

**The Representation of Arabs in Naomi Shihab Nye's
Habibi and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent***

صورة العرب في رواية حبيبي لنعمي شهاب ناي ورواية الهلال لديانا أبو جابر

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Requirements for the Master's Degree in English Language
and Literature**

Department of English Language and Literature

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Authorization

I, Ehab Hashem AlOmari, hereby authorize Middle East University to provide libraries, organizations, and even individuals with copies of my thesis upon request.

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This Thesis titled, “The Representation of Arabs in Naomi Shihab Nye’s *Habibi* and Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent*” was successfully defended and approved on 22/1/2022.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my lovely family.

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Abstract

The study aims to identify how Naomi Shihab Nye represents Arabs in her novel, *Habibi*. In the same way, the study also aims to explore how Diana Abu-Jaber represents Arabs in her novel, *Crescent*. Additionally, the study attempts to compare and contrast between the two writers' representations of Arabs in their novels. To achieve the objectives of the study, the theory of Post-colonialism is used, and specifically the views of Edward Said on *Orientalism* are applied on both novels. The study concludes with how both Arab-American authors, Naomi Shihab Nye and Diana Abu Jaber represent their Arab characters in their works, *Habibi* and *Crescent*, in an ambivalent way, sometimes in a positive way and other times in a negative way. The study also concludes with a set of concepts that have affected Arab-Americans, such as lack of identity, hybridity, and multiculturalism, that have influenced their cultural values. These representations are also considered ambivalent.

Keywords: The Representation of Arabs, Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi*.

صورة العرب في رواية حبيبي لنعومي شهاب ناي ورواية الهلال لديانا أبو جابر

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الملخص

هدفت الدراسة إلى التعرف على كيفية تمثيل نعومي ناي للعرب في روايتها حبيبي. وبنفس الطريقة، كيف تمثل ديانا أبو جابر العرب في روايتها الهلال. هدفت الدراسة أيضاً إلى المقارنة بين تمثيل الكاتبتين للعرب. ولتحقيق أهداف الدراسة، تم استخدام نظرية مابعد الإستعمار الأدبية في تحليل المحتوى وخاصة مفاهيم إدوارد سعيد عن الغرب والشرق. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة أن الكاتبتين صورتا العرب بطريقة ايجابية وسلبية كما وأن الروائيتين تحتويان على مجموعة من المفاهيم التي أثرت على الأمريكيين العرب، كفقدان الهوية، والتهمين والتعددية الثقافية التي أثرت على قيمهم الثقافية وخلال هذا التمثيل ظهر التناقض في تصوير الكاتبتين للعرب.

الكلمات المفتاحية: صورة العرب، رواية حبيبي لنعومي شهاب ناي.

**The Representation of Arabs in Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi* and
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CHAPTER ONE

1.1 Background of the Study

Arab writers in diaspora represent Arabs in different ways. Some of them represent Arabs in a positive way; they try to negate the stereotypical images that are known about Arabs and defend the Arabs from these images, such as Leila Aboulela and Mohja Kahf. Other Arab writers in diaspora represent Arabs in a negative way which may lead to enhancing the stereotypical images that are still known about Arabs, such as Fadia Faqir and Ahdaf Soueif. This could be understood as a way some Arab writers use in order to attract the Western reader and to gain popularity, or these writers may unintentionally represent the Arabs negatively because they just want to reflect Arab issues in their writings.

The representation of Arabs has been an issue throughout history, and this increased after the attacks on 11th of September. People then were convinced of the stereotypical images that they heard about the Arabs. Harb (2012) declares that the effect of the explosions on 9/11 is considered “a turning point” in the life of the Americans and the West and how they thought of the Arabs (p. 14).

Edward Said (1978) in his book, *Orientalism*, discusses the stereotypical images known about Arabs and how these stereotypical

images were first created by the West. He argues that the East, which is also termed by the West, does not exist except in the West's ideology. Said (1978) defines "Orientalism" as "a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" (p. 10). According to Said, the West view the East as inferior, irrational, exotic, and backward. On the other hand, they perceive themselves as rational, civilized, and strong. After the events of 11th September, the East began to be related and linked to terrorism and violence (Gana 2008).

Bayani (2020) states that in terms of the creation process, Orientalism refers to the analysis of the East by the West on one hand, and the most powerful method for the West to achieve its own consciousness on the other. Ahmad (2011) adds that the Western Orientals, according to Said, built the universe out of two conflicting elements: Ours (the West) and Theirs (the East).

Moreover, Said (1978) interrogated and challenged orientalist studies, he entangled political and cultural imperialism, claiming that orientalist; Western authors and scholars, who research the "Orient", "the East" have misrepresented, and continue to misrepresent, the Orient in a way that has promoted the West's domination over the Orient. However, many researchers have been motivated by Said's orientalist claims to think critically about how they picture other cultures and how they unwittingly

disseminate complex geopolitical messages in their practices (Mather 2020).

Harb (2012) declares that these stereotypical images were a crucial reason that motivated the Arab writers in diaspora to make their voices heard and to represent their perspectives and defend themselves. These Arab writers started representing Arabs in a favorable way in diaspora. On the other hand, these stereotypical images were enhanced by the representation of other diasporic Arab writers in an unfavorable way in the writings of Arab writers in diaspora. Some Arab writers' representation of the Arabs could be described as ambivalent. Such diasporic Arab writers are the two Arab American writers, Naomi Shihab Nye and Diana Abu Jaber, who both represent the Arabs in an ambivalent way in their works, *Habibi* (1997) and *Crescent* (2003), which is what the study shows. According to Gamez (2010), Naomi Shihab Nye and Diana Abu Jaber are considered as two icons for Arab American writings.

Rothman, Pratt, Rees and Vogus (2017) discuss the nature of ambivalence in their study, "Understanding the Dual Nature of Ambivalence: Why and When Ambivalence Leads to Good and Bad Outcomes." They state that the nature of ambivalence has been a subject of the scholars and critics' discussions since Plato and Aristotle. They present a definition for ambivalence after reviewing how scholars have had a long debate on the meaning of ambivalence. According to them, it "is the

simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotional or cognitive orientations toward a person, situation, object, task, goal, or idea, and the feelings of tension and conflict that result — may even be more the norm than the exception in organizations” (p. 33). One of these scholars is Eidsvik (2016), who declares that ambivalence is a concept that describes a persistent oscillation between wanting one thing and wanting something totally different. It may also refer to a simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from an object, individual, or actions.

Both Shihab Nye and Abu Jaber belong to hybrid cultures. Allani (2017) states that these Arab American women are considered “the product” of a bicultural heritage: the original homeland culture and their new home culture” (p. 33). The concept of hybridity refers to the individual who is trapped between two different objects, and different cultures, which leads her/him to acquire a double vision or double consciousness according to the culture or environment which she/he lives in, finally, a merged or even a lost identity. In addition to that, an individual from a specific country and culture has unique costumes, languages, religions, and other characteristics that distinguish them as members of that culture and ultimately distinguish them from other cultures. As a consequence, when an individual leaves his or her home country and moves to another, he/she experiences a variety of emotions (Zohdi 2017). This would lead them to be located in Homi Bhabha’s (1994) “third space”, which is “a sense of

home” with “a space to which they belong” (p. 23). Any mixing between Eastern and Western culture is referred to as hybridity. It generally applies to colonial subjects from Asia or Africa who have sought a balance between Eastern and Western cultural attributes in colonial and postcolonial literature (Singh 2009). Bhabha’s (1994) developed hybridity describes “the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity” (p.30).

Yousif (2019) states that Shihab Nye creates a place, where she can join both her American bringing and her Arab origins in her created “third place” to be able to comprehend the Arab world (31). AlKhadra (2013) explains that “biculturalism” is a source of “blessing” and it is not confusing. There is widespread agreement that hybridity originated from ideologies as a result of culturally internalized relations between colonizers and the colonized (Brady 1994).

Shihab Nye (1952), the author of *Habibi*, was born in St. Louis, Missouri. Her mother was an American while her father was from Palestine. Shihab Nye was raised in both Texas and Jerusalem during her youth. However, she went to Trinity University in San Antonio and still resides there. Moreover, Shihab Nye has received several honors and awards for her work, including the National Book Critics Circle’s Ivan Sandrof Award for Lifetime Achievement and several Pushcart Prizes. She

has been a Witter Bynner Fellow and has received fellowships from the Lannan Foundation and the Guggenheim Foundation (Marchi 2019).

Most of Shihab Nye's work has been inspired by her encounters with cultural disparity and various cultures. She is known for her literary works that give a fresh perspective to ordinary events, individuals, and things (Karim 2002). She is often regarded as one of the most important female poets in the American Southwest (Corrigan 2019).

Abu Jaber, who wrote *Crescent*, was born to a Jordanian father and an American (Irish-German) mother in Syracuse, New York, in (1960). Her family moved to Jordan for two years when she was seven years old, and she has since then lived in both the United States and Jordan. In 1986, Abu-Jaber earned a Ph.D. in Creative Writing from SUNY Binghamton. *Arabian Jazz*, her first novel, was published by Harcourt Brace in 1993 and received the Oregon Book Award as well as becoming a finalist for the National PEN/Hemingway Award. The book, set in upstate New York, where the author grew up, is a lighthearted look at a first-generation Arab-American family navigating the pressures and desires of the typical extended family network (Elia, Lysengen, Curtright & Rouzina 2007).

The images of Arabs in Western societies are one of the issues which concerned the public opinion in the recent time given the many distortions experienced in these images, which has contributed to the various foreign media by focusing on the transmission of the negatives that exist in Arab

societies and the dissemination of a different picture of Arab reality. However, articles dealing with Arabs in a negative way do exist, which result from the West's lack of understanding of Arab reality. The best way to improve this image is for Arabs to come to terms with the West and present themselves correctly.

Nevertheless, Western writers focus on the negative news that exists in our societies, which gives us a bad impression despite having such things in all societies, while most of Arab writers focus on the ever-bright image of the West and presents their communities as the promised paradise. So, the role of Arab writers and specifically the Arab writers in diaspora is to convey true and positive images of Arab societies. El-Enany (2006) comments on this in his book, *Arab Representations of the Occident: East-West Encounters in Arab Fiction*. El-Enany states that some Arabs look up to the West and perceive it as Paradise.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The current study shows that Naomi Shihab Nye and Diana Abu Jaber, as both Arab American writers in diaspora represent Arabs in an ambivalent way. They both represent a favorable image of Arabs in their assigned novels, but sometimes represent an unfavorable image. They both show good qualities of Arabs, and also show negative qualities. This shows how they represent Arabs in an ambivalent way in their novels, *Habibi* and *Crescent*.

1.3 The Significance of the Study

The Arab diaspora in the Western World is made up of a vast number of refugees who left their homelands for a variety of reasons. Their motives vary from a desire for a better life to the need of leaving their home countries as refugees. However, it is worth looking at how they communicate with their host countries' social contexts. Despite the fact that this is frequently underestimated, it is a fact that Arab immigrants are responsible for transforming the social contexts of their countries. Many studies were conducted on the two authors and the two novels. Both novels have been the subject of many studies. Most of the conducted studies on the two mentioned novels have concentrated on universal motifs such as love, family, war, and peace, adjusting to change, ethnicity and identity in relation to Arabic culture.

The contribution and significance of the current study lies in that not many studies were conducted on how these two Arab American writers, Shihab Nye and Abu Jaber, represent Arabs in their assigned novels, *Habibi* and *Crescent*. Added to that, up to the researcher's knowledge, most of the studies that were conducted tackle each writer alone, while the current study tackles both writers together, although both come from different homelands.

1.4 Questions of the Study

The current study answers the following questions:

1. How does Naomi Shihab Nye represent Arabs in her novel, *Habibi*?
2. How does Diana Abu Jaber represent Arabs in her novel, *Crescent*?
3. What are the similarities and differences between the writers' representations of Arabs?

1.5 Objectives of the Study:

This study aims at:

1. Examining how Naomi Shihab Nye represents Arabs in her novel, *Habibi*.
2. Examining how Diana Abu-Jaber represents Arabs in her novel, *Crescent*.
3. Comparing and contrasting between the two writers' representations of Arabs.

1.6 Definition of Terms

There are four key terms in the paper as the following:

1. **Postcolonialism:** is a term describing literary criticism based on cases of power, politics, culture, economics or religion, all these cases take the form of literature composed by many authors around the world. In other words, it relates to the idea of colonial hegemony (McEwan 2008).
2. **Ambivalence:** the “simultaneous experience of positive and negative emotional or cognitive orientations toward a person, situation, object, task, goal, or idea, and the feelings of tension and conflict that result—may even

be more the norm than the exception in organizations” (Rothman, Pratt, Rees & Vogu 2017, p.33)

3. **Hybridity:** Any mixing between eastern and western culture is referred to as hybridity. It more generally applies to colonial subjects from Asia or Africa who have sought a balance between eastern and western cultural attributes in colonial and postcolonial literature (Singh 2009). According to Bhabha, hybridity describes the construction of culture and identity within conditions of colonial antagonism and inequity (Bhabha 1994).
4. **Orientalism:** Orientalism is a style of thought based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between “the Orient” and (most of the time) “the Occident” (Said 1978, p. 10).

1.7 Limitations of the Study

The study is limited to the mentioned diasporic Arab writers, Naomi Shihab Nye and Diana Abu Jaber, and their mentioned novels, *Habibi* and *Crescent*. The results cannot be generalized to other diasporic Arab writers and their literary works.

CHAPTER TWO

Review of Related Literature

This chapter is a review of previous literature and studies related to the ambivalent representation of Arabs in Nye's *Habibi* and Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. The theoretical studies present the studies that discuss how the two writers generally deal with Arabs and Arabness in their literary works. The empirical studies continue to present the studies that show how both writers' representation of Arabs is ambivalent in the assigned novels.

2.1 Theoretical Studies

2.1.1 Representation of Arabness

Shaheen (2003) focuses on how the negative portrayal of Arabs in the media reflect their life experiences, other critics pointed to the complexity of the writing that Arab-American writers created from their works. Additionally, the media should open the door to completely new modes of activism for the real picture of Arab and Muslim communities. For more than a century, Hollywood has used repetition as a teaching tool, guiding movie audiences by repeating the "sinister image" of the Arabs over and over again. For instance, when it comes to Arab characters in movies, Hollywood has only one: mean Arabs. This is what Jack Shaheen argues in his new book, *Reel Bad Arabs: How Hollywood vilifies slander a nation*.

Arab American novelists are continuously positioned in connection to the larger Arab American community, as well as their typically more

inclusive readership and publishing companies, in such a literary context. On the one hand, the Arab American community expects them to offer a decent and humanitarian Arab face to the United States through mainstream media. This attempt includes, to some part, functioning as a voice for national, pan-national, and religious objectives. It also urges authors to write with a group's awareness, sensitivities, and priorities in mind, rather than their own, if they stray. On the other hand, in order to gain a mainstream readership, Arab American writers must get the support of bigger publishing houses for more creative presentation and marketing of their works (Wathington 2007).

In the other line, Arabness is said to have existed since the dawn of time, there is no clear historical trajectory that distinguishes it from other parallel and overlapping identities, the most notable of which is Islam. Indeed, many people believe Arabness is so historically entwined with Islam that they push for a transnational Islamic identity, particularly to differentiate oneself from other Muslims, by adopting an Arabic qualifier. In contrast, Arabness conveys for Europe and America a skewed perspective founded in primarily negative and disparaging conceptions rather than a historically informed and ideologically and intellectually balanced understanding, aside from its classificatory significance as the Arabs' national identity (Gershoni 1997).

Moreover, Arabness is frequently associated with backwardness, fanaticism, incompetence, and external antagonism against the Western world and its lauded humanistic and enlightened values of democracy, freedom, and economic and social openness in current political debate. This is a construct rooted in the mutual mistrust that characterizes the current Arab-Western relationship, particularly following the West's conspiratorial role in the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, despite vehement Arab resistance (Levanon 2021).

2.1.2 The Representation of Arabs and Arabness by Naomi Shihab Nye and Diana Abu Jaber in their Literary Works.

This section presents the studies that discuss how the two writers generally discuss Arabs and Arabness in their literary works. Naomi Shihab Nye's novel, *Habibi*, and Diana Abu Jaber's novel, *Crescent*, have both been the subject of many critics and scholars. They all mostly focus on how both writers represent Arab and Arabness in their novels in discussing universal motifs such as love, family, war, and peace, adjusting to change, ethnicity and identity in relation to Arabic culture.

One of the studies conducted on both writers is entitled, "Counter Narratives: Cooking up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" by Mercer and Strom (2007). The authors of this study show the food-related imagery and themes that are used by Shihab Nye in order to represent the Arab family, political conflicts

and issues, and culture. Through all this, they try to introduce Middle Eastern ingredients to the Western reader. Knopf-Newman (2006) also shows in her article, “The Heath Anthology of American Literature”, how Shihab Nye represents her own life in her novel, *Habibi*. She represents the Arabic culture, and specifically the Palestinian culture. Gardaphé and Xu (2007) urges that the language of food provides a window into ethnic history, culture, and roots in *Crescent*. Jaber’s language creates a gourmet contact zone in cafés, kitchens, and homes where displaced people congregate to reconstruct their identities and communities. Furthermore, in *Crescent*, the café is where the Arabs gather, eat and live the Arab social lives they are used to live in their home countries. The flavors of Serine’s meals appear to soothe their sense of loss for their homelands.

In addition, Inas Al-Masri (2001) states in a study entitled “The Middle East in Naomi Nye’s Poetry” that Shihab Nye reflects the Arabic culture and politics and the issues related to them in her literary works. In resemblance, De Sena (2011) discusses in her study “Jordanian-American Diana Abu-novel Jaber’s *Crescent* (2003) and its fictitious portrayal of food and memory” how the novel depicts food as synonymous with remembrance and serves as a backdrop for discussions of race and political problems. De Sena (2011) also addresses the importance of images and other items, especially a scarf, in that they, too, function as a kind of return to the past, bringing early memories into the present and thereby serving

as a remembrance location. Arabic food is represented as a way to enhance Arabic culture and represent it to the West, and in the same time for the Arabic characters to feel at home.

Michael (2011) states that the name Arab is used generically in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* as it is in the United States, to refer to people of Muslim Middle Eastern heritage. In actuality, "Arabs" are "those individuals who come from places where the Arabic language is spoken" (though distinctions exist within the language itself), and "not all Arabs are Muslims, and not all Muslims are Arabs" (p.4). However, the importance of oral storytelling in the Middle East as a means of knowing reality is emphasized throughout *Crescent*.

In another study conducted by Semaan (2014), a systematic analysis of scholarly and academic studies on Arab Americans had been written. It investigates the conditions and backgrounds that led to the visibility of this diaspora community in the United States. This paper sought to provide academics and researchers interested in Arab Americans with an analysis of previous studies and to emphasize the need for further study on this understudied minority group by laying the foundations for potential research on this ethnic group.

Alexandersen (2019) examines and analyzes Naomi Shihab Nye's young adult novel *Habibi* in relation to the theories of intercultural competence. The findings of the study reveal that Postcolonial theory lends

itself especially well to the growth of intercultural competence, and the genre's diversity provides a plethora of opportunities for promoting this development. Moreover, the results also show that Shihab Nye's *Habibi* has the ability to promote intercultural competence by allowing students to identify with and imitate the novel's main protagonist.

Additionally, Easa (2020) investigates exile's impact on the formation of hyphenated identities in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*. To achieve the objectives of the study, content analysis methodology was used. The results indicated that via Han's unknown history, which he reveals to her, Sirine, learns how enticing the life of an Iraqi exile can be. Han's unidentified status is a continuation of his unidentified experience with Sirine. Nevertheless, Sirine understands that the hyphen for her signifies a voyage of adventure into the future, while for Han; it represents the unknowns in terms of people who have vanished and a country that is no longer the Iraq he knows.

2.2 Empirical Studies: The ambivalent Representation of Arabs in Naomi Shihab's Nye's *Habibi* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

This section presents the studies that show how both writers' representation of Arabs is ambivalent in the assigned novels. Starting with Marcia G. Kutrieh (2007), who discusses in her study, "Images of Palestinians in the work of Naomi Shihab Nye", Nye's ambivalent portrayal of Arab men. Nye shows an ambivalent representation of Abboud, Liyana's Arab father.

He is a doctor and represented as an intelligent Arab, but yet is also represented as patriarchal, dominant and backward Arab in dealing with his wife and mother. He attempts to silence his mother no avail” (KutrieH 2007, 5).

Likewise, Awajan, Al-Shraa and Awad (2019) discuss how Nye represents Dr. Abboud in *Habibi* in their study entitled as “Representations of Parents-Children Relations in Arabic Fiction in Diaspora.” He is represented as a loving father for his two children. Dr. Abboud is shown in the novel as an open-minded Arab who sits with his children and enables them a chance to ask and give their opinions (Awajan, Al-Shraa and Awad 2019, 37).

White (2018) discusses in her article “Exotic Arabs and American Anxiety: Representations of Culinary Tourism in Diana Abu-Jaber’s *Crescent*” the exotic Arab in Abu Jaber’s novel, *Crescent*. White states that it is not clear whether Abu Jaber critiques the Arabs and their culture, nor celebrates them with reliance (White 2018, 363).

In a study by Ishak Berrebbah (2020), “The Politics and Aesthetics of Storytelling in Diana Abu-Jaber’s *Crescent*: A Strategic Implementation of an Old Folkloric Arab Tradition”, Arabness is represented as “a burden and an obstacle to assimilation and being accepted in a foreign culture” (p.132). Added to that, Berrebbah argues that the novel reflects the fact that having an Arab identity leads to being either denied or avoided (p. 132).

On the other hand, Abdelrahman Salahadin is represented in Sirine's uncle's story as an Arab hero. Salahadin is stated to resemble the character of Han, who is an Arab-Iraqi literature professor. Both have gone on a journey where they both explored "traumatic experiences". Both going through dangerous mythical journeys, but yet managed to survive (p. 135). It is good to mention here that Han's journey was to escape Saddam Hussein's regime from Iraq to the United States.

In later pages, Berrebbah also starts stating how Abu Jaber represents the Arab as an exotic and mysterious orient which resembles the European perspectives. Berrebbah also adds that "Abu-Jaber seems to successfully endorse the cultural and historical differences between the Orient and other parts of the world, particularly the Western one, through the Orientalist agenda in her narrator's storytelling" (p. 136).

Berrebbah (2020) states that Abu-Jaber follows in the footsteps of the early Arab immigrants who spread the concept that East and West are complementary. This is seen in *Crescent*, where the Western type of storytelling influences the Arab narrative tradition and vice versa. She attempts to confirm, in some manner, that the world requires a distinctive Oriental civilization just as much as it requires a distinctive Occidental civilization.

However, Farid (2018) confirmed on how Abu Jaber replies when asked if she feels responsible for the Arab-American community, Abu

Jaber says that creating authentic characters, rather than portraying Arab culture in the United States, is her first priority: “It is more about art than it is about cultural responsibility” (211). Thus, it may be claimed that Abu-Jaber did take on some type of cultural burden, even if it was not what was expected of her. It is rather the burden to hold up a mirror to a culture that is misunderstood in the sense that its many layers and multiple paradoxes are difficult to comprehend not just for foreigners, but also for Arabs who prefer to take a unilateral approach that incorporates “we” and “them.” Nevertheless, that is why it is clear throughout *Crescent* that Abu Jaber is unconcerned about the reaction of the community to her portrayal of Arab characters, even as several of them highlight negative pictures of the culture that are often overlooked, if not denied, not only by Arabs in the United States, but by Arabs as a whole.

Sirene Harb (2012) states in her study, “Perspectives on Violence and Reconciliation: Arab-American Women’s Writing about September 11” that Naomi Shihab Nye recommends that the “would-be-terrorist” needs to know more about the United States. On the other hand, Harb states that Shihab Nye also considers herself part of the Arab community in the United States (5).

Yousif (2019) declares that despite the fact that Shihab Nye tries to represent an image of Arabs away from the stereotypical images which continuously have been known about them, she does not really detach her

Arab origins as a Palestinian from her American upbringing. She represents both her Palestinian origins and her American upbringing in an equal way in her works. Yousif continues that Nye considers representing Arabs is her task but not the ones who blow up buildings. She considers these people who blow up buildings part of Arabs.

Shihab Nye's ambivalent representation of Arabs in *Habibi* is also mentioned in Tawfiq Yousef's (2005) study, "The Dialectic of Borders and Multiculturalism in Naomi Nye's *Habibi*." Yousef discusses how Dr. Abboud, is represented as a Palestinian who flees from his home country after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war. On the contrary, Yousef also portrays Dr. Abboud as an intelligent and successful Arab doctor in the United States, who decides to go back to his home country to serve. This is shown in the quote, "Only recently he [Liyana's father] grew hopeful about Jerusalem and his country again. While Abboud asserts he is a Palestinian coming back to his country, the Israeli soldiers consider him as an alien who should be checked and searched before letting him in. Indeed, the whole Abboud family is subjected to a humiliating treatment at the airport as are all their relatives who have come to see them" (pp. 34-36). In the same previous quotation, where Yousef shows how Abboud is represented by Shihab Nye as an Arab, Abboud is also portrayed as an Arab alien perceived by the Israeli.

CHAPTER THREE

Methodology and Procedures

3.1 Method

The researcher used the method of literary theory in approaching the two novels, Naomi Shihab's Nye's *Habibi* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. The theory of post colonialism is applied in reading the two novels. The researcher specifically relied on Edward Said's views on Orientalism and how he discusses the stereotypical images of the Orient/ East.

Postcolonial theory is a branch of cultural and critical theory that has been applied to literary studies. It is concerned with the reading and writing of literature from countries that were historically colonized. However, literature published in colonizing countries dealing with colonization or the colonized population can also be considered part postcolonial theory. Moreover, the theory reflects on how colonizers' literature distorts the experience and realities of the colonized, and inscribes the colonized's inferiority while supporting the colonizer's supremacy. The colonized are now declaring their presence and identity, as well as reclaiming their history that has been lost or distorted as a result of colonialism's othering (Mapara 2009).

Postcolonial theory is no longer held in the same importance as it was in the (1990s). This is not just a postcolonial point; all kinds of important cultural fields or initiatives are arguably less theoretical than

they were a generation ago, and work that actively seeks to advance the field of postcolonial critique is more likely to use postcolonial studies as the vehicle of choice rather than the more theoretically known version of the topic. What was theoretical regarding postcolonial theory in its early years is also a fascinating question: poststructuralist formations are often seen as the dominant expression of theory in the discipline, rather than the similarly theoretical critical Marxism that has been its main challenger. It now seems that theory has come to be recognized as one of several avenues by which to investigate the “revisionism” of which Huggan argues, rather than the originating and foundational concept it once seemed to be (Bernard, Elmarsafy & Murray, 2015).

Young (2016) added that analysis of colonialism's and imperialism's cultural legacies make up postcolonial theory. Postcolonialism is known as the relationship between Europeans and the places they colonized and dominated. In addition to that, postcolonial concepts can be found in anthropology, philosophy, linguistics, political science, architecture, human geography, sociology, Marxist theory, feminism, social and literature.

Since the dawn of time, colonialism has been a component of human civilization. Because the colonized's way of thinking is firmly established and colonial legacies remain strong, the difficulties between the colonizer and the colonized have not been satisfactorily resolved until now.

However, colonialism has been a part of human civilization from the beginning of time. The issues between the colonizer and the colonized have not been properly resolved until now, because the colonized way of thinking is firmly entrenched and colonial legacies remain strong (Vichiensing 2017). However, one of the issues which highlighted under colonialism is the dichotomy of “Us vs. Them” or “the Self” and “the Other” (Staszak 2009).

There are some key concepts in Postcolonialism, which are:

– **Diaspora**

Diaspora is a concept that refers to individuals or large groups of people who share a common heritage and have been moved from their homelands and who share a collective memory, in which emotional reminiscences of imagined homelands, or an inherited ideology of home forms a personal as well as a collective identity of members of a particular community. They don't have a fixed address and live in the memory of their “imagined homelands”. They negotiate their culture with that of the host nation in their new geographical location (Giri 2005).

– **Hybridity**

The concept of hybridity occurs when the individual is trapped between two different objects, and different cultures, which leads her/him to acquire a double vision or double consciousness according to the culture

or environment which he/she lives in, finally, a merged or even a lost identity. Added to that, an individual from a specific country and culture has a unique costume, language, religion, and other characteristics that distinguish him/ her as a member of that culture and ultimately distinguish it from other cultures. As a consequence, when an individual leaves his or her home country and moves to another, he/she goes through a variety of emotions (Zohdi 2017).

There is a widespread agreement that hybridity originated from ideologies as a result of culturally internalized relations between colonizers and the colonized (Brady 1994).

– **Mimicry**

Homi K. Bhabha, a cultural theorist, first proposed mimicry as a kind of agency under colonial settings. Colonial mimicry, according to Bhabha, is the desire for a reformed, recognized Other as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite the same, and its practices are colonial traditions of sarcasm, imitation, and repetition between imperial Self and colonized Other (Parry 1994).

According to Homi Bhabha, Mimicry is the process by which the colonial subject is replicated as almost identical, but not exactly. It is both a mockery and a menace; Mimicry shows the colonial discourse's limits in authority, almost as though colonial authority necessarily includes the seeds of its own destruction (Owen, Heathershaw & Savin, 2018).

- Ambivalent

Ambivalent is a psychoanalytic concept that describes a persistent oscillation between wanting one thing and wanting something totally different. It may also refer to a simultaneous attraction to and repulsion from an object, individual, or actions (Eidsvik, 2016).

3.2 Samples

3.2.1 Summary of Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi*

Habibi (1997) is a novel written by Naomi Shihab Nye. The main characters in the novel are; Liyana, poppy, Sitti and Omar, Liyana is a fourteen-year-old Arab American girl. In the beginning, Liyana moves from a small town in Missouri to the historical city of Jerusalem. This is because her father has determined that now is a good time to return to his hometown of Jerusalem. Moreover, she believes that she does not belong to her father's country.

Liyana's father, poppy, and mother want the family to move before the children enter middle and high school. *Sitti*, poppy's mother is excited because she has not seen her son since ten years! She is filled with many interesting stories which she wants to share.

However, it is a huge culture shock trying to understand what is right and wrong in a foreign country. After a while, Liyana realizes this when she meets a boy named Omer during a lunch break one day. She learns that

he is actually a Jewish boy. Arabs and Jewish are not supposed to get along, but they actually start falling in love.

3.2.2 Summary of Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*

Crescent (2003) is a novel written by Diana Abu-Jaber. There are four characters in the novel; Sirine, Hanif, Abdurrahman and Aziz. The novel tells about a 39-years woman named Sirine, who is not married. She was born in Iraq and lives in the United State. This is why she is considered as having a hyphenated identity, Iraq- America. She lives with her uncle with an Arab community.

However, she never feels like home in her uncle's home. She always looks for her own home until one day, she gets a job in a Mediterranean café. Sirine works as a chef in the café, and her only love is food preparation. Surprisingly, this café gives her the meaning of family or even home. After that, Sirine falls in love with an awesome Arabic literature professor. Finally, Sirine finds her home in this café.

3.3 Procedures

The researcher explores the representation of Arabs in Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*. The researcher took the following steps:

1. The researcher tackled the previous literature to decide on the title and to make sure of the shortage that the study will fill.

2. The researcher read the two novels through the lens of Postcolonialism, specifically applying the views of Edward Said.
3. The researcher went through the previous studies the tackled the representation of Arabs by both writers.
4. The researcher wrote the proposal.
5. The researcher provided specific evidence from both works on how both writers represented Arabs.
6. The researcher integrated these evidences with scholars' arguments.
7. The researcher reached to certain statements to conclude with.

CHAPTER FOUR

Analysis

The chapter discusses and explores the representation of Arabs in Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent*.

4.1. Naomi Shihab Nye's Representation of Arabs in her novel, *Habibi*.

Naomi Shihab Nye represents the Arabs in an ambivalent way, her representation may sometimes be positive and in others be negative. Shihab Nye represents many Arabs positively and negatively in her novel, *Habibi*. Starting with the positive representations, Shihab Nye represents Dr. Kamal as an open-minded educated Arab. This appears in his way of dealing with his kids and his wife. He tries to ask them about everything and listens to their opinions. This could be noticed in the following quote, "Dr. Kamal Abboud, whom they called Poppy, jumped right in. What do you think about moving to Jerusalem and starting new lives? His face cracked into its most contagious smile" (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 9).

Here, Poppy is asking his kids and wife about their return to Jerusalem and their feelings about it. Shihab Nye here also tries to show how Arabs stay attached to their home countries even if they are away. This is how Nye represents the Arabs as having good natures, who belong to their home countries.

Shihab Nye in this case is also trying to concentrate on the idea of Arabs' homesickness and their attachment to their Arab identity. She

reflects the image of homesickness within her and embodies it in the father's character. The father's smile carries a lot of longing for home. However, nationalism is part of the human being. In the same line, Thurber, (1999) mentions that homesickness is accompanied by acute longing and intrusive thoughts about home and attachment objects.

In the same paragraph, Shihab Nye (1997) represents the good side of an Arab father in Liyana's father as in, "He was handsome and lean, with rumpled black hair and dark eyes. Liyana's best friend, Claire, always said he looked more like a movie star than any of the other dads" (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 9). So it appears clearly that Dr. Kamal Abboud, sometimes known as Poppy, is a handsome man who, according to Liyana's friends and colleagues, has the appearance of a movie star. He is a highly open-minded man and a parent who can speak calmly to his children about any matter. Moreover, when Liyana wonders aloud why kissing is not allowed. He explains that each culture has its own unique traditions. From the previous examples, it could be noticed that Poppy's representation contradicts with the image of the Arabs in the Westerners' minds, resembling the stereotypical images known about the Arabs.

Shihab Nye shows this contradiction among the Westerners themselves throughout the novel. In one scene Liyana is told by her girlfriends that Jerusalem is full of "pretty guys" who they see on TV (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 21). This image of Arabs, which resembles how

Poppy is described, as handsome, contradicts with how Arabs are described by Liyana's teacher, Mr. Hathaway. He asks her why people in Jerusalem have big troubles being civilized (Shihab Nye 1997, p.27). Shihab Nye reflects two contradicted images of the Arabs.

The second example shows how the relationship between the father and his daughter is based on discussions and debates rather than the daughter-father relationship, which is based on the father's control and domination, known among Arabs. The same point is shown in the following example, where Nye is representing an open-minded Arab father, "Cultural differences aren't learned or understood immediately. Most importantly, you must abide by the guidelines where you are living. This is common sense. It will protect you. You know that phrase you always hated—When in Rome, do as the Romans do? You must remember, you are not in the United States" (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 47).

It is easily noted that Liyana's father is represented as open-minded and mature in all situations and attitudes. He advises his daughter that she must be patient since cultural differences are not simply and quickly understood. He adores his family, especially his children, whom he refers to as "precious." In addition, he expresses his delight at being with them all the time. This also negates the stereotypes of Arabs, who are known as husbands who neglect their houses, wives and children.

Another Example of Shihab Nye's positive representation occurs in the following quote, "Of course it was a rumor Liyana had been hearing all her life. Someday her family would leave the United States, the country her mother and she and her brother had been born in, and move overseas to the mixed-up country her father had been born in. It was only fair. He wanted to show it to them. He wanted them to know both sides of their history and become the fully rounded human beings they were destined to be" (Shihab Nye, p. 10).

As mentioned in the previous quote, Liyana is not completely surprised, when her parents first announce the move. She is expecting this will happen any time in her life. And now it is time to leave. According to Liyana's father, he portrays the importance of knowing the Arab history for his kids, when he says that "He wanted them to know both sides of their history", so Shihab Nye represents the significance of a person knowing his own past, as well as the history of his/her home, which is essential for the kids to know the Arab world, the place they come from.

In a way or another, Shihab Nye highlights also a significant positive representation about Arabs as: "Who would they be if they had to start all over again? Liyana started thinking of the word "immigrant" in a different way at that moment and her skin prickled. Now she would be the immigrant" (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 11).

One of the most important ideas that Shihab Nye positively represents in her novel, is how immigrants suffer in the West. According to Shihab Nye, her beliefs regarding immigration are a form of communication with the world in which she wants to explain how immigrants struggle. Furthermore, she is interested in the reader on the opposite side of her work. She sees her novel as a means of connecting with the wider picture, as well as an aspiration to bring readers closer to the Arabs and who they really are, instead of the images that are created in the Westerners' mentalities.

While doing so, Shihab Nye here focuses on the word "immigrant". She highlights human identity, and here the Arab identity in specific. This is clear in what she says, "Who would they be if they had to start all over again."

In the same context, Pourjafari and Vahidpour, (2014) state that Edward Said (1935-2003) and Homi Bhabha (1949) are two notable figures in postcolonialism, who, among others, have made significant contributions to the development of migration literature concepts. Moreover, the most important feature of this literature is derived from Bhabha's concept of "hybridity", which emphasizes the fact that in today's world, the migrant individual is valued not for his adherence to pre-determined ethnic morals and cultural traditions, but for his ability to adapt to new situations. In other words, "The ability of tradition to be described

through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend the lives of individuals who are in the minority” (Bhabha 1994, p. 2).

From the previous examples, it could be noticed how Shihab Nye represents Arabs and Arabness in a positive way. On the contrary, Shihab Nye also represents Arabs and Arabness in a negative way. The first example could be seen in her representation of how Arab people have to dress. This appears in the following example, “Poppy poked his head through Liyana’s doorway. “You won’t need those shorts,” he said. “No one wears shorts over there. That’s not true! I’ve seen pictures of Jerusalem and some people are definitely wearing shorts.” They’re tourists. Maybe they’re pilgrims. We’re going to be spending time in older places where shorts won’t be appropriate. Believe me, Arab women don’t wear shorts.” He walked away” (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 21). Poppy here is shown as he is scaring his daughter from moving to a place where she is not able to be the person she is, nor do what she is used to do.

As if Poppy is telling her daughter that American people wear short clothes but in the Arab world they cannot. It is not acceptable. On the other hand, it could be understood in another way. It could be understood that Shihab Nye definitely mentions her Palestinian roots when she mentions that Arab women do not wear shorts. The novel employs visuals of an Arab environment to convey a greater argument about variety and shared humanity, “No one wears shorts over there,” which refers to a respectful

attitude toward life. Additionally, Shihab Nye is always attempting to cross boundaries and connect individuals from these two disparate countries in order to bring them closer together as a result. The ambivalent representation of Arab civilization is noticeable here.

Shihab Nye goes deeply in details, by including tiny things Liyana's character tends to do such as in, "Before the Abboud family left St. Louis, there were many times Liyana thought she would rather be anyone else on their block, someone who planned to stick around in the neighborhood doing dull things like going to Mannino's grocery store and staring at watermelons and jars of peanut butter stacked up. She would rather not have to change her life" (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 14).

Shihab Nye concentrates on the idea of Liyana having a new life which is full of conflicts between two cultures marking her own identity. Liyana is represented as afraid of facing a new life which is full of difficulties especially in culture, society and people. It is totally different from her past. The author here tries to convey a realistic view of the mixed feelings of giving up one home and culture for another, the little things to which one says goodbye and the insignificant things that are missed. This is part of the negative representation showing how different Arab regions are and how Liyana is represented as having fears for such a place and its people. This is due to how Poppy enforces a certain image of Palestine and

develops Liyana's feelings of going to a place where everything is forbidden.

As Shihab Nye mentions in her novel; "Lately Poppy kept bringing up Arab women and it made Liyana mad. "I'm not a woman or a full Arab, either one!" She slammed her bedroom door, knowing what would happen next. Poppy would enter, stand with hands on his hips, and say, "Would you like to tell me something? "Liyana muttered, "I'm just a half-half, woman-girl, Arab-American, a mixed breed like those wild characters that ride up on ponies in the cowboy movies Rafik likes to watch. The half-breeds are always villains or rescuers, never anybody normal in between" (Shihab Nye, p. 21)

Shihab Nye's representation of Liyana's father in the previous quote, contradicts with the first representation, as one who is imposing hatred in Liyana for the new country she is moving to. Liyana begins to notice the national and racial barriers that surround her. In some way, Liyana's character shows that she is afraid of losing her identity (identity diffusion); as she considers herself empty and lost in addition to being stuck in between two oxymoron countries, cultures, ideas and thoughts.

Moreover, the reader may guess that Liyana has a bad impression about the Arab world, which may reflect Shihab Nye's own opinion. This resembles the Western consciousness about Arabs. Western world considers Arab as illiterate, uncivilized and savage. This appears when

Liyana mentions “wild characters”. Additionally, when Liyana mentions “the half-breeds”, this shows how Nye concentrates on the common concept in Postcolonialism, which is hybridity.

This is because Liyana considers herself as an Arab-American and has difficulties establishing her true identity. Liyana’s father, for example, finds it difficult to explain to his Arab relatives that he is half Arab and half American, and his daughter and son are likewise unsure of their true identities. This is one of the major points that show how Shihab Nye represents Arabs in a negative way, where they are lost in their hybrid identity. Commenting on this point, Erikson (1994) states that immigration is not only about changing countries or regions, but also about having two identities, which becomes hard to accept, particularly among adolescents. Immigrants endure competing social settings as they try to integrate “here” and “there” into a meaningful sense of self throughout the construction of their identity. As a result, identity construction among immigrants, particularly among teenagers, the age at which all people’s identities are formed, is a continual process in which both the host country and the country of origin play a considerable impact.

Then Shihab Nye moves to show how Liyana is disappointed from moving to Palestine from the minute they arrive. The reader sees and observes everything from the eyes of Liyana, feeling the anxiety and curiosity of Liyana. The reader could notice how disappointed she is and

how she thought Palestine is different from what she finds. This is explained in the following quote, “Liyana’s eyes swirled with stone buildings, TV antennas, metal grillwork over windows instead of screens, flapping white sheets strung from clotheslines right on the flat roofs of houses, signs in Arabic, Hebrew, and English, and lumbering buses. Rafik had gone to sleep again with his head back against the seat. Liyana felt like poking him to wake him up. ““It’s not how I pictured it. What about you?”” her mother said. Liyana answered softly, “Nothing is ever as I picture it”” (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 41). Both Liyana and her mother show and express their disappointment. This delivers a negative message to the reader about the Arab country they arrived to.

Shihab Nye presents the major image of how the West used to see the Arab world, which is very different from reality. She also has her own impressions about Palestine based on her father’s talks about his country, but this impression becomes apparent during her first visit to Palestine. It appears clearly when we look at the dialogue between Liyana and her mother: “It is not how I pictured it. What about you? Her mother said. Liyana answered softly, “Nothing is ever as I picture it.” In a similar vein, Shihab Nye utilizes the character Liyana to illustrate the problem of multiculturalism that the main character faces after returning to her hometown, and this struggle is also evident in the character of her father Poppy, who believes that if he returns to his homeland, he would no longer

be lonesome. Liyana found that her father is not all that different from her and shares her multiculturalism sentiments.

On the other hand, Shihab Nye in other scenes try to show how the stereotypical images known about the Arabs, and especially Palestinians, are only fake images created because of them trying to defend their home country and people. Shihab Nye tries to highlight how these Arab Palestinians live in their own country, and some are not even allowed to enter it.

She mentions this through Poppy's words, "We could drive to Damascus or Aleppo!" Poppy said, standing back proudly to admire his purchase. "Well, we might have trouble getting across the border.... Mostly they would just be driving back and forth from Jerusalem to Ramallah to their house, which sat so neatly in between." (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 51). This means that the people living in Palestine suffer from borders, which are shaped by cultural, economic, and political implications.

Another example, where Shihab Nye tries to represent Arabs in a positive way to defend them from the images they are known by in the West and in the world is when the Jews advise Liyana, thinking that she is an American, not to buy from Arabs. A Jew tells Liyana not to buy from an Arab zone and instead travel to the city's Jewish border. This kind of an act exemplifies the Arab-Israeli conflict and the tremendous suffering endured

by Palestinians in their homeland and across borders. These boundaries divide people, resulting in high hostility, intense political tension, and a significant cultural division between opposing factions of the population. Furthermore, there are several allusions to Israeli raids on Palestinian homes, including the searching and bombing of Palestinian homes, as well as the demolition of entire Palestinian borders to make way for Jewish settlers. Shihab Nye, in such scenes, tries to highlight the suffering of the Palestinians in Palestine and that what is negatively known about them as resistant people and terrorists is only a result of them defending themselves, and their lands and families from the Israelis. In this way, Shihab Nye represents Arabs positively, while in other scenes she represents them in a negative way. Shihab Nye represents Poppy as an Arab who is against and mocks religions. As Shihab Nye mentions in her novel "Poppy said every religion contained some shining ideas and plenty of foolishness, too" (Shihab Nye, p. 120). Shihab Nye conveys a bad impression about how Arabs think and what Arabs believe in. She states, according to Poppy's character, that "every religion contained some shining ideas and plenty of foolishness, too". It is not acceptable to abuse other religions. Due to religious tolerance, which is a deeper concept, human beings, have to respect all religions in its own thoughts and ideology. Even if it suits us or not. Nevertheless, it means acceptance by all people of all religions and cultures.

Additionally, when Nye mentions what Poppy answers Liyana about the relationship between Palestinians and Israelis. Liyana asks, “Do you think the Arabs and Jews secretly love one another?” “I think,” Poppy said, “they are bonded for life. Whether they like it or not. Like that kind of glue that won’t let go” (Shihab Nye 1997, p. 55)

Here, Shihab Nye wants to send a subliminal message to readers that Arabs have to accept the Jews, and that she is blaming them for not accepting the Jews. In this way, she is trying to blame Arabs and show how they are the reason behind the conflicts between the Palestinians and the Jews. On the other hand, the same scene could be positively understood in two ways. The first shows the hopelessness or disappointment in Poppy’s character when he says they are bonded for life, whether they like it or not. Poppy here shows himself losing hope of getting rid of the occupation, which may have led him to accept Jews in the occupied Palestinian territories. This also may be understood in a way that Shihab Nye (1997) is reflecting her hope of peace, which is also seen in the relationship she creates between Liyana and the Jewish, Omer. This is noted by Shihab Nye in the novel by stating, “Everybody then was praying for peace in Jerusalem” (p. 30).

4.2 Diana Abu Jaber’s Representation of Arabs in her novel, *Crescent*.

Diana Abu-Jaber’s representation of Arabs, in her novel *Crescent* (2004), is sometimes seen as positive and others as negative. Abu-Jaber highlights

several ideas concerning Arab-American identity while representing Arabs in her mentioned novel, *Crescent*.

Abu-Jaber highlights a significant positive representation of Arabs to the reader about how Arab immigrants suffer in the West. Sirine as an Arab female, who lives in the West with her uncle after her parents die. Abu Jaber describes her feelings in stating, “And sometimes when she is awake in the center of the night, the night cool and succulent as heart of palm or a little chicken kabob, Sirine senses these feelings rushing in her own blood. But she was also born with an abiding sense of patience, an ability to live deeply and purely inside her own body, to stop thinking, to work, and to simply exist inside the simplest actions, like chopping an onion or stirring a pot” (Abu Jaber, p. 21).

According to the above words, when Sirine feels the cool of the night, it represents her loneliness. Furthermore, if we look from another angle, we will find out that she likes her job as a chef because it allows her to just dwell on the simplest acts, such as slicing an onion or stirring a pot. This might be seen as the explanation for her desire to work as a cook at Nadia’s Café in order to create a friendly atmosphere. Being a chef in an Arabic Café and cooking Arabic food enables her to feel at home. This is a positive representation of Arabs by Abu Jaber that shows how Arabs are attached to their original identity although living in the West.

All of the symbols included in the previous quotation and throughout the novel may be interpreted as the reason why Sirine works as a chef, which is to find a “homely” place to live and to share her loneliness with other Arab immigrants, who also seek a sense of belonging, love, and warmth at the café. What Sirine does, also shows how she is an independent woman, who paves her own way in living in the West and surviving in it. Another character who shows the same independent Arab female woman is Nadia, who is the owner of the café that Sirine works in. In the following quote, Nadia is seen as an Arab woman with strong and independent personality. She opens her café for all Arabs to feel and let the Arabs feel at home, “Nadia’s Café is like other places—crowded at meals and quiet in between—but somehow there is also usually a lingering conversation, currents of Arabic that ebb around Sirine, fill her head with mellifluous voices. Always there are the same groups of students from the big university up the street, always so lonely, the sadness like blue hollows in their throats, blue notes for their wives and children back home, or for the American women they haven’t met” (Abu Jaber 2004, p 19). In this quote, Abu-Jaber figuratively conveys how Nadia’s café is a specific zone for Arab immigrants as a metaphor for unity, harmony, and even one identity as a soul mate.

Abu-Jaber’s representation of these two characters in the previous quotes is positive here because it highlights the idea of homeland. Abu

Jaber also tries to show the difference between the Arabs and the Westerners. She shows how the Arabs have strong bonds and relationships, unlike the Americans, who are considered Westerners. This is shown when Abu Jaber states in her novel, “Occasionally, a student would linger at the counter talking to Sirine. He would tell her how painful it is to be an immigrant—even if it was what he’d wanted all his life—sometimes especially if it was what he’d wanted all his life. Americans, he would tell her, don’t have the time or the space in their lives for the sort of friendship—days of coffee-drinking and talking— that the Arab students craved. For many of them the café was a little flavor of home” (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 22).

According to that, home is like an adoring mother who hugs her children and gives them a feeling of safety. So, when those Arab immigrants search for their mother, they come to the café and eat Sirine’s food, which is expressly defined as anodyne. It is as if the Arab delicacies made by Sirine bring back memories of the Arab World, family, and friends they have left behind. As well as her presence at the café, she inspires the students to confess their loneliness and lament about being “Others” in American culture.

In one way or another, the meals prepared at the café have the ability to draw Arab immigrants’ attention to their inner selves, and the terrible feeling of missing one’s hometown is temporarily forgotten. Sirine’s

presence in the kitchen and her food serve as a constant memory rescuer in this context.

As Abu-Jaber represents Arabs as one unity and that they all support each other challenging situations such as being in the West as foreigners. This is described in the description of Nadia's café as a place which unites the Arabs, "At Nadia's Café, there is a TV tilted in the corner above the cash register, permanently tuned to the all-Arabic station, with news from Qatar, variety shows and a shopping channel from Kuwait, endless Egyptian movies, Bedouin soap operas in Arabic, and American soap operas with Arabic subtitles. There is a group of regulars who each have their favorite shows and dishes and who sit at the same tables as consistently as if they were assigned. There are Jenob, Gharb, and Schmaal—engineering students from Egypt; Shark, a math student from Kuwait; Lon Hayden, the chair of Near Eastern Studies; Morris who owns the newsstand; Raphael from-New-Jersey; Jay, Ron, and Troy from the Kappa Something fraternity house; Odah, the Turkish butcher, and his many sons" (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 22).

In this context, Nadia's Café serves as a symbol of the materialization of home. Nevertheless, the novel by Abu-Jaber portrays Arab cultural history and conceptual frameworks that may be recognized and comprehended. However, Arab immigrants come from a variety of origins and live in the same community. All of them share the same

characteristics of hybridity, in-betweenness, diasporas, and the differentials of ideas and identities as a result of situations such as emigration, exile, colonization, or displacement. Abu Jaber's novel also attempts to raise awareness and sensitivity to diversity while celebrating various cultures and shared ties.

On the other hand, Sirine is represented as weak and fragile, when she “wishes she were smarter about things. Wishes she knew how to say something wise or consoling to him, something that wouldn't sound frightened or awkward” (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 88) This may also lead to the point that Sirine only cooks because it is the only way she can run away from her fears and her life as an Arab in the West. So, Sirine here, blames herself of being weak and wishes to become strong, and be able to say things that exist inside her.

Another character who Abu Jaber represents is Han, an Iraqi. Although Abu Jaber (2004) represents Han as an Arab Iraqi professor, who teaches in a university, he is sometimes represented as passive. His awareness and critical way of thinking is seen in his conversation with Rana about Mahfouz and identity, “Well, look at it this way—it's all about place and identity,” Han says. His hands slide back into his pockets, he takes a few steps in her direction. “Hemingway slipped easily between national identities, traveling all over the world, meeting everyone, having whatever adventures he could, yet he's considered the most

quintessentially American writer. Mahfouz, on the other hand, has spent almost his entire life in the same streets and neighborhoods, writing about Cairo and its people, yet he's considered an international author" — "That's just because he's not an American!" Rana says, tossing her head" (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 96).

Seen from the previous perspective, Abu-Jaber clearly portrays the idea of identity and how the identity plays an important role in social status. However, through Han's speech, there is a comparison between Hemingway, who discusses the national identities from all over the world, and Mahfouz, who mirrors just the social spectrum of his country. This means that literary works may reveal the identities of certain individuals of society. This implies that the literary works of Hemingway and Mahfouz put some strategies to convey their voices. So, what is fascinating is how Hemingway and Mahfouz express their aims via literary works. In the same point, they reveal the importance of fairness and equality in ethnicity relations is a critical element in the identity issue.

In the same line, for generations, identity has been a topic of discussion in psychology, anthropology, sociology, and other disciplines. However, Erikson (1963) conceptualize identity as a process in which people's identities are built up of biological, psychological, and social components that are negotiated to form a coherent sense of identity. Thus, Erikson identifies a feeling of cohesiveness as the aim of an individual's

identity formation and considered it fundamental to good personality functioning.

Although Han is represented as an educated Arab, he is misrepresented in some scenes throughout the novel as violent and as a murderer. This could be noticed from how Aziz and Um Nadia ask Sirine not to tell Han what happened between her and Aziz, because he may kill somebody (Abu Jaber 2004). Um Nadia continues by saying that Arab people are still as they are before millions of years about these matters (Abu Jaber 2004). Han is described here as a murderer and killer who would kill for anything. This resembles what is known about Arabs, so the Western reader will really believe these images after such representations. In other places, Han and Aziz are both presented in a positive way, Aziz is a wise and smart Arab poet (Abu Jaber 2004) and Han has many translations of Hemingway, Poe, Dickenson, and Whiteman into Arabic (Abu Jaber 2004).

Abu-Jaber mentions the most popular religion among Arabs and describes the crescent, which is “an important symbol in the Islamic faith.” She continues by saying that, “Many mosques are crowned with a crescent moon, in the same way that churches are adorned with crosses” (Abu Jaber 2004, p 327). The Prophet Muhammad, peace is upon him, told his followers to time certain rituals and activities according to the new moon. The first sighting of the new moon marks the beginning of each Islamic

month and it marks the end of Ramadan—the great and pious month of fasting—which closes with the 'Id-al-Fitr, the Feast of Fast Breaking, when everyone dresses up in new clothes, goes out visiting and eating!” (Abu Jaber 2004, p 327).

Abu Jaber points decisively to the crescent in the novel as a symbol of Islam to distinguish Muslims from other religions. Moreover, as we know crescent is the moon's first phase, and it signifies progress.

Abu Jaber sometimes, throughout the novel, shows how Arab immigrants are inassimilable and unable to adapt to the American way of life. Moreover, Arab-American hybrids feel incomplete and cannot exist as hybrids for long. This is how she represents Arabs as negative. She adds, such as what she states about Sirine, that “Um-Nadia says the loneliness of the Arab is a terrible thing; it is all consuming. It is already present like a little shadow under the heart when he lays his head on his mother's slap; it threatens to swallow him whole when he leaves his own country, even though he marries and travels and talks to friends twenty-four hours a day. That is the way Sirine suspects that Arabs feel everything—larger than life, feelings walking in the sky” (Abu Jaber 2004, p 22).

Likewise, Abu Jaber's depiction of characters is largely based on ethnic and racial stereotypes. In addition to that, she represents the belief that Arab-American hybrids feel incomplete and will not be able to remain as hybrids for long. That is how Sirine thinks Arabs perceive things larger

than life, as if they are walking in the sky. Moreover, the writer here highlights the sense of isolation that takes over the Arabs when they leave their homelands.

On the other hand, in other places in the novel, she shows some religious or traditional practices, such as prayers or Ramadan, done by all Arabs, who frequently, come to the café. She describes this Arab identity, which gathers them and joins them together (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 297).

Another character whose story of her husband shows that Arab women are dominated and oppressed by their male-relatives. Rana is married to an Arab, who brings her to America and locks her inside his house. He refuses to let her go out or see anyone. Rana tells Sirine and Han her story and how she managed to escape from him (Abu Jaber 2004). Abu Jaber states in the novel that “No one wants to be Arab” and that they are “old”, “tragic”, “mysterious”, “exasperating” and “lonely” (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 54). This also could be added to what Abu Jaber states from the point of view of Sirine, “Sirine sometimes tries to look around at the students from Middle East ... with the word “terrorist” in her mind”. Then the narration continues with, “She only reaches to the words “lonely” and “young” (Abu Jaber 2004, p. 22). From the previous examples, the ambivalence in the representation of Arabs could be noticed.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusions and Recommendations

This chapter presents the results of the study and answers the questions that are proposed in chapter one of this study. It also presents some recommendations that may reveal other issues of Arabs represented in Naomi Shihab Nye's *Habibi* and Diana Abu Jaber's *Crescent* in relation to Postcolonialism.

5.1 Conclusions

1. How Does Naomi Shihab Nye Represent Arabs in her Novel, *Habibi*?

After analyzing Shihab Nye's *Habibi* through the lens of Postcolonialism, many insights into the novel's diverse characteristics could be reached to. Shihab Nye generally highlights the concept of Arab identity and how it is significant to the Arabs living in the West. It appears that Arab identity, according to Shihab Nye, refers to Arabness to denote a broad but heterogeneous concept of belonging to an Arab culture and order.

It is apparent that Shihab Nye, as an Arab-American writer, uses her literary style as a kind of opposition not just against Orientalists and Arab foundational regimes and identity building, but also to investigate and articulate her sentiments regarding her hyphenated identities, diaspora, and uniqueness.

The author of *Habibi* represents Arabs sometimes in a positive way and other times in a negative way. This shows how her representation is described as ambivalent. Shihab Nye may not have intended to represent Arabs in an ambivalent way, but this is shown while trying to concentrate on the idea of homesickness and immigrants' experience throughout several characters mainly, Liyana .

Shihab Nye's main concern is to highlight Arabness, which appears clearly in her novel. In addition to identity, people throughout this wide expanse share some different behaviors and beliefs, which may have supplied the foundation for an understanding of a common culture with an assumed genealogical link to the Arab World. Such preconceptions about a shared multiculturalism based primarily on identity may not have been maintained by the Arabian Continent's citizens themselves.

While presenting all the previous topics, the researcher reaches to a conclusion, which is that from the way the Arabs in general and from the way Poppy is portrayed and shown in the novel, an ambivalence in the representation of Arabs is seen. Arabs are sometimes represented as positive and sometimes as negative. This kind of representation will neither enhance nor refute the stereotypical images that are known about the Arabs in the West and in the world.

2. How Does Diana Abu Jaber Represent Arabs in her novel, *Crescent*?

Diana Abu-Jaber portrays Arab cultural history and conceptual frameworks that may be recognized and comprehended. However, Arab immigrants come from a variety of origins and live in the same communities in the West. All of them share the same characteristics of hybridity, in-betweenness, diasporas, and identity as a result of emigration, exile, colonization, or displacement. Abu Jaber's novel also attempts to raise awareness and sensitivity to diversity while celebrating various cultures.

Although Abu- Jaber's emotive writing includes perceptive and empathetic representations of the Arab-American community, her aims are far larger. Furthermore, Abu-Jaber examines the intersections of Arabic culture with love, myth, poetry, and food. In *Crescent*, Abu- Jaber talks about Arabs in the United States. From this vantage point, Abu-Jaber effectively conveys this concept and uses the café as a striking metaphor for a lost former relationship. The café's atmosphere carries the characters back to their childhood homes and provides comfort. Again, it's critical to consider how immigrants react with their new surroundings and memories of their previous residence. Thus, in the café, food and the act of remembering the home country serve as a kind of comfort in an otherwise unfamiliar and new language.

Abu Jaber raises the topic of what it means to be a Middle Eastern writer. In terms of how she may declare herself as an Arab American writer, or at least be regarded as one of them, one possible explanation is that she negotiates her Arab-American identity throughout her works. In the context of examining Arab American women's writing, nowadays, media is full of images of the West. For example, narrative and writing are essential because they become the method by which Arab's identities and affiliations are constructed, in addition to determine how Arabs are recognized.

While presenting all the previous topics, the researcher reaches to a conclusion, which is that from the way the Arabs in general and from the way Han, Sirine, Aziz and others are portrayed and shown in the novel, an ambivalence in the representation of Arabs is seen. Arabs are sometimes represented as positive and sometimes as negative. This kind of representation will neither enhance nor refute the stereotypical images that are known about the Arabs in the West and in the world.

3. What are the similarities and differences between the writers' representations of Arabs?

Both Arab American writers, Diana Abu Jaber and Naomi Shihab Nye discuss the same issues that Arab American are exposed to while living in the West. Throughout reflecting these issues, they both intend on representing the real image of the Arabic culture and the Arabs to increase

the Westerners' awareness of Arabs and they both highlight their Arabic identity. On the other hand, while trying to represent the issues of Arabs in the West, the issues they suffered from in their home countries, or even the issues their people suffer from in the Arab regions, they may unintentionally show negative representations of the Arabic culture or the Arab characters they are representing.

As an example Shihab Nye represents Poppy as an open minded father who discusses everything with their children and his wife. He is an Arab doctor who works in the United States and then decides to go back to Palestine because he wants his two kinds to grow in Palestine and be exposed to Arabic culture and traditions. On the other hand, Shihab Nye highlights some characteristics of Arabic culture and Arabs that resemble the stereotypical characteristics of them known in the West and in the world.

On the same line, Abu Jaber represents Han, as an example, as an Arab professor, who has many translations and enters many discussions, where people get impressed by his thinking, such as Liyana's uncle. On the other hand, Abu Jaber represents him in other places as backward and uncivilized and a killer.

From these contradictory representations shown by both authors of the Arabic culture and the Arabs, the researcher reaches to a conclusion, which resembles the statement of the study. Both author's representations

are considered ambivalent, they cannot be considered totally positive, nor totally negative.

5.2 Recommendations

1. More studies should be done on Diana Abu Jaber's way in representing the role of the characters in rendering the Arabic culture.
2. More studies should be done on Naomi Nye's way in representing the role of the characters in rendering the Arabic culture.
3. More studies should be done on Diana Abu Jaber's way in representing The United States' occupation of Iraq.
4. More studies should be done on Naomi Nye's way in representing The Israeli's occupation of Palestine.

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