her only way to escape her present dis-eased life. Arousing from an episode of amnesia, Felicia finds herself in a room she had visibly adorned with history, with superannuated calendars, to conjure up the past and live in it. Felicia's exile is explained by her wish to go back to the past for "the experience of exile accentuates this desire for a return to the past" (Machado Sáez 131). In this sense, displacement is not only related to place but pertains also to notions of time. In *Questions of Travel*, Caren Kaplan notes in this concern, "When the past is displaced, often to another location, the modern subject must travel to it as it were" (Kaplan 35).

Recalling the ecclesiastical form of exile during the Middle Ages, Felicia further spiritually self-exiles from the decadent secular Cuban society by embracing the Afro-Cuban religion named Santeria. By so doing, Felicia seeks to purify herself from her infectious disease. In her quest for purification, Felicia sets her husband Hugo to fire[35] and drives him into a state of exile due to his terrifying physical appearance. Although Hugo is still living in Cuba, he is exiled from Cuban society since he is isolated and kept in quarantine because of the feeling of alienation arousing from his burned disfigured face throwing him into a frightening otherness.

Exile in *Dreaming in Cuban* is approached from two different points of view. On the one hand, Pilar and her parents are conceived as exiles in the United States. This conception is well-grounded both historically and literarily in Garcia's novel because

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[35] In *The Psychoanalysis of Fire*, Gaston Bachelard concurs that fire has a purifying effect throughout its "deodorizing action" and because it "separates substances and destroys material impurities". Fire is also purifying in the agricultural domain as Bachelard states, "There should doubtless be placed the agricultural fire, that which purifies the fields. This purification is truly conceived as going deep into the earth. Not only does the fire destroy the useless weed, but it enriches the soil" (103-4).

Pilar's family feels estrangement away from home. On the other hand, Cuba that has been severed from the rest of the world is also represented in terms of exile throughout the novel, and thus Cubans are also viewed as exiles. Pilar associates Cuba with isolation when she states, "Cuba is a peculiar exile, I think, an island-colony. We can reach it by a thirty minute charter flight from Miami, yet never reach it at all" (219). Celia similarly describes Cuba in terms of exile when she recalls her husband's meticulousness:

> What was it he read to her once? About how, long ago, the New World was attached to Europe and Africa? Yes, and the continents pulled away slowly, painfully after millions of years. The Americas were still inching westward and will eventually collide with Japan. Celia wonders if Cuba will be left behind, alone in the Caribbean Sea with its faulted and folded mountains, its conquests, its memories. (48)

This image of isolation raises the concerns that Cristina Garcia brings up in an interview with Iraida H. López with regard to "U.S. policy of continuing to isolate Cuba in a world where everybody else has been accepted and dealt with. Cuba continues to be ostracized in a way that makes no political or economic sense" (López 105). Conveniently, Elena Machado Sáez states in "The Global Baggage of Nostalgia in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*" that Cuba is isolated because the revolution has cut its ties with the world market and is thus not part of the global market (139). Similarly, Ruth Behar explains the shift in the American cartographic imagining of Cuba in the wake of the Revolution:

> Once upon a time, Cuba was such a common place of the United States' imagination that it was included in maps of Florida. After the Cuban Revolution in 1959 and Fidel Castro's declaration that Cuba would be

> resculpted a communist nation, the United States sent the island into exile. (1)

In fact, the image of “sending Cuba into exile” is well grounded if one takes into account the United States embargo against Cuba, described in Cuba as el *bloqueo*[36]. Thus, exile in *Dreaming in Cuban* is dealt with from both the insider’s viewpoint as well as the outsider’s one in a non-judgmental narrative to provide the reader with an objective account of the Cuban Revolution and the way it greatly impacts on the lives of generations of Cubans as well as Cuban Americans.

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[36] For nearly half a century the United States has unilaterally imposed an economic, commercial and financial blockade against Cuba. In an article issued in September 2009, Amnesty International describes the U.S. embargo on Cuba as follows, “The USA imposed the first economic sanctions against Cuba in 1960 by completely stopping sugar cane imports from Cuba. This was in response to Cuba’s nationalization of foreign property and businesses, the majority owned by US nationals. Since then, the US government has consolidated and extended the scope of the sanctions against Cuba. The original trade embargo has broadened into a more comprehensive set of economic, financial and commercial sanctions which rest principally on the following statutes and regulations: Trading With the Enemy Act of 1917, section 5(b); Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, section 620(a); Cuba Assets Control Regulations of 1963; Cuban Democracy Act of 1992, also known as the Torricelli Act; Cuban Liberty and Democratic Solidarity (Libertad) Act of 1996, (Helms-Burton Act); The Trade Sanctions Reform and Export Enhancement Act of 2000” (“The US Embargo on Cuba: its Impact on Economic and Social Rights”, *Amnesty International Publications*, September 2009, 7).

II.2. The Discourse of Nostalgia in *Dreaming in Cuban*

Many characters are affected by nostalgia in *Dreaming in Cuban*, although for different losses. The narrative involves not only personal but cultural dimensions of nostalgia for the loss of self, the loss of the past, or the loss of a culture.

For Pilar, Cuba represents the geographical equivalent of memory – the place where the past is housed and from which it continues to exert its complex influence. Pilar's nostalgia lies in her longing for her past. Being cut off her birthplace Cuba, Pilar is not privy to the history of Cuba, albeit through the few stories her father narrates to her from time to time. Pilar's longing for the past in *Dreaming in Cuban* is explained by her deduction that the past is partially, if not wholly, responsible for her deplorable present-day experience as a Cuban being raised in New York City. Pilar feels nostalgia for Cuba since her knowledge of her birthplace is rudimentary and causes nuances with regard to her sense of belonging as she tells the reader, "But every once in a while a wave of longing will hit me and it's all I can do not to hijack a plane to Havana or something" (137-8). The ambiguity surrounding Pilar's sense of belonging is the cause justifying her nostalgia for the past. Pilar expresses her dilemma in these words, "Even though I've been living in Brooklyn all my life, it doesn't feel like home to me. I'm not sure Cuba is, but I want to find out" (58).

The absence of an episode of one's existence or the inability to reach it, in this case one's past, calls into question a nostalgic discourse vis-à-vis the past. Pilar's journey back to Cuba, here representative of the past, is thus a consequence of nostalgia. Worth citing at this level is that Pilar was incapable of finding a sense of home in terms of place. Gustavo Pérez Firmat's use of metaphor in *Next Year in Cuba* to explain losses pertaining to exile is relevant to the understanding of Pilar's nostalgia for the past that substitutes her nostalgia for place:

> Refugees are amputees. Someone who goes into exile abandons not just possessions but part of himself. This is true especially of children, who leave before achieving a durable, portable identity. Just as people who lose a limb sometimes continue to ache or tingle in the missing calf or hand, the exile suffers the absence of the self he left behind. (7)

The question that may be raised at this level is the following: what is there in the past that Pilar is looking for since she claims, “Shit, I’m only twenty-one years old. How can I be nostalgic for my youth?” (198)? Since *Dreaming in Cuban* deals with the sense of dislocation and fragmentation at the level of identity, Pilar’s nostalgia is best viewed as a quest for roots and connection. Therefore, her return to Cuba, or as Michiko Kakutani calls it, “the childhood garden she’s been exiled from”[37] symbolizes the bridge she wants to build between her present and her past. All Pilar is looking for throughout her wish to return to Cuba are family ties that would assist her in defining her identity. For this particular reason she wishes she “could only see Abuela Celia again” (58) for this will help her “know where (she) belonged” (58). As a result, nostalgia “serves as the route Pilar travels in order to recover her family memories as well as a sense of her own identity and space of belonging” (Machado Sáez 131).

While Pilar’s nostalgia is related to place i.e., her birthplace, Celia’s nostalgia is for a time past, for pre-Revolution times when Cuba was an island-colony of the United States. Celia’s letters to Gustavo, full of recollections and remembrances, are all written before the Revolution and help the reader learn about the family’s background. In one of these letters, Celia describes Cuba as “a place where everything and everyone is for sale” (140). In the previous section, Celia’s portrayal of Cuba as an exile has been stressed, yet her description is preceded by her wish for the reintegration of Cuba into

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[37] Cf. Michiko Kakutani, “The Dreams and Yearnings of a Family of Exiles”, Rev. of *Dreaming in Cuban*, by Cristina Garcia, *New York Times* 25 February 1992: C17.

the global market via the processing of sugarcane, "She pictures three-hundred-pound sacks of refined sugar deep in the hulls of ships. People in Mexico and Russia and Poland will spoon out her sugar for coffee, or to bake in their birthday cakes. And Cuba will grow prosperous" (45).

Although Celia's nostalgia here is for the future[38], this scene represents Pre-revolutionary Cuba when the island was a site of American tourism and commerce. Thus, one can agree with Elena Machado Sáez when she concurs that, "The narrative's nostalgic look backwards into the past is particularly obsessed with the seductive presence of US commerce on the island" (140). Celia, for instance, reminisces about the past and recalls how:

> My girlfriends and I used to paint our mouths like American starlets, ruby red and heart-shaped. We bobbed our hair and wore cloche hats at coquettish angles and tried to sound like Gloria Swanson. We used to go to Cinelandia every Friday after work. I remember seeing *Mujeres de Fuego* with Bette Davis, Ann Dvorak, and Joan Blondell. (100; emphasis in original)

Furthermore, Cristina Garcia herself is nostalgic for Cuba and expresses her longing through her alter-ego Pilar[39]. Although a Cuban American ethnic writer rather than a Cuban exile, Cristina Garcia shares the nostalgia of those Cuban exiles living in the diaspora. In "(Re) Writing Sugar Cane Memories: Cuban Americans and Exile",

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[38] As Celia is a fervent adherent of the Castro regime, she could not express her nostalgia for Batista's Cuba; instead she redirects her nostalgia towards the future.

[39] Cristina Garcia does not agree with those who classified *Dreaming in Cuban* as an autobiography and prefers to categorize it as "emotionally autobiographical" when she answers López's question whether her novel is autobiographical, "Emotionally, it's very autobiographical. The details are not. I was not like Pilar at all growing up. I was very much a dutiful daughter. I never talked back to my mother… So Pilar is a kind of alter ego for me" (López 107).

Eliana Rivero explains her nostalgic discourse through the many references of sugarcane:

> In the nostalgic discourse of Cuban writers residing in the United States … the presence of palm trees and sugar cane is a constant … It can be said that the words sugar and sugar canes, and the images created by them, are metaphors for the essence of what it means to be Cuban … In the works of Cuban authors, then, and in those by younger Cubans in transition, "writing sugarcane memories" is an image that figuratively represents the re-creation of mother country motifs in a subtle form of nostalgic discourse. (175)

In this sense, not only Celia is nostalgic as she ardently dreams of the prosperity of Cuba due to sugarcane processing, but Lourdes is more so. Although trying hard to emulate Americans in the hope of being assimilated in American mainstream, Lourdes is subconsciously nostalgic for *la Cuba de ayer*. Throughout her bakery, Lourdes recreates in microcosm Fulgencio Batista's regime characterized as abusive[40]. Much in the same way people believe Batista did, Lourdes betrays her own people by selling out to American appetites. Throughout her bakery, Lourdes provides her white collar clients; most of whom are "judges and lawyers from the courts [and] executives from Brooklyn Union Gas" (139), with desserts, sweets and pastries. Lourdes' abundant consumption of sugar is what Andrea O'Reilly Herrera views as "unnecessary indulgences made with quantities of sugar" (84)[41], while her own compatriots are enduring life-threatening food shortages because of the American embargo on Cuba's biggest export crop i.e., sugar. Following this line of thought, the

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[40] Though Fulgencio Batista made much advancement in Cuba's infrastructure, it is widely believed that he allowed foreign investors, like Irénée de Pont mentioned in the novel, who enjoyed significantly vested interests in Cuba, to rule Cuba's economic life both in terms of natural resources and property.

[41] For more details on the comparison between Batista's Cuba and Lourdes' bakery, see Andrea O'Reilly Herrera, "Women and the Revolution in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*", pp. 83-4.

narrator of *Dreaming in Cuban* tells us that, "Each strawberry shortcake [is] a reminder of the ongoing shortages in Cuba" (117). Thus, Lourdes' indulgent consumption of sugar at the bakery prompts memories of sugarcane and nostalgia for Cuba.

Lourdes' nostalgia for Cuba is also manifested throughout her eating disorders. Upon her father's arrival in New York for medical treatments, Lourdes became an excessive consumer, in the form of eating and sex. This excessive consumption reflects both the disorder and instability in Lourdes' life caused by her relocation in the USA. In fact, Lourdes can be classified into what Homi Bhabha calls the "unhomed", those who have experienced the shock of being severed from all that is familiar and being relocated in an alien place[42]. Although Lourdes considers herself fortunate because "immigration has redefined her, and she is grateful" (73), Pilar, while trying to find out the causes of her mother's eating disorder, deduces, "I think that migration scrambles the appetite" (173).

Lourdes' refusal to eat is an eventual result of the loss of her father. In this sense, the only person throughout whom she felt her Cubanness disappears with all the valuable paraphernalia that used to remind her of Cuba, particularly his cigars. Lourdes' longing for Cuba is visibly clear after her father's death. When seriously affected by her hallucinogenic nostalgia, Lourdes claims that she continues to communicate with her father when she tells Rufino, "He's back. He spoke to me tonight when I was walking home from the bakery. I heard Papi's voice. I smelled his cigar. The street was empty, I swear it" (65). In fact, such hallucinatory moments were substantial for Lourdes because her olfactory nostalgia is satiated by the smell of the Cuban cigar and her auditory nostalgia is satiated by her father's voice.

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[42] For Homi Bhabha the unhomely "captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world in an unhallowed place. To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the "unhomely" be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and the public spheres" ("The World and the Home" 141).

Although seemingly Americanized and satisfied with her new way of life as an American citizen, Lourdes is very nostalgic for Cuba, in this case her fatherland rather than motherland, because she fails to conceive her homeland through matrilineal lenses. Therefore, it can be argued that Lourdes' declared nostalgia is eclipsed by her fragmented relationship with her mother Celia. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, all matrilineal relations are fragmentary. Felicia and Lourdes, for instance, strive to unravel their complicated relationships with their daughters as well as with their mother Celia[43]. Conveniently, because her source of identifying with Cubanness, i.e., her father, is ambulatory, Lourdes does not experience the same prompt nostalgia as the other characters such as Rufino who, Pilar thinks, "feels kind of lost here in Brooklyn … Dad only looks alive when he talks about the past, about Cuba" (138).

Lourdes' nostalgia is belated due to her abandonment of the past she lived in Cuba. Not only has Lourdes abandoned her past, but she also severed her ties with members of her family in Cuba. Using Eva Hoffman's words, Lourdes belongs to those people who "decide to abandon the past, never to look back" (52). Following this logic, Lourdes' existence prior to her arrival in the United States has been metaphorically effaced by her father's electric brooms (an appliance that recalls the oftentimes invoked image of the vacuum cleaner). Jorge succeeded in distorting the mother-daughter dyad and creating a feeling of estrangement between Lourdes and her mother Celia that eased and hastened Lourdes' adaptation to the American way of life. Like her father, Lourdes upholds the ideals of an American work ethic and hence ideologically belongs to her

[43] In *Dreaming in Cuban*, daughters are more attached to their fathers and sons are more so to their mothers. Felicia's daughters, for instance, feel more affection for their father Hugo, while Ivanito is more attached to his mother Felicia. Celia's daughters are more affectionately related to Jorge del Pino while their brother Javier is more attached to Celia. Rocio Davis argues, "The positive emphasis on the father-daughter and mother-son relationship, as opposed to the problematic mother-daughter one, may also have its roots in Spanish/ Cuban culture. Sons tend to be revered over daughters in these families, and Garcia blends this customary dynamic in her text to complicate the central issue further" (64).

father. In the final analysis, Lourdes begins recording her past following her father's death and all she can be nostalgic for is her father and "the Cuba" he represented.

Nostalgia in *Dreaming in Cuban* is expressed through many characters and for many "Cubas": *la Cuba de ayer*, the Cuba of Batista, the Cuba of sugarcane plantations, and Cuba the island with all its geographical riches.

II.3. Language Loss

The thematic issue and portrayal of language loss in *Dreaming in Cuban* is legitimate since it is the biggest sacrifice exiles, immigrants and displaced people make as soon as they are transplanted into a new culture. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, language loss is portrayed as a confusion that exacerbates exiles' feeling of alienation, or more exactly, hyphenation.

The loss incurred by exile is evidently manifested through the metaphor of language loss. Pilar Puente, a member of the third generation is chosen by Cristina Garcia to reflect on the issue of language loss. Celia tells the reader that her grandchild Pilar writes to her "in a Spanish that is no longer hers. She speaks the hard edged lexicon of bygone tourists itchy to throw dice on green felt or asphalt" (7). Pilar herself conceives of her language loss as a plight when she admits, "I envy my mother her Spanish curses sometimes. They make my English collapse in a heap" (59). Therefore, Pilar reveals throughout her reflections on language that one of the most important losses incurred by exile is the loss of one's mother language. In the same vein, Pilar further thinks, "English seems an impossible language for intimacy" (180), that is why she and her boyfriend Rubén favor Spanish language when they make love.

Spoken language seems to fail Pilar, Celia as well as other characters in *Dreaming in Cuban* causing them further turmoil. For this particular reason, characters

try to find alternative modes of expression other than the linguistic variable that is, according to them, fraught with handicaps.

Pilar and her grandmother Celia, for instance, communicate not through spoken language but through what Suzanne Leonard called "a semiotics of image" (194). In retrospect, Pilar's saga demonstrates a continual movement back to Cuba and reunion with Celia throughout dreamwork and telepathic communication with the latter. This might be viewed as a kind of modus operandi responsible for Pilar's idealization of Cuba. Pilar describes one dream, for instance, in which she is on a throne and is lifted up by the people who walk with her toward the sea. Pilar explains that those people "are chanting a language I don't understand. I don't feel scared, though. I can see the stars and the sky and the moon and the black sky revolving overhead. I can see my grandmother's face" (34). The fact that Celia appears in Pilar's dream indicates that the two communicate better through a pictographic order rather than through a verbal or linguistic mode of signification. Although Pilar cannot decipher the chanted language she hears, she recognizes her verbally expressionless grandmother, which suggests, "In the dream space the potential for pictographic communication is privileged over oral or spoken forms" (Leonard 194).

In this sense, language loss or its dysfunctional aspect explains characters' choice of other modes of communication or as Irene Brameshuber-Ziegler writes, the images "witness the insufficiency of regular language" (54). By its very ethereal nature, dreaming has the potential to transcend the space between Cuba and the United States that sets Celia and Pilar apart, and allows them to connect with each other despite the geographical distance. Repeatedly, images are the most resonant and efficient mode of communication between Pilar and Celia. Pilar reveals in another scene, "I have this image of Abuela Celia underwater, standing on a reef with tiny chrome fish darting by

her face like flashes of light. Her hair is waving in the tide and her eyes are wide open. She calls to me but I can't hear her. Is she talking to me from her dreams?" (220).

Such shared moments of imagery are necessary for both characters who strive to combat the collapse of communication through linguistic modes. Once and again, the inefficiency of language into conveying messages is stressed throughout this passage that highlights how Pilar definitely fails to hear her grandmother but identifies her vivid face. In this particular sense, the inability to communicate through language renders the latter a motif of severance rather than connection. Although Pilar expresses her preference for the Spanish language that is part of her past and thus of herself, she has grown up speaking in English. Her skepticism over which language best dovetail with, and in the process, satiate her thirst to shape a stable identity continues until the end of the novel when back in Cuba she starts dreaming in Spanish. Pilar reveals, "I have begun dreaming in Spanish which has never happened before. I wake up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible. There's a magic here working its way through my veins" (235). In this sense, Pilar's rediscovery of the Spanish language enables her to generate an indispensible link with her past.

Similarly, Celia conceives of her relationship with Pilar in imagistic terms that help both characters bridge the gap caused by the second generation. Celia "closes her eyes and speaks to her granddaughter, imagines her words as slivers of light piercing the murky night" (7). Celia's statement sheds light on the challenge posed by dream-work and telepathy to defy language handicaps altogether with the physical and geographical separations they might entail.

In fact, the novel locates the global market as a space dominated by the English language as a *lingua franca*. Following this line of understanding, achievement and

prosperity require learning English and leaving Cuba behind. Thus, it is no surprise that when Celia drowns herself at the end of the novel, she recites a Lorca poem[44] using English for the first time in the novel. Previously in the novel, Celia recites poetry in italicized Spanish with no translation[45]. Garcia's literary translation of Lorca's poem from Spanish into English at the moment of Celia's death gives a hint about Cuba's pessimistic future. It, furthermore, adds one more exile to the Puente family i.e., Celia who willingly alienates herself from Cuba and linguistically self-exiles into the global world dominated by the English language. Celia's choice of a new "linguistic home" for Lorca's poem equals, albeit partially, Cristina Garcia's choice of a new linguistic home for Cuban culture and Cubanness. Critics such as Valenzuela classify *Dreaming in Cuban* as inauthentic because Cuban culture is not expressed throughout its original language: Spanish,

> *Sus trabajos terminan regresando al castellano… Bless Me, Última, la gran novela chicana de Rudolfo Anaya… está siendo traducida estos días a la lengua de Cervantes, vuelve a su hogar cultural.*
>
> [Their works end up returning to Castellano … Bless Me, Última, Rudolfo Anaya's great chicano novel … is being translated these days to the language of Cervantes. It is returning to its cultural home]. (Qtd in and Trans. Ween 133)

Although valenzuela's statement concerning the authenticity of texts may be well-grounded, one would not completely agree with the classification of *Dreaming in Cuban* as inauthentic. This is mainly because the novel as text blends the two languages in the hope of reporting exile as a world experience and not only a Cuban one. Thus,

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[44] Federico del Sagrado Corzón de Jesús Garcia Lorca (1898- 1936) was a Spanish poet, dramatist and theatre director, he achieved international recognition and fame as a member of the "Generation of 27".

[45] See, for instance, Celia's recitation of poetry upon the return of her son Javier, his sickness and then eventual death (*Dreaming in Cuban* 156-57).

Cristina Garcia may be in line with Chris Abani who opines that the experience of exile allows writers and novelists in particular “to explore an international/ human identity”. Henceforth, Cristina Garcia’s use of the English language as an original language for *Dreaming in Cuban* does not necessarily exile Cuban culture into the English language. However, it allows for the ethnicization and internationalization of the theme of exile, an issue that will be discussed later in this chapter.

Moreover, the theme of language loss is portrayed in an equivocal narrative. Understandably, it is suggested in this work that *Dreaming in Cuban* cannot be synonymous with dreaming in Spanish for a variety of reasons. First, Spanish is but a part of Cuban heritage and hence Pilar’s dream-work is more of a cultural process than a linguistic one. Second, although English is the language that reminds Cubans of “the Platt Amendment, of the way the Americans have interfered in our affairs from the very beginning” (207), Celia explains in one of her letters to Gustavo, Spanish is more so. Spanish is also the language of an old colonizer. Thus, Garcia blends the two languages in one richly linguistic narrative reflecting on both influences on Cuban culture: the Spanish and American ones. *Dreaming in Cuban* is not a result of being able to dream in Spanish only, but refers also to the ability to exhume the past and moor it to the present.

Similarly to Celia, Ivanito, Felicia’s son, links success with the English language and confirms his position by learning English, “I pick up radio stations in Key West. I’m learning more English this way but it’s a lot different from Abuelo Jorge’s grammar books. If I’m lucky, I can tune in the Wolfman Jack show on Sunday nights. Sometimes I want to be like the Wolfman and talk to a million of people at once” (191).

Ivanito’s wish to be able to speak to a million people at once like Jack Wolfman indicates and explains his eagerness to learn the English language that

provides him with the opportunity of speaking to the mass of people given its international aspect. Moreover, Ivanito pairs the Wolfman's radio show success with the use of English. In fact, Ivanito's latter wish is only achieved in the last section of the novel entitled "Languages Lost". It is at the Peruvian embassy, en route to beginning his new life in exile, that Ivanito shouts, "Crraaaazzzzy!" and finds himself "talking to a million people at once" (241). Following this line of understanding, when the occasion is provided to Ivanito to speak to a crowd he favors English over Spanish, a choice explaining his language loss and stressing the advantages of English especially in communicating worldwide.

Language loss in *Dreaming in Cuban* does not refer only to the loss of one's mother tongue but refers also to the way it cracks family bonds. Rocio G. Davis best put it when he explained, "When Garcia entitles the last section of her book "The Languages Lost", she refers to much more than just Spanish, widening the reference to include the breaking of familial bonds between Cubans living on the island and those residing abroad" (60). Thus, because of Language loss characters in *Dreaming in Cuban* turn to other modes of communication. Celia and Pilar, for instance communicate telepathically. Pilar explains how vital the process of telepathy is for her. It alleviates her sense of estrangement as a Cuban living in America and lacking first hand contact with Cuba; something Celia provides her with throughout their evening telepathic conversations. Pilar explains, "Abuela Celia and I write to each other sometimes, but mostly I hear her speaking to me at night just before I fall asleep. She tells me stories about her life and what the sea was like that day . . . . Abuela says she wants to see me again. She tells me she loves me" (28-29).

In Cuba, Celia "knows that Pilar keeps a diary in the lining of her winter coat, hidden from her mother's souring eyes… This pleases Celia. She closes her eyes and

speaks to her granddaughter, imagines her words as slivers of light piercing the murky night" (7). In this sense, telepathy is not the only means that helps Celia and Pilar surmount the hindrances brought about by the collapse of verbal communication. However, writing is also an outlet for both characters and is portrayed as an alternative mode of expression for the repressive verbal communication. Celia's haunted love affair with Gustavo, for example, is not narrated verbally but in an epistolary form that protects the secrecy of her love to Gustavo.

Thematically, Pilar's concern with losing the language of her motherland is evinced through her mania for painting that has become an idée fixe. Pilar finds that images convey meanings more efficiently than words do, as she believes:

> Painting is its own language, I wanted to tell him. Translations just confuse it, dilute it, like words going from Spanish to English … Who needs words when colors and lines conjure up their own language? That's what I want to do with my paintings, find a unique language, obliterate the clichés. (59, 139)

In fact, Pilar conveys her view about the USA to the reader not through her verbal communications but through her painting of the Statue of Liberty. Pilar's punk version of the Statue of Liberty is very expressive of her contempt for US policy towards immigrants and helps Pilar transcend the incapacitating verbal communication. It is for this particular reason that Pilar believes that "a paintbrush is better than a gun" (59).

Cristina Garcia successfully depicts how exiles are psychologically incapacitated by language loss and how the latter engenders an identity malaise manifested throughout the various diseases that affect the characters and destabilize their identity constructs.

II.4. Identity malaise and the Poetics of Disease

Altogether with language loss, disease represents identity crises in *Dreaming in Cuban*. The novel reveals dis-eased and disabled bodies relocated in new "homes" and inextricably intertwined with memories and national histories. These diseased beings, Shemak states, "enable ancestral connections to stretch beyond strained emotional and political borders by assuming the characteristics of a rhizome" (1). Following Deleuze and Guattari[46], Caribbean scholar Edouard Glissant defines the rhizome as, "An enmeshed root system, a network spreading either in the ground or in the air, with no predatory rootstock taking over permanently" (11).

For Glissant, the rhizome is necessary for imagining the "submarine" connections that link Caribbean peoples, their histories and experiences, "Rhizomatic thought is the principle behind what I call the Poetics of Relation, in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other" (11). Thus, Glissant's "rhizomatic thought" explains how the past permeates and even shapes the present. In this section, a special attention will be given to the way the discourse of disease in *Dreaming in Cuban* calls for and justifies return to the past, in this case, conceived as a space of healing and remedy. Moreover, an examination of how *Dreaming in Cuban* displays disease and disability in such rhizomatic terms is provided. In so doing, this analysis highlights the dichotomized discourse surrounding the notion of belonging either to Cuba or the United States, or more exactly, living temporally in the present and abandoning the past or vice versa.

In fact, disability is common to all the characters in *Dreaming in Cuban* and thus reflects a collective if not a national trauma. Not only the characters suffer from

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[46] In *Milles Plateaux,* Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari define the rhizome as follows : « Un rhizome comme tige souterraine se distingue absolument des racines et radicelles. Les bulbes, les tubercules sont des rhizomes. Des plantes à racines ou radicelles peuvent être rhizomorphes … Des animaux même le sont, sous leur formes de meute, les rats sont des rhizomes. Les terriers le sont, sous toutes leurs fonctions d'habitat, de provision, de déplacement, d'esquive et de rupture » (13).

disability, with its various forms, but Cuba also does. Cuba is affected by communism that severs the island from the rest of the world and disables it economically.

Like communism that is seen as an economic infection that should be contained, Castro is described as "a complete hysteric with a messianic complex, if not a manic depressive" (Pérez 230). Similarly, Capitalism is also conceived as a disease by communists. Fidel Castro, for instance, stated, "Perhaps, of the evils brought about by developed capitalism none is so nefarious as the way of life and consumerist habits" (Qtd. in De Salas-del Valle).

The character that best exhibits Castro's view of capitalist evils is Lourdes who unabashedly emulates the typical American consumerist habits. Lourdes experiences both extremes of eating disorders. She first deals with the trauma she suffered as a victim of rape at the hands of Castro's soldiers and then with the incurable disease and eventual death of her father, through first bulimia then later anorexia. Partly, Lourdes' insatiability reflects Castro's vision of the devilish aspect of capitalism:

> Garcia suggests that despite its participation, and dominance, in the global marketplace, the U.S. is no more sustaining than Cuba. That Lourdes never manages to get "filled up" no matter how much she consumes symbolizes a political system marked by perpetual deficiency, despite the continuous consumption on the part of its citizenry. (Shemak 16)

Garcia matches Lourdes' change in appetite with instability in sexual appetite as well when the narrator tells us, "The more she took her father to the hospital for cobalt treatment, the more she reached for the pecan sticky buns and for Rufino" (20). Similarly, when Lourdes stops eating, she stops having sexual intercourse with her husband. Lourdes experiences diametrical opposites of eating disorder. During Jorge's

illness, Lourdes excessively devotes herself to consumption in order to fill the void that the separation from her mother and motherland has caused and that the probable death of her father surely will. Her insatiable appetite, however, is supplanted by anorexia nervosa when her father dies as the narrator recounts, “The smell of food repels her. She can’t even look at it without her mouth filling with the acrid saliva that precedes vomiting” (169). Thus, Lourdes’ eating disorders, in part, reflect her hybrid countenance as she experiences the hunger and starvation of Cuban people and the excesses of Americans. Elizabeth Carten states in this regard, “The extreme to which Lourdes experiences both ends of the disorders and the symptoms that accompany them signal Garcia’s use of Lourdes’ affliction as a means to critique a larger cultural phenomena of excess and extremes”

Lourdes’ excessive consumption in the form of eating and sex can be viewed as a kind of nourishment that she lacks and that the ailing presence of her father cannot satisfy. Lourdes’ suicidal refusal to eat, on the other hand, may be viewed as a willful euthanasia caused by the loss of the last and only familiar tie i.e., her father. Lourdes’ eating disorders may be viewed as symptoms of an identity crisis. Lourdes first strives to fill her inner emptiness created by the separation from her mother and motherland with overeating. For Lourdes, compulsive eating becomes a means to transform her body as “the flesh amassed rapidly on her hips and buttocks, muting the angles of her bones. It collected on her thighs, fusing them above the knees. It hung from her arms like hammocks” (20). By overeating, Lourdes longs for newness that she succeeds to carve out both at the physical and the ideological levels by severing herself from all that is Cuban. In this sense, instead of a poetics of relation “in which each and every identity is extended through a relationship with the Other”, Lourdes demonizes communist

Cuba, through her emulation of the American character, and refuses to reestablish links between Cuba and America and between her past and present[47].

However, Lourdes' abandonment of Cuba and the past disables her and foments within her a feeling of an amputee who has to live with organic deficiency. This feeling is later translated by her excessive diet that may be considered as the first step back towards the past aiming at reconciliation between the past and the present. By refusing to eat, Lourdes revives images of the past when "she was a skinny child . . . . [When] even on the day before her wedding, the seamstresses took in her bodice, begging her to eat and fill out her gown" (20, 21). Lourdes' later willful starvation parallels Cubans' one and thus Lourdes reestablishes the link between Cubans and Cuban Americans throughout the primary feeling of empathy. These paradoxical experiences create dilemma for Lourdes as to whether she belongs in the USA or in Cuba and thus result in an identity malaise best manifested by her instable changing appetite.

No matter how Lourdes strives to Americanize herself and abandon her Cuban heritage, Garcia's rehearsal of the association of Lourdes with the *Orisha Ochún*[48] proves that Lourdes cannot get rid of her Cubanness. This is explained by the association of *Ochún* with the *Virgen de la Caridad del Cobre* (Virgin of Charity of *el Cobre*) that is the patroness of Cuba[49]. At the level of onomastics, neither Lourdes not

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[47] Lourdes' assimilation into American mainstream is not only a linguistic one but is also ideological because she not only speaks English but adopts the American consumerist capitalist ideology as well. Lourdes' assimilation has gone so far as to disrupt her culinary attachment to Cuba as Pilar notes, "Mom makes food only people in Ohio eat, like Jell-O molds with miniature marshmallows or recipes she clips from Family Circle … Like this is it? we're living the American dream?" (137). Moreover, Lourdes unabashedly reveres the American flag as she "ordered custom-made signs for her bakeries in red, white and blue" (170).

[48] In Cuban Santeria, *Ochún* (also written *Ósun* in Yoruba and *Oshun* in *Orisha*) is the youngest and most beautiful of the female *Orisha*. Lourdes symbolizes the *Orisha Ochún* in many ways. One instance of this is when the owner of the *botànica* shop calls Pilar "a daughter of Changó" (200). The latter, another *Orisha*, is believed to be the sexual partner of *Ochún*.

[49] In Santeria, the town of El Cobre where the statue of the Virgin of charity (the Virgin Mary) lies is identified with Ochún, the powerful goddess of rivers and womanly love. For more details on the

the other Puente family members can uproot themselves and fully assimilate into American mainstream, their names are powerful reminders of their Cuban origin.

The escape, or voluntary exile, of the Puente family in *Dreaming in Cuban* is propelled by the inability of the Cuban motherland to nourish its citizens. This idea is best portrayed through the mastectomy of Celia who functions, on one level, as a kind of personification of Cuba. Andrea O'Reilly Herrera explains in this concern that Celia's removal of the maternal breast, a source of human nourishment, sheds light on both the physical deprivation of the Cuban people as a consequence of food shortages[50] and "the maiming of Cuba as mother country" (86). The image of Cuba as incapable to cater for its citizens' needs results into the escape of its inhabitants who, in this case, cannot be indicted for Cuba's economic plight.

While Lourdes' consumerist habits manifest U.S. economic ideology as an infectious one, Jorge's stomach cancer can be read as a manifestation of having lived under what Lourdes and Jorge see as the corruption and infection of communist Cuba. Pilar, for instance, explains, "Mom says 'communist' the way some people say 'cancer' low and fierce" (26). Jorge's mimicry of the American ideals manifests through his war on germs which he thinks spread in the tropical Cuban climate. For Jorge, the very word *microbios* "lit a fire in his eyes. "They are the enemy!" he used to bellow. "Culprits of tropical squalor!"" (20-21). Shemak argues that the way Jorge combats germs "signals his efforts to control and order his family's physical interactions with the tropical environment and the Cuban system" (17).

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significance of Ochún in Cuban Santeria see Mary Ann Clark, *Santeria: Correcting the Myths and Uncovering the Realities of a Growing Religion*, Praeger Publishers, USA, 2007, pp. 45-52.

[50] Andrea O'Reilley Herrera further explains that the image of milk as a source of human nourishment and the thirst of Cuban people for such nourishment is "a metonym that appears again and again throughout the novel and implicates both the first and second generations of the del Pino family. For example, Lourdes' rape occurs while her husband, Rufino, is in Havana ordering a cow-milking machine for the Puentes' dairy farm, which is confiscated (lost) in accordance with the Agrarian Reform Bill (1959); and in a parallel scene, the muggers in Morningside Park, who hold Pilar at knife-point, abuse the latter by fondling and suckling her breasts. In the same vein, Jorge is hit by a milk truck on his work route as he peddles American goods" (86-87).

Jorge's war on germs[51] and the advice he gives to Lourdes in one of her father's imagined visits "you must stop the cancer at your front door" (171) parallel the U.S government's strife to "contain" those "Cuban" diseases that menaced national, economic as well as political boundaries like the yellow fever in the 1900's[52]. Following this line of understanding, it is no surprise that Jorge turns for an American biomedical treatment. The New York hospital where Jorge follows cobalt radiation treatment stands for his view of a world that must extirpate the communist contamination. Similarly, while dieting Lourdes ingests a bluish liquid that equals her father's cobalt radiation treatments or as the narrator describes it, "a bluish fluid that comes in tubes like astronaut food. It tastes of chemicals" (170). However, the incongruity of radiation therapy lies in the fact that although it aims at killing cancerous cells, it kills good ones too. Thus, this very irony of radiation therapy suggests that, "Lourdes' and Jorge's attempts to inoculate themselves from communism can only be accomplished by denying themselves connections to their family members still tied to Cuba" (Shemak 18).

Despite the many symbolisms referring to Jorge's ideological allegiance to American capitalism, he does not seem to condone its disadvantages. Preceding his death, Jorge's excretions of his ailing body fragment his mirage of an efficacious and hygienic American medical structure. During his treatment, Lourdes remembers how "her father despaired at incompetences and breakdowns in procedures … Once a nurse inserted a suppository to loosen his bowels and did not return, although he cramped his

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[51] In the novel, Jorge, for instance, taught Lourdes, "Felicia and their younger brother, Javier, how to scrape under their nails with miniature scrubbers, how to let the hot water run over their hands for a slow, thirty-second count, how to dry between their fingers with towels boiled in bleach so the germs could not breed in the damp crevices" (22).

[52] Historian Nancy Stepan discusses the US yellow fever commission (1900) that investigated the transmission of yellow fever by mosquitoes in Cuba. She points out, "Both the imperial rationale and the north American military presence were threatened [by the disease]. These economic and political factors transformed yellow fever from a low priority disease to one of the highest priority" (151-2).

finger ringing the buzzer, until after he had soiled his pajamas" (22). While Jorge disapproves of "tropical squalor", his ideological allegiance to U.S capitalism is ultimately eclipsed by his humiliation following his incapacity to maintain his hygienic borders in North America. This state of paralysis overwhelms Jorge and "ultimately symbolizes the difficulty of drawing distinct allegiances along national and ideological borders" (Shemak 17).

The impossibility for Cuban exiles to dissociate themselves from their motherland is depicted through the mother-child relationship. For women in *Dreaming in Cuban*, the in-utero and post-natal liaison between mother and child represents a poetics of disease as well as relation. Significantly, pregnancy is a condition that requires the health of interdependent bodies but also raises interrogations about health and disease because the in-utero mother-child connection suggests the potential for passing on illness and thus solidifies the mother-child bond. Celia, for instance, imagines her pregnant body as a vector of disease and imagines her "venom" passing on to Lourdes. It is especially because "the baby is porous" that it makes her vulnerable to contagion (50).

Similarly, Ivanito is Felicia's only child who maintains a solid bond with his mother. When Felicia spends one summer making and eating coconut ice creams, believing "the coconuts will purify them, that the sweet white milk will heal them" (85), Ivanito is the only one, among her three children, to share in this decontamination. In this particular case, the poetics of disease explain the poetics of relation. This is because Ivanito's participation in the disinfection process is explained throughout a poetics of disease since it is during her pregnancy with Ivanito that Felicia became infected with syphilis. Therefore, Felicia's disease is an embodiment of a symbolic connection that strongly binds Ivanito to his mother so that when Felicia believes her mother intends to

poison her with the food she brings, Ivanito also balks at eating it for fear of "betray[ing] his mother" (87).

Symbolically, the disabled mother figure in *Dreaming in Cuban* represents the disabled motherland in that both fail to nurture their children / citizens and both pass on diseases to them in such a way that the mother-child and by extension motherland-citizens relationships become increasingly interdependent. This is why, in part, one way to combat skepticism over matters of belonging includes revisiting dis-eased mother-child and motherland-citizen relationships so that disease is not always enfeebling but can be viewed as an ontological necessity.

II.5. Art, History and the Formation of Identity

This section seeks to highlight the significance of music, painting and family stories in shaping the identity of the protagonist of *Dreaming in Cuban*. Indeed, the emphasis put on these three elements is grounded in the way the latter helped Pilar discover her identity and does neither underplay nor neutralize the role of other basic elements in the shaping of her identity.

Pilar's longing for roots is demonstrated early in the novel throughout her first intended journey in Cuba to recover her past at the age of thirteen. Pilar expresses her longing as follows:

> My mind's made up. I'm going back to Cuba. I'm fed up with everything around here. I take all my money out of the bank, $ 120, money I earned saving away at my mother's bakery, and buy a one-way ticket to Miami. I figure if I can just get there, I'll be able to make my way to Cuba, maybe rent a boat or get a fisherman to take me. (25-26)

Although her initial attempt to leave New York for Cuba has been thwarted by her father's family in Miami, her strong desire to return to Cuba does not wane since she continues to believe that it is the only way she can attain wholeness and enjoy stability at the level of the self. Pilar's longing for Cuba is not motivated by her desire to embrace the Cuban culture but by her longing for an ancestral home that can inform her about her family history. In the same vein, M.S Vasquez notes in this concern, "Pilar feels a dominant pull not toward the surrounding majority culture but for her ancestral home, Cuba" (58). For this particular reason, Pilar always links her desire to go back to Cuba with her longing for her grandmother *Abuela* Celia. Following the above passage, Pilar enjoys imagining her grandmother's happiness when she sees her, "I imagine Abuela Celia's surprise as I sneak up behind her. She'll be sitting in her wicker swing overlooking the sea and she'll smell of salt and violet water… She'll stroke my cheek with her cool hands, sing quietly in my ear" (26).

Pilar's loss of personal history acts as a hindrance to her eventual understanding of her hybrid identity. She vainly turns to her family to inform her about the family's past as she states:

> It doesn't help that Mom refuses to talk about Abuela Celia. She gets annoyed every time I ask her and she shuts me up quickly, like I'm prying into top secret information. Dad is more open, but he can't tell me what I really want to know, like why Mom hardly speaks to Abuela Celia or why she still keeps her riding crops from Cuba . . . . (138)

However Pilar grapples to find answers that would satisfy her need for a past, she fails in her endeavor. The only thing she knows is that history has splintered her family. Thus, it is understandable that Pilar cannot piece together the episodes of history that have shaped her present-day reality in America. As such, Pilar can be viewed as an

epitome of the children of exiles whose lives in the United States are shaped by the tremendous burden history places on their parents' lives and theirs too. As the diasporic experience sever many of her familial as well as historical ties, Pilar sees herself forced, to some extent, to reconstruct her family history with the aim of getting at an understanding of her true self. Dara Goldman points to Pilar's longing for her ancestral home as a common theme in Cuban American literature. She further explains that recovering one's past stories is one way to enlighten one's search for identity. In this respect, Goldman asserts:

> … The pilgrimage to the Caribbean becomes a necessary coadjutor for the self-information of the protagonist. The island itself affords an essential element that presumably cannot be obtained beyond its borders, and the main character's search for identity therefore becomes an attempt to recover this missing element. That is, the displacement created through migration has engendered a loss that the principle character must overcome in order to achieve complete maturation. (414)

With this idea in mind, Cristina Garcia portrays remembrance as an important process in *Dreaming in Cuban* throughout which one can preserve ties with the past and define the present a posteriori. Moreover, Cristina Garcia scrutinizes the struggle inherent in the quest for Cuban identity and memory through the character of Pilar who muses, "Everyday Cuba fades a little more inside me. And there's only in my imagination where our history should be" (138). Without a proper account of her past, Pilar is completely uprooted. Following this line of understanding, it is no surprise that Pilar is loaded with the responsibility of remembering everything and that "Abuela Celia also decides to pass on the torch of knowledge and remembrance to her granddaughter Pilar" (Ochoa 117). In so doing, Pilar becomes the repository of the

family story as Celia writes to Gustavo “My granddaughter, Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today . . . . I will no longer write to you . . . . She will remember everything” (245). As a result, remembered or received memories are a kind of inheritance that is necessary in writing a family story.

Moreover, Garcia literarily highlights how the present is steeped in history and how the past seeps into the shaping of identity throughout her complex narrative that blends present with past, instead of presenting a chronological account. In fact, the novelist presents her narrative to the reader in a puzzled way inviting him to reassemble the sequence of events from the first story set in 1972 to the last fragment, a letter written by Celia to Gustavo in 1959. By so doing, Garcia emphasizes the vitality of the past in shaping the present[53]. The process of un-earthing family stories becomes, thus, an essential ingredient in the process of self-identification predicated upon the discovery of ancestral history and recovering the bond with the cultural heritage.

Characters’ tastes in music give hints about their attachments and attitudinal belonging. Lourdes, for instance, buys “a Jim Nabors album of patriotic songs in honor of the bicentennial” (136) in order to express her patriotic love for her new country: the USA. However, Pilar pokes fun at her mother’s choice of music as she believes, “After Vietnam and Watergate, who the hell wants to hear “the Battle Hymn of the Republic”?” (136). Pilar’s sarcastic remark on her mother’s choice of music highlights her feeling of embarrassment to belong to a country imbued with historical scandals.

Instead, Pilar prefers punk music and her predilection for such music reflects her disconnection and how being a child of exiles marginalizes her further. She feels a strong connection with Lou Reed. However, when attending one of his concerts with

[53] Rocio Davis notes in this respect, “Pilar’s process is highlighted by Garcia’s complex narrative. The author frequently juxtaposes present and past tense, blurring and confounding the two time frames: rather than presenting a chronological account, she invites the reader to reconstruct the sequence of events” (62).

her boyfriend Max, Pilar does not react to Reed's shout-out, "I'm from Brooklyn, man!" despite the fact that Brooklyn is her adopted hometown. Her sense of alienation is exacerbated when she claims, "I'm from Brooklyn, man!" Lou shouts and the crowd goes wild. I don't cheer, though. I wouldn't cheer either if Lou said, "Let's hear it for Cuba." Cuba. Planet Cuba. Where the hell is that?" (134). Furthermore, Pilar expresses her admiration for Lou Reed and claims, "Lou Reed has about twenty-five personalities. I like him because he sings about people no one else sings about – drug addicts, transvestites, the down and out . . ." (135). Pilar's documentation of her alienation is revealed through her identification with Reed's subjects: marginal identities and disembodied people in the dominant culture.

Pilar not only listens to Lou Reed but aligns herself with the punk movement by listening to Iggy Pop and the Ramones, music figures from the punk movement that shined in the mid-to-late 1970's. Pilar explains what she likes about these alternative musicians, "I love their energy, their violence … It's like an artistic form of assault. I try to translate what I hear into colors and volumes and lines that confront people, that say, 'Hey, we're here too and what we think matters!'" (135). Although Pilar's taste in music offers her no clear answers about who she really is, it is through the punk movement that she learns to identify with a segment of the American population: the disenfranchised and frustrated.

Although very symbolic of Pilar's communitarian belonging in the USA, the punk culture's opposition to the mainstream is portrayed as a gloomy mimicry of the original resistance movement. Pilar demystifies the role of the punk as a counterculture and about its ability to challenge deep-seated conventional norms[54]. She joins jam

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[54] Pilar's disillusionment with the punk's efficiency as a counterculture is a result of the commercialization of the commodified symbols of punk music and its eventual mainstreaming. "Pilar remarks on the difficulty of being oppositional without having those visual markers commodified,

sessions at Columbia University to play what she called "this punky fake jazz everyone's into" (198). In the same record store where she explains her disillusionment with the punk movement, Pilar buys an old Beny Moré album. By taking the role of consumer, Pilar embarks on the commodification of Cuban culture and establishes bonds with the Latino population (represented by Franco, the record store cashier). What might be controversial for Pilar is the fact that she cannot recuperate her sense of Cubanness because of globalization that causes a loss of any sense of nationalism. However, it is this same process of globalization that facilitates the circulation of Cuban music and culture as a commodity, and gives Pilar access to Cuba, albeit partially[55].

Pilar's predilection for the punk movement is not manifested only through her musical taste but through the painting she was commissioned to do to celebrate the opening of her mother's second bakery. Pilar's painting is rife with political symbolism. When the painting is uncovered, the audience sees a colossal Statue of Liberty with a safety pin through her nose, pygmy black insects flying around, thorny scars like barbed wire, and the punk slogan "I'M A MESS" across the bottom (141). Pilar outlines her process of painting:

> I stretch a twelve-by-eight-foot canvas and wash it with an iridescent blue gouache—like the irgin Mary's robes in gaudy church paintings. I want the background to glow, to look irradiated, nuked out [. . .]. When the paint dries, I start on Liberty herself. I do a perfect replication of her a bit left of center canvas, changing only two details: first, I make Liberty's torch float slightly beyond her grasp, and second, I paint her right hand

transformed into a market category used in car commercials, for instance, to reach a specific audience. It is not simply the visual aspects of these movements that have sold out, however; the cultural production, the music itself, loses its edge through mass marketing" (Machado Såez 133).

[55] Access to Cuba through commodities is emphasized in *Dreaming in Cuban*. Inside the *botánica*, for instance, Pilar finds markers of Hispanic-Caribbean culture in the guise of religious objects that are produced for the mass market such as "plastic plug-in Virgins" (199).

> reaching over to cover her left breast, as if she's reciting the National Anthem or some other slogan. The next day, the background still looks off to me, so I [. . .] paint black stick figures pulsing in the air around Liberty, thorny scars that look like barbed wire. I do what I feel, so at the base of the statue I put my favorite punk rallying cry: I'M A MESS. And then carefully, very carefully, I paint a safety pin through Liberty's nose. This I think, sums everything up very nicely. *SL-76*. That'll be my title. (141)

Pilar's punk and iconoclastic version of the Statue of Liberty not only desecrates one of the most important icons of the United States but also helps Pilar evince her strong rebellion against her mother's assimilation into American mainstream. Pilar's Statue of Liberty, entitled *SL-76* not only reflects Pilar's disdain for one of America's emblematic icons, but also discredits the Statue's message of "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to breathe free". By placing the torch of liberty just "out of reach", Pilar is referring to liberty being out of reach for immigrants and stresses her opinion by producing stick figures that appear as "thorny scars that look like barbed wire". Moreover, placing Lady Liberty left of center stands for Pilar's political leanings. Pilar's painting, thus, acts as a rejection of the emptiness of signifiers such as liberty and equality in the Statue of Liberty. The mural is particularly stimulating as it fragments the image of a welcoming motherland and replaces it with a myth of an inhospitable nation to Latino immigrants.

Pilar also identifies with the punk Lady Liberty she painted in that both are denied their identities, albeit for different reasons. The painting is also a successful step up in the process of identification since it shortens the distance between Pilar and the Hispanic community with whom she shares many experiences:

> Pilar's Lady Liberty, painted with barbed wire, speaks not of freedom but of sacrifice and suffering and even of imprisonment, concepts opposed to those she usually represents. Whereas in the past many European immigrants were welcomed to the United States, filling a rapidly developing economy's need for cheap labor, today's (Hispanic) immigrants have not been received with the same enthusiasm [. . .] Pilar's Lady Liberty is a prisoner of society and has in recent years been denied her true identity. (Luis 219)

The reversal of the image of the Statue of Liberty as welcoming into "Lady Liberty painted with barbed wires" displays Pilar's disillusionment with the image of the hospitality of American soil. It also shows that the Statue of Liberty does no more fulfill her task of welcoming immigrants; instead it presents an abject apology for the newcomers for not being able to welcome them as warmly as it used to do in the past. Indeed, tied as she is painted by Pilar, Lady Liberty is obstructive and represents the failure of America to keep up with the tradition of hospitality. Pilar's painting is also strikingly reminiscent of the work of Cuban artist Ana Mendieta who "was among the first exiles to renew bonds with her homeland and express in her art the pain of rupture that is so much a part of Cuban history" (Fusco 121). Mendieta states that her creative artwork has been a result of her homesickness:

> My exploration through my art of the relationship between myself and nature has been a clear result of my having been torn from my homeland during my adolescence. The making of my Silueta in nature keeps (makes) the transition between my homeland and my new home. It is a way of reclaiming my roots and becoming one with nature. Although the

> culture in which I live is part of me, my roots and cultural identity are a result of my Cuban heritage. (Qtd. in Ortega 25)

In this sense, art is a strong outlet of the repressed feelings of nostalgia for Cuba and at the same time allegiance to the United States. Paradoxical as they are, these feelings can only be depicted through painting. Throughout her artwork, Mendieta tries to draw a representative image of her state of in-betweenness. As a one and a halfer, she depicts how she can neither deny her Americanness nor her Cubanness and displays the necessity of claiming both roots as constituent ingredients of her identity. Conveniently, Pilar's painting can be likened to Mendieta's work in that both confront what Fusco calls "the manifold dimensions of the exile and the colonial and neocolonial violence that created our fractured identities as New World Hispanics" (121). Being deracinated from her homeland Cuba, like Mendieta throughout her *Siluetas Series*, Pilar portrays her homesickness and disability to draw clear boundaries of her home throughout her blasphemous painting[56]. Pilar travels to Cuba in order to rediscover her cultural origins much in the same way Mendieta does[57]. Mendieta has been acclaimed as one of those few Cuban artists in North America who have undertaken what Antonio Eligio calls a "rare gesture of rapprochement" (72). Similarly, Pilar is the only character who attempts such a gesture of rapprochement between Cubans in North America and those in Cuba throughout her return to the island. Moreover, Pilar's painting is paralleled to Mendieta's artwork since Pilar's mural incites generations of Cubans to undergo a long process of rethinking themselves by checking the veracity of established histories. It eventually invites them to get at authentic stories that would help them discover who they really are and where they really belong.

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[56] *The Silueta Series* feature images of the artist's body usually linked to Santeria's *Orishas* of earth, fire, trees and water. One painting of this series shows Mendieta's body nude and covered with mud and leaves, standing against the trunk of a tree, her body blending in perfectly with its rough bark.
[57] In the early eighties Ana Mendieta who had left Cuba to settle in Iowa as a 13 years old teenager as part of Operation Peter Pan traveled to Cuba to rediscover her cultural roots.

II.6. From Estrangement to Conciliation: The Homeward Journey

Familial conflicts in *Dreaming in Cuban* may be interpreted in terms of politics that divide the del Pino family into two camps: those who approve of Castro's Revolution and those against it. Pilar, who lives in an in-between space i.e., geographically in the USA and emotionally in Cuba, is the one who attempts to establish a dialogue between Cubans in the diaspora and those in the island.

This call for dialogue and reconciliation is apostrophized in the work of Cuban writer Ruth Behar who tried throughout her anthology *Bridges to Cuba* to build bridges between the extreme views of right and left. Behar assumes that Cubans need "a nuanced and complex view of how Cubans on the island and in the diaspora give meaning to their lives, their identity, and their culture in the aftermath of a battle that has split the nation at the root" (2).

Indeed, Garcia's work provides this nuanced and complex view of the lives of Cubans in the USA and Cuba throughout the geographically divided del Pino family that could effectuate the rapprochement Behar calls for. Moreover, *Dreaming in Cuban* can be an exemplar in terms of establishing a dialogue between Cubans and Cuban Americans due to Garcia's neutrality regarding political leanings. Garcia's impartiality is clear through her "metafictional use of multiple narrators and perspectives [that] creates a community of divergent political view" (Payant 165).

Although Garcia's novel translates the political divides caused by the Revolution, it is not political in the generally understood sense. Garcia argues in an interview with Iraida López that she did not intend to comment on politics throughout her characters and that by staying so close to the characters "it happened that they are diametrically opposed politically" (106). Thus, it becomes clear that Garcia's interest in

politics is randomly rooted in the personal toll of events in Cuba following the 1959 Revolution.

The starkest indication of alienating effects is rooted in the Revolution since the del Pino family is divided by politics or as Thulani Davis argues, “Some inability to keep the family together continues its deadly work” (14). A plot analysis confirms that the del Pino family discord dates back to the 1930’s love affair of matriarch Celia with Gustavo, a married Spanish lover who abandons her. Celia’s terrible sense of desolation after Gustavo leaves her brings about an extended period of estrangement between Celia and her husband, Jorge. Payant thinks that, “Gustavo suggests the many outsiders, colonialists such as the Spanish and business people such as North Americans who have exploited the beauty and riches of Cuba and then left” (166). A preliminary to Celia’s psychological problems and alienation predate her desertion by Gustavo and are rooted in her childhood. Sent at age four by her mother to live in Havana with *Tia* Alicia, Celia tells Gustavo in a letter dated July 11, 1946 that on her way to Havana, she had already forgot her mother.

Celia’s experience of being deserted is not only atavistic, but is also marital to the extent that the future generation, particularly Celia’s children, is marked by the legacy of abandonment. This is certainly true of the relation between Celia and Lourdes who are separated by geography and ideology. The disruptive in utero and post-natal connections between Celia and Lourdes serve as embodiments of the tumult emerging in the wake of Fidel Castro’s cataclysmic Revolution and persisting throughout time. In the novel, Celia’s relation with the second generation stands for Cuba’s relation with its citizens. Therefore, one might agree with Mary Vasquez who views Celia as “a prosopopoeic representation of the island” (24). Being neglected by Jorge who forces her into a housebound exile where she had to endure the mistreatment of her mother-in-

law Berta and the latter's desiccated spinster daughter, Celia longs for escape. Celia becomes pregnant and wants "a son who could make his way in the world" (42) and dreams of running away to Spain to meet her beloved Gustavo. However, Celia decides that if she had a daughter she would not forsake her but would stay in Cuba. By the time Lourdes is born, Celia is remarkably schizophrenic in her attitude towards her daughter due to her mental instability and even rejects her daughter saying, "I will not remember her name" (43). In fact, Celia's rejection of her daughter is fuelled by the confining traditional gender roles that assume a dearth of mobility for the mother.

Being told by her father that Celia has rejected her at her birth, Lourdes cannot forgive her mother and nurtures a feeling of rancor towards her, and in the process forces estrangement between herself and her mother. Lourdes' estrangement is not only familial but political also since her decision to immigrate to the USA was also motivated by the devastating effect of the Revolution when she had been raped at knife-point by one of Castro's soldiers:

> The other soldier held Lourdes down as his partner took a knife from his holster. Carefully, he sliced Lourdes's riding pants off to her knees and tied them over her mouth. He cut through her blouse without dislodging a single button and slit her bra and panties in two. Then he placed the knife flat across her belly and raped her. (71)

Following the horrific sexual assault she had experienced, Lourdes abandoned Cuba not only in the physical sense of relocating herself into a new home but in the psychological sense by absorbing the persona and identity of an American. Lourdes' harrowing relation to Cuban history concretizes her resolve never to set foot again in Cuba. Lourdes is meant to embody the abrasive stand-in of ideological intolerance.

Lourdes' sharp rebuff of Cuba widens the gap between her and her own daughter Pilar, and makes Pilar's connection with Celia all the more necessary.

Pilar's adversarial relationship with Lourdes is similar to Celia's relationship with the latter. The central point of contention between Pilar and her mother is politics. In one memorable scene, Pilar gives her mother a book of essays on Cuba, called A Revolutionary Society, as a Christmas gift whose "cover showed cheerful, clean-cut children gathered in front of a portrait of Che Guevera" (132). When she sees the gift, Lourdes shouts, "Lies, poisonous Communist lies!" (132) and immediately takes the book from the Christmas tree, fills the bathtub with hot water and throws the book in it. Afterwards, the narrator counts, "[Lourdes] fished Pilar's book out of the tub with barbecue tongs and placed it on the porcelain platter she reserved for her roasted pork legs. Then she fastened a note to the cover with a safety pin. "Why don't you move to Russia if you think it's so great!" And she signed her name in full" (132).

However provocative Lourdes' attitude is, Pilar simply reacts by picking up the book and hanging it out to dry. Pilar and Lourdes vehemently disagree on exile politics, and this recalls Garcia's own family experience. Garcia claims in an interview with Allan Vorda:

> I grew up in a very black-and-white situation. My parents were virulently anti-communist, and yet my relatives in Cuba were tremendous supporters of Communism, including members of my family who belong to the Communist Party. The trip in 1984 and the book, to some extent, were an act of reconciliation for the choices everyone made. I'm very much in favor of democratic systems, but I also strongly believe a country should determine its own fate. I realize I couldn't write and be a

> journalist and do everything I've done in Cuba; yet, I respect the right of people to live as they choose. (Vorda 71)

These seemingly insoluble antagonisms affecting deeply the two generational matrilineal dyads i.e., Celia – Lourdes – Pilar are important in the sense that they give a conciliatory aspect to the whole narrative. In order to call for reconciliation between Cubans and Cubans Americans, Garcia had to profile the basic points setting the latter apart, something she successfully did.

The most stunning conciliation in the novel is the one that happens between Pilar and Lourdes however ideologically and politically different. Following the exhibition of Pilar's punk version of the Statue of Liberty, the crowd in Lourdes' bakery is offended and the atmosphere becomes acutely charged:

> [When someone] yells in raucous Brooklynese, 'Gaaahbage! Whadda piece of gaahbage!' a lumpish man charges Liberty with a pocketknife, repeating his words like a war cry. Before anyone can react, Mom swings her new handbag and clubs the guy cold inches from the painting. Then, as if in slow motion, she tumbles forward, a thrashing avalanche of patriotism and motherhood, crushing three spectators and a table of apple tartlets. (144)

It is at this crucial moment that Pilar's feeling for her mother begins to become pellucid for however different they might be Pilar thinks, "And I, I love my mother very much at that moment" (144). This scene also puts Lourdes' assimilation into American mainstream into question. Although Lourdes does not necessarily condone the political meaning of Pilar's canvas, she defends it and does so out of "patriotism and motherhood". Thus, the Cubanness of Lourdes eclipses her Americanized persona at the first threat the latter poses to one of her compatriots.

After Jorge's death of cancer in the USA, he appears to Lourdes and they speak of past family stories throughout which Lourdes learns about her father's responsibility for Celia's mental disorder[58]. Jorge also admits to Lourdes that Celia did love her and that he purposefully took her with him on his business trips to "own her" and deny Celia a bond with her (195). This confession along with her love for Pilar "seem to evoke a desire on Lourdes's part for reconciliation with her mother, leading to her return to Cuba in 1980" (Payant 167). Eventually, upon her arrival in Cuba, Lourdes affectionately bathes and dresses her sorrowful mother Celia deeply pained by Felicia's death. Lourdes's sense of estrangement from Cuba wanes gradually as she visits the scene of her rape at the family ranch. The fact that she was capable of visiting the ranch despite the cruel memories it evokes evinces healing. Finally, Lourdes takes pride in her Cubanness as she seductively performs the originally afro-Cuban dance of the conga with her thirteen-year-old nephew Ivanito.

Therefore, it is necessary to note that the homeward journey is a significant conciliatory step that could reassemble the diasporized populations of Cuba with Cubans. In *Dreaming in Cuban*, according to Ortiz-Márquez, it is Pilar who "marks the trajectory of the migratory saga by establishing the need to return home" (237). Rocio Davis explains the necessity of the journey back to Cuba:

> According to Lorna Irvine, the process of discovery – the 'psychological journey' – of the daughter's own identity demands a revision of the relationship with the mother, and this often involves three stages: negation, recognition, and reconciliation. The need to go "back to the future" implies the urgency of appropriating the intricate truths about

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[58] In a regretful tone that brought about Lourdes' reconciliation with her mother, Jorge tells Lourdes, "After we were married, I left her with my mother and my sister. I knew what it would do to her. A part of me wanted to punish her. For the Spaniard. I tried to kill her, Lourdes. I wanted to kill her. I left on a long trip after you were born. I wanted to break her, may God forgive me. When I returned, it was done. She held you out to me by one leg and told me she would not remember your name" (195).

> one's self and history as part of the process of self-affirmation. The immigrant characters in Garcia's novel – Lourdes and Pilar – need to return to Cuba in order to come to terms with the tangled meanings of mothering, language, and home, and renew their lives in the United States. (61)

Reconciliation with Cuba and Cubans in the island demonstrated through Pilar's reconciliation with Lourdes and their journey back to Cuba are cataclysmic for both characters. Return to Cuba results in maturation for Pilar and healing for Lourdes, it also clarified their conceptions of home. Separation and death may be surmounted by restoring both the cultural past and the bond with the mother, attaining reconciliation with the maternal bond through and within language and by reconfiguring the notion of home[59].

Although Lourdes deracinates herself from Cuba and proudly inhabits an American persona in Brooklyn, she cannot completely erase her Cuban heritage. This is justified in recuperating some sense of her emotional attachment to Cuba upon her return to the island exhibiting her Cubanness in a typically Cuban dance, in the presence of her perplexed daughter who "dances like an American" (224). For Pilar, returning to the motherland is a way to deal with the existential question of belonging. Pilar's journey in Cuba is also enlightening in the sense that it has disillusioned her. Before her return to Cuba, Pilar idealized the island and inhabited its imaginary space through dreamwork and telepathic communications with Celia.

While early in the novel Pilar states that, "Brooklyn doesn't feel like home" to her (58), she inversely concludes by the end of the novel, "But sooner or later I'd have

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[59] Cf Rocio G. Davis, "Back to the Future: Mothers, Languages and Homes in Cristina Garcia's *"Dreaming in Cuban"*", p. 61.

to return to New York. I know now it's where I belong – not instead of here, but more than here" (236). Pilar's reaction to the realities of Cuba highlights the illusiveness of the myth of "Cuba". Recall that Pilar could express her dissent vis-à-vis American immigration policy throughout her painting in the USA. Contrariwise, when she asks Celia whether she could paint whatever she wanted in Cuba, she learns that she could do so as long as she did not attack the state. Celia tells her, "Cuba is still developing and can't afford the luxury of dissent"[60] (235).

By denying art its recording and critical roles, Cuba embodies a paralytic space of stagnancy and then death. Thus, abandoning Cuba becomes urgent and is manifested through either death or exile. It then metaphorically follows that the characters that remain in Cuba die: Celia, Felicia and Javier, and that the character who survive (Lourdes, Pilar, Rufino and Ivanito) are those who flee and self-exile in the United States. Thus, it is while considering the differences between the real and the imagined Cuba that Pilar becomes cognizant of her nostalgia for America as she muses, "It's hard to imagine existing without Lou Reed" (235). Pointing to Pilar's frustration upon her return to Cuba, Payant writes, "Pilar had feared the "Cuba" of her dreams might not exist, and not surprisingly, her fears are confirmed. Furthermore, she does not belong in the real Cuba. Like many exiles who search for self by returning to the geographical space of the homeland, she is unsuccessful" (Payant 171).

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[60] Celia's words echo the Cuban Constitution, especially article 39. Laduke gives the nub of the Cuban Constitution with regard to art: "a) Art is free as long as its content does not come with collision with the principles of the Revolution. The forms of expression in art are free. b) the state, solicitous about raising the cultural level of the people, shall promote the development of artistic education and creative talent and shall cultivate art and the capacity to appreciate it" (34). These restrictions that are put on artists are reflected in the last case Celia judges before she resigns as a judge for the People's Court. The case is that of Simón Córdoba, a fifteen-year old boy who has written short stories regarded as antirevolutionary. "His characters", the narrator tells us, "escape from Cuba on rafts of sticks and tires, refuse to harvest grapefruit, dream of singing in a rock and roll band in California". Celia proposes to Simón ,"that he put down his pen for six months and work as an apprentice with the Escambray Theatre" and tells the boy "I don't want to discourage your creativity, Simón, I just want to reorient it toward the revolution" (158).

The journey back to Cuba, a symbol of reconciliation, is thus necessary not because it reunites the fragmentary del Pino family but because it helped the exiled characters of the family draw clear lines regarding their national attachment and decide whether their real home is their homeland or hostland. However, in the case of Pilar, deciding which of the two is definitely home seems impossible as Brooklyn does not feel like home and Cuba although reached by a thirty minute flight from Miami is never reached at all. Thus, one is driven to ask: where does Pilar essentially belong? The novel suggests two answers. As a young woman, Pilar might find a place in her family's history by preserving it and discovering her identity throughout its fascinating saga. Another suggestion may be examined i.e., Pilar is destined to remain a nomad and has to adapt to the state of homelessness, or as Celia augurs at the beginning of the novel that because her husband Jorge "will be buried in a stiff, foreign earth. Because of this, their children and their grandchildren are nomads" (6-7).

II.7. Pilar: The Bridge between *Cubanidad* and Americanness

Displacement and dislocation often result in a process of transculturation[61] whereby the exile strives to maintain his cultural heritage while readjusting to a new space that imposes the acquisition of new values and culture. Pilar Puente is a coming of age girl grappling to construct an identity that addresses major issues such as language, belonging, exile and gender in what she identifies as the purgatory of biculturalism.

Being Cristina Garcia's alter-ego, Pilar's identification process reflects the author's own strife to make sense of her hybrid identity. Garcia observes:

> Those of us who kind of straddle both cultures are in a unique position to tell our stories, to tell our family stories. We're still very close to the immigration, and yet we weren't as directly affected by it as our parents and grandparents were. So we are truly bilingual, truly bicultural, in a way that previous generations were not. (Lopez 109)

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[61] Coined by Cuban writer Fernando Ortiz, the concept of transculturation "better expresses the different phases of the process of transition from one culture to another because this does not consist merely in acquiring another culture, which is what the English word acculturation really implies, but the process also necessarily involves the loss or uprooting of a previous culture which could be described as a deculturation. In addition, it carries the idea of the consequent creation of new cultural phenomena, which could be called neoculturation. In the end, as the school of Malinowski's followers maintains, the result of every union of cultures is similar to that of the reproductive process between individuals: the offspring always has something of both parents but is always different from each of them" (102-3). "*Entendemos que el vocablo transculturación expresa mejor las diferentes fases del proceso transitivo de una cultura a otra, porque éste no consiste solamente en adquirir una nueva y distinta cultura, que es lo en rigor indicado por la voz inglesa aculturación, sino que el proceso implica también necesariamente la pérdida o desarraigo de una cultura precedente, lo que pudiera decirse una desculturación, además, significa la consiguiente creación de nuevos fenómenos culturales que pudieran denominarse de neoculturación. Al fin [. . .] en todo abrazo de culturas sucede lo que en la cópula genética de los individuos: la criatura siempre tiene algo de ambos progenitores, pero también siempre es distinta de cada uno de los dos. En conjunto, el proceso es una transculturación*" Fernando Ortiz, "El proceso de transculturación". *Revista Bimestre Cubana* 46, 1946, p. 278.

Like Garcia, Pilar is the one character in *Dreaming in Cuban* who straddles both cultures if compared to other exile characters. Indeed although Pilar remembers the scene of departure from Cuba, she is not as affected by the Revolution as her parents and this drives Pilar back to her past with no prejudice against Cuban history. Therefore, Pilar's attempt to reconcile the past with the present and Cuban heritage with North American way of life predicts the formation of her bicultural identity. Cristina Garcia reflects on this hybrid location of the self throughout the character of Pilar who embodies the aftermaths of historical and cultural intersections. In one scene where Pilar decries the inconsistencies of the Catholic religion, she identifies with children in limbo:

> I still remember how in third grade Sister Mary Joseph told Francine Zenowitz that her baby brother was going to limbo because her parents didn't baptize him before he died. Francine cried like a baby herself, with her face all screwed up. That day I stopped praying (before I stopped praying altogether) for the souls in purgatory and devoted all my Hail Marys to the kids in limbo, even though I knew it probably wouldn't do them any good. (59-60)

What is most captivating about this passage is that Pilar's sympathy and fellow feeling are traceable to her empathy with kids in limbo, and that sheds light on her self-portrait being a hybrid person. As such, Pilar is destined to a life in limbo, a life at the crossroads of cultures and has to cope with the traditions of her homeland while they are inscribed in a new society that may not have the same values. Being on the fringes of mainstream society marginalizes Pilar and condemns her to life on the hyphen being neither fully American nor fully Cuban. Pérez Firmat details the facet of this Cuban American identity when he writes:

> Although it is true enough that the 1.5 generation is "marginal" to both its native and its adopted cultures, the inverse might be equally accurate: only the 1.5 generation is marginal to *neither* culture. The 1.5 individual is unique in that, unlike younger and older compatriots, he or she may actually find it possible to circulate within and through both the old and the new cultures. (*Life on the Hyphen* 4)

At this point in the novel, however, Pilar is still heedless of her bicultural identity. This awareness will come much later in the novel, until then she struggles to understand the inconsistencies surrounding her existence and to harmonize dichotomies to create a hybridized whole. Later in the novel, Pilar questions many events in her life in order to give meaning to the formation of her identity:

> I couldn't face going back to Providence after Italy, so I decided to give mainstream academia a try. Art school was getting to be a drag anyway, cutthroat and backbiting, with everyone seeking praise from the instructors. I didn't want to end up being dependant on people I didn't respect much, so here I am majoring in anthropology instead. (179)

Recounting in Pilar's voice transforms the narrative into a female's bildungsroman depicting Pilar's journey from childhood to maturity[62]. Pilar's newfound interest in anthropology replacing the incompatibility and hypocrisy she found in art school is significant. Her new choice suggests her efforts to delve into her cultural history in a further attempt to understand her polarized identity. The polarization

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[62] *Dreaming in Cuban* can also be read as a kunstleroman due to Pilar's passion for painting but also to the role of the latter in enlightening Pilar over matters of self-identification. Dara Goldman identifies such works of fiction as resulting in a homeward journey, representing a rite of passage that eventually engenders the protagonist's maturation. She writes, "The [Cuban American] author presents the search for the identity of characters who are immigrants or children of immigrants. Such works can take the form of a bildungsroman or a kunstlerroman that culminates in a trip to the island of the protagonist's ancestors" (414).

implied in the terminology of hybridity (a mixture of cultures; of here and there) is well embodied in the character of Pilar who is the one character in the novel who tolerantly accepts different cultures and even wrestles to harmonize them. In so doing, Pilar is convinced that she should not have a Manichean view of the world and thus disapproves of her mother's "strictly black-and-white" views (26). On the contrary, Pilar tries to approach the grey that permeates both black and white visions[63].

Pilar's last name "Puente" which translated into the English word meaning "bridge" betokens her function as a bridge between the people and the place of the past and the future. This suggests that Garcia might have purposefully chosen Pilar's last name because in order for Pilar to make sense of her bicultural identity and validate it, she has first to bridge her Cuban past with her American present. In one sense, *Dreaming in Cuban* as a narrative acts as a textual literary homeland that bridges the spatial and temporal gaps between the imagined homeland and the home that exiles have made in the United States.

Although Pilar admits by the end of the novel that she belongs more in the USA than in Cuba, she is firmly anchored to her Cuban heritage. This is because her grandmother inscribes her in Cuban history throughout the letters she wrote to Gustavo and that represent the family history Pilar is going to recount to future generations. The last line of the novel, from Celia's ultimate letter to Gustavo displays the charge given to Pilar which she metafictionally fulfills through the narrative. On January 11, 1959, Celia writes, "The revolution is eleven days old. My granddaughter, Pilar Puente del Pino, was born today. It is also my birthday. I am fifty years old. I will no longer write to you mi amor, she will remember everything" (245). Inheriting the letters her grandmother never sent to Gustavo makes Pilar understand that she belongs to Cuban

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[63] Lourdes admits in the novels that "she has no patience for people who live between black and white" such as her own mother and daughter Pilar (129).

people as well as to Cuban history embodied in the inscription of Pilar in the epistolary historical document of the del Pino family.

Pilar's hybridizing energy is portrayed through her ability to stand somewhere in between the two extremes of Cubans in the island and the Cuban exile community in the USA. In music, for instance, Pilar's taste is a combination of the past with the present. She listens to Lou Reed's punk music as she maintains links with the past by purchasing a Beny Moré album. This unbiased acceptance of dichotomies validates Pilar's hybrid identity

Linguistically speaking, although Pilar masters English more than Spanish she is able to circulate both locations comfortably. However, both languages fail to provide her with an effectual means of expressing her Cuban American identity. It is for this particular reason that Garcia uses both languages simultaneously, creating a third language structure, a narrative that blends English with Spanish without making the reader notice the shift and enabling both the writer and the protagonist to express their bicultural identities. In fact, to be bicultural is to be culturally balanced as the critic Pérez Firmat explains when defining biculturation as "the equilibrium, however tense or precarious, between the two contributing cultures" (*Life on the Hyphen* 6). Thus, biculturation is a source of enrichment and summons its adherents to give both ends of the hyphen their due. Understandably, bicultural subjects should give equal value to both cultures dominating their lives without submitting one to the other.

Assumingly, Pilar's journey in Cuba may be read as an attempt to achieve equilibrium between Cuban culture and the American one in the making of her identity since prior to her return to Cuba, American culture dominated her life. Linguistically speaking, Pilar's quest to master the Spanish language is no surprise as she "envies her mother her Spanish curses". Her strong desire culminates in dreaming in Spanish that

might be viewed as a rite of passage after which Pilar "wake [s] up feeling different, like something inside me is changing, something chemical and irreversible" (235). Although her strife to instill Spanish language as a defining element in her life is ethereally achieved, this creates a linguistic balance for Pilar.

Pilar's strife to bridge two different cultures reflects the endeavor of the ethnic writer. In fact, as Garcia's alter ego, Pilar reflects the hybrid self of the author who manifests her hybridity throughout her narrative[64]:

> As an ethnic writer, Garcia engages the U.S. experience directly and cannot separate herself from it. Pilar's story tries to reconcile two cultures and two languages and two visions of the world into a particular whole. It is precisely this pull between two places that the ethnic character experiences and that motivates her actions within the text. Garcia's poetic descriptions allow her to display an ability to speak to two audiences at once. (Alvarez-Borland 48)

Therefore, Garcia's creation of Pilar's character is a way to picture the hardship of dwelling at the borderlands of cultures, but also to bridge two different cultures and speak to both cultural groups concomitantly. Garcia's choice of Pilar to be the holder of the torch of hybridity is grounded in her mixed fluctuating allegiances to both Cuba and the United States. She is neither hostile to Castro's Cuban regime as first generation exiles, nor hostile to America that has severed Cuba from the rest of the world like pro-Castro Cubans.

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[64] Some critics argue that this sense of fragmentation and strife to make sense of a hybrid identity is a hallmark of Latino literature. As Christie writes, "Latino writers are engaged in connecting the pieces of their complicated hybrid lives, not necessarily for the purpose of bringing life to some distant ancestral tradition, some mythic truth to live by, but in order to make sense out of the complexity of their own identities spread out in fragments before them. The subsequent attempt on the part of Latinos to adjust their lives to the impossibility of wholeness, of totally belonging to something clear and certain, constitutes the central tension of their fiction" (3).

Moreover, Maria Luisa Ochoa argues that *Dreaming in Cuban* is a hybrid text where hybrid technical devices are used, “first person accounts (i.e., through diaries, letters, etc) mixed with the rest of the narration in third person” (114). Being the arbiter of the past helps Pilar in piecing together her fragmented identity. The stories Pilar gathers narrate the harsh realities of a family split between two countries because of Castro’s regime. Pilar records the family’s stories in a diary she preserves “in the lining of her winter coat, hidden from her mother’s scouring eyes” (7). Pilar’s diary eventually becomes the reader’s text as Alvarez-Borland indicates, “The novel is sometimes told in Pilar’s first-person voice (when she narrates events related to her own life in the U.S.) and sometimes in her omniscient voice, as in the stories of Celia, Lourdes, and Felicia” (46).

When Pilar returns to Cuba, Celia gives her the unmailed letters she wrote to Gustavo, and these “texts within the text” will become an informative section in Pilar’s diary. The double role that Pilar plays in *Dreaming in Cuban*, being both a narrator and a participant in the story, reflects her double-consciousness that enabled her to recover that part of her identity that was missing. In this sense, Pilar is the narrator of the Puente family story and is the one chosen by Celia to bridge the gap between the Cuban population and the Cuban American one. Pilar’s role as an archivist symbolized through the preservation of Celia’s letters to Gustavo foretells her role in preserving Cuban history within the memories of Cuban Americans.

Garcia also blends the present with the past in her narrative. Thus, *Dreaming in Cuban* cannot be classified as either nostalgic or creative, to recall Guillén’s classification of exile writing, but blends nostalgia with creativity so as to give birth to a new category of exile writing. The latter preaches hybridity as a remedial reconciliation capable of healing the emotional shock caused by exile. Therefore, contrary to

detractors of hybridity, Cristina Garcia explores its advantages especially in the case of the one and half generation that is a priori hybrid and that needs to come through with its sense of in-betweenness by achieving cultural hybridity.

II.8. Exiles as an Ethnic Minority in *Dreaming in Cuban*

Exile in *Dreaming in Cuban* is represented as an experience that helps in the process of identity formation. If we take into consideration the fact that *Dreaming in Cuban* is a bildungsroman, then, exile becomes a phase in life similar to childhood and adolescence that Pilar had to go through in order to discover who she really was and to clarify her notions of belonging.

Cristina Garcia belongs to a generation of American writers of Cuban origins who, according to Eliana Rivero, "are in the midst of effecting the transition from émigé/exile categories to that of ethnic minority members" ("From Immigrants to Ethnics" 191). Similarly, Alvarez-Borland argues that Cristina Garcia "leads a third generation of Cuban-American writers as they walk the path from exile to ethnicity" (48). This section is devoted to the examination of the transition from exile to ethnicity in *Dreaming in Cuban* throughout Garcia's alter-ego Pilar.

Indeed, being a punk artist, Pilar has no chance to survive in Cuba. This impossibility to live in Cuba as an artist justifies Pilar's representation of exile as an ethnic category that does not necessarily damage the self. It thus becomes clear that Cristina Garcia redefines concepts of exile through globalization[65]. Instead of separating two worlds whose differences seem irreconcilable from a nationalistic restricted point of view, Garcia offers a new understanding of exile in a globalized age. She explains her

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[65] Globalization is defined here as a heightened form of capitalism that altogether with the development of new technologies has engendered an intensified and uneven global flow of products and culture. This definition is particularly influenced by Hardt's and Negri's works on globalization.

reconfiguration of the concept of exile in this epoch through the possibility to transplant the culture of the homeland into a multicultural hostland.

This deterritorialization of one's culture redefines many notions related to the state of exile. Nostalgia, for instance, is not as deadly as it used to be during times when the discourse of nationalism reached its apogee. Globalization and transculturation also challenge the validity of nationalism in geographically drawing the borderlines of its members. Pilar's final decision not to stay in Cuba because she belongs more in New York is illuminating as it challenges the notion of belonging in a nation as being geographically limited by its borderline.

Thus, Pilar could belong in Cuba even if she lived in the USA. Rather than conceived as dichotomies, the here and there in *Dreaming in Cuban* harmoniously combine into "t-here" that gathers both worlds while at the same time respecting their differences by establishing a hyphen that forbids one from the domination of the other. In fact, this is how Pilar has constructed her identity.

Although, at the beginning of the novel, Pilar manifests the same nostalgia as people holding nationalistic black and white vision of the world; her return to Cuba disillusions her and unloads the concept of exile of its semantic charge when she finally decides to settle in New York making of it her "adopted homeland". The absence of choice that marked Pilar's life; as she developed qualms about whether her parents' decision to self-exile was right or wrong, is reversed at the end of the novel when Pilar herself chooses to quit Cuba at all costs. Her choice to leave Cuba altogether with her realization that it cannot be a safe home for her motivates Pilar's decision to ethnicize her conception of exile. Pilar's choice to return to the USA is deemed necessary for she has filled the historical gap in her story and it was time to leave. In order for Pilar to create her new ethnicized identity, it was important that Celia dies at the end of the

novel providing Pilar with more independence from Cuba. Andrea O'Reilley Herrera suggests in "Women and the Revolution in Cristina Garcia's *Dreaming in Cuban*" that Celia's "death represents rebirth and regeneration" rather than "an act of despair" (90).

It is no coincidence that Pilar leaves Cuba for the United States at the end of the novel in 1980, a year marked by the historical Mariel Boatlift exodus. Those who asked for asylum at the Peruvian embassy were addressed by Castro as a response to Lourdes's shouting calling him "Asesino", "You are free to emigrate to whatever country will accept you! We won't hold you here against your will" (237). This, in fact, emphasizes those Cubans' willingness to leave Cuba and thus cannot be likened to those who have been forced to leave Cuba. Their choice to leave the island, in part, translates their willingness to create new identities in new countries, and this means that being Cuban cannot be restricted to Cuba. William Luis establishes a link between the Mariel Boatlift exodus and Pilar's reconfigured conception of home:

> Garcia concludes her novel with the mass exodus of Cubans in 1980, indicating that Pilar, and for that matter the author herself, has come to terms with her position regarding the Cuban revolution . . . . After witnessing for herself life in Cuba, Pilar becomes independent of the influence of Celia and the Cuban government. (222)

Pilar's homeward journey and later her trip back to the USA represent the successive phases in her identification process. By reestablishing links with the motherland, Pilar identifies with the Cuban exile community. By deciding to go back to the USA and settle therein, Pilar identifies with the Cuban American community or more appropriately with the Latino one.

Following this line of thought, Pilar represents those about whom Appadurai muses "need to think [themselves] beyond the nation" because transnationalism is

replacing nationalism in the globalized age. Globalization, therefore, gives rise to new forms of localization in a dialectical relationship that Roberston popularized as "glocalisation" where "globalisation has involved the reconstruction of "home", "community" and "locality"" (Roberston 30). Garcia's novel consists in a palimpsestic revision and amendments to non-fixed notions of nationalism, belonging, home, and identity. To put it otherwise, Pilar's attitude towards home and belonging change over time. Paul Tabori reminds us in this regard:

> The status of exile, both materially and psychologically, is a dynamic one – it changes from exile to emigrant or emigrant to exile. These changes can be the results both of circumstances altering him in his homeland and of the assimilation process in his new country. An essential element in this process is the attitude of the exile to the circumstances prevailing in his homeland which are bound to influence him psychologically. (*The Anatomy of Exile* 37)

Indeed, Tabori's theory applies well to Pilar's life circumstances that have shaped her ultimate identity and sense of belonging. Her round trip from the USA to Cuba and back to the USA might be regarded as an exemplar that best explains Tabori's theory. While she considered herself as an exile at the beginning of the novel, her visit to Cuba has completely altered the way she defines "the homeland".

If we attempt at recapitulating Pilar's journey in the discovery of her hybrid ethnic identity, we will find four phases: first childhood in Cuba, second exile from Cuba, third return to Cuba, and last leaving Cuba for the United States. Thus, her identity formation has been predicated on travelling that becomes a source of unbiased objective epistemological truths. This is because Pilar could only see the difference and weigh the pros and cons of both political ideologies and both social realities of Cuba

and the United States throughout travelling across cultures. In so doing, Pilar views exile from an extraterritorial perspective that provides her with the ability to place, replace and displace herself in a beleaguered map of belonging.

Mutatis mutandis, the Cuban-American encounter culminates in the formation of a hybrid transcultural self. The possibility offered by globalization and multicultural societies to survive under a hybrid label allows for the ethnicization of the exile category. By so doing, exile in the postmodern world is no more confining as it used to be in the past. Nowadays, exiles, apart from the political category, are sometimes confounded with immigrants and all fall under the rubric of ethnic groups.

Chapter Three:
Islamness in Exile in Mohja Kahf's
The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf

Mohja Kahf's novel *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) tells the story of Khadra: an Arab-American Muslim woman's journey of self-discovery. This chapter is devoted to highlighting the experience of Arab Muslim American women in the United States. The main issue that is raised in this chapter is how the Islamic veiling practice constitutes an impairing barrier to Muslim American women exiled from their native lands to the USA and then ostracized in the USA on account of their religious adherence. This chapter also seeks to shed light on how disillusioned these women are after coming to the United States; for them a land of liberty a priori. Their disillusionment is nurtured by the intensified Islamophobia and the historically-sedimented burdens that Islam has come to carry in the West.

Khadra Shamy grows up in a self-absorbed Muslim community that rejects differences. As Khadra matures, she goes through various experiences that heighten her skepticism vis-à-vis her Muslim community's so long claimed righteousness. Kahf's novel is an objective account presenting paradoxical stereotypes from both extremes i.e. Muslims' view of Americans as *Kuffar* and Americans' view of Muslims as backward.

Much of *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* deals with the construction of a sense of in-betweenness, a liminal space between Arab Muslim identity and Americanness. This "cultureligious" triangle; whose angles Islamness, Arabness and Americanness are utterly difficult to homogenize, constitutes the protagonist's line of intention in the novel. To achieve her goal, the protagonist travels to different countries where she

thinks she will know more about her identity. Thus, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* will also be read as a travelogue that will help the reader follow the protagonist's geographical trajectory in getting at her sense of identity and belonging.

III.1. The Dynamics of Exile in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

Thematically, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* mostly concerns itself with the issue of psychological and social alienation both at home and abroad and features its protagonist as a double-exile i.e., an exile from her ancestral homeland and later an exile in the hostland. Exile is foisted upon Khadra, the protagonist of the novel, by her dissident Syrian parents. Therefore, Khadra belongs to what Ruben Rumbault has labeled the "1.5 generation". Constrained by her hijab and Islamic religious practices in a land hostile to Islam, Khadra attempts to discover the meaning of a homeland throughout her brief journeys in Middle Eastern countries.

At the beginning of the novel, we learn that Khadra's parents viewed themselves as temporary residents in the United States. They thought that within a matter of time, Hafiz al Assad would be overthrown and they would be able to return to their homeland:

> Wajdy and Ebtehaj always viewed their stay in America as temporary. That was part of the reason they were always reluctant to buy many things; they'd just be more attachments to leave behind when the time came. Money saved buying beat-up furniture in America was money that could be spent back home in Syria one day. (131)

However, that seemed less likely to happen and it became clear for the Shamy family that they were going to have a longer stay in the United States of America:

> But the return kept getting postponed. Wajdy's idea had been to set things on a good course, train his replacement, and leave. But year piled on top year, and soon two whole children, Khadra and Eyad, had practically grown up, with Eyad in college and Khadra in high school. And Jihad was halfway through a childhood spent in America only by default. (132)

The Muslim characters in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* hold the same view as Wajdy and view themselves as temporary exiles. To mitigate their pain and console the Muslim new comers in the United States, they created the Dawah Center with the aim of providing a haven for the newly arrived homesick.

Khadra inscribes her identity on a religious Islamic register that stigmatizes her in a western society completely hostile to her religious values. Henceforth, Kahf's novel draws a woman's trajectory of double self-exile from first American community and second Arab American Muslim community. Her self-exile is motivated by her eagerness to discover who she really is and where she most appropriately belongs.

What explains Khadra's feeling of exile is her nostalgia for Syria although she almost remembers nothing about it. Khadra's "little boomerang-shaped scar on her right knee that had been made on a broken tile in Syria" (15) makes her constantly think of Syria. Although Khadra had only vague memories of Syria, her nostalgia for it is propelled by the scar that has become an organic part of her body. The scar being visible and ineffaceable permanently reminds Khadra of an invisible and yet ineffaceable place in her memory i.e., Syria. Khadra's inability to link a concrete life-long memorable scar with an unmemorable place justifies her urge to undertake a journey back into the past.

Unlike the Dawah center members' exile that is geographically and nationalistically defined, Khadra's exile is related to time and not to place. She is in Proustian terms in search of times lost. For Khadra, Syria is often either a hazy memory or a place she has learned about second-hand, through stories, photos or family visitors. Therefore, Khadra is able to retrieve the past through memory in spite of the geographical separation. Eventually, what teenage Khadra cannot secure in space, throughout her physical return to Syria, she constructs in time, by returning through memory.

Khadra's remembrance of Syria is refreshed by the smell of dry sunny days and the gustatory effects produced by tart plum or dark cherries. When Khadra "bit into a tart plum or a dark cherry, her mouth felt like Syria" (15). Syria, here, refers to the childhood time spent herein and not the place: Syria. The tart plum and the dark cherry, on the other hand, are analogous to Swann's *petite Madeleine* in Marcel Proust's "Swann's way"[66].

In the same way Swann recollects many images of his past life immediately after he tastes the Madeleine dipped into tea, the plum tart and dark cherry remind

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[66] Narrating the mysterious experience, Swann tells the reader "And soon, mechanically, dispirited after a dreary day with the prospect of a depressing morrow, I raised to my lips a spoonful of the tea in which I had soaked a morsel of the cake. No sooner had the warm liquid mixed with the crumbs touched my palate than a shiver ran through me and I stopped, intent upon the extraordinary thing that was happening to me. An exquisite pleasure had invaded my senses, something isolated, detached, with no suggestion of its origin … Whence could it have come to me, this all powerful joy? I sensed that it was connected with the taste of the tea and the cake … and suddenly the memory revealed itself. The taste was that of the little piece of madeleine which on Sunday mornings at Combray … when I went to say good morning to her in her bedroom, my aunt Léonie used to give me, dipping it first in her own cup of tea or tisane" (60-3).

Khadra of times spent in Syria, albeit hazily. In this sense, Khadra's exile is explained by her nostalgia for times past that is fostered either by olfactory or gustatory sensations. Associating home with comfort and homelessness with discomfort and taking into account the exquisite joy felt at moments of recollection, Khadra's exile is clinically identified with her amnesia and her sense of home is to be found in her memories. Proust views the olfactory and gustatory sensations as the last vestiges that challenge extinction after everything past dies:

> But when from a long-distant past nothing subsists, after the people are dead, after the things are broken and scattered, taste and smell alone, more fragile but more enduring, more immaterial, more persistent, more faithful, remain poised a long time, like souls, remembering, waiting, hoping, amid the ruins of all the rest; and bear unflinchingly, in the tiny and almost impalpable drop of their essence, the vast structure of recollection. (63-4)

Khadra's exile is also explained in culinary terms. Her nostalgia for Syria is elucidated throughout her gastronomic preferences. Middle Eastern cuisine with its variety of foods is a felicitous space for Khadra. For instance, she was "overwhelmed with a sense of home as she entered Im Litfy's kitchen" (188). For Khadra and Eyad, Im Litfy "felt as familiar as their grandmother whose kitchen felt like home" (189). Mohja Kahf establishes a link between exile and Syrian cuisine since the latter is relocated and transplanted in order to mitigate feelings of homelessness. In the case of exiles, "Food becomes the mother's love-potion for her family, a potent talisman of care and protection that envelops them in the aroma of memorable enchantment" (Mehta 216). Im Litfy's kitchen re-creates the familiarity of home through the dynamic of home cooking; its typical and familiar tastes and fragrances are powerful signifiers of

memory. Thus, food becomes an ostensible agent for identity exploration and identification as well. It also becomes a memorial keeping a cherished memory alive.

Khadra's adult years oscillated between East and West. In her particular case, exile is extended to the Arab context. Perceived as a foreigner in Mecca, Khadra infinitely argues with her cousin's friends who refuse to believe that she is an Arab observant Muslim and keep on regarding her as an American. The social ailments that affect the Muslim world urge Khadra, who cannot identify with contemporary Muslims, to undertake a journey back in time. In so doing, she harbored a delusive hope that she would live in a Mohammadan Islamic society. Eventually, she "went on a regime of dates and water to emulate the diet of the Prophet" (153) and creates her own world where she is surrounded by monumental figures of the Prophet's generation. Mimicking the Prophet's diet, although it was not one as Wajdy explains that, "The Prophet ate dates because they were the most abundant food of his land" (154); Khadra refuses the excesses of American society together with its McDonaldization.

Thus, becoming an Islamic activist, Khadra economically self-exiles from the American consumer society by first refusing its food excesses and second rejecting its fashion markets. Indeed, wearing "a black scarf and a navy-blue *jilbab* her father had sewn at her request" (149) and not being interested in attracting men's gaze towards her, Khadra constitutes a threat to fashion designers and consumerism. This clothing style is her way to individuate as a Muslim in America and at the same time constitutes her cultural and economic self-exile from American society.

Another scene clarifying Khadra's feeling of estrangement in the USA is when her parents opted for American citizenship as a last resort. This infuriates Khadra who cannot help regard her parents as hypocrites. This event gives a clearer view on her attitude towards America and her state of exile, more particularly. The following

interior monologue offers direct access to Khadra's thought, yet only to the reader, and deprives the other characters from seeing the different path Khadra was following to identify:

> Wasn't she supposed to be an Islamic warrior woman, a Nusayba, a Sumaya, an Um Salamah in exile, by the waters dark, of Babylon? Wasn't she supposed to remember always the children in Syria who had to scour toilets on their knees at her age? For whom her tongue cleaved to the roof of her mouth, hamburgerless, with the guilt of one who got away? It was an ache that had gnawed her gut for years. (141)

Here, Khadra is still in a dumb phase when she cannot deliver her thoughts. Keeping her thoughts for herself represents both her doubt about them and her fear to communicate them with other characters. However, Khadra's silence will not last for long as she soon breaks it and unashamedly creates her own discourse about many taboo issues in the Dawah center community like *khulu*, abortion, dating and so on. Khadra identifies with three notorious exiled women[67] in the history of Islam whose exile brought relief and rendered the practice of the Islamic faith easier. Similarly, Khadra identifies with Syrian children and pains for their miserable status, and thus feels exiled from a community of children with whom she could share many things. Like Sumaya, Nusayba and Um Salamah, Khadra feels exiled for a noble purpose. Although she identifies with these three women in terms of displacement, her exile is different from theirs. As indicated in the footnote, Nusayba, Sumaya and Um Salamah self-exiled from

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[67] Nusayba bint Ka'ab was an early convert to Islam and fought with Prophet Muhammad in the Battle of Uhud (625) against Quraish, she is known for her prowess as she shielded Prophet Muhammad from the arrows of the enemy and received several wounds while fighting. Sumaya bint Khayyat is known in the history of Islam as the first person to be killed because of the adoption of the Islamic faith. Hind bint Abi Umayya, known as Um Salamah, was married to Prophet Muhammad after the death of her husband, Abdullah ibn Abdul Asad, following the battle of Uhud. As they were among the first to embrace Islam, Um Salamah and her first husband had suffered at the hands of Quraish who had tried to force them to abandon their new faith.

the land of non-Muslims to the land of Muslims; however, Khadra is exiled from the land of Muslims to the land of *Kuffar*, to use Wajdy's characterization of Americans.

In the case of the three women, the effect of exile is reversed as displacement becomes advantageous because the loci of exile, Mecca or Medina, is home to Muslims while the places these women left behind were home to *Kuffar*. Similarly, exile for Khadra is advantageous as the host land offers more freedom than the homeland. Unable to find her version of Islam in Muslim lands, especially because of the social scourge that has affected Muslim societies, Khadra recognizes that home is not to be found in the Middle Eastern Muslim countries. In recourse, she turns toward a self-wrought homemaking that is grounded in dislocation, celebrating and claiming exile on its own homeground. As a result, exile becomes an existential necessity.

However, while Khadra ultimately chooses the United States as a homeland, she still feels exiled because as her name indicates she cannot abandon Islam for the secular norms of American life. The name Khadra meaning the color green is very symbolic in the novel. It provides a hint about Khadra's belonging and destiny. Green is a holy color in Islam. It is the color of various flags of Muslim countries like Saudi Arabia. It is also the color used in the ornamentation of mosques. Green is the color of the silken covers of the graves of saints. More importantly, green is the color of paradise and even the garments of the inhabitants of paradise is green[68]. In fact, the choice of this color as a name for Khadra is very symbolic and might be considered as an indication that Khadra cannot dissociate herself from the Muslim community and is thus condemned to eternal exile.

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[68] «عَالِيَهُمْ ثِيَابُ سُندُسٍ خُضْرٌ وَإِسْتَبْرَقٌ وَحُلُّوا أَسَاوِرَ مِن فِضَّةٍ وَسَقَاهُمْ رَبُّهُمْ شَرَابًا طَهُورًا» "Upon them will be green Garments of fine silk and heavy brocade, and they will be adorned with Bracelets of silver; and their Lord will give to them to drink of a Wine Pure and Holy". See Surah 76, Verse 21 of Koran.

III.2. Orientilizing the Oriental:

The Process of Othering

With regard to the relationship between the Arab Muslim world and the West, little has changed in the Western Orientalist discourse about the Orient. The Western view of the Orient insists on the representation of the Arab Muslim in terms of a demonic barbaric alterity. It also intensifies the narcissistic view of the West positing its model as the universal norm and rendering the notion of civilization per se exclusively Western. This discourse has reached its most acute form following the 9/11 events to embrace an ideological discourse associating Islam with terrorism. At this level, the representational discourse is manipulated by the West that continues to reinforce the process of "otherization" that sets apart "us" from "them". Edward Said provides a clear-cut metonymic example of the East-West relations in his seminal work *Orientalism* (1978)[69] in the following passage:

> There is very little consent to be found, for example, in the fact that Flaubert's encounter with an Egyptian courtesan produced a widely influential model of the Oriental woman; she never spoke of herself, she never represented her emotions, presence, or history. *He* spoke for and represented her. He was foreign, comparatively wealthy, male, and these were historical facts of domination that allowed him not only to possess Kuchuk Hanem physically but to speak for her and tell his readers in what way she was "typically Oriental". My argument is that Flaubert's situation of strength in relation to Kuchuk Hanem was not an isolated

[69] In *Orientalism*, Edward Said explains that the latter "can be discussed and analyzed as the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient" (3).

> instance. It fairly stands for the pattern of relative strength between East and West, and the discourse about the Orient that it enabled. (6)

Thus, Kuchuk Hanem cannot speak for herself but needs a spokesperson to represent her and speak for her, and this is no other than a Western enlightened man as Gustave Flaubert. Hanem's silence and inability to represent her emotions, presence and history are justified by her uncivilized status as well as her debased woman status. In this example, Hanem and Flaubert are synecdochical of the Orient and the West respectively. Flaubert stands for the powerful, virile, civilized and knowledgeable West while Hanem represents a feminized Orient, fetishized and inviting possession.

What is dramatic in the Orientalist discourse is the eagerly repeated mantra of a "mysterious East" and the necessity to civilize its people as well as the prejudiced discourse about "the Arab mind"[70]. With regard to Islam, the main tenets of Western narratives are, "That Islam was innately and immutably oppressive to women, that the veil and segregation epitomized that oppression, and that these customs were fundamental reasons for the general and comprehensive backwardness of Islamic societies" (Ahmed 152).

Following this line of thought, Khadra is an "other" in many respects. First, because she originally comes from an Arab country i.e., Syria, she is thus culturally considered as backward. Second, she is a Muslim woman who ardently believes in the practice of hijab and chooses to veil, she is thus regarded by Americans as a debased woman who submits to the patriarchal norms of Muslim societies by her own volition.

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[70] See, for example, Rafael Patai's *The Arab Mind*, Long Island City: Hatherleigh Press, 2002. In this work, Patai presents a compendium of racist stereotypes and Eurocentric generalizations such as Arabs understand only by force or that the Arab mind is fully engrossed with sex. According to Philip S. Golub, this book "has become the bible of the Bush administration's leading neoconservative lights and "the most popular and widely read book on the Arabs in the U.S. military"". For more details, see Philip Golub, *The Wasteland of Empire* (Book Review), Logos 3.3 – Summer: 2004.

For these reasons, Khadra's community constitutes a civilizational threat within the American nation.

As a Muslim living in a country hostile to Islam, Khadra experiences the same estrangement as Rica in Montesquieu's *Persian Letters* who writes to his friend Ibben in the letter number thirty about his inconveniences in Paris. Rica explains that he is always being regarded as an object of acute curiosity and gaze for French people on account of his costume. Finding this situation onerous, Rica explains, "I therefore resolved to change my Persian dress for a European one, in order to see if my countenance would still strike people as wonderful" (41). To his dismay, he discovers that he "sank immediately into the merest nonentity" (41). Now that he did not look Persian, he tells his correspondent that if someone in his company would discover that he was, he would wonder "Oh! Ah! A Persian, is he? Most amazing! However can anybody be a Persian?" (41).

This point can be echoed in the context of Khadra's struggle over how she can be considered American without compromising her religious Islamic values. Right in the first pages of the novel, we learn that Khadra's father Wajdy self-exiled from Syria because he thought that "Syria was a mean government" because it has imprisoned his elder brother Shaker for saying things against the Syrian government. Wajdy vehemently defends his brother who "has told the truth to its face and that's called standing witness and that's what a good Muslim should do" (20). For Wajdy, "Shaker died a hero. A martyr" (20). Being a daughter of a dissident exile, Khadra knows nothing about Syria except what her parents tell her. Likewise, she is deprived of befriending Americans who are always demonized by the Shamy family that regards Americans as blasphemous, and thus she knows nothing about Americans except what she learns from her parents. For Khadra's parents, Americans are materialistic and

individualistic, their only preoccupation is how much money they can get whatever the consequences are. Ebtehaj and Wajdy always speak of Americans in a mean way regarding them as libertine people who allow many social ills as adultery, fornication, alcohol and so on, “All in all, Americans led shallow, wasteful, materialistic lives” (68).

Such stereotypical views from both sides i.e., Americans viewing Arab Muslims as backward and Muslim Americans regarding Americans as blasphemous and *kuffar,* do not stand for what Khadra thinks of the ones or the others. Although Khadra is aware of the othering process she is subject to in America, she is also cognizant of her estrangement in Arab countries, since she will be regarded as a westernized American woman. As a result, Khadra’s knowledge of Syria and America is rudimentary; this is why she absolutely needs to have her own stories of both nations.

Therefore, it becomes evident that Orientalist discourses are countered by Occidentalist representations in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*; although they are not damaging to the Western self as is the case of Orientalism. This is mainly explained by the fact that knowledge is contaminated by its entanglement with power[71]. It follows, then, that the Western man-made story of the Middle East serves the imperialist purpose of domination whereas the Occidentalists’ labor of always having first to dismantle tenacious myths about the Orient come to seem Sisyphean as it simply serves the purpose of self-defense. As Orientalism (the institution) precedes the nascent movement of Occidentalism in the Middle East and Africa, it follows that Occidentalism is devoted to the cause of countering Orientalist discourses.

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[71] Edward Said well explains this relationship between knowledge and power when he states, “Although the connection between a routine British classical education and the extension of the British Empire is more complex than Lewis might suppose, no more glaring parallel exists between power and knowledge in the modern history of philology than in the case of Orientalism. Much of the information and knowledge about Islam and the Orient that was used by the colonial powers to justify their colonialism derived from Orientalist scholarship: a recent study by many contributors, Orientalism and the Postcolonial predicament, demonstrates with copious documentation how Orientalist knowledge was used in the colonial administration of South Asia” (*Orientalism* 344-5).

In Orientalist discourse, the Western way of life has emerged as a modernizing vector and has been set as a universal one. This, in fact, is opposed to the difference-blind principle of equal dignity for all cultures and has given rise to a "clash of civilizations". The latter determines cultural problems as the primary and dominating source of conflict that has dominated world politics since the twentieth century[72]. The notion of the clash of civilizations applies to *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* that elucidates the relationships between Orientals and Westerners showing how incompatible world civilizations are and how differences produce clashes relative to the superiority-inferiority dichotomy.

However, Kahf's profiling of the discrepancies between civilizations is not circumscribed to the clash between Western and Islamic civilizations; it also explores intra-civilizational clashes, most notably the one between the Sunnis and Shias and the one between Iranians and Arabs although they all belong to the Islamic civilization[73]. An example of such intra-civilizational clashes is illustrated through the relationship between Khadra and her Iranian roommate Bitsy. Right at the first meeting, Bitsy explains to Khadra, "I want to make it clear that I normally loathe and despise Arabs and have successfully avoided them all my life" (347). For Bitsy "Arabs caused the ruination of the once-proud Persian people by corrupting their culture, religion, language, and race" (348). Bitsy's loathing of Arabs is so acute that she refuses to

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[72] In his famous article "The Clash of Civilizations?" published in *Foreign Affairs* in 1993, Samuel Huntington asserts that, "The fundamental source of conflict in this new world will not be primarily ideological or primarily economic. The great divisions among humankind and the dominating source of conflict will be cultural. Nation states will remain the most powerful actors in world affairs, but the principal conflicts of global politics will occur between nations and groups of different civilizations. The clash of civilizations will dominate global politics. The fault lines between civilizations will be the battle lines of the future" (22). Said continues, "The West must exploit differences and conflicts among Confucian and Islamic states to support in other civilizations groups sympathetic to Western values and interests to strengthen international institutions that reflect and legitimate Western interests and values, and to promote the involvement of non-Western states in those institutions" (49).

[73] It is important to stress, at this level, that Islam is not monolithic. In this regard, the difference between the Sunnis, the Shias, the Mutazilin and Sufism are cases in point.

communicate with Khadra although she is her cohabitant. For urgent communicative purposes, Bitsy only leaves notes "on little yellow stickies around the house for Khadra" (348).

Likewise, Khadra does not grasp why Auntie Dilshad Haqiqat does not fold her hands after the first *Allahu akbar* when she prays, nor does she understand why she puts a piece of rock in front of her. Although Auntie Dilshad explains to Khadra, "It's how Shia pray" and that "the rock is from Karbala where the evil caliph of Syria killed the grandson of the Prophet" (34), Khadra continues to otherize the Shia members as she believes that, "All the Sunnis knew the Shias had wrong beliefs but tried to be polite and not talk about it. At least in front of them" (34).

Similar diatribes are launched against Sunni Muslims like the ones of Ramsey Nabolsy who contends, "Sunni Islam is just a sellout . . . . It's just a load of compromises and lies told by cowards too cowardly to fight for what they believe in" (151). Ramsey further explains that he does not "get how anyone could even be Sunni after finding out about Karbala"[74] (151). These historical facts did not convert Khadra into Shia Islam but incited her to find the truth about it. After a discussion with her father who has provided weak arguments in favor of the Caliph Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya, Khadra becomes compassionate with the Shia Haqiqat sisters. This particular experience and Khadra's reversal of attitude towards Shia members from an otherizing to a tolerant one are so symbolic of the possibility of replacing stigmatizing alterity with tolerance towards differences by combating what scholar Edward Said names "the clash

[74] Karbala is a city in Iraq; it is one of the holiest cities for Shia Muslims after Mecca, Medina and Najaf. Ramsey refers here to the famous battle of Karbala (in the year 680/ the year 61 in the Islamic calendar) in which the Prophet's grandson Hussein Ibn Ali was killed by Yazid Ibn Mu'awiya's army because he had refused to recognize him as caliph.

of ignorance"[75]. Hafid Gafaiti best explains Said's view of how institutionalized ignorance affects our attitudes vis-à-vis the other. He claims:

> Said's concept of "ignorance" is especially pertinent in this context. It is clear that fear and conflict among individuals, communities, cultures or whole nations develop because of a mutual absence of consideration and understanding. However, one needs to go beyond Said's notion of a natural ignorance among entities separated by geography, history and cultural spaces. Indeed, and unfortunately, this mutual ignorance is not a given. In fact, it is constructed and institutionalized. Thus, we are bound to face "*institutionalized ignorance*" – that is, an epistemological system, a state and its institution that intentionally and systematically produce misrepresentations of the Other in a discourse whose objective is to maintain its citizens' ignorance about the rest of the world. Clearly, these systematic misrepresentations of the Other often provoke conflicts. (103-4; emphasis mine)

Thus, it might be wrong to confuse the historically contextualized conflicts with a clash of supposedly organically contrasting civilizations, especially in the case of the cultural continuum of the Abrahamic religions[76]. Mohja Kahf represents well this

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[75] In response to Samuel Huntington's article "The Clash of Civilizations", Edward Said published an article entitled "The Clash of Ignorance", published in *The Nation* in October 2001, in which he criticizes Huntington's thesis that differences between civilizations are inertly a source of conflict.

[76] Backing his argument on Jan Assman's magisterial article "The Mosaic Distinction: Israel, Egypt, and the Invention of Paganism" (*Representations* 56, Special Issue: The New Erudition, Autumn 1996, pp, 48-67) Hafid Gafaiti explains that, "In essence, like Judaism and Christianity before it, Islam is a counter –religion. Every religion emerges on the basis of and establishes itself against the ones that preceded it. Assman's argument begins with the first form of monotheism under the Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton, which asserted itself against the polytheist credo of the high priests. Similarly, the Jewish people instituted their novel monotheism and the rule of YAHVEH in opposition to their Egyptian heritage and the local gods of Israel. Then Christianity, with its new values, distinguished itself from the God and the Jews by claiming that its own God, incarnated by Jesus Christ and the values he represents, is a superior God. Positing itself as the last revelation, and its Prophet as the "seal of prophets", Islam functions along the same lines. Its foundational principle is not that Islam is first and foremost a new Revelation, but that the People of the Book – the Jews and the Christians – strayed from the original word of God. In this respect, the first part of the Koran and, in particular, the first Medina sura, Surat' El Bakara (which

cultureligious continuum throughout the discussions between Khadra and her Jew roommate Blu who recognizes "Islamic fiqh as a parallel structure to Judaic law" (316). For Khadra, "It was a relief not to have to explain every little thing" and it was "cool to find an American who was not even a Muslim but got it" (316). Blu's understanding of Khadra and tolerance towards her traditions is explained by the multiple similarities between the two, especially in terms of dietary laws[77]. For instance, Khadra is happy when she learns that Blu does not eat pork and that she keeps kosher, she is also pleased to have Blu celebrate a Ramadan *iftar* with her (320). Khadra and Blu agree on so many things, the only issue that sets them apart is politics as the narrator informs us, "Where Khadra and Blu repeatedly reached a wall was Israel. Religion was one thing, politics another" (319). The narrator's opinion that religion and politics cannot be regarded as one entity and the entente between Khadra and Blu over religious issues but not political ones backs up Mohja Kahf's argument that civilizational conflicts are not predicated on religious differences but on geopolitical ones. It also demonstrates the cultureligious rapprochement between Jews and Muslims and the geopolitical discord between them over the Palestinian / Israeli territory. Khadra says to Blu that, "Israel was illegally made – by terrorists emptying out villages and forcing a mass exodus of Palestinians" and Blu answers her, "You don't understand: my grandmother died in the Holocaust. My mother grew up saving pennies in her little land box. You're insulting their lives. Their deaths" (320). Both Khadra and Blu evoke the painful experience of

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appears as the second sura in the codified Koran) consists essentially of a recapitulation and assessment of the Biblical message, as well as a refutation of the preeminence of Judaism and Christianity. However, it is crucial to note that Islam does not sever itself from the Abrahamic tradition. On the contrary, beyond the historical conditions and specific cultural dimensions of its context and expression, it situates itself structurally, from a metaphysical as well as a cosmological point of view, within the continuum of the monotheist tradition of Judaism and Christianity" (115-6).

[77] Muslims and Jews share many dietary laws such as: the prohibition of swine by both sets of laws, both Judaism and Islam consider slaughtering animals (Shechita in Judaism and Dhabiha in Islam) an obligation, both Shechita and Dhabiha involve cutting across the neck of the animal and both require that the spinal cord be avoided during slaughter.

exile that consists of the plight of their respective brethrens. It is after all a matter of LAND that sets people apart and produces conflicts between them.

Mohja Kahf profiles the Saidian “clash of ignorance” through a microsociety whose members are culturally and religiously disparate and shows how cohabitation and peace are rendered possible by tolerance and mutual understanding. Exploring these possibilities in a microsociety, so heterogeneously populated, can only be symbolic of the possibility to establish peace and tolerance in an international society presently spoiled by an insatiable geopolitical appetite for land and power.

Thus, it becomes urgent to call for mutual understanding and comprehension in order to eradicate this institutionalized ignorance and replace it with a tolerant peaceful world governed by respect for all entities. To achieve such an objective one should be vigilant when dealing with “political knowledge” whose aim is to manufacture knowledge so that it serves politics. Edward Said rightfully warns against this kind of knowledge in *Orientalism* when he tells his readers:

> What I am interested in doing now is suggesting how the general liberal consensus that "true" knowledge is fundamentally non-political (and conversely, that overtly political knowledge is not "true" knowledge) obscures the highly if obscurely organized political circumstances obtaining when knowledge is produced. (10)

Therefore, Said’s iterative emphasis on the relationship between politics and knowledge underscores the role of power in the institution of knowledge. Political knowledge is predicated on hegemonic imperialist discourses that completely erase subaltern stories. In fact, this leads to the conclusion that with regard to alterity, the politically instituted knowledge is a subjective self-interested one.

III.3. The Iconography of the Veil in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*

The Muslim woman as oppressed, debased, and desirous of progress and liberation has become an enduring topos in the Western imagination and representation of the Muslim woman. Two main issues are raised when the debate on the oppression of Arab Muslim women is launched i.e., the veil and polygamy[78]. The Muslim woman has been represented in Western discourse as disgraced by her backward and misogynous religion, the veil being the most tangible sign of these characteristics. Islam is also regarded, in the West, as a religion inimical to women's social progress. Within socio-economic terms, the veil is used as a symbol of women's debasement and it needs to be lifted by U.S democracy to liberate the Muslim woman. According to Mohja Kahf , ""The Muslim woman is being victimized" is a litany of a later age in Western discourse" since "the beginning of the question of liberty for Muslim women coincides with the beginning of the whole question of liberty in Western political discourse" (5, 7). In fact, this is how veiling has come to signify women's oppression and unveiling has become a sign of secularism and modernity. However, one may predict that if the Middle Eastern socio-economic conditions change and the Middle East runs out of oil, the Orientalist debate over hijab is most likely to disappear.

For Westerners as well as westernized Muslims, Hijab is a handicap for Muslim women willing to climb the ladder of social mobility and modernity. Having an "otherizing" image of veiled women already established in Western discourse, Muslim women are left with few choices: either to adopt the Western "modernist" value system in order not to stick out in a world hostile to their religion, or maintain the Islamic "old

[78] Why are Muslim men authorized to have up to four wives? Is a question that has often been regarded with much loathing by Western feminists. Although my intent is not to defend polygamy, I would like to draw attention to the fact that while polygamy is regarded as an unjust practice, polyamory has come to consolidate the cherished Enlightenment principle of liberty as it grants people more freedom in terms of love relationships. While the discourse on polygamy is shocking in the West, polyamory is simply accepted as less constraining.

fashioned" value system that, according to Westerners, does not conform with modernity. Western discourse on hijab has also succeeded in effacing the symbolic significance of hijab as a sign of belonging and created instead a debate about it questioning its "oppressive" aspect as opposed to the "modernizing" lifestyle of the Western woman. It is anecdotal, then, that if modernity depends on how much uncovered one is, the nudists are the most modern people on Earth!

Hitherto Western representations of hijab have been stigmatizing, biased and excluding. The "otherization" process seems to veil Muslim women's role and value in society, while it simultaneously sets up the image of the Occidental woman as a template. This hegemonic discourse about Muslim women identifies this category of people in terms of a "despised difference". Donnell explained this view of Muslim women when he emphasized:

> The familiar and much- analyzed Orientalist gaze through which the veil is viewed as an object of mystique, exoticism and eroticism and the veiled woman as an object of fantasy, excitement and desire is now replaced by the xenophobic, more specifically Islamophobic, gaze through which the veil, or headscarf, is seen as a highly visible sign of a despised difference. (123)

It follows that Muslim women's "otherness" is relative to what the West conceives of as the "familiarity" of Occidental women. These dichotomous representations of an Occidental woman as opposed to the Oriental Muslim woman in terms of modernity have produced what is now called gender apartheid. In "Tear off your Western Veil", Azizah Al-Hibri explains this new kind of apartheid made possible by the above-discussed Saidian notion of "clash of ignorance":

> Western Feminists do not attempt to educate themselves about Islam as a world religion, or about the points of view of Muslim or Arab women. Instead, western feminists hold an Orientalist view of Islam, and act on that view. This attitude has already resulted in western feminists silencing Muslim/ Arab-American women not through coercion, but rather by their astounding inability to hear us, regardless of how loudly we protest. And that inability to hear is not the result of a cultural gap. (160-1)

However, the espousal of Western modernity with a Muslim woman's dress has been made possible through the efforts of many European designers such as Yves St Laurent, Christian Dior and others to reach a voluminous Muslim feminine market[79]. For example, the caption alongside a National Geographic magazine photo of an entirely veiled Muslim woman reads, 'A designer veil sports the logo of Yves St. Laurent. Most accept the veil for privacy and protection from male harassment, not as a symbol of oppression, and cling to a tradition that defies Western understanding.'' Commenting on the photo, Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad et al. write:

> The woman in this photo remains a mystery, an object wrapped in secrecy not penetrated by the camera's lens, and the caption gives no detail about when or where the photo was taken. But the irony captured on film is what Westerners find to be not only surprising but incongruous—a combination of the Islamic veil with a French designer emblem. Can East really meet West in such a way? By showing this

[79] Yvonne Yazbeck Haddad explains an anecdotal remark that has been made by Nuha al-Hegelan, wife of former Saudi Ambassador to the United States, in the early 1980's. Al-Hegelan told a group of high school social studies teachers, "The veil has always been more than a piece of cloth . . . . Lifting her Yves St Laurent shawl from her shoulders and slowly placing it on her head, she told them: "When this designer scarf rests on my shoulders, you see it as stylish and fashionable, when I cover my hair with it, you see it as a symbol of my oppression" ("The Post-9/11 Hijab as Icon" 261-262).

> union of cultural symbols, the photo hints at the specter of the global spread of Islam, and the continued salience of a tradition that 'defies Western understanding. (21)

To counter such hegemonic and patriarchal constructions of the veil, Mohja Kahf presents *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* as a narrative of resistance, a counter-hegemonic narrative that defies Western interpretations of the veil. Kahf joins a great number of scholars in their belief that Western representations of the veil have been politically construed to serve colonial and imperial projects. In "Algeria Unveiled", Frantz Fanon, for instance, comments on the situation in Algeria in the 1930's when the veil was used to fissure national and resistance movements. Sociologists revealed the solid and dynamic existence of matriarchy that united Algerian society while remaining behind the veil of patriarchy. This is why it became important to control women. This discovery, according to Fanon, has shaped the political doctrine of the French colonizer who concluded, "If we want to destroy the structure of Algerian society, its capacity for resistance, we must first of all conquer the women; we must go and find them behind the veil where they hide themselves…" ("Algeria Unveiled" 74). Thus, Fanon opines that it became known in the colonialist program that the Algerian woman was able to weaken the Algerian men. Fanon argues, "Converting the woman, winning her over to the foreign values, wrenching her free from her status, was at the same time achieving a real power over the man and attaining a practical, effective means of destructuring Algerian culture" ("Algeria Unveiled" 75).

According to Fanon, the colonizer's reverie of a total domestication of Algerian society was to be achieved throughout "unveiled women aiding and sheltering

the occupier" ("Algeria Unveiled" 75). Fanon concludes that the *haïk*[80] was not only a visible marker of Algerian women's identity, but also a potential signifier of an Algerian reality of resistance to French domination. Fanon states that the abandonment of this clothing code and the adoption of the colonizer's one would signify Algerians' acceptance of the French colonial project as a "civilizing mission":

> Every veil that fell, everybody that became liberated from the traditional embrace of the *haïk,* every face that offered itself to the bold and impatient glance of the occupier, was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer. Algerian society with every abandoned veil seemed to express its willingness to attend the master's school and to decide to change its habits under the occupier's direction and patronage. ("Algeria Unveiled" 76)

Thus, the attempt of unveiling Algerian women, according to Homi Bhabha, turns the veil into "a symbol of resistance, it becomes a technique of camouflage, a means of struggle – the veil conceals bombs" ("Remembering Fanon" xxiii). A clothing code is thus an important element of identification and attachment and the ban of the veil can be interpreted as a attempt to detach subjects from their land of attachment. In order to de-ottomanize Turkey, for instance, Atatürk has launched an attack against wearing the fez that symbolized the tie to the Ottoman past. In a similar vein, Mohja Kahf highlights how unveiling operates as a means of reinforcing the power dynamics. She uses Syria as an example to demonstrate the way Muslim women had to endure government oppression because of the Islamic veil and how the Ba'ath party of Hafiz al

[80] The *haïk* is the Arab name for the big square veil worn by Algerian women and that they wrap around themselves so that just their hands, feet and eyes remain visible. Fanon explains that this traditional cloth was a source of frustration for the European colonizer who despised the fact that a veiled woman sees without being seen. This lack of reciprocity in terms of sight disturbed the colonizer.

Assad insisted on unveiling as a way of breaching the Muslim Brotherhood party. Kahf uses Khadra's aunt Razanne's story as a historiographical account of the Hama Massacre of 1982[81]. Back in Syria, Khadra learns from Aunt Razanne about the experience of her daughter Reem:

> The day the paratroopers tore our veils; you could strip off your hijab and jilbab, or get a gun to your head … Well Reem was on foot, coming back from the seamstress. She tried to duck into the lobby of an apartment building but it was the buzzer kind and she couldn't get in … The paratrooper grabs her by the arm, with a soldier right beside her. She slips off the scarf right away. Why endanger your life for it? But then, the paratrooper barks at her to take off her manteau, too. Well my Reem is only wearing a cami and half-slip under the manteau that day, as it happens… With the soldier prodding her with the rifle, she starts to unbutton. She is mortified … So the paratrooper can't even wait for Reem to take off her clothes. So she rips off the manteau herself, and holds it up in the air and sets it on fire with a blowtorch. (281)

The paratroopers' ferocious behavior towards veiled women shocks Khadra but makes her understand how exile was the only alternative for her parents and how such a decision was important for her parents who were eager to stay true to themselves. Even though Razanne's husband Uncle Mazen tersely comments that it was those dissidents

[81] The Hama Massacre took place in the city of Hama, Syria in 1982 when the Muslim Brotherhood Anti-regime forces seized control of parts of the city of Hama and "called on all Syrians to join in a jihad against the government. Al-Asad responded to the Hama rebellion with ferocious brutality. The Syrian military, under the overall direction of his younger brother, Rif'at al-Asad, launched a deadly campaign against the city and its civilian population . . . . When the military operation was halted after two weeks, the Asad regime had preserved itself and crushed the rebellion, but at a terrible cost. Large portions of the city of Hama lay in ruins, and at least 10,000 of its inhabitants were dead, killed by the armed forces of their own government. The events at Hama sent a collective chill of fear through Syrian society. Hafiz al-Asad had issued a warning to other potential dissidents that his regime would use all the force at its disposal to remain in power" (Cleveland & Bunton 407).

like Khadra's parents who politicized hijab and have made life hell for them, Khadra explains that her parents "stood taller in her sight", and that at least "they had not stooped. Had not twisted their minds to fit into a cramped space, had not shrunk themselves like poor Uncle Mazen and Aunt Razanne" (282). Being proud of her parents' dissidence and her mother's refusal to take off her hijab are elements that define *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* as a counter-hegemonic narrative of resistance that defies Western interpretations of the Muslim veiled woman.

Repeatedly faced with the biased interpretation of the veil as a sign of backwardness, Khadra learns that wearing the veil had caused her mother Ebtehaj much agony after her mother died, and her father got married to a Turkish secular Kemalist[82] woman called Sibelle. Téta explains to Khadra that Sibelle "was a Kemalist, totally secular … Militantly, spitefully secular" (275). Kahf presents Sibelle as a colonial agent who gradually westernizes, or Kemalizes, the Syrian family. This argument is backed

[82] Kemalism refers to the westernizing reforms that were determined in large measure by Mustafa Kemal, known as Atatürk (meaning father of the Turks). Cleveland and Bunton profile the secular reforms brought by Atatürk in the following passage, "Secularism was a central element in Atatürk's platform, and the impatient Westernizer pursued it with a thoroughness unparalleled in modern Islamic history… Other secularizing legislation quickly followed. The office of shaykh al-Islam was abolished, the religious schools were closed, and the Ministry of Religious Endowments was eliminated. In 1926 the assembly went much further and voted to abolish the Mejelle and the shari'ah. In their place, the Swiss civil code was adopted, along with penal and commercial codes modeled on Italian and German examples. This was a direct break with the past . . . . The new civil code forbade polygamy and broadened the grounds by which wives could seek divorce. As a result of these reform measures, the ulama lost the final vestiges of their role in affairs of state, and their numbers declined. Secularism affected not only official institutions but also the religious practices of the Turkish people. The Sufi orders were dissolved, and worship at tombs and shrines was prohibited by law. Atatürk launched a personal attack on the fez, the brimless headgear that enabled a worshiper to touch his forehead to the ground during prayer. To Atatürk, the fez symbolized a tie to the Ottoman past, and he was determined to force its abandonment. In summer 1925 the president took to wearing a panama hat during his public appearances, explaining that hats were the headgear of civilized nations. In November the assembly endorsed the president's practice and passed a law that made it a criminal offense to wear a fez. Hats became a prime symbol of Turkey's drive to Westernize . . . . One of the most controversial acts of secularization involved the translation of the Quran. Because the divine revelations were in Arabic, translations were prohibited, for they were seen as tampering with the direct word of God. But Atatürk commissioned a translation of the Quran into Turkish and had it read publicly in 1932. In the same year legislation made obligatory the issuing of the call to prayer in Turkish instead of Arabic" (Cleveland & Bunton 180-1).

up by the fact that Sibelle succeeds in having Ebtehaj's father going in her direction "making light of his prayers, dropping out of his first wife's pious circle, allowing wine at his table" (275). By reforming the religious foundation of Ebtehaj's family, Sibelle establishes a new secular household where Ebtehaj becomes a persona non grata because of her hijab. Khadra learns from Téta that Sibelle "mocked her [mother] for wearing hijab. Most fashionable people had stopped wearing hijab by then … the city was against it, the tide was against it" (275). Ebtehaj was not only ridiculed by her stepmother, but was also harassed and bellicosely disparaged by her as Téta recounts, "Sibelle loathed the sight of that hijab. She made fun of it – she tried everything – she'd yank it right off her head. I heard she put it in the pot and shat on it – no I'm not kidding. She was embarrassed to be seen in public with her stepdaughter in it. Made Ebtehaj walk on the other side of the street . . ." (275).

Sibelle's disruptive influence on Ebtehaj's father and household is the cause behind Ebtehaj's exile into the United States as dwelling in Sibelle's household has become impossible. Ebtehaj's feeling of homelessness had been exacerbated when her stepmother tried to force her to marry a man "who drank and whored, just to make her misery lifelong" (276). Moreover, Sibelle "yanked her out of that Quran circle she was in for just a few months – her deceased mother's circle" and warned Ebtehaj that, "she wouldn't have anyone in *her* household as connected to it" (275-6; emphasis in original). Conveniently, Téta pointed to Ebtehaj's homelessness by insisting on the function of the deictic pronoun "her" in Sibelle's appropriation of the household through the following remark, "'Her' household, imagine! As if your mother had no place in her own home anymore! Yanked your mother right out" (276).

Khadra suffers from the same harassment as her mother but in a different environment. One of Khadra's childhood experiences in America was when she was

cornered by two schoolboys at school: Brent Lott and Curtis Stephenson who harassed and plagued her because of the veil. Khadra still recalls how aggressively and mockingly the two boys grabbed her Malcolm X book and asked her to "take off [her] towel first" (124) before they would give her back the book. Therefore, Curtis ends up yanking her scarf off her head and comments, "Look, raghead's got hair under that piece a shit" (124). No matter how Khadra tries to resist, the boys hold her down until they tear her scarf and Khadra reacts by screaming, "I hate you". Not being able to understand her rage because the boys have seen her hair, Brent shouts at her, "It's just hair, you psycho" (124).

This scene is not of the scopophilically-arranged kind that focuses on appearance since there is no mysterious titillation in the act of unveiling. Moreover, although Khadra's hair has become the object of the boys' gaze, she is unfetishized. However, the unfetishization of Khadra's hair is engendered by the hatred felt for her. This unfetishization might be explained through the principle motive behind the boys' behavior that was their curiosity, and curiosity, in this case, overwhelms voyeuristic conduct. As a result, the veil acts here as a protector against the curious phallic scopophilic gaze in a heterosocial world. Khadra conceives of the veil as that element that empowers her by removing her body from male scrutiny that reduces women's value to fetish objects. Veiling, in Khadra's case, is a way to enable men to see behind the veil that veils and hypnotizes the phallocentric nature of men who then become able to appreciate women in a non-fetishizing way. Following this line of thought, the veil becomes liberating as it frees women from the fetishizing male gaze that circumscribes the treatment of women to a scopophilic approach. Thus, veiling is voluntarily adopted by Khadra in order to direct the male gaze at her intellectual value, yet the boys are not interested in *The Autobiography of Malcolm X* or Theodore Dreiser's *An American*

Tragedy (the books that slipped to the floor), rather their own preoccupation is with the mystery that lies behind Khadra's veil. Being disinterested in what Khadra reads, the boys are not interested in what she thinks but in what she looks like.

Summarizing her view of the current debates equalizing hijab with backwardness and highlighting this falsity about the veiling practice being opposed to modernity, Mohja Kahf writes in *Hijab Scene # 7*[83]:

> No I'm not bald
>
> No I'm not from that country where women can't drive cars
>
> No I would not like to defect. Thank you,
>
> I'm already American
>
> What else would you like me to explain
>
> relevant to my opening a bank account,
>
> buying insurance,
>
> reserving a seat on a flight?
>
> Yes I speak English
>
> Yes I'm legal (Lines 1-10)

Here the speaker addresses common assumptions about women wearing hijab. The speaker's irritation heightens as she contends with assumption after assumption. In this poem the speaker emphatically stresses her Americanness in spite of her silent interlocutor's stubborn belief in her foreignness because of her "lurid" dressing code. After all, is not wearing or not the veil a matter of individual liberty that need not be decided but individually? Is not this individual liberty worth respect as other Western liberties such as polyamory? Is not this diatribe against hijab a form of racism aiming at

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[83] *Hijab scenes* are poems that appear in Mohja Kahf's short volume of poetry *E-mails from Scheherazad*. The poems are numbered but they defy chronological logic as the numbers either appear in a non-chronological way or are completely missing. The *Hijab Scenes* poems include poems 1-3, 5 and 7.

founding a global society where the West discursively subdues the rest of the World and rises to dominance?

III.4. The Journey from Westoxification to Eastoxification

Let us begin this section with a brief reminder that the main motif behind the exile of the Shamy family was the "westoxificating" measures taken by the Ba'ath regime of Hafiz al Assad. This would prepare the ground for a presumption that the Shamy family will not easily succumb to the lure of the American Dream and assimilate into American mainstream. As a family that accurately observes Islamic laws, the Shamys regard all that is Western as wrong and blasphemous and try to render their children impervious to what Huntington calls the wave of "westoxification" they are subject to. The Shamys' apprehension is concretized through Ebtehaj's later admission to Khadra, "Our biggest fear was always losing you . . . losing our children to America. Having you not keep Islam one hundred percent" (383-4). Khadra's parents deploy herculean efforts to immunize their children against a Western degenerate way of life by isolating them from Westerners and reinforcing the religious aspect of their education. This Islamic religious hubris seen as a "revival" by Samuel Huntington:

> Is not a rejection of modernity, it is a rejection of the West and of the secular, relativistic, degenerate culture associated with the West. It is a rejection of what has been termed the "Westoxification" of non-Western societies. It is a declaration of cultural independence from the West, a proud statement that: "we will be modern but we won't be you". (*The Clash of Civilizations* 101)

Khadra learns so many things from her parents that induce her to regard all that is Western as toxic. She inherits Westophobia from her parents who constantly remind

her and her brothers that all what is Western is wrong. Ebtehaj, for instance, "always ran the laundry twice in the Fallen Timbers basement laundry room with the coin machines" as a precautionary measure in case the person who had used the washer before her children had a dog. Ebtehaj claims, "You never know with Americans. Pee, poop, vomit, dog spit, and beer were impurities. Americans didn't care about impurities. They let their dogs rub their balls on the couches they sit on and drool on the beds they sleep in and lick the mouths of their children" (4).

This view of Americans as being loathsomely different is repeatedly stressed by Khadra's parents in order to immunize her and her brothers against the Western "debauched" lifestyle. Duval explains that Western people have become decadent as they now worship a new kind of God that provides them with unlimited liberties [84]. Eventually, this is explained by Westerners' licentious behavior, from a religious point of view, after the sexual revolution of the 1960's or their conduct in the light of what is philosophically regarded by Friedrich Nietzsche as "the death of God"[85]. As such, the Western postmodern way of life is contradictory with the Muslim codes that insist on the necessity of being aware of the omnipresence of God.

The Shamys do not only regard Americans as "filthy" but they also see them as confusingly gender-bender. This is shown through the physical appearance of the Shamys' neighbors Lindsey and Leslie, a young couple who both "had long hair and

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[84] Duval writes in this concern, "Now the West worships a new kind of God. Their God is called 'do anything you like'. There are no rules or limits. Men and women go around almost naked in the streets, they kiss and touch each other in public, and in the name of liberty they sleep around as they like. Women are exposing that which should be private and allowing them to be used by anyone as a cheap commodity. Can this be called women's liberation, civilization or development? The west is disintegrating, and their people are lost amidst high crime rates, drugs and sexual perversity. Islam prevents all this" (61).

[85] In the *Gay Science*, Section 125(The Madman), Nietzsche explains the idea of "the death of God" as follows, "Do we still hear nothing of the noise of the grave-diggers who are burying God? Do we still smell nothing of the divine decomposition? – Gods, too, decompose! God is dead! God remains dead! And we have killed him. How can we console ourselves, the murderers of all murderers! The holiest and the mightiest thing the world has ever possessed has bled to death under our knives: who will wipe this blood from us? With what water could we clean ourselves? What festivals of atonement, what holy games willll we have to invent for ourselves? Is the magnitude not too great for us? Do we not ourselves have to become gods merely to appear worthy of it? " (120).

wore loose clothes and lots of necklaces" (7). This couple bewildered the Shamys as they could not distinguish the man from the woman. When offering Ebtehaj a miso soup, the latter could not discern if the one in front of her was the man or the woman. Ebtehaj keeps hypothesizing, "If male, he had very cleanshaven soft skin. If female, she had big knuckles and a very flat chest" (7). Ebtehaj's impossibility to amalgamate the oxymoronic visions of a beardless man or a woman with big knuckles incapacitates her to identify the person. If that person were her homosocial i.e., a woman, Ebtehaj tells the reader that she would have invited her. However, Ebtehaj ends up treating the person as a heterosocial, smiling politely and thanking him or her. It is important to note at this level that the beard is viewed in Middle Eastern culture as a symbol of manliness and that beardless men connote unmanliness[86]. Presently, Being bearded or beardless does not constitute a controversial debate as the fierce anti-veil polemic or as Najmabadi explains, "The culture wars correspondingly shifted from men's beard and beardlessness to women's veiling and unveiling" (250). By effacing differences between women and men, Westerners have spoiled the heterosocial nature of society. Indeed, in terms of gender, a typical Muslim society is more distinctive than a Western society because of visible markers as the headscarf and the full beard, viewed as signs of backwardness in the West. Wajdy also warns his children against befriending Americans who he fears will influence them. He speaks of Americans as a blasphemous population, "Generally speaking, Americans cussed, smoke, and drank, and the Shamys had it on good authority that a fair number of them used drugs. Americans dated and fornicated and committed adultery. They had broken families and lots of divorces" (68).

[86] In *Women with Mustaches and Men Without Beards: Gender and Sexual Anxieties of Iranian Modernity*, Najmabadi explains that the argument behind the loathing of a beardless man in nineteenth century Middle Eastern countries was the "cultural fear that young men may want to remain an object of desire rather than passing into the desiring man" (16). Najmabadi further explains that the growth of a beard demarcates the transition of the adolescent male from "an object of desire to a desiring subject" (15). The beard, according to Najmabadi, distinguishes a man from a mukhannas (an adult man who makes himself look like a young beardless man, displaying a wish to remain the object of desire of adult men).

Wajdy also explains to his children that family ethics do not exist in American society as Americans have broken families and high rates of divorce. Another social ill Wajdy immunizes his children against is American individualism as he elucidates how disintegrated American families are:

> Americans believed the individual was more important than the family, and money was more important than anything. Khadra's dad said Americans threw out their sons and daughters when they turned eighteen unless they could pay rent – to their own parents. And, at the other hand, they threw their parents into nursing homes when they got old. (68)

The most despised characteristic of Americans, according to Wajdy, is their uncleanliness as "Americans did not wash their buttholes with water when they pooped" (68). Americans also lack a very important quality preached in Islam, according to Wajdy, that is generosity and hospitality as they are very materialistic. Note that in Islam not only generosity is highly valued but that charity (*zakat* in Arabic) is one of the five pillars of Islam. Wajdy explains the avarice of the American people[87] throughout the following anecdote: "Americans were not generous and hospitable like Uncle Abdulla or Aunt Fatma; they invited people to their houses only a few at a time … and only fed them little tiny portions of food they called courses on big empty plates they called good china . . . " (68).

The representation of Americans as signifying a "despised difference" is being countered by the various positive images of the Muslim world that are provided by Khadra's parents. The use of positive representations of the Muslim world is a double edge strategy whose aims are: first to highlight the racist character of Americans and

[87] We should recall that avarice is one of the seven deadly sins in Christianity together with lust, gluttony, sloth, wrath, envy and pride. However, Americans have become too materialistic and greedy that capitalism has come to be the religion of the 20th and 21st centuries. This one example highlights how Christian values are at odds with capitalism.

second to counter the hegemonic discourse by rupturing the authoritative narratives of "othering" that foster Islamophobia. In the novel, the Dawah Center, for instance, is subject to acts of vandalism by anti-Muslims. On Zuhura's wedding day, the center is attacked during prayer time. When the women finished prayer, they found that rotten eggs and tomatoes were thrown at the entrance with toilet paper everywhere. The windows were also sprayed with different verbal trespasses such as "FUCK YOU, RAGHEADS. DIE" that were signed "KKK, 100% USA" (82; emphasis in original). Muslims' sentiment that they are discriminated against is heightened because the narrator informs us, "Vandalism of the Dawah Center with soap and white spray paint was something the police couldn't seem to stop; they only came and took pictures every time it happened" (119). Although this violence does not represent mainstream America, it is something Middle Eastern people hate America for.

In dismantling the image of Muslims as backward and uncivilized, Khadra's parents educate their children about Muslims' various scientific achievements throughout history[88]. Ebtehaj tells them, "Isalm was scientific. Not like Christianity. Islam, it encourages us to learn science. In history, Christianity killed the scientists" (120). They also learn that it was Ibn Sina who "advanced the science of optics in the eleventh century" and a Muslim scientist named Al-Idrissi "who discovered the world was round" (120). Ebtehaj also educates her children about the heyday of Islamic civilization telling them "of the glories of Al-Andalus and the beauties of Baghdad and Cairo in their prime" (120). However, Khadra wonders why her school text books do

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[88] For more details on the scientific inventions accomplished by Muslims see the mini-movie entitled "*1001 Inventions and The Library of Secrets*" available from http://www.1001inventions.com/media/video/library. In the movie, Oscar-winning actor and Screen legend Sir Ben Kingsley has taken the mysterious and cantankerous role of a librarian who takes a group of school children on an illuminating journey to meet pioneering scientists and engineers from the Muslim civilization. In the movie, Sir Ben Kingsley ends up being the 12th century engineering genius Al-Jazari.

not include such information. As a school girl, she even engages in the creation of a counter hegemonic narrative that infuriates her teacher.

Khadra's vision of Americans as culturally intoxicating is relative to what she learns from her parents about the good qualities of a Muslim, whereupon she draws an ideal image of Muslim countries. However, Khadra soon becomes disillusioned as she ends up regarding the Middle East as equally Eastoxificating. Khadra's disillusionment with the Muslim world began in the United States inside her family when she gradually discovers how hypocritical her parents are. For instance, Ebtehaj pushes Khadra into the bathtub "with the water running hot and hard" even though Khadra's father always reminds his children that "the Prophet teaches us not to waste, even if we are taking water from a river" (66).

Khadra and her brothers also learn from their parents that racism is *haram* in Islam. However, when Khadra asks why she cannot braid her hair like Tayiba, she is surprised to hear Téta use a derogatory term to describe Black people referring to them as Zunuj and *Abeed* telling her that she has "such pretty hair, not like that repulsive hair of Abeed, all kinky and unnatural" (75). Téta is reprimanded by Khadra who angrily protests, "You can't say that … It's haram to be racist. Eyad! Isn't it haram to be racist?" (75-6). Khadra's parents' hypocritical masks fall when they oppose Eyad's marriage to Dr Abdulkadir's daughter Maha because she was Black. Upon hearing Eyad's idea, Wajdy "stopped deboning the chicken, mid-breast, and blurted, "But for heaven's sake, she's black as coal!"" (139). Ebtehaj's attitude was not very different from Wajdy's and although she kept silent, her refusal was crystal-clear because "black grandchildren were not what she had in mind, either" (139).

Khadra deduces that the behavior of many Muslims does not reflect the core of Islamic values. Her disenchantment with her parents' righteousness as Muslims reaches

its most acute form when her parents let down their Islamic ideals in order to get American citizenship. Khadra and Eyad could not understand how their parents could "swear to defend the U.S. in war when and if called to do so" (142). As a response, "Khadra rolled her eyes – like she was ever going to help the U.S. and its buddy Israel kill more Palestinians and Lebanese!" (142). Fearing that Khadra or Eyad would verbally express their obnoxious attitude in front of the judge, Wajdy "shot [them] a terrible, stern look" (143). To Khadra's and Eyad's consternation, Wajdy makes a dramatic volte-face from anti-American sentiments to pro-American ones as he enunciates in the *khutba* he gave at the Dawah Center's small *juma* service after he has become an American citizen:

> In many ways, my brothers, America is more Islamic than the countries of the Muslim world. There is no widespread corruption. You can enter a judge's offices and not need to bribe his secretary for the simple basic services … But let's face it: here *inside* America, there are many good qualities. Law and order, cleanliness, democracy, freedom to work and honestly seek the provision of the Lord … freedom to practice religion. These are Islamic qualities. America is like Islam without Muslims, and our sick and corrupt Muslim home countries – they are Muslims without Islam. (143-4; emphasis in original)

With such ramblings, Wajdy lost his credibility among the Dawah Center members as his address was not warmly received. Brother Taher even asks Wajdy, "You're just discovering that you're American and you want to wave a flag now" (144). Wajdy's reflection that "America is like Islam without Muslims, and our sick and corrupt Muslim home countries – they are Muslims without Islam" will soon be shared by Khadra. During her journey to Arab countries in order to discover who she really is,

Khadra finds that Middle-Eatsern countries are eastoxifcating and chooses to return to the United States of America out of her own volition. During her hajj journey in Saudi Arabia, for example, Khadra finds out that her parents have been lying to her about how going to the mosque for women was mandatory and part of Islam when she was conducted back home by two officers because she wanted to pray *fajr* in the mosque. What was more striking for Khadra was the attitude of the officers when she tried to convince them that it was not wrong for a woman to go the mosque. After reciting the Prophet's saying, "You must never prevent the female servants of God from attending the Houses of God", Khadra was laughed at and mocked by one of them who said, "Listen to this *woman* quoting the scriptures at *us*" (168; emphasis in original) whereupon Khadra started screaming. Being alone outside at such an hour, Khadra was thought to be a salacious woman. The narrator explains in this regard, "The tone when he said "this woman" – it was like the police thought she was some kind of bad woman, out in the street at that dark hour, alone, face uncovered, and were going to haul her in for some sort of *vice* crime. None of them believed her or even listened to her". (168; emphasis in original)

Another eye-opening experience about the Muslim world without Islam is Khadra's adventure with her cousin Afaaf. Khadra and Afaaf went to visit the latter's aunt Sheikha who welcomed the girls to her abode but apologized for not being able to stay with them because she had to interview the surrealist playwright Raja Alem. Sheikha put on her *abaya* and veil and kindly invited the girls to use the library. In lieu of using the library, Afaaf proposes to Khadra to go out and "flipped open a compact and applied mascara, eye-shadow, and blusher, and outlined her lips" (173). To Khadra's consternation, after sending Sheikha's driver home as soon as he dropped them off, Afaaf got into a long black limousine and pulled Khadra in after her. The limo

was full of Saudi men and Afaaf hastens to introduce Khadra as her "American cousin" (175). Once in the limo, Afaaf threw off her long garment and veil and in a vampish way "shook out her short, dark auburn curls. Her lips were full and glossy" (174).

Being regarded as an American (which reads here more liberated than Arab women and sexually available), Khadra is subject to the men's debasing gaze even though she does not take off her veil. Henceforth, the veil loses its value as a signifier of protection. Whatever Khadra does to exhibit her Arabness, the guys still regard her as a licentious American. For instance, when one of the men named Ghazi starts a conversation with Khadra telling her "you're American, huh?" (176), she answers nervously by refuting and telling him that she is Arab just like him. Eager to know more about Khadra, Ghazi asks her what kind of Arab she is, to which Khadra hastens to answer that she is the Muslim kind. However when Ghazi knew that Khadra was originally from Syria, he grinned, "Syrian girls have a reputation" (176). When judging Khadra as a licentious girl because of where she lives, America, or where she originally comes from, Syria, the men are doing to her what she and her family have been doing to Americans for years. Although they live in Saudi Arabia, the mother land of all Muslims, Afaaf and the men in the limo engage in an unislamic behavior in a Muslim land. This turns to be a traumatic experience for Khadra who cannot conceive of the contradiction between Afaaf's belonging in a Muslim country and her behavior as a libertine woman.

Because Americanness is incompatible with Islam, the men in the limo find difficulties to believe that Khadra was an observant Muslim. For instance, Ghazi points at Khadra's headscarf and says to her, "Surely you don't wear that thing in America" (177). Although Ghazi is an Arab Muslim and shares the same identity as Khadra, he constitutes the same danger Brent Lott has constituted, even though Brent's aggression

is motivated by his incomprehension of her difference. A few minutes later, Ghazi pulls her veil down and "pushes his other hand up against her breasts and his mouth was grazing her now exposed neck" (177). When she tries to get him off her, he asks her, "What is it - what is the big *deal* - we're not doing anything you have to worry about" (177-8; emphasis in original). Ghazi further importunes Khadra when he adds, "We've got our clothes on – and you grew up in *America* – don't tell me you never do stuff like this in America –" (178; emphasis in original). Indeed, such a behavior by Muslims in Saudi Arabia, the cradle of Islamic civilization, was the last thing Khadra would have expected. This experience is a turning point in Khadra's life. It reverses situations and shapes Khadra's new vision of the Middle East as "eastoxificating" and the West as a more appropriate place for a Muslim to live in, mainly because of the various opportunities a democratic state offers its citizens.

Khadra deduces that the utopian vision she had constructed of the Muslim world was far from being real, and that although both Western and Eastern societies are "toxic"; life in the West is more relieving than in the East. In a Western democratic state as the United States, Khadra could at least enjoy her cherished right of freedom of speech. Her dismemberment from the Muslim community of the Middle East is grounded in the identitarian crisis that has struck the Arab world and that has affected greatly the way Middle Eastern people identify. Following the colonial era and on account of globalization, Middle Eastern states are unable to define, project, and maintain an identity that is typically representative of the Middle East proper. Because of colonization and the deep-seated process of "othering", even Middle Eastern states have set the Western model as universal and are adopting it as an alternative.

Following this line of thought, Islam has become a homeless religion suffering from abandonment in the once Mohammadan Muslim land and persecution in foreign

lands, and its indigenous inhabitants have become refugees or more appropriately, diasporic subjects. Therefore, countries and states for Khadra become devoid of any national affiliation and all represent geographical territories that shelter nomads. Conveniently, this might be the reason behind Khadra's ultimate choice to settle in the United States of America however islamophobic it is.

III.5. The Topos of Belonging in a Labyrinthine Home Politics

Discussing the issue of belonging as regards Arab Muslim Americans is not an easy task because three different homes are in question. The notion of belonging for Muslim Arab Americans rests on three co-ordinates: Islam, the Arab world, and America. In fact, issues of belonging are related to the question of priority. If one believes that his Arab heritage is a priority, so he feels he belongs in the homeland he has left behind. If one assimilates into American mainstream, then America is his homeland. Ultimately, if one believes that Islam is a priority in his life, then the entire Universe constitutes a home[89].

In *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, Mohja Kahf highlights how feelings of belonging are very hard to define for Arab Muslim Americans, let alone exiled subjects. At the beginning of the novel, Khadra's feeling of belonging is restricted to her family and the ethnically rich Muslim community of the Dawah Center. Although the members

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[89] Sayyid explains that the notion of diaspora does not describe the Muslim minorities spread all over the world because there is no fixed homeland for Muslims. Sayyid points out, "While it is the case that there are many Muslims living as minorities throughout the world, the idea of a diaspora demands both a displaced population and a homeland—the point from which the displacement originates. Such a homeland is clearly lacking in the Muslim case. We Muslims do not have a Zion—a place of redemptive return. Also the universalist urge within many Muslim discourses makes it difficult to privilege a particular locale as a homeland, imagined or otherwise" (137).

of the Dawah Center are nationalistically rooted in different countries[90], the Islamic credo has veiled the limitations of nationalism and gathered instead a wide variety of people whose feelings of belonging surpass the geographical definition.

Because members of the Dawah Center are all Muslims, but not all Arabs, and all of them live in the United States of America, the two mostly used attributes are Muslims and Americans. This explains why Khadra and her brothers concentrate too much on their Islamic heritage and neglect their Arabness. The neglecting of the Arab heritage is grounded in Khadra's belief that the Arab world is homogeneously Islamic. However, Khadra's feeling of belonging in a Muslim homogeneous *Umma* is put into question when she discovers that Islam is not a monolith. When she discovers that Shia pray differently from Sunni, Khadra excludes the Shia members from her imagined Muslim collectivity. Khadra has been brought up in an environment that simply put things in two categories: *halal* and *haram*, and hence her insistence on not having anything in common with Americans who, in her opinion do not care when they sin. Recall that Khadra's anti-American sentiment is fuelled by her parents' constant reminder that Americans are *kuffar*. After their passports had expired, Wajdy and Ebtehaj felt an urgent need "to court to become U.S. citizens"; otherwise, "they would become undocumented aliens, a precarious limbo status" (140). Although, being an American citizen did not matter for Jihad who was born in America, to Khadra things were different:

> To her, taking citizenship felt like giving up, giving in. After all she'd been through at school, defending her identity against the jeering kids who vaunted America's superiority as the clincher put-down to everything she said, everything she was. Wasn't she supposed to be an

[90] Syria (the Shamys), Sudan (The Abdul-Kadirs), the United States (the Thoreaus), Palestine (the Nabolsys), India (the Haqiqat family).

> Islamic warrior woman, a Nusayba, a Sumaya, an Um Salamah in exile, by the waters dark, of Babylon? (141).

Khadra's belonging in a Muslim community is more clearly set here as she identifies with Muslim illustrious women in the past. The three women have been persecuted because of their faith and all self-exiled in order not to be tortured further. Khadra identifies with women whose lives are far from being ordinary. Nusayba, Sumaya as well as Um Salamah were women known for their stern resistance to compromise their faith whatever the conditions were. Khadra's repulsion of becoming an American citizen is a form of resistance akin to the three women's one. The way her parents succumb to American assimilation at the first obstacle urges her to distance herself further from the contemporary Muslim community and to seek another Muslim community in the past whose members share her ideals.

Like Sumaya, Nusayba and Um Salamah, Khadra's sense of exile is felt when she leaves America (the land of *Kuffar*) for Saudi Arabia (the homeland of Muslims) to accomplish her Hajj duty. When the Airplane landed in the Airport of Jeddah, Khadra thought at last that it was "someplace where we really belong. It's the land of the Prophet. The land of all Muslims" (159). After the pernicious incident of the limo, however, Khadra put her understanding of the notion of home into question. She even spontaneously referred to America as "home" when she confessed to her mother that she was happy they were quitting that place (Saudi Arabia). Khadra, the narrator tells us, "was glad to be going home. "Home" – she said, without thinking" (179).

Khadra's feelings of belonging are unstable as there are many factors responsible for her definition of belonging. On her Hajj trip with her family, for instance, Khadra's feeling of attachment fluctuate from the place where she lives to the community she belongs to. When leaving America for Saudi Arabia, Khadra "pasted her

face to the airplane window . . . [and] the phrase "leaving home" came into her head" then soon she remembers, "But Indianapolis is not my home, she thought indignantly" (157). Afterwards, Khadra changes her mind as "catchphrases from Islamic revival nasheeds flashed in her head – how a true Muslim feels at home wherever the call to prayer is sung, how a true Muslim feels no attachment to one nation or tribe over another" (157). Khadra's final decision that her home as a Muslim is wherever the architectural Islamic monument of the mosque is to be found renders her conception of home ubiquitous and alleviates her feelings of homelessness in the United States. Thus, Khadra diasporizes the notion of home for Muslims. Khadra's hesitation to precisely define a "home" is grounded in the different conceptualizations of "home" in the Arab mind, the Muslim mind and the American mind. Once and again, feelings of belonging are thus dependent on how priorities are classified.

At the linguistic level, Khadra belongs in both communities. When Khadra first met Juma, her husband, his first impression of her was that "she had a pure Arabic accent – even though she spoke English with a regular American accent" (201). However, at the cultural level Khadra still cares about not melting her Islamness and Arabness with Americanness. In spite of being a resident in America for a long time, Khadra gives the reader the impression that she can easily abandon this country without a minimum of nostalgia. when Juma asks Khadra's hand for marriage, she accepts although they had never exchanged conversations. Being a Kuwaiti, Juma "was up-front about his future being in Kuwait" and Khadra did not object, for her "maybe it was the answer to not belonging in America all these years" (205). Khadra's reflection that she better belongs in a Kuwaiti society than in an American one is motivated by her identification as an Arab. Note that Khadra does not think of Syria in nationalistic terms and that all Arab countries are home for her. Her sense of belonging as an Arab is as

generic as her feeling of belonging as a Muslim as neither form of belonging is geographically limited by the nationalistic configurations of belonging.

After Khadra's visit to Kuwait with Juma her relation with her husband worsens. Unfortunately, Khadra discovers that she is pregnant and feels that abortion is urgent given her fragmentary marital relationship with Juma. Eventually, Khadra aborts and offers Juma a *khulu* (a wife-initiated divorce) as a solution. Abortion and *khulu* have widened the gap between Khadra and her Muslim community who completely abandons her. After being dismembered from the Dawah Center community that regarded Khadra's behavior as unislamic, Khadra "wanted to abort the Dawah Center and its entire community . . . twenty one years of useless head-clutter. It all had to go" (261-2). The Dawah Center acts as the umbilical cord that attaches Khadra to the Muslim collectivity and its cutting marks Khadra's expected feeling of homelessness among the Muslim community of the United States. This is confirmed by the Shamy family's abandonment of Khadra during her worst days.

After such drastic episodes in her life, Khadra finds herself in a complete maze and consoles herself through the story of the Virgin Maryam by constantly practising "kaf ha ya ayn sad … And remember Mary in the Book … When she withdrew from her family to a place in the East" (197). Moreover, Khadra thought, "It was time for retreat. She would betake herself unto an eastern place" (266) and finally mimics Maryam. No matter how uprooting the abandonment of her family and the Dawah members is, the Koranic tone in Khadra's statement reflects her determination to claim belonging in a Muslim land. After divorce, Khadra hits rock bottom and starts a quest to find out who she really is. At last and for the first time, Khadra decides to go to Syria, "Back where she came from: Syria. Land where her fathers died. Land that made a little

boomerang scar on her knee. *Ya maal el shaam, you were always on my mind. Yellow rose of Damascus. Oh Damascus, don't you cry for me*" (266; emphasis in original).

Struggling to find answers that would satiate her need for an identity, Khadra decides to leave America for Syria. For the first time, Khadra recognizes the notion of belonging to be a family affair as she identifies her homeland as the territory where her ancestors died. The boomerang scar is very metaphorical in this passage. With the effect of a boomerang it was the scar that has taken Khadra back to Syria. The matrilineal bond being fragmentary, Khadra's trip to Syria is a way to bridge the gap between the first and third generations. The journey to Syria is constructive for Khadra as she comes to make her proper account of Syria. Let us recall that all that Khadra knows about Syria is that it has splintered her family. In Syria, Téta acts as an informant who fills the gaps in Khadra's story about Syria and her family. For Khadra "Syria is Téta" (270), and this gives optimum credibility to her grandmother whose stories are the ones Khadra would believe. Although Khadra understands how precious heritage is, she decides to go back to America when she concludes at last that, "It was in the American crucible where her character had been forged, for good or ill" (313). Khadra is not ready to completely abandon her ancestral home as she opines that heritage is "a treasure fire cannot eat" (313), but attempts to revive that heritage in America, thus creating a hybrid sense of belonging.

The feeling of homelessness takes on a new meaning when Khadra decides to abandon the veiling tradition in Syria, and once back in America she starts conceiving of hijab as her home. The narrator explains in this regard, "She was beginning to see that, of the covered and uncovered modes, she preferred the covered, after all, and she wore it more often than not … She was never going back to being a stickler about hijab. But it was something her body felt at home in" (373-4).

Being uncovered, Khadra feels homeless as her only connector to her faith is abandoned. Hijab is home for her feminine body as it protects her peaceful feminine nature from the invasion of a male colonizer, either scopophilically or sexually. Hijab referred to as home is a typically Islamic feminist conceptualization of home for the Muslim woman. Following Fanon's thought, unveiling for Khadra is "revealing her beauty, baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure" ("Algeria Unveiled" 77). Similarly, Leila Ahmed thinks that in resistance narratives:

> [The veil symbolizes] not the inferiority of the culture and the need to cast aside its customs in favor of those of the West, but, on the contrary, the dignity and validity of all native customs, and in particular those customs coming under fiercest colonial attack- the customs relating to women- and the need to tenaciously affirm them as a means of resistance to Western domination. (164)

As a result, although identifying hijab as sheltering for Muslim women against the untamed, potentially explosive male sexuality is an organically feminist conception of hijab, it defies the long-claimed universality of Western feminism. Were we to use Fanon's metaphor of unveiling as acceptance to be raped; by unveiling, Khadra would be letting in a male Western colonizer and willfully accepting to be "raped". Connotatively, rape does not only refer to the acceptance to assimilate but also implies an invitation to colonize.

Khadra's hesitation and incapacity to define one home for herself is grounded in the polysemous aspect of belonging. Conceptions of home are as controversial and instable as the ones of identity and do not subdue to one definition in the case of hyphenated Americans, in general, and Muslim Americans of Arab descent in particular.

III.6. Khadra's Identity in the Shadow of Arabness- Americanness - Islamness

Originally from an Arab country, practicing the faith of Islam and living in the United States of America are disparate ingredients that render the conception of identity terminologically hard. Although Arabness is compatible with Islamness and that both can form a whole, the third ingredient i.e., Americanness is paradoxically unfamiliar to both. At the level of identity, Mohja Kahf's protagonist in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* is metonymic of the Arab Muslim American community. Although the three identifications are true of Khadra, they do not all happen at the same time.

As a teenager and brought up in a strict Muslim community, Khadra comes to construct a black-and-white view of life and proceeds with her Manichean conception of identity. For Khadra, all that is Islamic is valid and ethically right and all that is not Islamic is demonic and ethically wrong, and hence her vigilance not to have anything in common with what her parents regard as "blasphemous" Americans. As an adolescent and through the trip she made to Saudi Arabia, Khadra was in the process of learning about both life codes that administer Islamic and Western societies.

The upsurge of one identity over the other is incident-dependent in Khadra's psyche. Throughout the many experiences of other characters in the novel, Khadra learns new things and starts constructing her own judgment on Western and Islamic norms independently of what her parents used to teach her. One example is when Zuhura, a Muslim female character in the novel, was raped and murdered. Her body was found near a bridge, she had cuts on her hands and her scarf and clothes were in rags. To Khadra's consternation, the *Indianapolis Freeman* called Zuhura:

> "A young black woman" and didn't even mention that she was Muslim at all. On the other hand, the *Indianapolis Star* pretended like race wasn't

> there at all, calling Zuhura a "foreign woman" and "an IU international student," as if her family didn't live right there in town. The *Indianapolis News* article treated it like just some random crime, giving it one tiny paragraph in the back pages. (95; emphasis in original)

The way the newspapers referred to Zuhura's murder maddened Khadra who meditated at Zuhura's funeral, "Maybe we don't belong here . . . . Maybe she belonged in a place where she would not get shoved and called "raghead" every other day in the school hallway" (97). This incident widens the gap between Khadra and Americans as she constructs a racist xenophobic image of them. It eventually fosters a rapprochement between Khadra and the Muslim community at large at the detriment of the American one.

The incident of the limousine in Saudi Arabia, on the other hand, renders Khadra a renegade who claims Americanness as more liberating and less hypocritical than Islam (appropriated by Arabs) in the 20th and 21st centuries[91]. Being invited to fornicate in a land that considers fornication as a sin urges Khadra to revise her conceptions and her parents' "lies" and take a detour in terms of identity. Not being able to marry her Islamness with her sense of Arabness, Khadra gives an opportunity to the second suitor i.e., Americanness however discordant it might be. In fact, the experience of the limousine marks drastic changes in Khadra's life and her new identification process. For the first time, Khadra starts considering the advantages of assimilation as she comes to view America as the most suitable homeland without fully compromising her Islamness.

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[91] Although I am not using this phrase for a derogatory purpose, this refers to the divorce between Arabness and Islamness earlier amalgamated by the Mohammadan generation. The birth of Islam in an Arabian territory has facilitated the marriage of Islamness with Arabness in such a way that some even consider all Muslims as Arabs and vice versa. This, in fact has induced Arabs to monopolize Islamness although Islam is not restricted to Arabs. Therefore, عروبة الإسلام as a historical fact should be distinguished from إسلام العرب that is a man-made version of Islam that is more Arab in countenance than Islamic.

The question that may arise at this level is: why does Khadra attempt to unite Americanness with Islamness and not Arabness? This is probably because the marriage of two cultures involves many impediments on account of the impossibility to unite two opposing sets into a whole. This is also because one's culture is identified through apparel that is considered a visible marker of cultural belonging[92]. Imagine, for instance, the attempt to create a whole out of the typical dressing code of an Arab (abaya and turban) and the archetypal clothing style of a modern European (a suit))! The designer as well as the model will be ridiculed for the idea.

Although this is also true of religious identities[93] being much of the time indicated by visible markers, they do not impose change as cultural ones do. Cultures are territorially bound while religions are unterritorial, and that gives more fluidity to religious identities in terms of mobility. Moreover, the attempt to create a hybrid identity out of two cultures often generates clashes between the two since there are serious concessions to make by abandoning elements of one culture to adopt ingredients of the other. This in turn gives birth to an inferiority complex for the exile subject and an authority complex for the host member, what complicates further the process of forging the hybrid identity. Independent of the 9/11 events as a turning point in history[94], uniting religious identities with cultural ones, however, is less constraining.

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[92] Frantz Fanon argues in this concern, "It is by their apparel that types of society first become known. whether through written accounts and photographic records or motion pictures. Thus, there are civilizations without neckties, civilizations with loin-cloths, and others without hats. The fact of belonging to a given cultural group is usually revealed by clothing traditions. In the Arab world, for example, the veil worn by women is at once noticed by the tourist. One may remain for a long time unaware of the fact that a Moslem does not eat pork or that he denies himself daily sexual relations during the month of Ramadan, but the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society" (Algeria Unveiled 74).

[93] For example, a Muslim woman identified because of the veil, a Christian identified because of the crucifix, a Jewish identified because of the skullcap.

[94] The 9/11 events have delineated a clear territory for Islam and Muslims that ought not to be transcended and render the idea that behind each attempt to go beyond those limits was a terrorist threat believable.

Let us note that the ban on religious ostentatious markers is a recent story that is geopolitically well studied by detractors of immigration and transculturation. Independent of these political facts, the union between any culture and any religion is possible. An Algerian, for instance, can be Muslim, Jew or Christian but he cannot be Algerian and French at the same time.

Mohja Kahf gives cute examples for such an argument through the character of Joe Thoreau, Zuhura's father, who is a white American from Nebraska married to a Kenyan Muslim: Aunt Ayesha. Joe later changed his name into Yusuf as he embraced Islam. He was the accountant of the Dawah Center and he regularly presented his "Why I embraced Islam" lectures at mosques (28). Trish, Omar Nabolsy's wife, is also an American convert who "didn't like it when people assumed she became a Muslim for her husband" (42). Although she was Muslim, she "was the only woman who didn't cover her hair, except during prayers" (42). Islam being the faith of characters of different origins in the novel: Kenyans, Americans, Palestinians, Pakistani and so on, is a showcase that religion has no territorial referent and that it may be accommodated in any cultural territory.

Therefore, after the various incidents that have opened Khadra's eyes on the ingredients of the identity she would later forge, Khadra chooses to amalgamate Americanness with Islamness. After getting American citizenship, Khadra became conscious that she was unavoidably American. On the one hand, the embrace of Islam by two American characters, Joe Thoreau and Trish, is representative of Islam as a religion open to all humanity and rejects the Arab's appropriation of Islam. On the other hand, Khadra's amalgamation of Islamness with Americanness is representative of a nation welcoming differences. This reciprocity in terms of adopting differences is the motif behind Khadra's choice of a hybrid identity. Although this utopian vision of

hybridity is far from being real, hybridity might be the best solution offered to Muslim exiles in the United States.

Following the limousine incident, Khadra comes to regard her trip to Saudi Arabia as an experience that marks the end of what she calls "her black scarf days" and the beginning of her journey back in Islamic civilization with all its triumphs. Instead, Khadra starts a new identitarian phase represented by her new clothing style. After returning from Hajj, "Khadra put on a white scarf with tiny flowers like a village meadow in spring, and a pale blue blouse and soft floral skirt. Her broadcloth navy Jilbab and plain black scarves she shoved to the back of her closet" (193). After a long hesitation, this clothing style in turn is abandoned in Syria where Khadra decides to unveil describing the unveiling moment as follows, "Under the cherry-tree canopy it had felt fine having her scarf slip off. She was safe; she was among friends . . . . The first few days without her life-long armor she felt wobbly, like a child on new legs" (310). The lexicon identifying hijab in this scene is related to the binary safety – insecurity. Similar to armor, Khadra views her hijab as a means of security protecting her against violent physical attacks (these may be in the form of a sexual rape as was the case of Zuhura and Ebtehaj, or a scopophilic gaze). Unveiling under a tree represents Khadra's hesitation to unveil because she was always in need to be covered, and this explains her choice to unveil while always being partly veiled by the tree. Lastly, identifying as "a child on new legs" after the unveiling scene explains Khadra's burial of her comparatively old identity, the one of:

> Some other Khadra who accepted things she didn't really want, who didn't really know what she wanted and took whatever was foisted on her without examining it. Took whatever crappy unnourishing food for the soul was slopped in front of her and ate it up, becoming its spokesperson

> and foisting it on others. Ruining friendships for it. She loathed that girl, that Khadra. Despised her. Blamed her for it all. Wanted to scratch her face, to hurt her, wanted to cut her – she looked dully at a razor, one of Juma's, forgotten in the back of a bathroom drawer. Wanted her dead. (263-4)

Obsessed with burying the loathsome doppelganger that haunts her and everything that reminds her of it; Khadra even "stopped watering the maidenhair fern in her little living room and it died" (264). By refusing to duplicate the identity of her parents, Khadra starts carving her own identity by way of replacing her parents' version of history with her version of "herstory". Let us note that contrary to the reader's expectation, unveiling does not take place in the United States of America, but in Syria. Had Khadra unveiled in the USA, because of the constraints of segregation, hybridity would not have been an option and nationalistic extremism would have been the result.

Back in Indiana, unveiling allows Khadra for more social mobility and opens for her a new horizon of friendships. And Khadra's new identity now resembles Kibbeh making, the traditional Syrian food whose making "was a great and complex task, requiring a whole clan in the kitchen" (189). In the same way Kibbeh making requires various ingredients and many persons, Khadra's identity construction invites various ingredients and many persons shaping her views and attitudes in the future. Furthermore, Khadra's move towards her new identity is represented by her new attitudes toward issues she had categorically rejected in her black-scarf days. Khadra learnt from her parents that a relationship with a boy outside the contours of marriage is *haram* and eventually Khadra got married to Juma without even sharing one conversation before they got married. By the end of the novel, however, and after her divorce and unveiling, Khadra starts getting out with a Tunisian secular Muslim named

Chrif. Although it was dating per se, Khadra preferred to name it "Islamic dating" (353) as she still held chastity as a moral religious principle. Khadra's laxity is also evident when she accepts, albeit disconcertingly, being introduced to Chrif's friends as his "Hoosier girlfriend" (342). On the one hand, Hoosier refers to Khadra's Americanness, and girlfriend connotes her secular version of Islam. Identified as such, Khadra resembles the Mishawaka Muslims her parents used to criticize. Back from visiting a Mishawaka community, Wajdy explains:

> They had one of the oldest mosques in America up there, founded by Arab Muslims who had come to America as far back as the 1870's. But slowly, over generations, they had mixed American things in with real Islam … none of the women up there wore hijab and none of the men had beards – they didn't even look like Muslims. (103)

Being more Muslim than Mishawaka Muslims and less Muslim than Muslims leads Khadra to the final conclusion that she was too religious for the secular men and too lax for the religious ones. Thus, Khadra locates herself between the secular and the religious thereby creating her own hybrid newness. By the end of the novel, Khadra repeatedly admits that she has forged a hybrid identity and this is because she could neglect neither her Islamness nor her Americanness. Khadra's name suggests her identitarian claim for Islamness and her settlement in the United States stands for her allegiance to the Western ideals of freedom of speech, democracy and equality.

Khadra concludes that she is fit only in the USA no matter how she feels about it, she even admits that she is "caught between homesick parents and a land that . . . hated her, spit her . . . yet at the same time made her unfit to live anywhere else" (391). She also confesses that all overseas trips she had undertaken "enabled her to see that she was irrevocably American" (391). Likewise, Khadra is not ready to abandon her

Islamness, metonymically represented by the veil, as she lately admits, “Of the covered and uncovered, she preferred the covered, after all, and she wore it more often than not” (373).

The color of the scarf she starts wearing in America: tangerine, is also highly symbolic and acts as a reminder of her Arabness. The tangerine scarf connects her to Téta, in particular, and Syria, in general. The narrator informs us that, “Khadra cut it in half and had the hems finished with a rolled edge at a tailor shop. Two magnificent scarves resulted” (293). Khadra keeps one for herself and offers the other half to Téta thereby rendering the tangerine scarf a deep reminder of Syria and Téta. Moreover,“a brilliant tangerine color [was] Téta’s favorite” (293). Choosing to wear the tangerine scarf and wiling “to pull it on tighter, not take it off the way Seemi keeps suggesting she do after every Middle Eastern crisis dredges up more American hate” (424) represent Khadra’s new tolerant attitude towards her hyphenated self. The bright and attention grabbing tangerine color shows that Khadra is no more bashful to be identified as a Muslim and proudly accepts all aspects of her “subaltern” identity in an islamophobic country. Khadra does not only preach hybridity throughout wearing the scarf in an unislamic country but also claims hybridity within Islam throughout her new apparel i.e., a scarf and jeans. By so doing, Khadra displays the possibility of being a Muslim and a modern person at the same time in a country that has long regarded Islam as a backward religion.

Claiming more explicitly her hybrid identity, Khadra sums up her life as an attempt to get at a hybrid self as she confesses to Hakim, “I guess what I’ve been doing is trying to get to a place where I could reconnect the two, and be a whole person” (395). After all, this fusion of Islamness with Americanness resembles the fusion of the yellow and red colors into the tangerine hybrid color.

III.7. Khadra's Scheherazadian Narrative of Survival

Exile narratives deal primarily with the theme of survival and their characters are similar to Defoe's Robinson Crusoe in that both, regardless of the motives, try to carve a new home after being, accidentally or not, displaced. However, unlike Crusoe who found himself on a desert island and could act as master, exiles of the 21st century can only be slaves to the host land masters as Friday was to Crusoe. However, if we take the two issues of gender and religion into account, Muslim women exiled in the West might be compared to *The Thousand and one Nights* heroine Scheherazad. The fact of always having to tell new entertaining stories to survive in her new home, Scheherazad's trajectory resembles exiled Muslim women's one who are interminably arguing against the Western discourse describing them as debased and subservient.

Mohja Kahf's narrative in *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* revolves around her heroine's attempt to survive and resist the Western attempt to efface the existence of Muslim women through ethnic cleansing. Metaphorically, Khadra's infinite arguments in favor of Islam to save the whole Muslim community resemble Scheherazad's narratives to save other women from Shahryar's homicide. Like Scheherazad's attempt to survive in a misogynistic locus, Khadra refused to die out in an Islamophobic society and both are eager to save endangered species. Nawar Al-Hassan Golley describes Scheherazad's narrative in terms of resistance and self-assertion when he states:

> Through the act of telling stories—that is, through the medium of the reproduction of words – Shahrazad managed to save not only her own life but also the lives of hundreds of potential wives of Shahriar. Death is conquered by narrative; silence is broken by discourse. Narrative becomes indispensable for life. Shahrazad's "cogito, ergo sum" becomes "I narrate, therefore, I am". (80)

Similarly, Kahf's narrative saves not only her protagonist Khadra but Muslim women living in the West, in general. Narrating, in the case of Khadra becomes indispensible as it allows her to resist the hegemonic discourse held by the West. As a counter hegemonic discourse, her narrative creates equilibrium between what they say about her and what she says about herself. Khadra's identity is thus like a jigsaw puzzle whose pieces are collected from her narratives and joined together to form her harmonious identity. Henceforth, Khadra's "*cogito, ergo sum*" becomes "I speak for myself, therefore, I am".

By entertaining the Sultan, the main purpose of Scheherazad's narrative was to divert his attention from the desire to kill her to the desire to listen to her never-ending stories. Likewise, Khadra's narrative reflects her willingness to divert the West's attention from judging her on what she wears to judging her on what she is. Following this line of though, Khadra's frustration may be compared to Khaleda's in Mohja Kahf's poem *Descent into JFK*. The speaker states that no matter how Khaleda is enlightened, Americans would never acknowledge it, and continue to judge her as a backward woman because of the veil:

> They'd never know Khaleda
>
> Has a Ph.D.
>
> Because she wears a veil they'll
>
> Never see beyond (Lines 20-23)

Being reduced to a piece of cloth renders breaking silence a commitment for Khadra who thematically engages in an autobiography whose aim is to correct and criticize the biography authored by the Western hegemon. Therefore, the importance of the strategy of retelling history as a way of criticizing hegemonic narratives can be clarified throughout the following Gramscian statement, "In a given state, history is the

history of the ruling classes, so, on a world scale, history is the history of the hegemonic states. The history of the subaltern states is explained by the history of the hegemonic states" (Gramsci 222-3). Using narrative as a strategy to counter the hegemonic scripts becomes Kahf's commitment also. At the author's level, the words ending the poem *Hijab Scene #7* characterize the whole set of Mohja Kahf's writing as counter-discursive:

> Yes I carry explosives
> they're called words
> and if you don't get up off your assumptions,
> they're going to blow you away (Lines 11-14)

In *The Girl in the Tagerine Scarf*, Khadra starts her resistance narrative at an early age in high school where she starts penning her real view of America and the world in her essays. Khadra cannot grasp her teacher's grading when she explains:

> Whenever Khadra wrote an essay about how it was hypocritical of America to say it was democratic while it propped dictators like the Shah and supported Israel's domination of Lebanon, "and then they wonder why people over there hate them," she got big red D's and Mrs. Tarkington found a reason to circle every other word with red ink. As soon as she turned in a composition on a neutral topic, no politics or religion, the Tark gave her a big fat A. It was that black-and-white. (123)

Finding the way history is taught in American high schools very selective, Khadra engages in a Zinnian[95] approach to writing a new colored history from the

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[95] Following the model of Howard Zinn in his seminal work *A people's History of the United States 1492-Present* (2003) whose main concern is to retell American history. The storytellers, however, are not Columbus or the settlers that came following the discovery of the new world, or even government executioners, instead history in this work is told from the standpoint of those conquered peoples and victims that suffered from execution and defiantly survived extermination like the Indian tribes and slaves.

standpoint of the conquered and not the conquerors. The relationship between Khadra and her teacher and the way the latter powerfully acts and the former reacts describe the dynamics of power and the way they control history writing. Khadra is in a situation that does not enable her to be heard or read while the teacher is in a situation that enables her to silence Khadra by metaphorically censoring what she writes. In this sense, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* reports many historical events, political as well as social, from the standpoint of ordinary people. For instance, it is the victims of the Hama Massacre and the Iranian Islamic Revolution, Reem's mother and Bitsy respectively, who tell the history of these genocidal events. As discussed earlier in this chapter, Khadra's aunt Razanne narrates how her daughter Reem was forced to take off her hijab during the Hama Massacre days. The protagonist also shapes a new idea about the Iranian Islamic Revolution when she learns from Bitsy that:

> [Her] parents died in '78 … killed by the Islamic Revolution. I was very little. I remember running through the street, terrified, and being surrounded by women dressed like you are dressed right now, and Islamic phrases ringing out all around me. It was the scariest time of my life. (375)

Let us note here that to Bitsy, Khadra belongs to the world of conquerors who swept her Persian civilization. The fact of having Bitsy voice her story of the Iranian Islamic Revolution and having Khadra feel apologetic is a way to say that civilizational victories are always bloody as they are based on violence.

Thus, Khadra concludes that in order for her to survive in an American hostile environment, she should elevate her conception of human relationships from being controlled by the forces of politics, history, nationalism and patriotism to being governed by human virtues of tolerance, peace, and mutual understanding. Khadra's

decision to veil occasionally proves that she was ready to take pride in her otherness that she no more defined through the superiority-inferiority dichotomy.

To conclude this chapter, let us consider two analogical reflections. First, in the same way it took Scheherazad one thousand and one nights to convince Shahryar to spare her life and enable him to see that infidelity is not common to all women; Khadra spent her teenage and part of her adult years trying to convince Americans that backwardness and terrorism are not common to all Muslims. Second, willing to secure the lives of many women, no matter where they come from or which class they belong to, Scheherazad is compassionate with all women without exception. Similarly, by profiling a wide array of immigrant and exile characters, Kahf does not exclude non-Muslims from her compassion and internationalizes the state of exile the same way Abani does. Khadra, in this sense, makes a huge move from a very restricted sense of belonging i.e., a religious self-absorbed community, to a broadened sense of attachment i.e., the human race in general. This new sense of belonging and the carving of this new international human identity are motivated by Khadra's desire for freedom from the constraints of place as being either "ours" or "theirs".

Chapter Four:

Exile into Madness in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*

Toni Morrison's first novel *The Bluest Eye* (1970) is more than a fictional work that narrates the sufferings of a poor little black girl who is obsessed with blue eyes. Sociologically, it is a work committed to the revision of many supremacist notions such as the one of beauty. Set in the 1940's, *The Bluest Eye* presents Pecola's abject ugliness as the binding cause of all her sufferings. In the novel, Pecola conceives of beauty as a panacea that would elevate her social status and solve all her problems, particularly those related to her self-loathing.

This chapter aims at exploring the bodily criterion of identity. It is centered on the discussion of how the Breedlove family and Pecola, in particular, are victims of social ostracism leading to Pecola's severe derangement, read here as a form of exile. This part of the work is also devoted to a psychological study of the phenomenon of self-loathing that is the source of Pecola's plight and later descent into madness.

IV.1. Atavistic Rejection of Blackness

The Bluest Eye presents a cycle of rejection developed in the metaphors that the author uses. Toni Morrison presents different pariahs who cope with their rejection in different ways. The protagonist of *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola, is traumatized by this cyclic rejection and ends up being an accomplice of the perpetrators of her trauma by rejecting her blackness. In the forward to the Vintage Publication of *The Bluest Eye* (1999), Morrison explains that the phenomenon of self-denial was an important theme she wanted to highlight throughout the novel, "When I began writing *The Bluest Eye*, I was interested in something else. Not resistance to the contempt of others, ways to deflect it, but the far more tragic and disabling consequences of accepting rejection as legitimate, as self-evident."

The indelible ugliness of Pecola is described in terms of biological heredity over which Pecola has no control. Ugliness is a commonality in the Breedlove family whose members think that their destiny is determined by their physical crippling appearance. For instance, the narrator tells us that the Breedlove family lived in a storefront "because they were poor and black, and they stayed there because they believed they were ugly" (28). Set in 1941, the times of Depression, the Breedlove's poverty, unlike their ugliness and blackness, is not shocking. Although Toni Morrison uses disparate narrative viewpoints[96], there is unanimity that Pecola Breedlove is ugly because she is black. The theme of rejection is mostly identified in the matrilineal relationship between Pecola and her mother. There is a sort of estrangement in the daughter – mother dyad exacerbated by the fact that nowhere in the novel Pecola calls Mrs. Breedlove mom and only addresses her or speaks about her as Mrs. Breedlove. Pecola's mother does not act motherly, she too rejects the ugliness of Pecola right after

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[96] The different narrators of *The Bluest Eye* are Claudia, an omniscient narrator, Pauline and Pecola.

her birth when she explains, “When I had the second one, a girl [Pecola], I ‘member I said I’d love it no matter what it looked like. She looked like a black ball of hair … But I knowed she was ugly. Head full of pretty hair, but lord she was ugly” (96-98).

Moreover, Mrs. Breedlove is partly amnesic of her real motherhood and acts as a surrogate mother for the Fishers’ children. Upon hearing her mother being called Polly by the Fisher girl, Pecola cannot control herself and let down a pan full of blueberries with hot juice. Claudia narrates this pathetic scene:

> It may have been nervousness, awkwardness, but the pan tilted under Pecola’s fingers and fell to the floor, splattering blackish blueberries everywhere. Most of the juice splashed on Pecola’s legs, and the burn must have been painful, for she cried and began hopping about just as Mrs. Breedlove entered with a tightly packed laundry bag. In one gallop she was on Pecola, and with the back of her hand knocked her to the floor. Pecola slid in the pie juice, one leg folding under her. Mrs. Breedlove yanked her by the arm, slapped her again, and in a voice thin with anger, abused Pecola . . . (84)

Instead of being preoccupied with her daughter’s scald, Mrs. Breedlove consoles the Fisher girl who started crying “hushing and soothing the tears of the little pink-and-yellow girl” telling her, “Hush, baby, hush. Come here. Oh, Lord, look at your dress. Don’t cry no more. Polly will change it” (85). Being preoccupied with cleaning the dirty dress of the Fisher girl and the kitchen floor rather than providing treatment for burned Pecola is a fact that completely “demotherizes” if not dehumanizes Mrs. Breedlove. Mrs. Breedlove’s obsession with the cleanliness of the floor and the Fisher girl’s dress and the negligence of Pecola’s aching body is the “monstrous” form of rejection Toni Morrison might have referred to in the Afterword when she stated, “In

exploring the social and domestic aggression that could cause a child to fall apart, I mounted a series of rejections, some routine, some exceptional, some monstrous, all the while trying hard to avoid complicity in the demonization process Pecola was subjected to" (168).

All the characters who meet Pecola believe that she is ugly. It follows, then, that Pecola is rejected because of her "unworthiness" to live among pretty people, beauty being a point of divergence. Pecola's blackness is metaphorically the color that would deface a painter's picturesque canvas of bright whiteness. *The Bluest Eye* shows how forces beyond human control such as nature and particularly the legacy of rejection have been compiled to establish the heritage of desolation that has been transmitted to Pecola. For instance, the cyclical segmentation of the novel into seasons – Fall, Winter, Spring, Summer – is specifically telling since these are constants in nature that are not subjected to human control. In the same way that the seasonal ordering of the year is unchanged, Pecola's ugliness rooted in her blackness is described in the novel as "static and dread" (37).

Pecola believes that people reject her because of her ugliness that is stemmed in her blackness. She is thus crippled by blackness that is not only hers but also her parents'. By emphasizing biological heredity as the factor that determines how people look at Pecola and how she looks at herself, Toni Morrison shows that rejection in this case is atavistic. Moreover, it can hardly disappear given the impossibility to biologically have control over black genes, eradicate them or even whiten them. Therefore, in order to understand how Pecola's rejection is grounded in the rejection of her parents, Toni Morrison devotes two separate segments in the novel to the historic past of Pecola's parents, Pauline and Cholly Breedlove respectively. By so doing, Morrison invites the reader to better understand the generational mechanism of rejection

as well as the development of Pecola's parents' respective identities and the way they affect the construction of Pecola's one. For the Breedloves, ugliness seemingly becomes a kind of "stigma that can be transmitted through lineages and equally contaminate all members of a family" (Goffman 4). Even as a child, Pecola is cognizant of the biological hereditary fact that her ugliness and her parents' are interrelated, holding the belief that "if she looked different, beautiful, maybe Cholly would be different, and Mrs. Breedlove too" (34).

In the section on Pauline, Toni Morrison explores what she describes in the postscript as, "The damaging internalization of assumptions of immutable inferiority originating in an outside gaze" (168). In fact, Pauline fully absorbs the white aesthetic through the movies and projects it on to her daughter. Pregnant with her first child Sammy:

> [Mrs Breedlove] stopped staring at the green chairs, at the delivery truck; she went to the movies instead. There in the dark of her memory was refreshed, and she succumbed to her earlier dreams. Along with the idea of romantic love, she was introduced to another – physical beauty. Probably the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought. Both originated in envy, thrived in insecurity, and ended in disillusion. (95)

Indeed, the internalization of these stereotypes is incrementally manifested as self-loathing, self-denial, and ultimately self-effacement. Pauline fully inhabits the white aesthetic and starts mimicking the white model as she narrates to the reader one of her adventures, "I 'member," she says, "one time I went to see Clark Gable and Jean Harlow. I fixed my hair up like I'd seen hers on a magazine . . . it looked just like her.

Well almost like her" (96). Explaining the mechanisms of the motion picture projector, Gary Schwartz describes Mrs. Breedlove in these terms:

> Pauline, as the viewer and learner, has absorbed the visions of light and darkness and becomes the engine of their reproduction – a projector, as she projects *Imitaion* onto the screen of her black vs. white life experience. Wittingly or otherwise, Pauline not only becomes the *Imitation* but, in turn imitates it. She is an imitation of an imitation. (122-23; emphasis in original)

By inhabiting the white aesthetic, Pauline's first frame of mind was self-loathing and contempt for the blackness surrounding her as she states, "Them pictures gave me a lot of pleasure, but it made coming home hard, and looking at Cholly hard" (95-6). Afterward, her self-loathing exacerbates into a penchant for self-effacement represented by her claim for visibility through embellishment that parallels an actress' claim for stardom. A star actress does not gain stardom because of what she is but rather because of the roles she performs and the cathartic identities she inhabits. Thus, fake identities start to pick up steam at the detriment of authentic ones. In the same way an actress performs a role in a movie and ought to fully inhabit it in order to be successful; Pauline inhabits a role in the Fishers' house that completely detaches her from her real identity as the Breedlove matriarch. Pauline fully abdicates her responsibility as Pecola's and Sammy's mother in favor of personal domesticity. Conveniently, as a devoted housekeeper in the Fisher house, Pauline inhabits the role of Delilah Johnson that Louise Beavers performs in *Imitation of life*[97]. By performing the role of an "ideal

[97] Imitation of life (1934) is a movie about Peola, a light skinned girl and the daughter of Delilah Johnson. Her mother is the maid at Beatrice Pullman's house who helps the widow Beatrice in her pancake business. Peola runs away from home because she cannot accept the blackness of her mother. After being found by her mother working at a restaurant that prohibits black customers, Peola denies her kinship with

servant", Pauline is "willing to abandon her own identity, sacrifice her family, and bask in second-hand glory all to keep her position" (Russell 105). As a result, Pauline confuses self with role-performing. Like an actress, Pauline lives illusive moments during daytime in the Fisher house that are shattered by reality once she is back home. In this sense, O'Reilley assumes that, "The lived, however, does frequently interrupt and disrupt the assumed subjectivity; as with Pauline's tooth, the lived/actual often shatters the illusion" [98] (49).

The dreadful effects of the movies on Pauline can be epitomized in her choice of her daughter's name Pecola. In the first encounter between Pecola and Maureen Peal, the latter inquired immediately after they had made the introductions, "Pecola? Wasn't that the name of the girl in *Imitation of Life*?" (52). Maureen mistakenly believes that the name of the girl in the movie was also Pecola. In fact, Pecola's name is close to the name of the heroine of the 1934 movie entitled *Imitation of Life* wherein a little girl named Peola wants to pass for white because she so hates her mother's blackness. Pointing to the difference between Peola and Pecola, Schwartz notes:

> [Pauline's] conflated name is interesting, Pecola is either what Pauline "misheard" or "mispronounced" and it certainly what Maureen misidentifies. While various mistaken identities are there, the identities are inescapable. Pecola is Peola – dead on. Pauline puts her own creative imprimatur on this child with a predestined name. The name with the 'c'

Delilah. This causes Delilah much agony and she dies before Peola is back home. After learning about her mother's death, Peola comes to attend the funeral with an overwhelming sense of selfishness and loss.

[98] While mimicking Jean Harlow and trying to identify with her, Pauline took a big bite of a candy that cost her one tooth right out of her mouth. Pauline narrates this scene as follows, ""I was sitting back in my seat, and I taken a big bite of that candy, and it pulled a tooth right out of my mouth. I could of cried . . . I don't believe I ever did get over that. There I was, five months pregnant, trying to look like Jean Harlow, and a front tooth gone. Everything went then" (96).

> has some suggestion of Latin *peccatum* (mistake, fault, error), while Peola sounds floral. (122-23)

Focusing on Pecola as a "mistake, fault, error" is crucial to understanding Pauline's rejection of her own daughter. Low self-esteem and self-loathing are not phenomena limited to female characters in the novel. However, they extend to men also making the sentiment of self-loathing a common trait throughout which the Breedlove family identifies. Like Pauline, Cholly transfers his chronic shame and his feelings of humiliation and vulnerability to his daughter.

In the section on Cholly, Toni Morrison sets herself the task of making us sympathize with Cholly because "his mother wrapped him in two blankets and one newspaper and placed him on a junk heap by the railroad" (103) only four days after his birth. Cholly is rescued by Aunt Jimmy who acts as his surrogate mother but who dies when he is only 13 years old. Therefore, Morrison starts with these small details to build up our sympathy for Cholly that gets more intense when he meets his father whom Cholly decided to look for immediately after Aunt Jimmy's death. After Cholly flirts with Darlene, he innocently thinks that she is pregnant and decides to leave the city in search of his father, who he believed was the only one to understand him. The narrator counts in this regard, "Cholly knew it was wrong to run out on a pregnant girl, and recalled, with sympathy, that his father had done just that. Now he understood. He knew then what he must do – find his father. His father would understand" (119).

However, to Cholly's consternation, his father assumed that Cholly has come at the behest of a woman that he has slept with to squeeze money out of him telling Cholly, "Tell that bitch she get her money. Now, get the fuck outa my face!" (123). These sequences in Cholly's life, altogether with the scene when he is obliged by two white men to make love to Darlene in front of them under the flashlight, contribute to

the fashioning of the deviant rapist character of Cholly. Being cognizant that he is an illegitimate child and not possessing the least consoling souvenir of his parents, Cholly cannot handle his own family as a father and frees himself of all family responsibilities. These stultifying experiences have shaped a man who is described in the novel as "dangerously free":

> Only a musician would sense, know, without even knowing that he knew, that Cholly was free. Dangerously free. Free to feel whatever he felt - fear, guilt, shame, love, grief, pity. Free to be tender or violent, to whistle or weep. . . . He could go to jail and not feel imprisoned, for he had already seen the furtiveness in the eyes of his jailer, free to say, "No suh," and smile, for he had already killed three white men. Free to take a woman's insults, for his body had already conquered hers. Free even to know her in the head, for he had already cradled that head in his arms. Free to be gentle when she was sick, or mop her floor, for she knew what and where his maleness was. . . . He was free to live his fantasies, and free even to die, the how and the when of which held no interest for him. In those days, Cholly was truly free. Abandoned in a junk heap by his mother, rejected for a crap game by his father, there was nothing more to lose. He was alone with his own perceptions and appetites. And they alone interested him. (125-6)

Cholly feels free and in Morrison's words, he feels "godlike". In fact, it is in this "godlike" state of mind that Cholly meets Pauline, marries her, and lately fathers two children: Sammy and Pecola. Having never known a sound parent-child relationship or even been delighted in the intrinsic security of parental affection, Cholly reacts to all family problems in an anarchic way with the least consideration to his

family's emotional needs. Thus, Toni Morrison highlights throughout *The Bluest Eye* the iterative process of parental rejection whereby Cholly is not alone to be indicted on family abandonment. Cholly's freedom is actually a relinquishment of his personal will and denotes his complete resignation and despondency over the fact that "there was nothing more to lose". Indeed, Cholly's freedom testifies to a seriously deranged self, rejected and deprived of any form of human attachments. These series of rejections have serious repercussions on the construction of Pecola's identity.

Cholly's ugliness added to the one of Pauline has given birth to hideousness in triplicate in the person of Pecola who bears within her three generations of atavistic ugliness. Atavism is a determining force in the shaping of identities in *The Bluest Eye* to the extent that not only ugliness is cyclical in the Breedlove family but madness too. By the end of the novel, Pecola turns mad as she comes to believe that she has blue eyes and that nobody wants to look at her because of envy. Her madness might have been inherited from Cholly's mother. Explaining how Pauline wanted to raise her children, the omniscient narrator tells us that Pauline "taught them fear: fear of being clumsy, fear of being like their father, fear of not being loved by God, fear of madness like Cholly's mother's" (100). Note that the only story we have of Cholly's mother is that she has abandoned Cholly when still a newborn baby and has turned mad. This story is not intermingled with other stories in order to be engraved on the readers' memory so that when Pecola starts hallucinating, the reader would be able to genealogically link it to her grandmother's madness.

In fact, these chronic rejections are grounded in an older Western rejection of a "demonic" "cursed" blackness. Spencer draws the genealogy of this rejected species, "There was the notion that black-skinned people were the descendents of Ham, the son that Noah cursed and banished to the land of Nod – East of Eden. And there were also

notions that there were pre-Adamic beings that were outside of the regular Christian remit" (34-35).

Following this line of thought, blacks are predestined to experience the same banishment and curse as their progenitor. What is important about this belief is that it marks the beginning of a tradition of telling stories about blacks in the West. This is how the story of "demonic blackness" has been created; showing blacks as one thing, and only one thing, repeatedly, and that is what they have become.

IV.2. The homelessness of the homely in *The Bluest Eye*

In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola shares with conventional exiles the tribulations of homelessness. Although home in *The Bluest Eye* is polysemous, Pecola finds home nowhere. Exile in the case of Pecola is defined not only through her alienation but also through her outdoors status. Exile works on a number of different levels in *The Bluest Eye*. Defining home as the "house" and taking into account that Pecola was fostered by the MacTeer family immediately after her father Cholly burns down the house, Pecola is described as an "outdoors". Being put outdoors, Pecola is not only houseless but homeless too. Her sense of exile and homelessness is embedded in her nostalgia for hearth and home. Because the house is the place that reunites the family and because the family provides a certain sense of home, Pecola is truly homeless. With regard to the issue of homelessness, Claudia explains, "Knowing that there was such a thing as outdoors bred in us a hunger for property, for ownership. The firm possession of a yard, a porch, a grape arbor" (12). As an outdoors, Pecola is deprived of the hearth of family life and is literally exiled by her father who refuses her a sense of family attachment.

Pecola believes that her ugliness is the cause of her destitution especially that beautiful girls live in nice households. This assumption conceals a dubious

interrelationship between residents and the places they occupy. For instance, the primer that frames Pecola's story displays two white beautiful children, Dick and Jane, living in a house that is "green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty" (1), while Pecola lives in "an abandoned store" (24). Cleanliness becomes an aspect of whiteness appropriated by white families, while dirt equates blackness. Let us recall that by the end of the novel Pecola ends up "searching in garbage" (163), "picking and plucking her way between the tire rims and the sunflowers, between coke bottles and milkweed among all the waste and beauty of the world" (162), while the Fisher family lives in a clean orderly house maintained by Mrs. Breedlove. Shelley Wong notes that, "The "house" in the primer text "precedes the "family" in order of both appearance and discussion. In this scheme of things, human relations are preempted by property and commodity relations" (472).

In his description of the Breedloves' storefront, the narrator points the scarcity of interior walls. The kitchen is a separate room, while the bedrooms and the living area are primarily separated by furnishings. As such, the Breedloves' storefront omits all "the physical barriers that would serve as signposts, issuing prohibitions ("Do not enter"; "Do not exit"; "Watch this, not that") are simply not present" (Sweeney Prince 83). The absence of walls renders the storefront a place of exhibitions where everything happens in the presence of everyone. In the absence of walls, acts such as socializing signposts, sleeping, getting up, fighting, drinking and having sex "are all spectacles available for public display" (Sweeney Prince 83). In this disorderly building, Pecola's childhood is violated because she has visual as well as auditory access to her parents' sexual intercourse. The architectural inadequacy of the storefront forces Pecola to confront situations that ought to be veiled to her as a child.

Because of the identification of the kitchen in African American culture as a site of home, it is no surprise that the walls in the storefront are around the kitchen and not the bedroom. However, the kitchen of the Breedloves becomes dysfunctional as soon as Cholly rapes Pecola herein. Sweeney clarifies that, “Once walls are undermined as effective barriers that restrict what logically can happen in a place (in this case the kitchen), they lose their authority” (137). Indeed, after Cholly rapes Pecola in the kitchen and setting no restrictions on the activities allowed to happen there, the kitchen can no more breed the Breedloves.

The Bluest Eye starts with Claudia’s flashback narration of what happened in the fall of 1941, “Quiet as it’s kept, there were no marigolds in the fall of 1941. We thought, at the time, that it was because Pecola was having her father’s baby that the marigolds did not grow” (4). The formulaic expression “Quite as it’s kept” belies a private confidence as Morrison herself claims that the novel embodies “the disclosure of secrets” (169) and that “something grim is about to be divulged” namely “a terrible story about things one would rather not know anything about” (170).

The public exposure of Pecola’s secret is a voluntary act aiming at discrediting Pecola and propagating her shameful experience. By so doing, Pecola becomes a persona non grata in a community that no more tolerates her presence. Claudia’s association of Pecola’s baby with the fact that no marigolds grew in the fall of 1941 is not haphazard. Morrison explains that Claudia’s statement put the flowers in the foreground and that it “backgrounds illicit, traumatic, incomprehensible sex coming to its dreaded fruition” (170).

Claudia realizes that not only the seeds she sowed with Frieda did not grow but that “nobody’s did. Not even the gardens fronting the lake showed marigolds that year” (4). In fact, this agricultural unproductivity convinces Claudia that “the land of the

entire country was hostile to marigolds that year" (164). The infertility of the soil equates Pecola's infertility. In the same way Pecola's womb failed to fruitfully give birth to a lively creature, the earth refuses the flowering growth of marigolds. Let us note that the Breedloves are not allowed to procreate in this hostile and sterile land as both father and son die. Claudia's philosophical conclusion of the novel bespeaks blacks' eternal condemnation to homelessness and alienation in the USA when she comments, "This soil is bad for certain kinds of flowers. Certain seeds it will not nurture, certain fruit it will not bear, and when the land kills of its own volition, we acquiesce and say the victim had no right to live" (164). On account of the circular structure of the novel, one is driven to believe that Morrison's choice of death for Pecola's baby is grounded in a probable belief that the Breedloves' ugliness is circular and irredeemable.

In her distinction between "being put out and being put outdoors", Claudia assumes that, "If you are put out, you go somewhere else; if you are outdoors, there is no place to go" (11). In fact, having no earthly place to go to, Pecola ends up mimicking a bird wishing to fly flailing "her arms like a bird in an eternal, grotesquely futile effort to fly. Beating the air, a winged but grounded bird, intent on the blue void it could not reach—could not even see—but which filled the valleys of the mind" (162). In fact, Pecola's willingness to fly is very symbolic of her failure to find a sense of home. Although in the case of Pecola (an outdoors), "the house serves as the antidote to the evil of being outdoors, offering shelter and safety . . . . The home as the haven is soon translated into the home as prison" (Conner 53). Marc Conner describes the commonality between the house and the community Pecola lives in when he explains, "The house is simultaneously respite and jail; like the community, for which it stands as synecdoche, the house seems to promise rest and comfort, but it provides neither,

especially for Pecola" (53). Indeed, if we take into account the example of the kitchen that is a symbol of hearth and nourishment and that represents a site of trauma for Pecola (because of her father's rape), Conner's conception of the "house" as "prison" becomes credible.

Furthermore, Valerie Sweeney Prince points to the "fragility" of Pecola's attempt to fly "without speed, wind, or anything more than arms for wings" as a further proof of the acuteness of her mental disorder. Her attempt to achieve flight can also be seen as Pecola's last resort following her deduction that she is coerced by the inhospitable earthly ground and home. Sweeney Prince argues, in this concern, "In contrast to the unforgiving apathy with which the ground confronts her, flight might possibly release her from the tyranny of place into an alternative reality" (91).

Moreover, "flailing her arms like a bird", Pecola can be compared to the Christ figure whose survival on earth was no more possible. Spreading her arms like a bird, she resembles Christ in the crucifixion scene. In this sense, Pecola becomes a grotesque version of Christ who "who takes on the ugliness (sin) of the world around her and consequently absolves others of their feelings of inferiority (guilt)" (Alexander 121). Claudia is the only one who praises the Christ-like role of Pecola:

> All of our waste which we dumped on her and which she absorbed. And all of our beauty, which was hers first and which she gave to us. All of us – all who knew her – felt so wholesome after we cleaned ourselves on her. We were so beautiful when we stood astride her ugliness. Her simplicity decorated us, her guilt sanctified us, her pain made us glow with health, her awkwardness made us think we had a sense of humor. Her inarticulateness made us believe we were eloquent. Her poverty kept us generous. Even her waking dreams we used – to silence our own

> nightmares … We honed our egos on her, padded our character with her frailty, and yawned in the fantasy of our strength. (162-163)

All the defects of Pecola define the virtues of the other characters in the novel. Seen from a different perspective, Pecola's homelessness is also evidenced by Soaphead Church deus ex machina. He has duped Pecola into thinking that if anything happens to the dog that he sends her out to feed, this will be an indication that God has answered her prayer for blue eyes. Indeed, what Soaphead has given her to give to the dog is toxin. The dog's death convinces Pecola that her "wish will be granted the following day" (139). Soaphead is very satisfied with his work and conceives of it as a challenge to the Deity.

By tricking Pecola and making her believe that she has the blue eyes she always dreamt of, Soaphead Church further alienates Pecola from reality pushing her over the edge into schizophrenia. By absorbing a fake white aesthetic, Pecola is further distanced from reality as she thinks that nobody wants to look at her because they are jealous of her and they all envy her nice blue eyes. Homelessness looms large in Pecola's life and is irredeemable. It is her sense of homelessness in a dysfunctional home (family) and an unwelcoming nation (the earth) that define Pecola's sense of exile and alienation.

In the final analysis, Pecola is deprived of a sense of home because of her hideousness. It is because she is ugly that no one cares for her security and well-being. Her father burns the house completely disregarding where his children are going to go afterwards and her mother takes care of the Fisher's house thoroughly neglecting her own. In fact, these shattered familial bonds are the main reason behind Pecola's feeling of homelessness that is further nurtured and exacerbated by the community's rejection.

IV.3. Ocular Traumatic Encounters in *The Bluest Eye*

Since the ruminative idée fixe of Pygmalion and Narcissus[99], we have come to ideate that no one is apathetic to beauty per se, especially if one lives in a society of spectacle. In *The Bluest Eye*, Toni Morrison displays how the social circumstances that Pecola Breedlove goes through hoodwink her into believing that being beautiful is being white de facto. Pecola is perpetually striving for this ideal throughout her lust for blue eyes and a skin color that correspond to an aesthetic orthodoxy already set out against her race by the white hegemon.

Toni Morrison presents the encounter between whites and blacks in shocking terms and highlights its traumatic effects on Blacks in the novel. Pointing to the traumatic encounter between blacks and whites, Fanon notes, "The Negro is comparison. There is the first truth. He is comparison: that is, he is constantly preoccupied with self-evaluation and with the ego-ideal. Whenever he comes into contact with someone else, the question of value, of merit arises" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 211). Fanon further argues that, "Not only must the black man be black: he must be black in relation to the white man" (*Black Skin, White Masks* 110). Pecola is in this Fanonist tradition of always having to compare herself with others and perceive her identity in relation to the white other that always ends up being traumatizing. If we take into consideration Cholly's adolescent experience with Darlene, trauma is also atavistic in *The Bluest Eye*. Caught by two white men making love to Darlene, Cholly is humiliated and compelled to give a dehumanizing sexual performance at gunpoint, "come on, coon. Faster. You ain't doing nothing for her" (116). The ocular encounter

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[99] Pygmalion is a notorious sculptor, in Greek mythology, who opted for celibacy but sculpted such a beautiful model of a goddess with which he fell in love and begged Venus to give it life. Narcissus is a handsome young man, in Greek mythology, who fell in love with his own reflection in the water supposing it to be a nymph. His incapability to reach this object of his desire induced him to kill himself.

between the white men and Cholly exacerbate his hatred toward the White race that is genealogically transferred to his children, Pecola and Sammy.

Although not a face-to-face meeting, the first traumatizing encounter for Pecola was the one with the iconic beauty star Shirley Temple. Like her mother who could neither identify with nor mimic the beautiful stars of the Hollywood industry, Pecola's self-worth is annihilated as soon as she encounters the beautiful hollywoodian star Shirley Temple. Claudia narrates the scene when Pecola first met Shirley Temple's beautiful face, "Frieda brought her four graham crackers on a saucer and some milk in a blue-and-white Shirley Temple cup. She was a long time with the milk, and gazed fondly at the silhouette of Shirley Temple's dimpled face. Frieda and she had a loving conversation about how cu-ute Shirley Temple was" (12-13).

In this passage, being a white, blonde haired and blue-eyed woman who axiomatically conforms to the white Aesthetic, Shirley Temple is in perfect symbiosis with the blue-and-white universe she is doused in. Moreover, the Shirley Temple mug is a container of milk, making the relation between Shirley and whiteness tautological. The dash used to link the white and blue colors assumes that blue eyes and whiteness are inseparable and that the blue eyes Pecola dreams of would not satiate her desire to conform to the white aesthetic. Pecola stuffs herself with milk (up to three quarts of milk) and drinks it only from the Shirley Temple mug in order to "see sweet Shirley's face" (16) and absorb her whiteness. Pecola's insatiable appetite for milk connotes the irony embedded in the "Breedlove" name. The Breedlove's frailty and incapacity to properly breed Pecola with love and nurture her emotionally induces her to consume huge quantities of milk. Thus, milk becomes a symbol that indicts Pecola's family for their failure to properly nurture her. Drinking milk to the last drop in the Shirley Temple mug prompts Pecola to meet the hallmark of American beauty.

This experience is traumatizing to Pecola in the sense that trauma is "what happens when [what is] normally hidden by the social reality in which we live our daily lives, is suddenly revealed" (Edkins 214). Indeed, Pecola's hideousness is relatively revealed by Shirley Temple's beauty that is full of imprecations. The encounter between Pecola and Shirley Temple is traumatizing at all levels. For instance, Pecola starts menstruating immediately after gorging on three quarts of milk from the Shirley Temple cup. While nourishing herself to maturity on Temple's canon of female beauty, Pecola fertilizes the soil of self-loathing whose fruits embody her interrogation "how do you get somebody to love you?" (23). Shirley Temple provides an answer to this interrogation in her song "Be Optimistic" from *Little Miss Broadway* through the edict "just smile" to be loved even "when the road gets bumpy". However, while Shirley Temple blames "bumpy roads" and "troubles" for her peers' sadness, she excludes Pecola from the team throughout her imprecatory gaze that blames no one but Pecola for her misery. Werrlein notes in this concern that, "Since edicts like Temple's "just smile" occlude the oppressive histories that might otherwise explain Pecola's loveless family, Temple offers Pecola no one to blame but herself" (203). It follows then that unlike Shirley Temple who can efface her sadness throughout her powerfully seducing sweet smile, Pecola's ugliness would only produce an ugly smile that implicitly refers to her eternal sadness.

Moreover, Shirley Temple is metaphorically the Temple people go to in order to worship the goddess of beauty, in this case, Shirley. She is the deity of beauty that girls like Pecola venerate. Morrison's choice of Shirley Temple might be justified by the religious undertone in Shirley's name that implies sanctity. Thus, being white and blue-eyed, Shirley Temple sanctifies whiteness and demonizes blackness. Underpinning

the religious metaphorical undertone in this passage, Donald Gibson compares Shirley to a goddess and milk to chalice:

> That for Pecola becomes something entirely other, a chalice, a grail whose milk-white content will allow her to take in the blood of the goddess, a white blood of milk—not a red blood of wine. The milk is the blood of the goddess because it is contained within the cup. Pecola gorges herself on the blood of the goddess; she indulges an insatiable appetite. If she drinks enough white milk from the chalice, she may become like the stuff she imbibes and as well become like the image adorning the container itself. One ingests the blood of the goddess in order to become her. (40)

Even Claudia, who first could not join Frieda and Pecola in their conversation about how pretty Shirley was, ends up perceiving Shirley Temple as a goddess of beauty saying, "I learned much later to worship her" (16). Although Shirley Temple was a symbol of healing for Americans as Depression-era icon whose childhood puerility carries hope to the struggling nation[100], she does not heal Pecola of her own particular depression, but traumatizes her further. This traumatic encounter with Shirley Temple incites Pecola to gaze worshipfully at Shirley's desired blue eyes. In her article entitled "« on me regarde donc je suis » ou le Traumatisme d'une Ocularité Héliotrope dans *The Bluest Eye* de Toni Morrison", Sindou Soumahoro points to Pecola's pathological gaze at Shirley Temple in these terms:

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[100] Emphasizing the empowerment that union is generated by the movies of Shirley Temple that conveyed hope to American individuals. Debrah T. Werrlein points to noble themes of these movies maintaining that, "Despite the common theme of orphanhood in Temple's films, titles such as *Curly Top* (1935) and *Little Miss Broadway* (1938) preserve childhood innocence by reducing adversity to a plot device. Presaging the moralizing and harmonizing role that children supposedly played for their families during the Cold War, Temple's characters, Elizabeth and Betsy respectively, pull themselves up by their bootstraps. They both charm wayward (and wealthy) bachelors into marrying financially bereft women so that the happy couple can adopt their orphaned matchmaker" (202).

> We can make, in Durandian terms, an exegesis of the scheme of descent noting that Pecola is first impressed by the surface of milk, also called the skin of milk. This produces a kind of homology between the skin of milk and epidermis. Pecola goes further as she drinks milk to the last drop, moving from the layer-over (epidermis) to the underneath (hypodermis) of the skin surface in order to discover in the bottom of the cup the impregnable face of Shirley Temple and her gaze fraught with imprecations. This imprecation is linked to the fact that behind the evanescence of milk there is an eternal fixed gaze with which Pecola finds herself tragically nose to nose and which stares at her in a loathsome way while she admires it pathologically.[101]

Here, Pecola is on the verge of achieving her desired transubstantiation[102] by imagining herself miraculously transformed into the body of Shirley Temple. In fact, this transubstantiation is more acute when Pecola eats the three Mary Jane candies. This traumatic aspect of Pecola's encounter with white standards of beauty is iterative in the novel. A similar instance of the trauma Pecola experiences with the Shirley Temple cup is embedded in her encounter with Mary Jane when she buys three candies from Yacobowski's store. The Mary Jane picture on the wrapper is as fascinating as Shirley Temple's picture on the cup, "Each pale yellow wrapper has a picture on it. A picture of

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[101] Translation mine. « On peut faire, en termes durandiens, une exégèse du schème de la descente en rappelant que Pecola est émerveillée d'abord par la surface du lait, également appelée la peau du lait. Ceci induirait justement une homologie entre la peau du lait et l'épiderme. Elle va plus loin, puisqu'elle le boit jusqu'à la dernière goutte, passant ainsi du dessus (épiderme) au dessous (hypoderme) de la surface peaucière pour découvrir au fond de la tasse le visage imprenable de Shirley Temple et son regard imprécatoire. Cette imprécation est liée justement au fait que derrière l'évanescence du lait se cache l'éternité d'un regard figé avec lequel elle se retrouve tragiquement nez à nez et qui la dévisage de manière méprisante alors qu'elle l'admire maladivement.». Available from www.rile-ci.org/articles/article1/Article1.pdf

[102] The belief that the bread and wine of the Communion service become the actual body and blood of Jesus Christ after they have been blessed, even though they still look like bread and wine. This is celebrated in Christendom as Eucharist, the ceremony wherein people eat bread and drink wine in memory of the last meal that Christ had with his disciples.

Mary Jane, for whom the candy is named. Smiling white face. Blond hair in gentle disarray, blue eyes looking at her out of a world of clean comfort. The eyes are petulant, mischievous. To Pecola they are simply pretty" (38).

The ritualistic significance of eating the Mary Jane candies embodies reference to Eucharist that is emphasized by Morrison's iterative reference to trinity (Pecola has three pennies and Mr. Yacobowski gives her three Mary Janes). Transubstantiation occurs when Pecola eats the Mary Janes, or as the narrator comments, "She eats the candy, and its sweetness is good. To eat the candy is somehow to eat the eyes. Eat Mary Jane. Love Mary Jane. Be Mary Jane" (38). In the process of eating, the candy has been transformed into the body and blood of Mary Jane. Donald Gibson goes further in his argument to claim that Mary Jane is a conflation of three symbolic figures: first the Virgin Mary, second God the father, and third Christ (as Mr. Yacobowski says to Pecola, "Christ, Kantcha talk?" (37)):

> Pecola is an inverted Virgin Mary, however, a Virgin Mary demystified: not mysteriously and spiritually impregnated by God the father but brutally impregnated by Cholly Breedlove, the father, on the dirty floor of the kitchen of her storefront home. The offspring of this union is the Christ child, the stillborn Christ child, who is incapable of saving the world because incapable of saving himself. (40)

These ocular traumatic encounters orient Pecola towards a desire to disappear as she whispers in the darkness of her parents' store front home, "Please God … please make me disappear" (33). Pecola even imagines that "little parts of her body faded away" (33), but does not succeed in getting her eyes disappear, "they were everything, everything was there in them" (34). By so doing, Pecola sees all parts of her body, except her eyes, as a corporeal surplus that she has to rid herself of or metaphorically

amputate. Moreover, Pecola's failure to recognize the functionality of the other organs and her reference to her eyes as "everything" displays how this ocular trauma engulfs Pecola and incapacitates her to see herself but as an undesirable girl unworthy of a look. Having imagined the disappearance of her body and the transformation of her eyes into pretty blue ones, Pecola forces her body into a Dick and Jane abstraction. This is mainly represented through the stylistic resemblance between the Dick and Jane primer and Pecola's oration on her illusive transformation into a pretty girl:

> ***Pretty eyes. Pretty blue eyes. Big blue pretty eyes. Run, Jip, run. Jip runs, Alice runs. Alice has blue eyes. Jerry has blue eyes. Jerry runs. Alice runs. They run with their blue eyes. Four blue eyes. Four pretty blue eyes. Blue-sky eyes. Blue-like Mrs. Forrest's blue blouse eyes. Morning-glory-blue-eyes. Alice-and-Jerry-blue-storybook-eyes.*** (emphasis in original, 34-5)

Eventually, pointing not only to a physical indication of her corporeal surpluses, "Pecola's eyes represent her consciousness, her ability to see the "ugliness" she associates with blackness" (Werrlein 204). Pecola shares Peola's dreams, but she occupies a different body. Even though Schwartz perceives the additional "c" in Pecola's name as a mistake, a "*peccatum*", other critics perceive the additional "c" as the homophone of the verb "see" that places sight at the very center of Pecola's persona. It is the "c", read as "see", that paralyses Pecola and hinders her efforts to end up like Peola who could finally defy the negativity related to her colored race. Deborah Werrlein states that without the "c" Pecola would be obliged to live in and endure a state of blindness, that is viewed by Furman as "the awful safety of oblivion" (19) "Without the ability to "see"—or without the "c"—Pecola believes she can be Peola; she hopes to enact her own blue-eyed, white-faced version of blackness. Paradoxically,

for successful abstraction, Pecola must endure self-erasure *and* blindness, a self-lynching . . ." (Werrlein; emphasis in original 204).

These series of ocular insidious traumas related to Pecola's racial phobia and internalization of shame and self-loathing culminate in her final hallucinatory dialogue with her imagined "friend". *The Bluest Eye*, as the title suggests, is centered on the ocular perception of the "I" so that Pecola's definition of "self" embodies a lexicon in relation to sight, vision and view. Pecola does not passively desire blue eyes in order to be admirably seen but wants to be engaged in the activity of sight wishing her vision of the world will change when she gets blue eyes. This implies that Pecola is doomed to passivity unless she has blue eyes and that in order for Pecola to be an active member in her society of spectacle; she is urgently compelled to adopt the white aesthetic metonymically represented by blue eyes.

IV.4. The White Supremacist Discourse of Aesthetics

The impact of the notion of beauty on individuals is at the heart of *The Bluest Eye*. At one level, the narrative can be seen as a pageant wherein Pecola is excluded as she is lagging behind in the competition because of her hideousness. The black characters' admittance of their "ugliness" is a potentially fatal form of self-loathing and a way of consolidating and confirming beauty standards already set by the whites against them. These white standards of beauty are the reason behind Pecola's development of a scapegoat identity. The white discourse of aesthetics maintains that the outside beauty reflects an inside beauty and vice versa. This assumption can be exemplified by the fact that no one can imagine that angels are ugly in the same way that no one can imagine that Lucifer is handsome. This parallelism between physical beauty and virtue is represented in many fairy tales as well as religious texts. Assuming

that Pecola is an agglomeration of many fairy tale heroines, Bessie Jones notes that Pecola is:

> [An] ironical caricature. . . . She is the ugly duckling, but, unfortunately, she does not change into a swan. She is the abused and ill-treated step-child, but [she is not beautiful like Cinderella and] the abusive step-parents are ironically her own mother and father. The mirror into which she stares does not reassure her that she is the 'fairest of them all'. (27)

Similarly, holding the belief that virtue cannot fit ugliness, Pecola's brother Sammy "adjusted his behavior to [his ugliness], chose his friends on the basis of it" (29). Like Job in the Old Testament, the Breedloves seem exceptionally chosen to wear the cloak of divine retribution, or as the narrator of *The Bluest Eye* maintains, "It was as though some mysterious all-knowing master had given each one a cloak of ugliness to wear, and they had each accepted it without question" (28). Accepting "ugliness" as a form of divine retribution, the Breedloves found no reason to contradict the master's statement and become self-punitive as the narrator puts it, "They took the ugliness in their hands, threw it as a mantle over them, and went about the world with it" (28). In a similar vein, Claudia realizes that, "Maureen Peal was not the Enemy" and that "the Thing to fear was the Thing that made her beautiful, and not us" (58). Like Claudia, the omniscient narrator evokes the Breedloves' ugliness as a divine matter (the Thing). Michael Wood explains that Toni Morrison insinuates that the "master", the "Thing", is the western historical version of beauty that not only excludes blacks but "uglifies" them too:

> Each member of the family interprets and acts out of his or her ugliness, but none of then [*sic*] understands that the all-knowing master is not God but only history and habit; the projection of their own numbed collusion

> with the mythology of beauty and ugliness that oppresses them beyond their already grim social oppression. (Qtd. in Bloom 1)

Moreover, the fact that the Breedloves see support for the mantle "leaning at them from every billboard, every movie, every glance" (28) is an indication of how white feminine beauty has been advertised through billboards and movies and how each gaze at these distorts further the Breedloves' self-image. Although there are infinite definitions of the word "beauty", this instance reinforces Naomi Wolf's definition of beauty that is seen as, ""a currency system like the gold standard. Like any economy, it is determined by politics" (12). Roberts Samuels suggests that the beauty industry is the backbone of the white aesthetics:

> The beauty industry is the prime example of the way that global capitalism has linked itself to a cycle of prejudices. . . . Morrison shows that all modes of representation (books, toys, movies, billboards, stores, magazines, newspaper, etc) in our current culture tend to idealize whiteness and devalue blackness. (105)

Indeed, the various mentions of iconic beautiful stars[103] in the novel are not a random selection but reflect the American society's judgment and validation of white feminine beauty as sublime. This is particularly true of *The Bluest Eye* that shows how the standards of female beauty in 1940's America were set by the Hollywood industry. These standards politically excluded black women and deprived them of a feeling of belonging into this iconic beauty industry.

The white norms of feminine beauty are embedded in the industrialized white blue-eyed yellow-haired dolls that white and black children alike crave for and what many critics call the "white text" of the Dick and Jane "happy" white family. As to the

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[103] Some of Hollywood stars that are mentioned in the novel are Shirley Temple, Greta Garbo, Ginger Rogers, and Jean Harlow among others.

dolls and the way they stand for the white aesthetic, Claudia's reflection on the importance of these dolls is very insightful. She cannot understand why "adults, older girls, shops, magazines, newspapers, window signs – all the world agreed that a blue-eyed, yellow-haired, pink-skinned doll was what every girl child treasured" (14). Although unaware of the link between beauty and pleasure, Claudia confirms that beauty is a source of pleasure through her inability to extract pleasure from the sight or the possession of a white baby doll.

Questioning the functionality of the doll, Claudia seems bemused as she wonders, "What was I supposed to do with it? Pretend I was its mother? I had no interest in babies or the concept of motherhood" (13). Mothering a white doll, the product of the racist other, implies here nurturing and cultivating the white aesthetic within the black community. Claudia is cognizant of the mechanisms of racism and that self-loathing is the bedrock of blacks' low self-esteem; this is why she unequivocally challenges the metaphorical white aesthetics crusader, i.e., the doll. In her attempt to make sense of the loveliness of the white baby doll, Claudia anatomizes her Christmas gift of a white doll with the eagerness to find what it is made of and what makes it so special:

> I fingered the face, wondering at the single-stroke eyebrows; picked at the pearly teeth stuck like two piano keys between red bowline lips. Traced the turned-up nose, poked the glassy blue eyeballs, twisted the yellow hair. I could not love it. But I could examine it to see what it was that all the world said lovable. Break off the tiny fingers, bend the flat feet, loosen the hair, twist the head around, and the thing made one sound – a sound they said was the sweet and plaintive cry "Mama"… Remove the cold and stupid eyeball, it would bleat still, "Ahhhhhh," take off the

> head, shake out the sawdust, crack the back against the brass bed rail, it would bleat still. The gauze back would split, and I could see the disk with six holes, the secret of the sound. A mere metal roundness. (14)

Claudia's dismembering of the doll displays her vengeful character. Bearing in mind the fact that the black persona was fragmented and distorted because of corporeal otherness, Claudia fragments the doll into pieces in such a way that the "beautiful" doll loses its persona i.e., beauty. Young Claudia is seen as "an empiricist among metaphysicians" and "is rational and resolutely empirical in her quest for understanding" (Fick 23). In her anatomical dissection of the doll, Claudia finds nothing that would quench her thirst to know the secret about peoples' infatuation for it. The only thing she discovered was related to the doll's bleating, it was a "mere metal roundness" inserted in the back of the doll. This discovery makes Claudia "unable to believe there is value above and beyond what can be found in the immediate world" (Fick 23), and incites her to find the causes behind the affirmation that beautiful dolls are white and blue-eyed within the doll and not elsewhere. However, no matter how Claudia rummages through the physical countenance of the doll, she finds no cause for the desirable beauty of the doll.

For Christmas, Claudia explains that she did not want to have anything but that she "wanted rather to feel something" (15). She tells the reader about her wishes for Christmas, "I want to sit on the low stool in Big Mamma's kitchen with my lap full of lilacs and listen to Big papa play his violin for me alone" (15). Instead of catering for their children's emotional needs, the MacTeer family distorts the emotional equilibrium of their daughter by offering her something that would nurture envy within her and possibly detach her from reality the way it did with Pecola.

Claudia's criticism of the popular established beliefs regarding the notion of beauty represent Morrison's own belief, an iconoclast herself. In "What the Black Woman Thinks About Women's Lib", Morrison examines figures of black feminine beauty, such as Nefertiti[104], that black women should appropriate to counter the hegemonic white images of feminine beauty. Morrison underpins the difference between the functional black feminine beauty and the idle aspect of white feminine beauty. Morrison argues that it "seems a needless cul-de-sac, an opiate that appears to make life livable if not serene but eventually must separate us from reality. I maintain that black women are already O.K. O.K. with our short necks. O.K. with our calloused hands. O.K. with our tired feet and paper bags. . . . O.K. O.K. O.K" ("What the Black Woman Thinks About Women's Lib" 15).

Although *The Bluest Eye* emphasizes the white aesthetic as the primary source of Pecola's plight, Morrison does not limit the novel to a focalization on the theme of victimization but provides a counter-narrative of beauty. Throughout this statement, Morrison redefines the notion of beauty by rejecting its orthodox conception. Morrison's implicit comparison of the aspects of white consumer beauty with the "O.K" characteristics of black female beauty yields two contrastive points according to Malin LaVon Walther. In her analytical reading of this passage, Walther notes that the first point of contrast is Morrison's "suggestion that black women should "remain useful" implicitly contrasts the uselessness inherent in white culture's images of female beauty with the utility of black women" (Walther 776). These contrastive images are abundant in *The Bluest Eye*. For instance, when the Fisher girl's dress is stained, the latter

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[104] Nefertiti (1370 BC, 1330 BC) was the royal wife of Egyptian Pharaoh Akhenaton; her name means "the beautiful or the perfect one has come." Nefertiti is considered a beauty legend although she is not white. She was in Ama Ata Aidoo's words "a black beauty whose complexion was far superior to the alabaster with which she is not willfully painted". Ama Ata Aidoo. "The African Woman Today". Obioma Nnaemeka, ed. *Sisterhood, Feminism and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora*. Trenton, NJ: Africa World Press, 1998, pp. 39-40.

depends on Pauline to clean it. Although, in *The Bluest Eye*, cleanliness matches with beauty, and thus whiteness, and dirtiness corresponds with blackness, it is Pauline Breedlove who usefully whitens the stains on the girl's dress. This particular instance shows that the Fisher girl cannot preserve the whiteness of her dress, her beauty in this case, because of her idleness and it is the useful "calloused hands" of Pauline that are going to embellish her dress. Walther explains that such images remind the reader that "a hidden criterion of female beauty is idleness: to be beautiful one must have soft hands and dainty feet" (776).

The second point that Morrison makes is that white-defined beauty detaches women from reality. Morrison "recognizes the fundamental objectification within the specular system of beauty, in which the image becomes separated from the real thing" (Walther 776). In this sense, working on the assumption that the notion of beauty in 1940's United States is grounded on iconic Hollywoodian figures assumes, to use Jean Beaudrillard's terms, that "the construction of the real as film is said to mark the destruction of reality" (Qtd. in Constable 44). This is represented through Pauline's ipseity as being subjected to change by the celluloid world of transcendent beauty. On the one hand, Pauline's high self-esteem depends on how much useful she is as an active member in her microsociety. On the other hand, her self-loathing and detachment from reality is produced by images from the movie industry that "convulse" her stable sense of identity. Thomas Fick assumes that Morrison's use of cinema in *The Bluest Eye*, "serves to recall an older and more intellectually distinguished precursor . . . the famous cave in Plato's The Republic" (24). Summarizing the Allegory of the Cave, Fick writes:

> Socrates asks us to imagine people living from childhood in a cave, chained by leg and neck with their backs to the only entrance. Behind

> them is a fire with a parapet in front of it "like the screen at a puppet-show, which hides the performers while they show their puppets over the top."[105] Objects are carried by men behind the parapet so that the fire projects the objects' shadows on the wall of the cave in front of the chained viewers. Obviously, Socrates says, the captives would think the shadows are the sole reality, and if one of the people crossing behind them spoke, the echo would make the sound seem to come from the projected shadow. He concludes, "In every way, then, such prisoners would recognize as reality nothing but the shadows of those artificial objects."[106] But the shadows are still shadows; the "real" lies outside the cave, in the immutable Archetypes represented by the objects carried between the fire and the cave wall. (24)

Following this Platonic conception, Morrison argues that the characters who identify against the advertisement of the celluloid world are victims and captives of their imagination[107]. Morrison highlights how a character like Pauline appropriates this shadowy reality after she absorbs "the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought": romantic love and physical beauty (95). Pauline cannot even look at Cholly after watching a romantic movie where the white actor treats the woman extraordinarily. The narrator tells us that Pauline "was never able after her education in the movies, to look at a face and not assign it some category in the scale of absolute beauty, and the scale was one she absorbed in full form from the silver screen" (95). The silver screen

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[105] Plato, *The Republic of Plato,* trans. Francis Macdonald Cornford (1941; rpt. New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), 228.

[106] Plato, 229.

[107] Fick argues that "The allegory of the cave" "is an accurate though technologically unsophisticated description of the cinema: celluloid takes the place of Socrates's hand-carried objects, and a projector the place of his fire" (24).

cultivates a white scale of visual beauty. The notion of absolute beauty conduces Pauline into a perception of her world as a shadow, a projection of the perfect world where "white men [take] such good care of they women, and they all dressed up in big clean houses" (95). In fact, these movies convey a mature version of Dick and Jane's utopian world. Apart from these cinematic haunting images, Morrison shows how the white aesthetic plagues the Breedlove family through a narrative technique that convokes the Dick and Jane primer as a continual reminder of the Breedloves' ugliness:

> Here is the house. It is green and white. It has a red door. It is very pretty. Here is the family. Mother, Father, Dick and Jane live in the green-and-white house. They are very happy. See Jane. She has a red dress. She wants to play. Who will play with Jane? See the cat. It goes meow-meow. Come and play. Come play with Jane. The kitten will not play. See Mother. Mother is very nice. Mother, will you play with Jane? Mother laughs. Laugh, Mother, laugh. See Father. He is big and strong. Father, will you play with Jane? Father is smiling. Smile, Father, smile. See the dog. Bowwow goes the dog. Do you want to play with Jane? See the dog run. Run, dog, run. Look, look. Here comes a friend. The friend will play with Jane. They will play a good game. Play, Jane, play. (1)

In an interview, Morrison explains that she had employed the primer with its portrayal of a happy white family "as a frame acknowledging the outer civilization". She further notes that, "The primer with white children was the way life was presented to black people" (LeClair 28-29). Morrison triples the novel's epigraph in different versions, the first variant of the primer is linguistically regular, the second one omits capitals and punctuation, while the third one is free from capitals, punctuation, and spacing. Carl Malmgren explains that the classic critical reading of these versions is that

the first stands for the happy life of white families "orderly and "readable"; the second represents the MacTeer family, "confused but still readable"; and the final run-on version[108] symbolizes the Breedlove family, "incoherent and unintelligible" (152). Hong Zeng argues in this concern that, "The violence and madness of language is found in the typographically contracted text of the primer, hinting at an atmosphere of urgency in the symbol of cultural rape (the invasion of space), as well as Pecola's mind spinning into madness" (126-7).

It follows that the invasion of space in the third version is a prolepsis of the invasion of Pecoal's body by her father and the invasion of her mind by the white colonizer. *The Bluest Eye* includes two interspersed texts: four seasonal sections narrated by Claudia MacTeer and seven primer sections prefaced by the "master" primer and narrated by various narrators. Brooks Bouson explains the relationship between the different fragments of the primer and the texts of the sections they introduce in the following words:

> The chapters of the novel that are headed with the primer descriptions of Jane's idealized green-and-white house and her happy family introduce readers to the decaying storefront dwelling where the ugly Breedloves live; the chapters that begin with primer accounts of the dog and cat tell pointed stories of animal abuse; the chapters headed with primer descriptions of the very nice mother and big and strong father who smiles at his daughter report on the mother's physical and the father's sexual abuse of Pecola; and the chapter headed with the primer passage

[108]"Hereisthehouseitisgreenandwhiteithasareddooritisveryprettyhereisthefamilymotherfatherdickandjaneli veinthegreenandwhitehousetheyareveryhappyseejaneshehasareddressshewantstoplaywhowillplaywithjane sethecatitgoesmeowmeowcomeandplaycomeplaywithjanethekittenwillnotplayseemothermotherisverynice motherwillyouplaywithjanemotherlaughslaughmotherlaughseefatherheisbigandstrongfatherwillyouplaywi thjanefatherissmilingsmilefathersmileseethedogbowwowgoesthedogdoyouwanttoplaywithjaneseethedogr urundog runlooklookherecomesafriendthefriendwillplaywithjanetheywillplayagoodgameplayjaneplay" (2).

> mentioning Jane's playful friend relates Pecola's conversation with her only "friend," her dissociated alter self. (56)

The iterative use of different snippets from the Dick and Jane primer at the outset of many fragments of the novel aims at reminding the reader about the typical white family engulfed in happiness. However, the emotional estrangement affecting the seemingly prefect white primer family (represented through the family's inability to answer Jane's desire for play) is duplicated through the character of Pecola whose family fails to cater for her emotional needs. The master primer further alienates Pecola as it is used to ideologically indoctrinate white values as the correct ones. The primer implies the stealthiest ways that the dominant culture exerts its supremacy through the educational system. It communicates to readers "the role of education in both oppressing the victim – and more to the point – teaching the victim how to oppress her own black self by internalizing the values that dictate standards of beauty" (Gibson 37).

Morrison does not counter the hegemonic definition of whiteness only through her critique of the idleness and uselessness of white feminine beauty, but depends on the prefatory master primer to reinforce her counter hegemonic discourse. While the primer served for decades to teach children to read by offering them simple sentences, Morrison's third edition of the primer challenges the reader to make sense of the text as it echoes the Breedloves' descent into chaos. Morrison's choice of the typographically disordered pieces to introduce the Breedloves' sections reveals that the primer's efficiency is no more applicable to the black community that, by then, had to produce its own primer. Moreover, by rejecting the imposed ready-made ideals on blacks, Morrison deconstructs the primer and engages the reader in constructing meaning out of this senseless world. By so doing, the author manifests her refusal to define the African American experience following the white standards.

Another scene testifying to Morrison's critique of the white aesthetic is Cholly's second time rape of Pecola while she is reading. Choosing this moment of "reading" implies that Cholly is violating the very act of reading. "Reading" here metaphorically stands for reading the Black African American history through the Dick and Jane Primer. Raping Pecola at the very moment of reading is Cholly's attempt to interrupt the educational tradition that has shattered Pecola's psyche. He is thus violating Pecola's body while trying to protect her psyche from the colonization of the white aesthetic.

IV.5. Sexualizing the Beautiful in *The Bluest Eye*

Sexual references abound in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*. The most vivid image that the reader might keep in mind after the perusal of *The Bluest Eye* is that Pecola is raped and impregnated by her father and that this incestuous relationship has resulted in Pecola's final descent into madness. Beauty in the novel is "sexualized". By "sexualizing the beautiful", this section refers exclusively to the sexual consumption of the beautiful, but the word "sexualizing" here metaphorically refers to all sorts of consumption as related to pleasure. Metaphorically, Pecola's body needs to be consummated, in her case when rejoicing in fetishizing gazes, in order to feel the holiness and perfection of beauty. Again, Pecola's inability to have a lover is due to her ugliness. Recall that when schoolchildren want to mock one of the boys, they "accuse" him of loving Pecola, as if this were a crime.

Throughout *The Bluest Eye*, "femininity and "the sexual" can be produced and reproduced as commodities" (Kuenz 100), and only the beautiful and the feminine run this process of commodification. Two examples are at work here, the Shirley Temple cup and Mary Jane candies. These commercialized iconic beauties invite the consumer

to ingest not only the product (milk from the Shirley Temple cup and Mary Jane candies), but the advertisement that accompanies them as well. The Mary Jane candies unveil Pecola's precocious sexual awareness. After eating the candies, Pecola thinks that, "Three pennies had bought her nine lovely orgasms with Mary Jane" (38). Thomas Fick notes that, "The incident at the candy store, for example, draws its power from the conflation of sex and consumption" (29). To Fick's two conflated ingredients, one may add beauty that is the defining force of who is socialized, sexualized and then "consumed". Because of her beauty, Mary Jane becomes a pleasurable source for Pecola's body. Therefore, while Shirley Temple feeds starving Pecola with milk, Mary Jane nurtures Pecola's nascent sexual needs. Mary Jane is a powerful aphrodisiac for Pecola's sexual awakening, or as indicated by Barbara Rigney, "In Morrison's texts, food like everything else in her worlds, is metaphoric, diffusely erotic, expressive of jouissance" (83). This metaphor of jouissance is clarified through the candy store incident. Pecola's experience at the candy store defines her conception of "sexual love" that cannot be separated from "pleasure" that Pecola assumes is to be squeezed from the contemplation of white feminine beauty.

Fick highlights how sexual love is conceived differently by Cholly and Pecola, "Sexual love is one of the most profound and private expressions of individuality, but for both Cholly and Pecola sex assumes a public aspect: for Cholly a spectacle, and for Pecola a form of packaged masturbation" (29). Indeed, Cholly is a kind of an exhibitionist in terms of sexual love as he does not care about his children's presence in the same room where he sleeps with his wife. As a child, Pecola does not understand her parents' different ways of behaving while making love:

> He making sounds as though he were in pain, as though something had him by the throat and wouldn't let go. Terrible as his noises were, they

> were not nearly as bad as the no noise at all from her mother. It was as though she was not even there. Maybe be that was love. Choking sounds and silence. (44)

Thinking that love is “choking sounds and silence”, Pecola duplicates her mother’s behavior when she is raped by her father. In fact, although the idea of rape is shocking, Cholly’s rape of his daughter is presented in such a way that forces the reader to sympathize with the perpetrator. In architectonic terms, Toni Morrison provides the reader first with an apercu of Pauline’s and Cholly’s lives so that all what the reader learns about them later builds upon these historical backgrounds. Accordingly, Cholly’s being abandoned by his parents, the death of his surrogate mother at an early age, the humiliation he experiences at the hands of two white men forcing him to make love to Darlene in front of them, are all facts that build up the reader’s empathy with Cholly. Morrison sets herself the task of making the reader empathize and sympathize with the drunk, the rapist[109]. This should not be read as an attempt to absolve Cholly from his sinful deed, but it is in the Morrisonian tradition an attempt to understand “the how” of things[110].

The Bluest Eye is fraught with images of sexual abuse, ranging from Cholly’s rape of Pecola to Henry Washington’s molestation of Frieda to Soaphead Church’s pedophilia. Although Morrison presents Cholly’s rape of Pecola as no less criminal than the other sexual abuses in the novel, she is always presenting the various stories that have shaped the single story people make of each other. By providing such stories,

[109] It is noteworthy at this level to point that until the rape scene, Cholly could only be pitied by the reader because of the tribulations of his life. Moreover, immediately after his father’s refusal to acknowledge his fatherhood, Cholly goes to hide under a pier and bathes in a river at night. The bath he takes in the river foretells the transformation of Cholly into a new Cholly: the drunk and the rapist.

[110] At the beginning of the novel, Claudia says with regard to Pecola’s story that “There is really nothing more to say – except why. But since why is difficult to handle, one must take refuge in how” (4).

Morrison is warning the reader against what Chimamanda Ngozie Adichie calls "the danger of a single story".

If the hypothesis of "only the beautiful is sexualized" is applied to Pecola, then her father Cholly offered her what other men could have never offered. In this sense, Cholly is like Soaphead Church who offered Pecola what, he thinks, God "did not, could not, would not do" (144). In the letter he addressed to God by referring to him in an ironic grandiloquent style as, "*HE WHO GREATLY ENNOBLED HUMAN NATURE BY CREATING IT*", Soaphead Church says to God:

> I looked at that ugly little black girl, and I loved her. I played you. And it was a very good show! I, I have caused a miracle. I gave her the eyes. I gave her the blue, blue, two blue eyes. Cobalt blue. A streak of it right out of your own blue heaven. No one else will see her blue eyes. But she will. And she will live happily ever after. I, I have found it meet and right so to do. (144)

Because the last line of this statement "meet and right so to do" is from the Catholic liturgy[111], it implies that Soaphead Church has turned Pecola's story into a sacramental one. Indeed, this is because Pecola is totally remade by the story Soaphead Church makes. Toni Morrison provides the reader with a conceited image of Soaphead Church's "miracle", as she linguistically intermingles ingredients from the Catholic liturgy and fairy tales. After explaining to his addressee the purpose of his letter, Soaphead Church starts with "once upon a time I lived", he then thinks that he has given Pecola the blue eyes she prayed for, and that she "will live happily ever after" and explains that he has found it "meet and right so to do". These three formulaic

[111] It refers to the last meal Christ had with his disciples. "It is meet and right so to do" is a sentence used to solemnize Christ's last supper through the sacrament of the Holy Communion.

expressions show what Soaphead Church thinks of these stories (sacramental) and what the reader should think of them (no more than stories).

Although Pecola's story of blue eyes is a fairy tale, it rids her of the haunting negativity. This story does more to Pecola; it provides her with high self-esteem embedded in her belief that people would no more ignore her presence thanks to her embellished blue eyes. However, all attempts to "sexualize" Pecola are abortive. Even with the fictitious blue eyes, Pecola is not worth a gaze. She says to her hallucinated friend that ever since she got her blue eyes "every time [she] look (s) at somebody, they look off" (154). Therefore, all Soaphead Church could do to Pecola was to give her the power of vision but not visibility yet.

Cholly's impregnation of Pecola does the same thing to her as Soaphead's "miracle". Immediately after Pecola learns that menstruating signifies a woman's ability to have a baby, and that having a baby requires being loved, she asks Frieda, "How do you get somebody to love you?" (23). Following this logic, if Pecola has been impregnated by Cholly, this means that Cholly loves her and that rape itself is an act of love. Trying to sustain the reader's sympathy with Cholly and maintain it until the end of the novel, Morrison uses Claudia's voice who concludes, "And cholly loved her. I'm sure he did. He, at any rate, was the one who loved her enough to touch her, envelop her, give something of himself to her" (163).

More importantly, Cholly is the only male character who gave Pecola the gaze she longed for. In the rape scene, Toni Morrison "associates the gaze and male sexual desire, but also degenders the gaze to uncover it as a social system of looking" (Walther 761). In the novel and abiding by this specular system, Pecola gains presence throughout how she looks rather than what she is. Pecola's body is "sexualized" by Cholly who not only gazes at Pecola's corporeality, but also consummates her belief

that she can be loved by impregnating her. Morrison presents the scene of rape in terms of Cholly's gaze:

> He staggered home reeling drunk and saw his daughter in the kitchen. She was washing dishes. Her small back hunched over the sink. Cholly saw her dimly and could not tell what he saw or what he felt . . . . Why did she have to look so whipped? She was a child-unburdened-why wasn't she happy? . . . . If he looked into her face, he would see those haunted, loving eyes. (127)

Cholly's rape of Pecola was as fatal as Soaphead Church's maneuver as they both culminate in an extreme alienation of Pecola from the community, albeit differently. Although both Cholly and Soaphead Church "sexualize" Pecola and render her "consumable", they exacerbate her alienation and widen the gap between her and the community depriving her eternally, this time, any kind of visibility. Peoples' refusal to look at her and the death of her baby are hints that indicate the abortion of their enterprise.

IV.6. Pecola's Specular Definition of the *Cogito*

Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* has generated much interest among psychoanalytic critics. The novel impresses the reader with the psychological complexity of the protagonist, in particular, and the other characters, in general. The *Bluest Eye* profiles how Pecola constitutes her identity in a community fraught with constraints. Because the construction of Pecola's identity is tightly linked to the bluest eye she prays for, there is a rewriting of the Cartesian *cogito* "I think therefore I am" that changes into Pecola's aphorism, "I am seen therefore I am". The very difference

between the Cartesian *cogito* and Pecola's one is that Pecola invites a community of viewers to participate in the making of her identity.

Pecola's conception of her identity is in Du Boisan terms fashioned according to her "double consciousness" that W.E.B. Du Bois defines as "this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity" (8). Pecola inscribes her identity in this Du Boisan register, taking the Other's look as the only parameter throughout which she can identify. Therefore, Pecola is compelled, to use Fanon's theory in *Black Skin White Masks*, to wear the "mask" of the dominant other in order to be recognizable in the white dominant society. It should be noted that with this schizophrenic Du Boisan double consciousness, Pecola views and judges everything against the standards of whiteness.

The bluest eye is the "I" that Pecola seeks to identify through. Blond hair, blue eyes and white skin are what constitute the pinnacles of perfection to Pecola's mind. Presence, for Pecola, is only indicated by visibility; or as Carl Malmgren has rightly put it when commenting on the effects of the Breedloves' ugliness, "Accepting an essentialist view of beauty . . . consigns them to invisibility and condemns them to self-hatred" (153). Therefore, the Breedloves become the agents of their own suffering. This is true of the Breedloves, in general, and Pecola, in particular. We learn at the beginning of the novel that the Breedloves deal with their ugliness differently, each according to his conception of it. Pecola deals with hers as a "mask" that conceals her presence as the narrator puts it, "She hid behind hers. Concealed, veiled, eclipsed – peeping out from behind the shroud very seldom, and then only to yearn for the return of her mask" (29).

Being an accomplice in designing her invisibility, Pecola's corporeal presence is never acknowledged. Peoples' refusal to look at her is exacerbated by their refusal to

look at anything related to her. For instance, the storefront where the Breedlove family lives is so gloomy that people avoid looking at it:

> It does not recede into its background of leaden sky, nor harmonize with the gray frame houses and black telephone poles around it. It foists itself on the eye of the passerby in a manner that is both irritating and melancholy. Visitors who drive to this tiny town wonder why it has not been torn down, while pedestrians, who are residents of the neighborhood, simply look away when they pass it. (24)

Therefore, it is no accident that people refuse to look at Pecola who lives in a dirty, disorderly space whose melancholy and gloom do not invite the human gaze. However, even when she inhabits other spaces such as school, Pecola is still invisible, and as the narrator counts, her ugliness "made her ignored or despised at school, by teachers and classmates alike" (34). "Her teachers," the omniscient voice informs us, "had always treated her this way. They tried never to glance at her, and called on her only when everyone was required to respond" (34).

Following Sartrean theory[112], Morrison highlights how the community's gaze regulates Pecola's self-perception and how it produces either low self-esteem or high self-esteem. One such example is Pecola's changing perceptions of the dandelions and how they reflect her perception of herself. As Pecola passes a patch of dandelions on her way toward Mr. Yacobowski's "Fresh Veg. Meat and Sundries Store", she wonders, "Why do people call them weeds? . . . . They were pretty" (35). However, after the vacant gaze of Mr. Yacobowski, Pecola senses racial contempt. When Pecola enters the store Yacobowski's "eyes draw back, hesitate and hover" and he later decides "he need

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[112] Throughout The Bluest Eye, Morrison "reveals each character's awareness of self indirectly through his or her relationship with others, especially through visual perception or, to borrow from Sartre, the Look" (Samuels 10).

not waste the effort of a glance" (36). The narrator explains that Yacobowski "does not see her, because for him there is nothing to see" and his "total absence of human recognition – the glazed separateness" (36), and this urges Pecola to fathom that, "The distaste must be for her, her blackness" (37). It is this state of nothingness[113] that Pecola is thrown into that refuses her visibility, and thus presence, in the eyes of Yacobowski, who stands for the white specular community. In Sartrean terms, Wilfred D. Samuels and Clenora Hudson-Weems indicate in "The Damaging Look: The Search for Authentic Existence in *The Bluest Eye*" that:

> [This event] reveals a central trope in the novel – the eyes, and their fundamental signification, which is found in Yacobowski's petrifying look. Like Medusa's look, which was capable of turning people to stone, Yacobowski's devastates Pecola, rendering her powerless and, to some degree, symbolically dead or nonexistent. (17)

Pecola suffers embarrassment at the hands of the storekeeper whose shame-inducing empty gaze destroys the happiness she experiences at the sight of dandelions. Leaving Yacobowski's store after purchasing three Mary Jane candies, Pecola passes the dandelions again and "a dart of affection leaps out from her to them. But they do not look at her and do not send love back", so she finally decides, "They are ugly. They are weeds" (37). Yacobowski's shaming stare was so poignant that it had enveloped Pecola who thought that like Yacobowski, nobody was ready to exchange a look with her, not even the dandelions. Immediately after the racist gaze of Yacobowski, Pecola transfers this hatred towards the dandelions. In this regard, Wilfred Samuels argues that Pecola's incapacity to define herself without the other's look has trapped her in what Sartre calls

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[113] The term nothingness is used here in the Sartrean context. See particularly *Being and Nothingness*, part 1, chapter 2 ("Bad Faith"); part 3, ch. 1, IV ("The Look"); and part 3, ch. 3 ("Concrete Relations with Others").

"bad faith" and "falsehood"[114]. Highlighting the symptoms of "bad faith", Sartre explains, "We say indifferently of a person that he shows signs of bad faith or that he lies to himself. We should willingly grant that bad faith is a lie to oneself, on condition that we distinguish the lie to oneself from lying in general" (Sartre: 1969, 48). Eventually, Pecola shows bad faith by trying to self-negate and embody the lie, in this case, her new blue eyes. Because bad faith "has in appearance the structure of falsehood", Pecola is in Sartrean terms a template of bad faith as she "is hiding a displeasing truth or presenting as truth a pleasing untruth" (Sartre 49).

Samuels hinges on Sartre's definition of "the Look" in his analysis of the Breedlove family stating that Pecola as well as Pauline and Cholly "fall victim to their failure to transcend the imposing definition of the Other's look. Reduced to a state of objectness (thingness), each remains frozen in a world of being-for-the-other and consequently lives a life of shame, alienation, self-hatred, and inevitable destruction" (Samuels and Hudson-Weems 10).

In fact, Yacobowski's shaming gaze has the same effect as the mirror. The whiteness of the specular community is metaphorically so transparent that it forces Pecola to see her blackness that reminds her of her ugliness. At a very early age, Pecola ingested one of "the most destructive ideas in the history of human thought" i.e. physical beauty. The latter induced her to look for the secret behind her ugliness using a similarly destructive instrument i.e., the mirror, "Long hours she sat looking in the mirror, trying to discover the secret of her ugliness…" (34). Metaphorically, the effect of the mirror explains how the gaze cannot be reciprocated in the case of Pecola. Taking blueness as a symbol of transparence, and blackness as a symbol of opacity, it can be

[114] In *Being and Nothingness*, Jean Paul Sartre discusses the concept of "bad faith" (*mauvaise foi*) synonymously with the act of lying. Highlighting how lying is a form of self-negation, Sartre argues "doubtless it happens often enough that the liar is more or less the victim of his lie, that he half persuades himself of it. But these common, popular forms of the lie are also degenerate aspects of it; they represent intermediaries between falsehood and bad faith. The lie is a behavior of transcendence" (48).

argued that Pecola's corporeal opacity is reflected through the blueness of the whites' blue eyes and that conversely there is nothing to be seen in Pecola's black eyes that do not reflect whiteness.

This effect of the mirror that embodies the impossibility to exchange a gaze with Pecola is the motive behind her wish for blue eyes. After Soaphead Church makes Pecola believe that she has got the blue eyes she was dreaming of, Pecola is the only one who sees her new blue eyes. The mirror, in this particular sense, stands for the utopian place that Pecola inhabits as an exile. In "Of Other Spaces" (1967), Michel Foucault explains the heterotopian[115] aspect of the mirror throughout the presence-absence dichotomy when he states, "from the standpoint of the mirror I discover my absence from the place where I am since I see myself over there" (http://foucault.info/documents/heteroTopia/foucault.heteroTopia.en.html). From a Foucauldian standpoint, the mirror is both a utopia because it is a virtual "placeless place" and a heterotopia in so far as the mirror "does exist in reality." Therefore, Pecola inhabits this specific space where she imaginatively exists but realistically does not. The only reality about her new existent self is the real existence of the mirror object.

In psychoanalytical terms, Lacanian theory of the "Mirror stage" is intimately linked to Pecola's process of identification. As defined by Lacan, "The mirror stage is a drama whose internal thrust is precipitated from *insufficiency* to anticipation-and which manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of spatial identification, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality" (3; emphasis in original).

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[115] Heterotopia is a concept in human geography first coined by French philosopher Michel Foucault in a lecture entitled "Of Other Spaces" (1967) to specify places which are neither here nor there. Foucault gives the example of the mirror when he explains, "The mirror functions as a heterotopia in this respect: it makes this place that I occupy at the moment when I look at myself in the glass at once absolutely real, connected with all the space that surrounds it, and absolutely unreal, since in order to be perceived it has to pass through this virtual point which is over there."

Therefore, the mirror stage indicates the child's primary awareness of his incompleteness. Following this line of thought, Pecola is aware of her "insufficiency" that is embedded in two things: first her ugliness, and second her fragmentary relation with her mother. As Lacan believes that the mother is the primeval overarching other with whom the child is united in the pre-mirror stage and Pecola's relationship with her mother is disjointed, Pecola comes in the world already incomplete. Let us recall that Pecola, like Sammy and Cholly, called her mother Mrs. Breedlove.

Coming into the world already stocked with her story of incompleteness and "lack", Pecola is overwhelmed by her desire to overcome this condition of "insufficiency". Eventually, what Pecola does is filling her lack by ingesting images of the white majority "other". For instance, she drinks huge quantities of milk from the Shirley Temple cup in order to gaze at her pretty eyes and dimpled face; she also eats Mary Jane candies with the belief that eating them enables her to "be Mary Jane". This identificatory practice shows how desire to be the "other" defines and foretells how Pecola will identify in the end of the novel. As defined by Jacques Lacan, "desire is not an appetite: it is essentially excentric and insatiable". This definition of "desire" applies perfectly to Pecola's wish for blue eyes that is both eccentric and insatiable. In her dialogue with her hallucinated friend, Pecola tells the latter that Soaphead Church "should have made them [her eyes] bluer" (160).

Moreover, in this stage the child learns to identify through the two-person structure identification. Following Lacanian theory, Pecola is enmeshed in what Lacan calls the "Imaginary" that he uses to designate the relationship between the ego and images. In her analysis of Lacan's concept of the "Imaginary", Elisabeth Grosz clarifies, "Relations between self and other thus govern the imaginary order. This is the domain in which the self is dominated by images of the other and seeks its identity in a reflected

relation with alterity. Imaginary relations are thus two-person relations, where the self sees itself reflected in the other" (46).

Indeed, Pecola is from the beginning of the novel until its end identifying through these reflections. She starts by identifying her ugliness against Shirley Temple's beautiful picture on the cup. She, then, sacrifices much of her pride in Yacobowski's store in order to buy the Mary Jane candy whose package depicts the picture of blue-eyed Mary Jane against whom Pecola identifies. Eventually, Pecola's identification against these reflections culminates in her identification through her mirror reflection. This final identification is the result of Pecola's imagination. In this sense, Pecola's mirage of her newness is very distorting as it condemns her to eternally stay in the mirror stage captured by her imagination. She is in Lacanian words offered an identity only as gestalt. "The fact is that the total form of the body by which the subject anticipates in a mirage the maturation of his power is given to him only as *Gestalt*, that is to say, in an exteriority in which this form is certainly more constituent than constituted" (Lacan 2; emphasis in original).

Although, in normal cases, this *Gestalt* is "more constituent than constituted", Pecola's *Gestalt* is the only constituent that constitutes her identity. Accordingly, Pecola's psyche is deprived of evolution and she cannot even embody her newness. Pecola's alter ego is only perceptible in the mirror, and it is this new perception of herself that makes her believe that her existence is now acknowledged by her community. Claudia has gone through the same mirror stage as Pecola when she expressed her hatred of Shirley Temple and dismembered the white blue eyed baby doll in order to know what it was made of. However, unlike Pecola who cannot identify without the imago she has hallucinated because she is captured in this mirror stage, Claudia succeeds in stepping up. She later learns how to deal with her difference.

The purpose behind Lacan's analysis of the mirror stage accounts for the way in which a child is able to distinguish the "I" from the "me". The mirror image gives way to a psychic response that allows the mental representation of the "I". However, Pecola does not identify her mirror image as a "me", she rather perceives of it as the "you" she is conversing with. Pecola's inability to identify her *imago* in the mirror explains how her desire has consumed her in such a way that the community of viewers she invites in her *cogito* is no more than her mirror image.

Pecola's final definition of her *cogito* centers on what she perceives with her new blue eyes regardless of whether her look is reciprocated or not. Thus, Pecola's construction of self depends heavily on the bodily criterion of her personal identity. To put it otherwise, Pecola's relation to her body is the only determining factor of her identity. Her rejection of blackness and imaginary adoption of whiteness, epitomized through the blue eyes, shows which group Pecola chooses to belong in.

IV.7. Psychotic Schizophrenia:
An Affordable Exile

Pecola's way of identifying through the Lacanian concept of the *imago* is something that has been foisted on her, first by her community who did not accept her "otherness", and second by Soaphead Church who tested his psychic powers on her, by offering her the hallucination throughout which she "will live happily ever after". Tragically, this hallucinated newness becomes the only reality by which Pecola lives, or in Morrison's words, Pecola "is not seen by herself until she hallucinates a self" (171).

In Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior*, the narrator's mother explains the difference between mad people and sane people, "'Sane people have variety when they talk-story. Mad people have only one story that they talk over and

over'" (159). By the end of *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola has only one story, the story of her pretty blue eyes. This single story fragments Pecola's identity, and as Madonna Miner claims, "Tragically, even when combined, [Pecola and her 'imaginary friend'] do not compose one whole being … She no longer exists as a reasonable human being" (181).

In Foucauldian terms, Pecola's madness is interwoven with Otherness because it is essentially produced by social forces. Briefly highlighting the history of madness, Foucault states in *The Order of Things*:

> The history of madness would be the history of the Other—of that which, for a given culture, is at once interior and foreign, therefore to be excluded (so as to exorcize the interior danger) but by being shut away (in order to reduce its otherness); whereas the history of the order imposed on things would be the history of the Same—of that which, for a given culture, is both dispersed and related, therefore to be distinguished by kinds and to be collected together into identities. (xxiv)

Pecola becomes metaphorically "hypochondriac" about the blueness of her eyes. Even though Soaphead Church said to Pecola that her new blue eyes "would last forever", she is permanently worrying about their blueness and continually asking her imagined friend about how much blue they are. This culminates into Pecola's constant fear highlighted throughout her interrogation:

> Even if my eyes are bluer than Joanna's and bluer than Michelena and bluer than that lady you saw, suppose there is somebody way off somewhere with bluer eyes than mine. . . . . But suppose. Suppose a long way off. In Cincinnati, say, there is somebody whose eyes are bluer than mine? Suppose there are two people with bluer eyes . . . . But suppose

> my eyes aren't blue enough? … Blue enough for … I don't know. Blue enough for something. Blue enough . . . for you. (161)

In *The Bluest Eye*, Pecola suffers a series of rejection that finally catapult her into a severe state of exile. Her exile is neither political, in the conventional sense, nor racial, in the contextual one; however, it is a therapeutic exile that offers Pecola relief from the constraints of her society, albeit fictitiously. As Sharon L. Gravett put it when he described Pecola's madness, "Sensitive and vulnerable, Pecola has been so neglected and abused by those around her that she eventually retreats into madness, safe from those who had told her she was ugly and unwanted; her individuality has not been prized but scorned" (89).

Claudia also conceives of Pecola's madness as consolatory when she describes her schizophrenia as "a madness which protected her from us simply because it bored us in the end" (163). Indeed, Pecola's madness would logically invert the community's gaze from an aggressive, repulsive gaze to a pitiful one, thus protecting her at least from the community's strong aversion. Therefore, Pecola's wish for blue eyes can be seen as a Faustian bargain whereby she creates and enters an imaginary world of love and security but only at the cost of her sanity. Retreating to madness, Pecola is always viewed as an "other", but more sympathetically. Worth citing in this concern is that Pecola's schizophrenia, seen here as a therapeutic exile, is offered to her by Soaphead Church, a white man. More importantly, the narrator informs us that Soaphead Church is a eugenicist who ardently believes in De Gobineau's hypothesis that, "All civilizations derive from the white race, and none can exist without its help, and that a society is great and brilliant only so far as it preserves the blood of the noble group that created it" (133). Eventually, by the end of the novel Pecola's survival, although a

distorted one, is due to Soaphead's assistance. Because Pecola could no more fit in her community she was isolated from it by Soaphead Church.

Unable to cope with all the difficulties in her life and the exclusion by her community, Pecola "spent her days, her tendril, sap-green days, walking up and down, up and down, her head jerking to the beat of a drummer so distant only she could hear" (162). In this sense, Pecola embodies the Thoreaudian man who does not fit in a choir but whose presence and tolerated difference is not shared by Pecola. Gravett argues that Pecola's difference does not invite tolerance of the kind Thoreau recommends in Walden throughout his suggestion that, "If a man does not keep pace with his companions, perhaps it is because he hears a different drummer. Let him step to the music which he hears, however measured or far away" (317). Highlighting the similarity and difference between Pecola and the Thoreaudian man, Gravett explains that, "Pecola is indeed marching to the beat of a different drummer but it is a forced rather than a voluntary march" (89).

In fact, although Pecola's exile into madness is a therapeutic one, it is not a voluntary exile but a forced one. Pecola's presence is first ignored by her community because of her ugliness (although her hideousness does not totally exclude her), and then she is completely excluded from it as she ends up being cast on the periphery of her community. It is Soaphead Church who is indicted for her peripheral status, he is the colonial agent who invades Pecola's body and mind and forces her blackness out of her. Underpinning the possible reading of *The Bluest Eye* as a postcolonial novel, Jane Kuenz notes that Morrison's choice of three whores, by the names China, Poland and the Maginot Line[116], is crucial in highlighting how African American women are invaded by hegemonic cultures:

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[116] The three names are significant names of places in the Second World War. The Maginot line, named after the French minister of war André Maginot (1922-1924 and 1929-1932), was a line of fortifications

> With these characters, Morrison literalizes the novel's overall conflation of black female bodies as the sites of fascist invasions of one kind or another, as the terrain on which is mapped the encroachment and colonization of African-American experiences, particularly those of its women, by a seemingly hegemonic white culture. *The Bluest Eye* as a whole documents this *invasion*—and its concomitant erasure of specific local bodies, histories, and cultural productions—in terms of sexuality as it intersects with commodity culture. Furthermore, this mass culture and, more generally, the commodity capitalism that gave rise to it, is in large part responsible—through its capacity to efface history—for the "disinterestedness" that Morrison condemns throughout the novel. (97; emphasis mine)

What is particularly noticeable about the lives of these three whores is that they are, with the MacTeer family, the only ones who welcome Pecola to their abode. That these women "function as the only positive domestic influences in the life of Pecola Breedlove is ironic, because as prostitutes they represent the unsettling of domestic respectability" (Gillan 161-2). Indeed, there is a replication of the whores' unsettling respectability and their disreputable aspect on Pecola after she is impregnated by her father. Therefore, Pecola is at a very early age abandoned by all possible educational institutions, (like family and school) and left to the whores' influence.

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constructed by France along its borders with Italy and Germany to protect itself from foreign attacks. Leaving its borders with Belgium unfortified, the Maginot Line was blurred by Germany in 1940 when Nazi armies invaded France through neutral Holland and Belgium, circumventing the Maginot Line and its defensive fortifications. China was invaded by Japan two years before the beginning of World War II in 1937. While the invasion of Poland by Germany in 1939 was the famous event that marked the beginning of the War. Therefore, the three characters are named after famous places in the historical timeline of World War II and symbolize the bodily invasions that the three characters undergo as whores. Morrison invites the reader to discover the embedded meaning in these character names as she states that her choice of 1941 as a timeframe for the novel "has a closet innuendo" (170) as it marks the beginning of World War II.

Although Soaphead Church did what he did for Pecola at her behest, her exile is still involuntary as Soaphead abuses of Pecola's childish naivety and innocence and makes her believe that what she is dreaming of is like a commodity. He is in postcolonial terms, the missionary whose advent promises "a civilizing mission", in this case the transformation of Pecola's eyes.

With her conviction that her blackness is the source of her retribution and demonization, having blue eyes that would change the way she sees the world and the way the world sees her, becomes an idée fixe for Pecola. Perceiving the impossibility of realistically achieving Pecola's dream, Soaphead Church offers her what she wishes by providing her with an affordable exile into madness. Pecola's madness, in *The Bluest Eye*, is regarded as the last resort, when all attempts to affirm herself and make her visibility acknowledged failed.

Madness is, in this sense, what Shoshana Felman calls "the impasse confronting those whom cultural conditioning has deprived of the very means of protest or self-affirmation" (21). In the light of Felman's definition of madness, it is true that Pecola has been deprived of both "the means of protest" and "self-affirmation". There are many instances that highlight Pecola's passivity and frailty even when she is abused. Claudia describes the scene when Pecola is harassed by a group of boys at school calling her, "Black e mo" and humiliating her because of her father's sleeping habits "yadaddsleepsnekked" (50). Pecola's first response was edging "around the circle crying", then "she had dropped her notebook, and covered her eyes with her hands" (50). Had Frieda and Claudia not come to her rescue, Pecola would never have saved or defended herself. Her passivity is, on some level, a kind of acquiescence that her blackness is demonic.

This happens to Pecola another time at Geraldine's home when she was invited by the perfidious Louis Junior. She had been hoodwinked into coming in Geraldine's house with the belief that Louis Junior was going to show her some kittens and offer her one. Instead of offering her kitten, Louis Junior throws his mother's black cat on Pecola's face and "she sucked in her breath in fear and surprise and felt fur in her mouth. The cat clawed her face and chest in an effort to right itself, then leaped nimbly to the floor" (70). Calling her his "prisoner" and barring her exit, Pecola's reaction was crying as "the tears came fast, and she held her face in her hands" (70). It is noteworthy at this level to point that in both cases Pecola's reaction to sadistic and abusive treatments is crying and covering her face with her hands showing her impotence in the face of humiliating situations. The fact that Pecola is neither immunized against society's abuse nor able to defend herself highlights the way in which these interminable episodes of mortification will culminate in Pecola's refuge into madness.

Moreover, Pecola's silence in the face of these verbal aggressions like "black e mo" anticipates her madness. The image of Pecola as aphonic is "broken only in her insane discourse with an imaginary friend who reassures her that in fact her eyes are blue and therefore beautiful" (Rigney 21). Hong Zeng notes in *The Semiotics of Exile in Literature*:

> In Morrison's *The Bluest Eye*, the central character, Pecola, is not granted any narrative voice. Her story is deflected through the narration of Claudia, Paula [*sic*], and the omniscient narrator. When at last her voice emerges belatedly, it takes the form of the interior monologue of schizophrenia. At this time, she has totally denied her self-identity as a black girl . . . . The identity of the other replaced the self in complete madness. (127)

In this sense, madness offers Pecola not only protection from social pressures but it also provides her with a voice. Let us note that prior to her insane dialogue with her imaginary friend, Pecola is almost not remembered for saying things, instead she is remembered for things done to her. Moreover, Pecola engages in a homeopathic remedy. She attempts to treat her defectiveness by using amounts of the very substance (whiteness) that causes her malaise i.e., blue eyes. By ingesting amounts of whiteness, Pecola believes that she has cured her ugliness. Pecola's metaphorical homeopathy reinforces the view of her exile as a therapeutic one.

Pecola's exile is first manifested through her banishment from school. When Pecola's imagined friend asks her about the reasons why she left school Pecola answers, "They made me . . . After that first day at school when I had my blue eyes. Well, the next day they had Mrs. Breedlove come out. Now I don‘t go anymore. But I don‘t care" (155). The role of school in *The Bluest Eye* is epitomized by the Dick and Jane primer that frames Pecola's story. According to Deborah Werrlein, "Dick and Jane primers not only posit the literary "masterplot" in *The Bluest Eye;* as textbooks in America's public schools, Morrison suggests they posit a *national* masterplot that defines Americanness within the parameters of innocent white middle-class childhood" (196; emphasis in original).

In this sense, Pecola needs no more to attend school as the latter has achieved its expected goal, namely by reinforcing the dominant ideology of white aesthetics on Pecola. Thus, Pecola's last resort in these circumstances is to fully inhabit the dream. Conveniently, school compels Pecola to self-negate and is implicitly responsible for Pecola's descent into madness. However, Pecola's self-negation does not offer her integration or Americanness but further alienates her.

Therefore, *The Bluest Eye* profiles the journey of Pecola from sanity to madness. She is in this sense exiled not because of her insanity but into insanity. Pecola lapses into madness because of the social pressures that constrained her and scapegoated her for her racial “otherness”. As she persuades neither herself nor her community that her “otherness” is not demonic, Pecola is not only held incommunicado but is also socially excommunicated for her “nonconformity”. This severe punishment detaches Pecola from reality. As a result, Pecola finds dwelling in what Sartre calls “bad faith”, “the falsehood” she has maneuvered, believed and lived by.

In the final run, although *The Bluest Eye* is a piece of literature, it can be read as a tract that revises the notion of beauty and exhorts humanity to review its principles. However, Morrison’s choice of the novel form is grounded in her belief that literature allows the voices of the oppressed and marginalized people to speak in a way that they could not otherwise. Describing the reasons behind Pecola’s descent into madness and the injustices her parents suffered from, Morrison invites the reader to learn about the new mechanisms of exile foisted on hyphenated Americans by the dominant culture.

CONCLUSION

This thesis began with an attempt to understand the nuances embedded in the perennial phenomenon of displacement and its representations throughout history. This historical profiling of the concept of exile helped to elucidate how the modern conception of exile has diverged from its conventional sense in the face of multiculturalism and mass migration.

The study of characterization in *Dreaming in Cuban*, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* and *The Bluest Eye* revealed that exile is an enriching experience that helps to construct new meanings and discover new or buried truths about one's history and identity. This might be justified by the round trip undertaken by Pilar and Khadra who both decide to go back to their motherlands in order to settle but only to discover that their hostland is more homely than their homeland.

The three protagonists at work here have different experiences of othering and hyphenation, yet they all offer resistance as panacea for identity problems and leave no room for another perspective. While Khadra as a Muslim woman suffers from segregation because of the veil and her religious affiliation, Pecola is discriminated against because of her race and Pilar because of her national attachment. There are many similarities between Pilar, Khadra and Pecola. The three are hyphenated American little girls who grow up in an environment they did not really choose and are forced to inherit the losses of their parents' displacement. The three girls have very fragmentary relations with their mothers. Pilar and Khadra replace their adversarial relations with their mothers with a return to the past by reinforcing their bonds with their grandmothers. By contrast, in the absence of an ancestor figure, Pecola replaces her fragmentary relation with her mother with idolatry for whiteness.

In both *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* the grandmother figure represents the motherland and serves for reconciling the mother-child relationship. Goldman's descripton of Pilar's return to Cuba as a pilgrimage that "becomes a necessary coadjutor for the self-information of the protagonist" (414) applies also to Khadra whose journey in Middle-eastern countries enables her to assemble all pieces of her history puzzle.

The three protagonist girls in the three novels examined in this work create a certain distance between themselves and their families in exile in order to form their identities independently of any familial influence. The three characters come from countries that celebrate patriarchy and resign women to secondary roles and negative identities and hence the protagonists' feminist call for freedom and emancipation.

The narrative point of view in the three novels corresponds to the sociological contemporary change regarding exile. Quite understandably, the three authors do not trust an omniscient point of view, instead they call upon different characters to narrate different episodes of the whole story and let the reader decide what attitude to hold on different issues. Unlike Garcia and Kahf who offer their female protagonists a narrative voice to tell their personal stories, Morrison "silences" her protagonist whose story is told from the point of view of her friend Claudia.

Exile in the case of Pilar and Khadra is considered as a journey towards newness that is essential in learning about one's otherness. However, this is done in reverse i.e., instead of moving from the homeland to the hostland, Pilar and Khadra have already found themselves living in a hostland. The feeling that their respective parents decide to exile on their behalf engenders skepticism within their minds as to whether the decision to leave Cuba and Syria for the United States was appropriate. Therefore, Pilar and Khadra go back to their motherlands in the hope of being able to

decide by themselves whether to settle in their homelands or self-exile like their parents. Following this line of understanding, Pilar and Khadra do not trust their parents' experiences and instead of trusting ready-made information about their homelands, they choose to form their own vision about them by returning to the past.

In the same way Pilar and Khadra do not submit to their destiny and decide to experience things individually by returning to their homelands in order to understand homegrown stagnations, Pecola does not surrender to her ugliness. She rather decides, to use Morrison's terms, that "beauty was not simply something to behold; it was something one could *do*".

Although willfully leaving their homelands and ultimately choosing to definitively settle in the United States, Pilar and Khadra got at two important truths. First, the present is steeped in history and the past is a major constituent in the shaping of one's identity. Second, the plight of their parents as well as theirs is not their culture but is forced by man-made changes in their homelands. Therefore, Pilar's as well as Khadra's self-exile do not call for a sense of loathing for their mother cultures that are not that "bad" after all and hence their decision to transplant them into the hostland. By contrast, Pecola condemns her race for her plight and is trapped into thinking that change is possible. Striving for that change, Pecola does not want the past to intrude on the shaping of her new and futuristic self.

While Pilar and Khadra turn a deaf ear to stereotypical discourses as regards their cultures and successfully create hybrid identities, Pecola submits to the white supremacist discourse that forces her to become a renegade who refuses to give any meaning to her identity unless her eyes turn blue. Therefore, the process of identity making for Pecola becomes the sine qua non of racial transformation.

In an attempt to discuss hegemony and resistance throughout the works of Garcia, Kahf and Morrison, Gramsci's notion of hegemony and counter-hegemony has been useful. In both narratives of Garcia and Kahf the female protagonists reject subordination and silencing and chafe against Western as well as local structures of oppression. They rewrite their family stories and national histories to counter the reductive hegemonic narratives produced by the West about them. While Garcia and Kahf are outspokenly critical of ethnic cleansing, hegemony and patriarchy, Toni Morrison uses the inductive reasoning to oppose these structures. Let us recall that Pecola keeps aphonic in the face of many aggressions and that it is silence that has completely damaged her persona.

Taking into account the imminent hostilities that are recorded in the history of the United States of America vis-à-vis Cubans, Muslims and Blacks, and the visible identity markers of notably Khadra and Pecola, assimilation is far from being an option but becomes a necessity. Following the American principle of ethnic cleansing and at first sight, the reader would expect Pilar to be the first and most favorable to assimilate as long as she has no visible cultural markers and would expect Khadra to abandon the veil, but envisages no solution for Pecola who has no control over her racial marker.

Surprisingly, neither Khadra nor Pilar abandon their cultural affiliations but Pecola does. Trapped between the "them" and "us", Pilar and Khadra renegotiate a third space of their own to occupy privileging neither the original culture nor the dominant American culture. Interestingly, this hybrid identity throughout which Khadra and Pilar define themselves compels them to resist the contrastive binaries dictated by either culture that seeks to align them to one without the other. For Pecola things went differently.

Not being able to hybridize her skin color with the white supremacist criteria of beauty, Pecola had only two options available i.e., ethnic cleansing or ethnic pride. Indeed, as a child and because of the troublesome problem of race during the 1940's, Pecola could not demur ethnic cleansing. In her forward to the novel, Morrison explains why Pecola has opted for ethnic cleansing, "The death of self-esteem can occur quickly, easily in children, before their ego has "legs", so to speak. Couple the vulnerability of youth with indifferent parents, dismissive adults, and a world, which, in its language, laws, and images, re-inforces despair, and the journey to destruction is sealed". In fact, here lies the kernel of a comparative argument. Pilar and Khadra succeeded in retrieving the past thanks to the help of their family members in their motherlands. Therefore, the stories they gathered were not distorted by an imperialist author. However, Pecola's only source of help was the white community represented by Soaphead Church. As a result, her story and destiny were under the control of the white community that reinforced the sense of black negativity within her.

Garcia and Kahf ultimately present home as a space that their two female protagonists inhabit without sticking to place-bound memories as their parents. Pilar and Khadra thrive on the diasporic hybrid third space they create and feel they belong in. Pecola also creates a therapeutic third space where she dwells through her illusory amalgamation of blackness with the icon of white beauty: blue eyes. Although, the globalized world celebrates crossculturalism and national boundaries have theoretically become meaningless, the postmodern exile cannot individuate without a national affiliation that necessitates a journey back to the homeland. And it is this spatial relocation that fills in the historical gaps. So the classification of the postmodern exile experience as either spatial or temporal is impossible because geography is naturally the permanent faithful companion of history. Thus, Pilar and Khadra present their exile

experiences in the form of their nostalgia for their homelands that are historically more informative about their identities than the hostland. By contrast, Pecola's rejection of geographical reterritorialization, represented by her stern refusal to culturally take pride in the Black race, deprives her of finding out the lies of the historical record. .

It was in the scope of the present thesis to highlight the significance of ethnic American writing as a reactionary literature and the way it protects us from what Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie names "the danger of a single story." I have come to the same conclusion as Adichie that reading ethnic American books makes the reader feel overwhelmed with shame as s/he realizes that the public mind has been controlled by the American media coverage about Arabs, Africans and Cubans among others. In fact, Adichie rightfully explains that the West creates a single story by showing a people as one thing and only one thing over and over again and that is what they become in the public mind. The single story is fraught with stereotypes that are not necessarily untrue but are compellingly incomplete and make the single story become the only story. Few examples are Westerners' only story of Africans as poor and starving, their only story of Islam as a religion of terrorism and backwardness, and Muslims' only story of Westerners as *kuffar*. To put it differently, identity must involve a multitude of determinants.

The other problem with the single story and stereotypes is that they emphasize how much different we are in a negative way, while many stories always remind us of how much equal we are. Henceforth, reading a single story about Cuban exiles and a single one about Arab exiles and yet another single one about African exiles would make one believe that each case exile should be dealt with individually. Reading *The Bluest Eye* might be regarded as an exemplar of "the danger of a single story" that has paralyzed Pecola's mental faculties depriving her of the right to proudly narrate a

different story. However, reading *Dreaming in Cuban* and *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* as two different stories of exile whose protagonists take the same trajectory proves that the experience of exile has the same effects on human beings regardless of their color, religion, race or nationality. As a result, it is not the experience of exile that differs but its circumstances and the way of dealing with it that differ from one individual to another, and this is explained by the different dénouement of *The Bluest Eye*.

In conclusion, the chief virtue of the three novels at work here is to highlight the damaging effect of ethnic cleansing and the necessity embedded in revisiting the past in order to cure the identity malaise that is caused by displacement. The three authors insist on subverting the hegemonic discourse and negative portrayals of their national identities throughout a historiographic metafictional counter-discourse. The novelists; each in her own style, create a counter-discourse with regard to the representation of their respective homelands and identities. However, it should be noted that this counter-discourse does not necessarily qualify the already established historical Truth as false but claim that "there are only *truths* in the plural, and never one Truth; and there is rarely falseness *per se*, just other's truths" (Hutcheon 109; emphasis in original). In this sense, the three authors provide new truths about the experience of exile as well as other truths about their histories and identities. More specifically, Cristina Garcia commits *Dreaming in Cuban* to presenting Cuba and the Cuban diaspora from a hitherto unvoiced Cuban American point of view. Mohja Kahf dedicates *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* to a representation of Muslim women and Islamness from a victim's point of view, while Toni Morrison presents *The Bluest Eye* as a literary tract whose aim is to correct the biased opinion on black demonization,

conceived as a Truth by the white community of the 1940's, and calls for a humane understanding of black wrongdoers who are victims of negativity.

This particular counter-discourse is presented in the form of historiographic metafiction, to use Linda Hucheon's label who assumes that "historiographic metafiction … attempts to demarginalize the literary through confrontation with the historical, and it does so both thematically and formally" (108). In *Dreaming in Cuban*, Garcia presents her historiographic metafiction throughout her presentation of new truths about life in Cuba. In *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf*, Mohja Kahf concentrates her historiographic metafiction in Aunt Razanne's and Bitsy's accounts of the Hama Massacre and the Iranian Islamic Revolution, respectively. Toni Morrison, however, orchestrates *The Bluest Eye* in such a way as to subvert the established truth about Blacks as culpable by providing the victim's truth.

Therefore, the significant contribution of these three novels lies in their exploitation of the truths and lies recorded by History. These contested truths include the one about exile as established in the historical record by "authoritative" and "conclusive" voices like the one of Ovid. Thus, authors like Garcia, Kahf and Morrison put forward a new approach to reading literature and history in an inseparable manner so that the likely mnemonic failures of the historical record might be supplemented or revised by historiographic metafiction.

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