

Diaspora Reversed: A Post-Modern ‘Third Space’ in ‘The American Granddaughter’

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Abstract: *This paper explores a socio-political and cultural approach to identity-formation for the Iraqi diasporic subject. Projecting diaspora as following a fixed pattern does not serve young-generation diasporists. Ultimately, the aim of this study is projected in the possibility of experiencing diaspora in reverse, particularly in the neglected younger diasporic generation, for the purpose of recreating a subjective self-narrative away from their parents' diasporic experiences. The study of diasporic-identities will be projected in Inaam Kachachi's 'The American Granddaughter', with specific focus on the young protagonist as representative of diaspora in reverse. A 'Third Framework' will be utilized for the purpose of allowing the construction of a possible post-modern diasporic-identity, the fluidity of which crosses boundaries rather than falls under a dichotomous choice.*

Keywords: diaspora reversed, 'real Iraq', Iraqi diaspora, self-narrative, 'third space'

1. Introduction: 'Real Iraq' in Inaam Kachachi's diasporic memory

Unlike many other authors of the diaspora, Inaam Kachachi did not escape Iraqi violence, but rather chose to live in Paris as the political state in Iraq worsened, because she was 'born with a wish for freedom [... She would not otherwise] live in Iraq as a free and independent woman' (Snaije 2014: 1). However, her love for Iraq remains as much alive as it is in her diasporic characters. The notion of a 'Real Iraq' living in her and many other diasporic Iraqis reflects their enchantment with their experienced memories of better times, in opposition to their disenchantment and dissociation with today's Iraq projected with utter governmental chaos, sectarian violence and extremism.

Her long-pursued career as a journalist did not fully accommodate the passion she wanted to express for her country. With the growing local and foreign tensions erupting in Iraq, Kachachi responded to 'a big shout inside of [her] as a reaction to what was happening in [her] country, something that couldn't be transmitted by journalism' (ibid: 3). Thus, her fiction becomes a projection of how she felt towards it: its changing image, and the diasporic state of Iraqis. In this sense, fiction becomes the only venue fluid enough for her to fully narrate diasporic self-narratives from within and beyond the borders of Iraq, out of 'duty to tell the new generation' (ibid: 3).

The significance of expressing oneself through fiction as opposed to stating archived historical fact as a journalist, according to Rosa Yassin Hassan (Abdelhady 2007), a Syrian diasporist and novelist also living in France, manifests itself in giving the word of truth through memory. Fiction, to Hassan as well as Kachachi, becomes the means by which

to extract that which is secret. To find what has been made to disappear, to say what is unsaid or hidden. All these things that are buried in the deep interior of people and at the heart of society [...] I think writing [fiction], besides being an aesthetic art that pleases the reader, is above all a method to ask questions, to provoke and to oblige us to think in a different manner [...] I don't believe that literature consists in creating an imaginary world into which one can plunge. The novel, in particular, is the secret history of humanity because the official history is a great lie written by the conquerors and the rulers (Abdelhady 2007: 4).

In her novel 'The American Granddaughter' (2010), Kachachi treats diasporic self-narratives which manifest themselves in her fictional characters, as *alternate archives*. Each self-narrative documents the personalized experiences of its subject through subjective memories in the homeland (Hirsch, Smith 2002: 10). In this sense, memory plays a very significant role in the diasporic characters' struggles to construct a personal and social identity, the subjectivity of whom has been fragmented (Giles 2002: 21). The recording of these memories, thus, becomes a means of 'representation [and] interpretation' (Hirsch et al. 2002: 5), authenticated by its subjects, and representative of self, home and history. Memory for Kachachi encodes the cultural and political heritage of diasporic populations to satisfy their nostalgia and longing to be in touch with their ancestral history, hence, the representation of their 'Real Iraq'. The constant invasion of cultural symbols in her novel such as folkloric music and local food enhances the sense of pride for the diasporic characters, whose self-worth has been eroded by either physical conflict experienced in Iraq, or through forced assimilation into the country of residence (Baronian, Besser and Jansen 2007). Memory is specifically treated in this paper as a performative, figurative process rather than a secure space of identity in itself (Douglas 1975). It cannot serve the younger diasporic generation as a substitute for identity, especially that the memory in question would not ideally be theirs, but rather that of their parents; the sum of lived experiences of a different generation. Nevertheless, memory does serve as an incentive for the young diasporists to embark on their own journey for identity-formation by creating their own self-narratives.

On the role that memory plays in the enchantment of a 'Real Iraq' projected in the self-narratives of its diasporists, Kachachi insists that 'digging up memories is the profession of both migrants and residents in the Arab world [...] Perhaps internal exile is more painful than the impact of external exile' (Al-Najjar 2014). She explains that writing about Iraq is not simple nostalgia to her as she is neither

a refugee nor an exile, but rather a channel to voice the untold stories of Iraqis, whose memories make up the 'Real Iraq'. According to Kachachi then, the projection of memory of Iraq in her characters:

is just a pretext to write about the Iraq of yesterday; *I* is not nostalgia so much as [her] responsibility as a mother towards [her] sons and daughters. The country they and their friends have seen on television over the past years, burning and bleeding on a daily basis, has never been a land of bombings and assassinations, but an ancient and generous country that was pleasant to live in (ibid).

Kachachi also reflects on the growing number of Iraqi authors projecting the plight of Iraq during a critical time for the country. She has not directly witnessed war in Iraq, and so does not deal with the present bloody scene in her homeland, the way other Iraqi authors do. These authors 'are striving to capture the shocking events taking place in Iraq and monitor their reverberations' (ibid). Their themes also capture experiences of war and exile, alluding to details, accounts and experiences specifically fixated upon the conflict of its diasporists. Her fiction, however, stands out because it, on the one hand, holds with it a specific message; one that manifests itself as a reminder to the entire world of the 'Real Iraq'; an image that has been deformed by late twentieth century world media, to serve different political agendas. Kachachi's fiction, then, focuses more so on the revival of the 'Real Iraq' through her portrayal of the peaceful memories that most older generation diasporists project. She states that even though 'violence tries me, and my description of its mechanisms cannot match the skill with which it is being committed on the ground [, give] me peace and I will describe it to you and furnish it with characters. Don't you think that a warm, well-lit room conveys the darkness to us?' (ibid). In this sense, her focus on diasporic memory in her characters serves the purpose of voicing the forgotten truth about the 'Real Iraq' that existed before the eruption of internal conflict, followed by foreign interference.

On the other hand, what is more interesting in Kachachi's novel, is her specific focus on the forgotten younger diasporic generation, that suffers the plight of identity loss, with barely any memory of their homeland to hold onto, and a continued sense of loss experienced in the country of residence. If they are to assume an identity, it would not be theirs, but that adopted from their parents. Since the focus of this paper is the neglected younger diasporic generation, it questions the possibility of experiencing diaspora in reverse. In other words, instead of following the diasporic pattern chronologically, diaspora would be traced back starting from the country of residence. Revisiting their homeland as adults, with the sole purpose of directly forming personal, social and political experiences, tangible enough to form memories, upon which a diasporic identity may be created is a necessity, before they return to their country of residence. Respectively, special focus should be shed on the ownership of a subjective self-narrative, for the purpose of setting their narratives away from those of the older generation. The above mentioned themes are most prominently projected

throughout 'The American Granddaughter', and so the analysis of her characters, with specific focus on the protagonist Zeina, will furnish the basis of this conducted study. However, the starting point should ideally be the root-cause of twentieth and twenty first centuries Iraqi diaspora. A brief historical account will lay the foundation to understanding the socio-political and psychological states of the two diasporic generations projected in the novel, starting with Iraq's internal conflict, worsened by foreign interference.

1.1 The history of Iraqi diaspora: The case of the United States of America

Although the early period witnessed many political tensions at work, Iraqis then attested to a better time without sectarian conflict, where Sunnis, Shi'is, Kurds, Christians, Mandeans, Yazidis and Jews lived together with one noticeable differential, that of class distinction. The incidents of prejudice and discrimination were scattered individual experiences, and the majority of Iraqis attested to having 'lived in relatively multicultural and to some extent cosmopolitan environments that encouraged education, travel abroad and cultural appreciation' (Al-Ali 2007: 66).

Between the early 1940s up till the 1970s, the United States witnessed two waves of Iraqi immigrants, initially commencing with students travelling in pursuit of higher education and economic stability (ibid: 32). This was followed by a wave of political exiles, especially the elite associated with the monarchy and communists fleeing their persecution by the Ba'th regime. These immigrants are currently found to be dispersed throughout the country, and mainly populated in 'Detroit, Chicago, Nashville, Los Angeles and San Diego' (ibid: 53).

The Ba'th period extended through 1963-2003, and witnessed the continuation of the ongoing flow of immigrants into the United States, and although Iraqi immigrants had fled the many atrocities practiced in their homeland as a result of growing sectarian and political conflict. (2007: 34). Iraqi immigrants and refugees had in common the heart wrenching stories of relatives' disappearances, mysterious deaths, and many atrocities practiced in their homeland. Such anger translated itself in the massive support of the American invasion on Iraq in 2003, as getting rid of the sectarian conflict and the struggle for power, that had controlled the country for over thirty years, was their priority (ibid: 30).

A large population of Iraqi residents, in the meantime, was internally dispersed within Iraq (ibid: 55). After the 2003 American attack, Iraq witnessed 'worsening violence and lack of security, including continued armed conflict and increasing ethnic and religious tensions, new patterns of persecution, as well as the acute lack of services and infrastructure have led to new displacements of Iraqis both inside and outside Iraq' (ibid: 55).

For the purpose of this study, Iraqi immigrants will be referred to as diasporists, as will be projected in the main characters of Kachachi's 'The

American Granddaughter' (2010), who '[encompass] a whole range of voluntary and forced migration patterns' (2007: 17). In the novel, the protagonist's parents and grandmother project different notions of diaspora. The grandmother Rahma, on the one hand, embodies psychologically-forced diaspora, as she is psychologically dispersed within Iraq away from her perception of a 'Real Iraq'. The parents, on the other hand, represent involuntary diaspora, having fled their country to Detroit out of fear of persecution by the Ba'th regime. The analysis of both diasporas will set them aside from that of the young protagonist, Zeina, who does not seem to fall under either of the diasporic patterns followed by her family, ultimately leading to her point of departure from the traditional diasporic patterns. The physical reality of diaspora is always accompanied by the psychological dimension, especially the risk that is taken in parting with the familiar and embracing what is entirely foreign to their being. The reaction that the protagonist's parents and grandmother have toward their conditions and positionings is fixed, where they are found desperately holding on to their forsaken pasts, in comparison to the protagonist who does not have much to hold onto, but rather faces a diasporic 'crisis of meaning' (ibid: 17). The study of the different diasporas at work in the novel will serve the purpose of understanding Zeina's identity loss, onto her process of identity search, ultimately reaching a post-modern 'Third Space'. However, reaching a clear understanding of Zeina's identity-formation requires the study of the different dimensions at work, making up a diasporic identity.

2. Zeina's third space: A post-modern diasporic identity

The study of diaspora entails a discursive space for the immigrant subject that allows one to examine their alternating perception of one's identity and place in society as a result of relational political conflict within one nation-state or between more. Scholars of the diaspora, such as Gerard Chaliand, choose to narrow down the phenomena to include a minority of population dispersed from their homeland onto distant parts of the world upon subjection to acute danger, oppression, political persecution, as urgent motives to fleeing their native lands (Chailand and Rageau1995). Other scholars such as Robin Cohen, choose to include immigrants who have never been subjected to any form of threat, but have moved for varied reasons, one of which is their interest in the creation, not of a homeland, as much as it is of a sovereign state for it (Gilroy 1997: 323). In such a case, the understanding of diaspora is purely based on 'physical denotation of dispersal or change of locality [where] homes are [construed as] always provisional. Borders and barriers which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity' (Said 2002: 166). Minority populations that were once referred to as immigrants, refugees, asylum seekers, or even guest workers may today fall under the same category of diaspora, mainly because the term was not in the past considered as a distinct category by specialists on ethnicity, nationalism, and migration, at least not until the twenty first century.

One reason behind the current theorists' heavy inclination to conflate the above categories under diaspora might be subjectively looking at these dispersed populations in relation to their self-narratives. Amin Maalouf suggests that diasporic identities are the sum of their life experiences (Maalouf 2001). Vijay Mishra however, explains the concept differently, as a 'diaspora imaginary [that recounts] the state of identification in which we appear likeable to ourselves, with the image representing what we would like to be [... In this fashion, diaspora becomes a state of mind,] a joy, a pleasure around which anti-miscegenation narratives of homeland are constructed' (Mishra 1996: 422-423).

In spite of the differing opinions on what should ideally constitute a diasporic character, most theorists agree to certain characteristics that diasporists share. Their dispersal from their familiar surroundings onto a foreign region is a must, where they sustain a certain image or myth about their homeland created and fed through their discontinued experiences, in the form of memory (2007: 16), thus, interrupting their full assimilation into the host country. The constant comparison between the familiar and the foreign leads them to a state of frustration and despair as their image of their real homeland is respective to their discontinued experiences and so does not necessarily constitute its actual and continued reality. The constant sense of guilt for having left their country behind, also pushes them to maintain and transmit their cultural heritage as they know it to younger diasporists (Safran 1991: 83-99).

This scenario, however, is rather problematic for younger generation diasporists that are dispersed with their families. Even though the younger generation is automatically categorized as diasporic, it does not really fit into the category for two simple reasons, that of age and maturity on the one hand, and easier assimilation into the host country on the other. The sum of experiences they would have acquired in their homeland with their local community, upon which their diasporic memories are based, cannot be compared to that of their parents, whose memories of their homeland are fathomed over a longer period of time, and are based on physical experiences with the local community at the social, political, and economic levels. In other words, the younger generation's mature sense of reality would not as yet have been reached and developed. Their assimilation into the host country would also be easier to that of the older generation, especially that the sum of experiences and memories that they would form in the host country, as they come of age, would mostly be influenced by their new surroundings. Consequently, they would not subjectively identify with a diasporic self-narrative of their own, and so would be assuming a diasporic identity, the recounted imaginary of which is that of their parents. If younger generation diasporists do not fit into the category of diaspora in the same way and order experienced and followed by adults, perhaps by following an alternative order, the younger generation may be able to create their separate self-narratives. This would not merely help them create a subjective diasporic self-narrative, but

one that suggests fluidity of identity in continuous transformation, hence their point of departure from the older generation's sense of diaspora.

The challenge that many young diasporists face in their country of residence is projected in 'The American Granddaughter' (Kachachi 2010) at many levels, through the troubled perception that the young protagonist Zeina has of herself, and the lack of identification that she feels with her parents' self-narratives, her country of residence, and her homeland. Zeina's diaspora is described by her milk-brother Muhaymen as one of instability with 'rupture' in her 'spirit' (2010: 130), leaving behind her life, identity, and home to embrace the abyss. That, to him is the very state of 'captivity', not freedom, where one is 'suspended between two lives, with no comfort in moving on or turning back', especially that he can never 'imagine having a stepmother land' (ibid: 130). Zeina's Iraqi milk-mother Tawoos also describes her as 'a dog with two homes', to which Zeina reflects on as feeling astray: 'I couldn't get my old life back, and I couldn't adapt to my life in the Zone. I was a dog with two homes but unable to feel at home in either' (ibid: 147).

Beside the image she projects of herself in the eyes of Iraqis, Zeina's sadness and sense of loss are projected from the opening lines of the novel as she confesses:

If sorrow were a man I would not kill him. I would pray for his long life. For it has honed me and smoothed over the edges of my reckless nature. It has turned the world and everything in it a strange colour with unfamiliar hues that my words stutter to describe and my eyes fail to register (ibid: 1).

Set against the critical period between Iraq and the United States, the novel opens with a vital moment in the protagonist's life, in the year 2003, witnessing her country of residence attack her homeland. Amidst the confusion of war that Zeina is witnessing from her safe home in Detroit, she contends that

like any skilled actor, I felt I had the ability to adopt a role and change character, to be simultaneously their daughter and their enemy, while they could be my kin as well as my enemy. From that day on, I became aware of the malady of grief that afflicted me, to which I adapted and for which I sought no cure (ibid: 7).

Her understanding of her grief is projected in her self-perception and projection as kin and enemy at the same time in her homeland and her place of residence. For her parents, diaspora becomes an indispensable space for refuge from their land of origin which is in political conflict with their safe place of residence. But understanding Zeina's diaspora poses a challenge in her particular story, as it is multi-layered and rather complex. She is born in Baghdad, and projects a normal childhood through the memories she is capable of recounting as an adult. Without the slightest understanding of the political state of urgency her family experiences, she is moved early on in life to the city of Detroit, 'fifteen years ago' to be exact, where she is to take refuge with her family from the sectarian and political conflict (ibid: 32). Her understanding of her parents' state does not exceed the image of her mother Batoul who 'could not stay in the

country after [the torture that her husband was subjected to for] protest[ing] about the news bulletins being too long and had said that the news was merely recycled leftovers from the day before what had happened to her husband' (ibid: 69-71).

In addition to the sudden move, Zeina is exposed to her parents' many unresolved tensions. The parents' account is fixed against their discontinued past experiences of Iraq, their desire to return to a distant past, the constant sense of guilt and betrayal they feel toward their homeland, and the realization of the impossibility of such a return, consequently resulting in their divorce (ibid: 63). The only narrative she grows up with is that of her troubled parents; a narrative she cannot seem to affiliate with.

Ideally, the pattern that diaspora follows should start with the past lived in the homeland, leading to a state of diaspora that the dispersed subject experiences, projecting frozen memories that form a certain enchantment of the homeland. However, since Zeina's account of the past is merely fixed upon her father's traumatic near-death experience, and her mother's lasting memory of it, the only way for her to project herself as a diasporist is by experiencing the process of diaspora in reverse, from the perspective of an adult living in the diaspora. Zeina has to first identify with Iraq in order to recreate her subjective self-narrative, but since the greater part of her life was lived as an American, the only way for her to identify with Iraq is by going back to it and recreating memories that would be no one but hers. Her life does not follow the normal diasporic pattern that her parents experience. It is however not as simple as she assumes it to be, as her journey comes at a critical stage in the history of the two countries she has ever known, the United States and Iraq. Consequently, the experience of a better time lived in Iraq remains missing. Her parents' experiences in Iraq do not make full sense to her because they remain fragmented segments of a distant past, reinforcing a growing vacuum between their past and Zeina's present. As the parents' past froze, it is only continued through the acquisition of knowledge about what constitutes Iraq away from American media, which is postulated in a way that serves the purpose of the attack. In this sense, the insider's voice becomes crucial.

And so the only option available for her is to rely on her grandmother Rahma's account of life in Iraq uninterrupted by immigration, and continued till Zeina is capable of forming a past connected to her direct present experience there. Her grandmother would offer a more detailed and stable account of the distant past, connected to the present that Zeina will experience in Iraq. But for Zeina, and her grandmother Rahma, the real face of Iraq exists in the past before the Ba'th regime took over power, and certainly before the American invasion on Iraq. However, the complexity in Zeina's establishment of a 'Real Iraq' is mired by the very sectarian and foreign intrusions of its reality. And so the only option she has is to rely on her grandmother's account of it.

Zeina assumes she has found her purpose by applying for the post of a translator for the American Army in Iraq; that initially '[...] to repay the country

that had embraced [her] since [her] adolescence and given [her] and [her] family a [safe] home' (ibid: 81). She wonders:

How could a powerless immigrant like me serve the great United States of America? It was impossible to [...] be content with my small hopes [...] Quickly, without thinking too much [...] I filled out an online application. But it wasn't a rash decision. I knew exactly what I was getting into (ibid: 12).

Zeina's initial naïve assumption leads her to believe that she is an American savior on the mission of rescuing her Iraqi people. She states:

I repeated after Fox News that I was going on a patriotic mission. I was a soldier stepping forward to help my government, my people and my army, our American army that would bring down Saddam and liberate a nation from its suffering [...] The poor people of Iraq. They won't believe their eyes when they finally open onto freedom (ibid: 10-11).

But not until she goes back to Iraq does she find the real purpose for her journey, that being the reconstruction of her self-narrative, by filling the gap her parents have always failed to provide. She has neither experienced the prosecution her parents were directly subjected to in Iraq, nor has she had enough time to form a sense of loyalty and strong passion toward her homeland, mixed with a perpetual fear of the regime. And so, with her move back to Iraq, Zeina allows herself a 'Third Space', her own space for questioning, where she is capable of rationally and emotionally documenting her own self-narrative through her moment to moment experiences in the US, and in Iraq from the perspective of an adult, and with the assistance of her grandmother Rahma.

3. Memory in self-narratives

Self-narratives are crucial to the understanding of Iraqi diasporists, and should not be treated as homogeneous. Each narrative is dictated by its subject's experiences and memories, taking into account the different moments of history and their current political situations, upon which their narratives are based. In order to reach an understanding of the complexly layered relations producing differing attitudes within Zeina as a diasporic subject, setting her parents' self-narrative against her grandmother's is imperative. In other words, Zeina's identity loss is partly fed by her inability to move away from her parents' self-narrative. It is also equally important to recognize the role of her grandmother, Rahma, who lives in Iraq, in filling her self-narrative with memories that later on serve the purpose of forming a more realistic image of the 'Real Iraq' in her mind. Zeina does not however limit herself to her grandmother's account, as she manages to find her 'Third Space' that will ultimately help shape her subjective identity.

In her book, *Tangled Memories*, Marita Shurken contends that:

memory forms the fabric of human life, affecting everything from the ability to perform simple, everyday tasks to the recognition of the self. Memory establishes life's continuity; it gives meaning to the present, as each moment is constituted by the past. As the means by which we

remember who we are, memory provides the very core of identity (Shurken 1991: 1).

Dalia Abdelhady also insists that almost all scholars in the field of diasporic studies differ in their approaches, they nevertheless agree to the crucial significance of memory for their identity formation and condition, because it helps them sustain a common consciousness and therefore solidarity (2007: 39). Abdelhady argues that 'the selective process of describing the past' is crucial not just to understand it, but also to give essence to the present, because it indicates [the] collective desires, needs, and self-definitions of diasporic subjects' (ibid: 40). Maurice Halbwachs however, insists that 'the past is a social construction mainly, if not wholly, shaped by the concerns of the present ... the beliefs, interests and aspirations of the present shape the various views of the past as they are manifested respectively in every historical epoch' (Coser 1992: 25).

The clearest projection of Zeina's parents' attitudes toward their memories of Iraq influencing their present in Detroit may be understood through their demeanor on the day they swear allegiance to the United States:

My father dressed up especially for the occasion in his dark blue suit [...] My mother walked apart from us and looked like she was in a funeral procession [...] I heard my mother's voice break as if she was suffocating [...] Her pale face had turned purple and tears streamed down from her eyes[...] The masses put their hands on their hearts and sang out the national anthem [...] but] the voice of my mother, the Iraqi woman Batoul Fatouhy Saour, was the only one out of tune, as she wailed in Arabic, 'Forgive me, Father. *Yaabaa*, forgive me (2010: 19-21).

Even though their attitudes differ toward swearing allegiance to the United States, they nevertheless share a similar if not the same self-narrative, especially as pertaining to their loyalty toward their homeland, with the father repeatedly stating: 'I'd give my right hand if I should forget you, Baghdad' (ibid: 180).

The memory of a 'Real Iraq' shapes the self-perception and future self-projection of Zeina's family. The parents are found restrained by the very idealized enchantment they have created of their homeland. Their fixation upon the image they have of Iraq is reinforced by their nostalgic yearning for a homeland that could no longer shelter them from the oppressive Ba'th regime, hence their projection of a static self-narrative. As they simply remember, they become prisoners of their memories. Zeina, on the other hand, does not have much memory of Iraq to hold onto, neither in her childhood lived in Iraq, nor in her diasporic life as an American. Her inquisitive urge to identity-formation allows her to indulge in Hall's post-modern 'Third Space', by not simply relying on her parents' memories, but rather her first-hand experiences to allocate the missing emotional link she does not share with her family. She does not depend on their imagined homeland, but decides to recreate her own self-narrative in the actual homeland by revisiting it and creating her own account of it. Rahma on the

other hand feels alienated and lonely in Iraq, holding on to her memories of the time before the family scattered around the world. The only solace she finds is in her collection of saints she has and prays for. Looking at Saint Christopher, the patron of travelers, she habitually reflects on 'missing her emigrant children and unable to forgive the destiny that led her to end up alone in this big house, as if she was living beyond her years with no purpose [...] and cursed the children who'd flown away without her' (ibid: 54).

Zeina's parents and Rahma's accounts of the past are also conditioned and selected upon their personal experiences with the sectarian struggle and hope for a better future. Since Zeina does not have much of a past in Iraq upon which her diasporic identity may be built, her decision to participate in the US mission in Iraq is grounded in her refusal to settle for what Hall suggests is 'mere recovery of the past, which is waiting to be found.' She realizes that she cannot relive her past in Iraq, but can rather 'reconstruct [...] it] on the basis of the present' (Cosser 1992: 40). Consequently, Zeina does not fully depend on her grandmother's memory of Iraq, but rather utilizes it to inform her day to day experiences in the country. This is because

we preserve memories of each epoch in our lives, and these are continually reproduced; through them, as by a continual relationship, a sense of our identity is perpetuated. But precisely because these memories are repetitions, because they are successively engaged in very different systems of notions, at different periods of our lives, they have lost the form and the appearance they once had (ibid: 47).

Rahma's persona, however, is of excruciating significance for Zeina's understanding of the 'Real Iraq', especially that she belongs to the older generation, and has experienced the 'Real Iraq', that is before the Ba'th came to power in 1968. Her account of the 'Real Iraq' is therefore tangible, as it is made up of encountered experiences that can be directly accessed and translated onto her self-narrative, rather than depending on an older generation's account of it. Zeina's parents, in comparison, are only capable of narrating memories experienced under the Ba'th regime; projecting the bloodshed and growing political dispute and sectarian violence following the revolution of 1958. The parents' generation's enchantment with the 'Real Iraq' mostly comes from the older generation's account of it, in their case Rahma. The clash in memory experienced by the older generation and only heard of by the younger generation only gives more reason for them to visualize the 'Real Iraq' as a concept, but that image remains vague and insubstantial evidence for Zeina to hold onto. With 'the idea that the lost homeland is the defining moment of diasporic identity' (Baronian 2007: 12), it is translated differently through the different generations within their given contexts: for Rahma, the 'Real Iraq' did exist and was experienced, but was lost with the coming of the Ba'th regime. However, for the parents, the 'Real Iraq' was always troubled politically, marking their diasporic crisis.

Rahma's focus on a past of coexistence and a rich heritage projected onto the hope of its return in the future is a method that she seems to be purposefully and consciously adopting in the hope of instilling her own ideals in Zeina. Rahma does so by presenting her personal narrative and experiences that celebrate her own conceptions of her identity and her memories of coexistence. Zeina states:

I rested my head in her lap and let her tell me her stories that were steeped in the scent of Iraq. She delved deep into her memory for anecdotes and other means of explanation. She told me of my family's history that was manifest everywhere around us. The print of my blood and the bones of my ancestors (2010: 78).

Rahma's choice to focus on her memories becomes an approach that projects 'a politicization of memory that distinguishes nostalgia, that longing for something to be as it once was, a kind of useless act, from that of remembering that serves to illuminate and transform the present' (Hooks 1990: 147). Her narrative, however, illustrates the suggestion that diaspora can take on a different dimension from within and amidst the space of conflict, exiled and imprisoned in her own home. Ultimately, Rahma's alienation from within the country pauses yet another complex issue to be resolved by Zeina, that lying in the grandmother's disappointment with her return as an American. This initially pauses a barrier in Zeina's process of recreating her self-narrative with Rahma's help because of her grandmother's obvious prejudice against what she believes is now a tainted identity that should be purified through extensive doses of Iraqi memory. Zeina describes her grandmother's attitude toward her American uniform as she receives her:

She started to beat her thighs with her hands like women only do at funerals and catastrophes. The sad look in her eyes as she looked at me said it all. I felt vulnerable and exposed and sat there waiting for the sermon of reproach. I knew what I'd done wrong and had no intention of defending myself. When she'd had her fill of looking at me, she picked up [... my grandfather's Iraqi] army suit and laid it out beside her on the sofa (2010: 77).

Rahma's prejudiced attitude comes in retaliation to the simplistic perception that Zeina has of American policy and purpose behind the attack on Iraq. Her reaction to the burden of having her beloved granddaughter reintroduced as a foreign occupier forces her to scream and slap her own cheeks the minute she sees her granddaughter in the distinctive light-coloured camouflage of the US Army. She doesn't recognize her right away, not until Zeina has removed the helmet from her head. [...] But she knows that her eyes are only confirming what her heart has been telling her for some time. 'God damn you, Zeina, daughter of Batoul ... I wish I had died before having to see you like this (ibid: 100).

Zeina's grandmother, Rahma, like the parents, identifies with the present struggle by setting it against the experienced past she hopes to be recreated in the future. Halbwach asserts that:

Memories, especially the earliest ones, are indeed our memories: those who might read them in us as well as we read them ourselves have either vanished or been dispersed. Yet, if we flee in this way from the society of the people of today, this is in order to find ourselves among other human beings and in another human milieu, since our past is inhabited by the figures of those we used to know. In this sense, one can escape from a society only by opposing to it another society (1992: 49).

Consequently, Zeina refuses to fully accept her grandmother's obsessive need to re-shape her identity, as she consciously states: 'I drank her stories in, but they didn't quench my thirst. There was a missing link somewhere, and it wasn't my grandmother's job to find it, but mine' (2010: 78). Zeina confirms listening to Rahma's memories attentively. It does not however lead her to forsake her American identity, as she does not feel the need to choose:

I wanted to hear more of the family history that she'd been dripping into my consciousness ... My grandmother told her stories, and I listened and memorized them. When she got tired of talking, she'd let out a sigh and look at me like someone waiting for a miracle. Did she expect me to suddenly get up and start shouting 'Down with America?' (ibid: 112).

However, regardless of the intention behind the extensive doses of memory that Rahma bombards Zeina with, Rahma's point of departure from Zeina's parents lies in her capability of linking her narrated memories to her moment to moment continued experiences in Iraq, which forms the basis of her self-narrative and self-identification, influenced by the local struggle she is caught up in on the one hand, and foreign interference on the other. This serves Zeina's process of selecting past memories as told by her grandmother, channeling her subjective present experiences lived day for day. In this sense, Rahma projects a reservoir of *continued* memory, as her account is not exclusively based on past memories, but continues so long as she lives (Fortier 2003: 122). However, like the parents, Rahma's narrative is based on her submission to the belief that her identity is 'already accomplished fact' (Hall 2003), and 'inevitably determined by place [and] nationality' (Gilroy 1997: 304). Such a submission is rather problematic and limiting to Zeina's identity-formation, whose psychological and physical experiences in Baghdad and Detroit lead her to the pursuit of an alternative and fluid space.

To allow room for Zeina's creation of a diasporic 'Third Space', based on a subjective narrative that is neither her parents' nor her grandmother's, the relationship between diaspora and identity should ideally be projected as complementary and fluid. Paul Gilroy contends that 'diaspora as a concept, offers new possibilities for understanding identity, not as something inevitably determined by place or nationality, and for visualizing a future where new bases for social solidarity are offered and joined' (1997: 304). Gilroy's suggestion

allows Zeina a point of departure from her parents' fixed positioning, and her grandmother's obsessive mission to reform her identity, onto her own diasporic 'Third Space', in order to recreate her separate self-narrative, partly informed by Rahma, yet fully constructed by Zeina herself.

Ultimately, Zeina's diaspora may be identified as post-modern based on Stuart Hall's third framework as projected in his work 'The Question of Cultural Identity', where he states:

The post-modern subject, conceptualized as having no fixed, essential or permanent identity. Identity becomes a 'moveable feast': formed and transformed continuously in relation to the ways we are represented or addressed in the cultural systems which surround [us]. It is historically, not biologically, defined. The subject assumes different identities at different times, identities which are not unified around a coherent 'self'. Within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different contradictions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about. If we feel we have a unified identity from birth to death, it is only because we construct a comforting story or 'narrative of the self' about ourselves (Hall 1992: 277).

In his essay, 'Cultural Identity and Diaspora', Hall further suggests that:

Cultural identity [...] is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to continuous 'play' of history, culture and power. Far from being grounded in a mere 'recovery' of the past, which is waiting to be found, and which, when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity, identities are names we give to the different ways we are positioned by, and position ourselves within, the narratives of the past (2003: 225).

Hall's suggestion is translated in the characters that surround the protagonist. The identities of Zeina's parents and grandmother epitomize the self-imposed imprisonment they create in the memories they constantly recover. They are not capable of adjusting to the many changing circumstances around them that they are positioned by, and so their self-narratives remain 'fixed in some essentialised past' (ibid, 225). On the other hand, with the increase in violence on both sides, the American and Iraqi, Zeina transcends her need to take sides, and starts fighting for justice, noting that Americans and Iraqis become 'victim of lies that are bigger than [them]' (2010: 164). Zeina states being tired of hatred, fear, and opposing sides around her as she exclaims: 'my diary was filling up with names of dead friends. I didn't want to live like this, with the bitterness on my tongue and the wind of grief blowing through my heart' (ibid: 166). She decides

that she cannot take sides because both suffered losses, one side under the impression that its mission is to save, the other believing their country is invaded (ibid: 167).

Toward the end of her stay in Iraq, Zeina still feels 'the burden of her grandmother's memory' (ibid: 176), and even though she feels that Rahma's 'project of [her] re-education was never completed, but what she'd given [her] had completed [her] as a woman, as a human being' (ibid: 177). Zeina believes that she has lost a part of her as she leaves back to Detroit. By mourning the death of her grandmother she mourns her Self, and her memories. All she has in Iraq is gone with the loss of Rahma, thus, forming her real personalized memories of Iraq that prepare her to embark on her diaporic experience in the US (ibid: 178). Hall's perception of the post-modern subject then manifests itself in Zeina's character, as she realizes the impossibility of limiting herself to a rigidly fixed identity, she rather embraces the fluidity of the in-between, marked by the death of Rahma, as she realizes that she is neither fully American, nor is she fully Iraqi, yet is both at the same time, hence, her formation of a 'Third Space'.

4. Conclusion

The sense of fluidity suggested by Hall translates itself in Zeina's identity-formation. Unlike her parents whose identities are perceived as 'eternally fixed in some essentialised past [...] waiting to be found' (2003: 234), Zeina does not limit herself by identifying with her parents' perception of a fixed cultural identity. She rather embraces her shifting positioning; first by recreating her Iraqi 'history', retold by her grandmother, then by creating an alternative narrative to that of her parents and her grandmother, translated in the fluidity of a 'Third Space', which then forms the basis for her 'constant transformation'. In this sense, Zeina's self-narrative is not fixated upon a distant past, but a lived present evolving and developing so long as she lives. And so, Zeina's perception and projection of her identity-formation illustrates what Hall contends as: 'instead of thinking of identity as an already accomplished fact [...] we should think, instead, of identity as a 'production,' which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation' (ibid: 234).

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