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Website: jedh.utq.edu.iq Email: utjedh@utq.edu.iq

Cultural and Racial Differences Sequent September 11/2001 in Laila Halaby's Novel Once in a Promised Land

Assistant Professor Huda Kadhim Alwan
MOHE&SR / Dir. of Scholarships and Cultural Relations

Abstract

Laila Halaby is an Arab American writer who exposes the struggles facing Arab Americans, men and women sequent 9/11/2001in her novel *Once in a Promised Land (2007)*. Her American figures of Arabs and Islamic cultures become suspicious and prejudice. In her novel, Halaby shows American characters' feeling of a world separated between East and West and their points of view towards immigrants which show that ethnic and religious groups are dangerous to the safety of America.

This article focuses on cultural and racial differences that have a great negative effect on the lives of Halaby's protagonists, such as pain, unhappiness, anger, and

social change. They face physical attack in America because of their Arab identity. Arab American writers used literature to reveal collections of racist policies and the negative construction of Arabs particularly Muslims as terrorists, dangerous outlaws, and undesirable intruders sequent the assaults on the Twin Towers in New York City and the Pentagon in Virginia. Halaby in this novel focuses on the outcome of the 9/11 national trauma for Arab American and she seeks for the revival of Arab culture.

Keywords: Laila Halaby, Arab culture, racial difference, Muslims, immigrants, America, colonization, sequent– 9/11.

1. Introduction

The Middle East contains a diversity of people, cultures, religious practices and Muslim nations of South Asia and northern Africa which exerted multifaceted influence on the United States. It is hard

to reach the topic of Arab and Muslim American writers and their themes. The authors, who were born into families that immigrated to the United States can seek their own relations to identity, culture, and religion with their understanding of life in the United States. Laila Halaby's father is from Jordan and her mother from America. Laila was born in Beirut, Lebanon, and lived generally in Arizona. So, she comes from different countries and cultures (Layton, 2010, p.7). In her novel, America arises as a strong place that includes exemplified chances and gloomy realities.

(Altwaji, 2016, p. 118) illustrates that the term "Arab American" refers to Arabs and their descendants who have migrated from the Middle East to the United States from the 1880s till the present time. Though these writers have migrated to the United States from various societies of the Middle East especially Lebanon, Syria, and Palestine, carrying with them different religious and spiritual heritage, yet they "staked out an individual space from which they explore their own relations to identity, culture, religion, and the building

or inhabiting of a life in the States" and tried "to bridge Eastern and Western philosophy, and religion". At the start of the twenty–first Century, the subject matter in Arab American literature takes a change to meet against Arab racism in the U.S. that expanded significantly through the attacks of 9/11on the United States and supported by the United States military intrusion in the Middle East. Therefore themes of self–assertion, loyalty to Arab culture, Arab community unity, deposition, discrimination and racism against Arabs and Muslims control the majority of texts written during the period from 2001 to 2009.

Exploring the literature of Arab American, Steven Salaita debates that Anglophone Arabs are not less than anyone else; they solely hold various cultural worth as a consequence of their various conditions. Salaita preserves those Arab American authors ' build a

heritage identifiably linked to the Arab world but is nonetheless their own '. As the form of Arab – American literature prospers and develops Salaita confirms, ' critics and scholars need a particular critical matrix that uses Arab artistic traditions as well as American and is articulated from within the Arab American community '. Salaita's invitation is persuasively pressing and helpful. Literature demands a crucial setting that illustrates its beautiful, socio–political and cultural activity (Awad, 2011, pp.12, 13). Salaita (2007) states that Arab Americans are being resolved systematically and extensively as a separate ethnic community perfect to the coherence of an imagined American cultural nation, for the first time in our history in the United States. He assures the adverbs systematically and widely because it is significant to acknowledge that Arab Americans (and others) have

been analyzing themselves for over a century as a distinct ethnic community. It is a great time to write about Arab Americans because Arab Americans are creating a reasonable quantity of concern in both common and academic circles in the U. S. for reasons strongly linked to the dawn agrees with diffuse and systematic evaluation (p. ix).

Low (2010) elucidates that postcolonial scholars classify literature as imaginative indicators within an inscribed economy and illustrative scope, they should be aware of literature as an institutional network of interweaving aesthetic, cultural, social, economic and digressive relationships (p.204).

Derek Attridge confirms that literature's notion must be comprehended as a method of boundary passing and not in accordance. This effective notion of

literature connects with Attridge's concept of ' culture ' including:

> **A complex matrix of habits, cognitive models, representations, beliefs, expectations, prejudices, and preferences that operate intellectually, emotionally, and physically to produce a sense of at least relative continuity, coherence, and significance out of the manifold events of human living.(Sorensen, 2010, p.34)**

The notion of the role of heritage in the making of Arab identity has been distorted by the political situation that introduced the Western culture in a superior manner as a universal cultural event that leads to developing and enlightening nations (Altwaji, 2016, p.

117). However, this political and military control to cultural dominance that reechoed among Arab tops

and rolled common man away from the backbone of his area.

The background and origins of Arab – American communities in North and South America had links or connections to New England and especially to Worcester, Massachusetts, a main city in the Northeast where big Arab – American populations were founded. Their alliances and models of migration and combination into American society generally matched those of their rivals in other Arabic – speaking communities in both North and South America. Usually, they protected their Arab culture through food and its presentation, the Arabic language, literature, religion (Christianity and Islam), dance, music, philosophy, storytelling, and poetry. Some adventurous individuals lived and managed a business in South America and preserved their New England

addresses and businesses that overwhelmingly were invested by the wives. Most Arab migrants were the enterprising Arab woman – a widow accompanied by a kid or kids, males, or a single woman – was often first in the family to emigrate. Her primary task was frequently as a cook or street hawker of barren goods to various ethnic associations who lived close and out of state (Boosahda, 2003, pp. xii, xiii). Arabs mentioned in this text usually emigrated for wealth and adventure.

Most researchers and most Americans keep in mind a general and decisive plan that consists of blacks, whites, American Indians, Asians, and Hispanics. All researchers and almost Americans are as well conscious that these public decisive concealment important indecision inside any of these main gatherings. To the range reasonable, new research has tried to distinguish and counterweight subordinate groups inside any of

the main ethnic and racial gatherings, making differences by generation, country of origin, and nativity inside the U.S. Almost researchers mostly accept that these divisions are originally social structures that have replaced and will resume replacing through time. Ethnicity and race are words that hold huge rationalistic and political gravity, and matters embracing ethnic and racial personalities are overwhelmingly discorded inside and over gatherings (Sandefur, Cambell, & Boeck, 2004, p. 25).

Through time, common and academic perceptions of ethnic and racial identities have varied in a dramatic manner. Ethnic and racial groups were understood as constant, biological kinds before the 20th century. Researchers of ethnicity and race overturned to Biblical sections and later natural history's theories to illustrate the roots of differences between racial and

ethnic gatherings. They consummated that these group variations were unalterable and natural. Cornell and Hartmnn (1998) demonstrate that the patterns common between social scientists in the late 19th and early 20th centuries "conceived ethnic and racial groups as biological distinct entities and gave to biology the larger part of the responsibility for differences in the cultures and the political – economic fortunes of these groups"(Ibid., pp. 26, 27).

Loomba (1998) states that the term ' ethnicity ' has supremely been used to show biologically and culturally firm identities, but Stuart Hall, asks us to separate it from its sovereign, racist or nationalist deployment and to adequate it to specify identity as a constructed process rather than a given core. For Hall, the new black ethnicities visible in contemporary

Britain are results of the ' cut – and mix ' processes of ' Cultural *diaspora–ization* ' (p. 176).

Arab Mezzaterrans Generations had believed what Western culture said of itself: that its deals were democratic, universalist, and humane. They thought that once you husked from the army and political control, the liberated world would be one where everybody could easily capture thoughts, art forms, and technologies as a replacement. This was the world that generation believed we had passed down: an area of interfering, a fertile land, where one culture covered into the other, where reflections and resonance added depth and point of view, where variations were fascinating rather than menacing because they were foregrounded against a background of alliances (Soueif, 2005, p. 17).

September 11 / 2001 events played straightforward into what would seem to be the Neoconservative dream script. The theoretical basis for dealing with the Arab world in terms of pure power had been laid by Neocons, who were now in crucial positions in government (Ibid., p. 21).

In her novel, *Once in a Promised Land*, Laila Halaby explains how Arab Americans encountered obstacles post the events of September in terms of the clashing sense of belonging and non-belonging, cultural identification and identity construction (Alghaberi, 2016, p.1). The deeds of the 9/11 attacks completely swapped the future non-Islamic Americans have concerning foreign Muslims and any Arab of the species.

2. Postcolonial Theory and the Construction of Race and Culture

Recent theorists have interested to use the hyphenated term ' post–colonial ' to avail the historical period following the end of European colonialism. Meanwhile, the unhyphenated word ' postcolonial ' has come to be used in a much vast style to express the massive area of sessions, ideologies and intellectual formations which have appeared from cultures that practiced imperial encounters. ' the hyphenated version was first used by political scientists and economists to denote the period after colonialism '. By contrast, ' the unhyphenated version ' is preferably when one desires to think ' the discourse and ideology of colonialism ' alongside ' the material effects of subjugation under colonialism and after (Boehmer, 2006, p.3).

Postcolonial Theory is a literary hypothesis or significant process that accords with writing made in nations that were once, or are currently settlements of different nations. It might likewise accord with literature written in or by natives of colonizing nations that accept provinces or their kin as its topics matter. The hypothesis is based around ideas of otherness and opposition. This theory is constructed in a big section about the idea of the otherness. There are, however, difficulties with or perplexities to the idea of otherness, for example: otherness consists duality, together difference, and identity, so that each different, each other and estranged by is accent formed and contains the importance and meaning of the colonizing culture even as it refuses its force to realize; the western idea of the oriental is built, as Abdul Jan Mohamed explains, on the Manichean symbol (seeing the world as

separated reciprocally excluding contradictions): if the west is logical, arranged, good, and masculine, then the orient is illogical, messy, evil, and feminine.

This theory is as well constructed about the idea of opposition, which can accompany with it or holds with it ideas concerning human liberty, freedom, individuality, identity, etc., which thoughts may not have been held, or held in a similar way, in the colonized culture's view of species. Another idea is hybridity (mixing of cultures). It is significant in this theory, indicating the combination of cultural exercises and signals from the colonizing and the colonized cultures. Hybridity is as well a helpful idea for supporting to collapse the artificial sense that colonizing cultures or colonized cultures for that subject are monolithic, or have important unvarying brows (Ibid., pp.2, 3).

Loomba elucidates that in some cases of differences, color was the most influential indicator of racial and cultural difference (as in the representations of Africans) and in other cases, it was less remarkable upon (as in the case of the Irish). The structure of racial variations had to do both with the nature of societies which Europeans visited, the class of people who were being focused, apart from whether commerce or stability was the topical of the visitors. Colonizers varied in their modes of interacting with the domestic people, and these differences had a deep effect on identities and racial sessions. The race became a sign of an ' imagined community ', a phrase that Benedict Anderson has used in contact with the nation. Both races and nations are imagined as communities which connect mate human beings. Both speak to members of all genders and classes (although this does not mean

that all classes and genders are treated as equal within them) (pp.109, 110,118). Race is responsible for the cultural structure and historical development. Nations are often perceived as the expression of racial and biological features.

The noble savage idea illustrates a discrepancy, a point at which the seamless connections between external characteristics and interiority are confused. At the same time, the converted heathen and the educated native are images that cannot completely or easily be agreed to the thought of the utter difference. While at one level they explain colonial achievements, at another they stand for infection and the possibility of mixing or to use a term that has become central to postcolonial theory, ' hybridity '. Theories of race and racial classifications were often tried to deal with the '

hybridization ' that was a feature of contact zones everywhere (Ibid., p. 119).

The studies of postcolonial have been engaged with matters of hybridity, in–betweenness, the ability to change, diasporas, liminality, and cross – overs of thoughts and identities created by colonialism. Robert Young invokes us that a hybrid is technically a cross between two distinct species and that therefore the term ' hybridization ' elicits both the botanical concept of inter–species grafting and the ' vocabulary of the Victorian extreme right ' which considered distinct races as distinct species. In postcolonial theory, however, hybridity is intended to stir up all the methods that challenged and undermined this vocabulary. Even as imperial and racist ideologies insist on racial distinction, they stimulate cross– overs,

partially because it is not possible to observe and control everything that takes place in the ' contact zones ' but sometimes also as a consequence of intentional colonial policy. One of the most amazing discrepancies concerning colonialism is that it both requires to ' civilize ' its ' others ', and to resolve them into eternal ' otherness ' (**Ibid.**, **p.173**).

In the view of Neil Lazarus, the ' specific role ' of postcolonial intellectuals is ' to construct a standpoint – nationalitarian, liberationist, internationalist – from which it is possible to suppose the encumbrance of speaking of all humanity '. Given the history of the exemptions that joined the earlier constructions of an all – inclusive nation, postcolonial intellectuals may, in fact, be suspicious about such a command. Postcolonial women's conflicts, for instance, are less interested in speaking on behalf of all the people than

assumption their own place within the national polity (Ibid., pp.206, 207). It is even more dubious whether building a national identity can be sufficient basis to forget an anti – imperialist conflict.

The viewpoint of Arab American women writers who are intelligent of the Arab American reality besides critical of patriarchal legislation of Arab American masculinities. The view that women offer in their representation of men ruins the traditional active role of men describing women, and thus shapes a feminist attempt in itself. Their writings also forward the tenets of Arab American women of color feminism in their struggle against both racism and sexism. In addition, countering the monolithic depiction of Arab men resultant from their visiblization and vilification after September 11, 2001. Arab American women writers are providing varied portrayals of Arab

American masculinities. There are Arab American novels published by women after 9/11, an effort to combat the stereotyping of men as castrated or threatening and of woman as victims while there is also an emphasis of Arab American feminism, thus advancing gender and racial justice (Vilarrubias, 2016, p.337).

Arab feminism has had a long and unstable history. What is classified ' feminism ' in the Middle East is a complex term often connected in public session as a hybrid notion that somehow points and implies foreign intrusion. The important indictments from the prevailing culture in the Arab world against feminism have been that on the one hand, it is yet another example of the ' West ' pressing and intruding in the affairs of the ' East '. This position has had the miserable symptom of re–affirming the position of the

‘ East ’ as unsophisticated and easily taken in by tempting Western ideas. In this manner, just as managing the indistinguishable hindrances to the setting up of gatherings and developments for the refinement of ladies' lives, non–military personnel sane and furthermore Islamist ladies' gatherings have needed to protect themselves against the cases from moderate gatherings that they are working inside Western models insufficient for Arab ladies (Valassopoulos, 2007, p13).

Anglophone Arab authors could employ English to start a conversation between the Arabic / Islamic culture and the Western culture. There is a demand to understand the “other” more carefully and to encourage reciprocal perception between the two parts, to some extent than making romantic Anglophone Arab imagination in the issue of isolation, slit identity and

thoroughness. Anglophone Arab authors use literary planning to ruin the patterns generally connected with Arabs in the United States, and how they consider the communities of Arab American from inside orderly to inspect some of the troubles they observe. In the works of young Arab – American authors Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Rabih Alameddine's *The Hakawati* (2008), a feeling of hybridity and in–betweenness is spread and strongly announced; a merit that the first Anglophone Arab authors mirrored in their works, a type of ' metropolitan ' hybridity established in the central area of land of both patriotic and extending beyond national borders citizenship that would certainly assist them confer the ' identity politics ' of their birthplace and their selected residence with low stress(Alghaberi, 2016, p. 3).

3. Cultural and Racial Differences in Laila Halaby's Novel Once in a Promised Land

Laila Halaby is one of the Arab American women writers who expose the implications of cultural racial differences towards Arab Americans particularly after 9/11 ambiance which make them sustain from the national trauma of the collapse of the Twin Towers and a personal trauma, being understood as terrorists and unbearable ethnics in the United States. Her American characters become skeptical of Arabs and Islamic cultures.

Laila's protagonists, a husband and his wife named Jassim and Slawa, whose marital problems are intensified after 9/11. The novel starts with a preface entitled "Before" pointing to the historical turning point that 9/11 involved for the United States and for Arab Americans. In this preface, we know Jassim and Slawa leave their native country and live in Tucson,

Arizona in order to fulfill their dreams and the story will take place after the 2001 attacks (Vilarrubias, 2016, pp. 223, 224, 225). In her novel, Halaby uses one narrative technique in order to inform all episodes uttered by characters she uses an Arabic narrative technique to strain on certain principles and values. She introduces the reader with the Arabic folkloric opening lines:

> Kan Ya ma Kan fee qadeem az-zamman
> They say there was or there wasn't in olden times a story as old as life, as young as this moment, a story that is yours and is mine. (Once, p. VII)

‘ We really come to know them only after the World Trade Center buildings have been flattened by planes flown by Arabs, by Muslims. Salwa and Jassim are both Arabs. Both

Muslims. But of course, they have nothing to do with what happened to the World Trade Center. Nothing and everything ' (p.VIII). Their life is not quite in Jordan or America. They fight to find a place for themselves but they remained bewildered by their blended identities. Salwa was born in the U. S. while her parents tried to fulfill the American dream. After their failure, they returned to Jordan where Salwa meets Jassim at her university in Amman, where he gives a guest lectures on the role of water in the regional politics of the Arab world. They married and settled in Tucson, Arizona where their profitable jobs postpone their return to Jordan (Bhat, 2014, p. 106). Jassim works in the Tucson water company, as a hydrologist and Salwa works as a banker. Halaby assures that they leave preconceptions and prejudices behind them:

> I ask that you open the box and place in it any notions and preconceptions, any stereotypes with regard to Arabs and Muslims that you can find in your shirtsleeves and pockets…. This box awaits terrorists, veils, oil, and camels. There is room for all your billionaires, bombers and belly - dancers (Halaby, p. VIII)

The quote points to Arabs and Muslims as "terrorists" and "bombers". Halaby assures that Jassim and Salwa are realized Arab American, who have links with their origins but no connections to an Arab American community.

Altwaji (2016) explains that the Arab immigrants, as a cultural cluster, are remote from their native countries, they keep alive cultural heritage provided by recollections of their native land or inherited through grandmothers to descendants. This heritage is endowed in the post – 9/11Arab American writings when Arab immigrants become exposed to hatred,

discrimination, physical assaults, and rampant racist acts after 9/11 terrorist attacks (p. 117).

Nadine Naber (2012) illustrates that from the stories of migrant communities, the themes of family, religion, gender, and sexuality regularly emerged. It became clear that these themes shaped the backbone of the perfect ideas of Arab culture that circulated in their families and communities, and were the battlefield on that they, and their parents, and also the Arab community, and in addition to the looming world of America all wrangled. This struggle, over divided ideas of culture, and the ways in which we have a tendency to perceive ourselves as individuals and peoples, is that the first cornerstone of Nadine Naber's book *Arab American: Gender, Cultural Politics, and Activism* (p. 6).

The newcomers were refused by thoughts and also the minority culture takes on select sides of the bulk culture however, keeps its own identity.

The happiness of the couple becomes out of reach once their lives take a pointy flip for the worse after a series of escalating events leave them physically and spiritually broken and alienated from one another. They deceive one another and then exacerbate their alienation from each other. Their Arab, Muslim foundation appears to render than a suspect within the eyes of individuals around them. Every one of them become underneath close to home examination by natives electrifies by Bush's decision to go about as the eyes and ears of the legislature or what Judith Butler would call "Petty sovereigns" an obligation at first held for individuals from Bureaucratic foundations anyway right now reached out to the whole country (Bhat 2014,

p. 107). They are marked as untouchables and outsiders in light of their ethnic starting point.

The Arab American, after September 11, 2001, is not any longer invisible. Whether or not driving, working, traveling, walking around an area or just sitting in their homes, Arabs in America non – citizens – and citizens are currently under unique scrutiny. Arabs have a longstanding standard in American society, in their over hundred–year history in the U.S. for discrimination, violence, and intolerance. Muslim women in Chicago repeatedly reported that they were teased and harassed in public. They reported that they had their scarves were aggressively pulled off their heads or being spit at on the road. Even though the amount level of attacks against Arabs, Muslims and those perceived to be Arab or Muslim and hate crimes has sharply decreased since the fall, wakeful media still

reports that such abusive behavior is still present until this day, with at least one hate crime or attack happening weekly nationwide (Cainker, 2002, p.23). Arab and Muslim considerations are growing with regard to intolerance, identification, and therefore, the long-term impacts of discrimination.

In order to fill that void in her life, Salwa in secret stops taking contraception gets pregnant "even though Jassim says he doesn't want a child" and has a miscarriage. The miscarriage trauma and the thought of raising a family in the U.S. therefore, drive a dowel between her and Jassim. At the similar time, Jassim is concerned in an exceedingly automotive accident that gets the life of a white juvenile person. Nor fit to accord with the death nor believe in his confused wife, Jassim's clockwork monotony resolves (DeRosa, 2011, p. 3). Throughout the novel, Salwa and Jassim hardly talk to

each other and both start additional matrimonial relationships.

The national trauma becomes a private trauma, Jassim cannot realize his balance because the imagery from 9/11 replayed in his head: "his brain seized on the picture after picture, humans leaping from possible heights, plumes of smoke filling the air and then charging down the narrow streets" (Halaby, p. 19).The trauma that 9/11 required within the United States penetrates Jassim's ideas whereas in the swimming pool. As is explained in the novel:

> **Looping down and down in his car, he did not think about the destruction of two days ago; it was not until he was in the pool and swimming that his mind wrapped around the pictures of those two massive buildings collapsing to the ground so neatly beneath the columns of smoke, that he returned to the impossibility of what he had seen. What entered into someone's mind to make him (them) want to do such a thing? It was incomprehensible. And unnatural – human beings fought to survive not to die. And had they, those many people who seemed to join together in crazy suicide, had any idea that they would cause such devastation? (Halaby, p. 20)**

The first response of Jassim to 9/11 mirrors that of numerous Americans, and does not have any specific ethnic (Arab / Muslim) part. It is his spouse Salwa who makes him consider the plausible consequences of the terrorist attacks for those perceived as Arab or Muslim. Salwa expresses her considerations regarding the potential backlash against Arabs / Muslims within the

following manner: "**people are stupid**. ***Stupid macho***". **She associates Western structure to institutionalized racism, she emphasizes the attribute of fear**

> "**Macho. You know, throwing their weight around if something happens that they don't like. Only it doesn't matter to them if they get the people who did whatever it is that they are angry about, just as long as they've done something large and loud. I hate to think what sort of retaliation here is going to be easy,**

that makes Arab or Muslim look as threatening and vile Others and branding them as "intolerable ethnics" in distinction to white Anglo – Saxon protestant heroes. As Salwa enhances:

> "**And is there any particular reason for that ma'am?**"
> "**I think I'd feel more comfortable working with someone I can understand better**".
> "**Of course. Would you like to work with a Mexican man or an American lesbian?**" (**Halaby, p. 114**)

9/11 encourages a young adult at the shopping center to invite security on Jassim for penetrating gaze excessively at a motorcycle. Afterwards Salwa distributes due to a consumer at the bank who asks regarding her inheritance prior inquiring to be assisted by "someone else". "Salwa's heart thudded in anger. She willed her blood to stay calm, keep away from her face" DeRosa, 2011, p. 3). Salwa's "perfect English puddled on the floor, her manners and kindness all scattered and soggy". Salwa inquires the anonymous woman:

It is the post 9/11control culture that encourages an FBI inspection of Jassim's conveyance putting to death the young adult was opposed Arab and afterwards changed the routine, finally resulting in his dismissing. Nevertheless whereas 9/11 these specific manners of the additional harmful difficulty Halaby identifies the fake comprehensiveness promised by the American dream.

There is something alienating and isolating regarding American culture, despite Salwa's private and of finance prosperity. This is not known as a consequence of the sequent 9/11opposed Arab emotion, however slightly during the summons of her unfaithful association along with her coworker Jake. He appears curious about Salwa's cultural inheritance, conversational Arabic for her and asking concerning her family conventions encompassing Ramadan. He is attracted to her curiousness. She is an island to colonize, a body to conquer (DeRosa, 2011, p.3).

Halaby yet, trails at the concept that his concern in Salwa perhaps 9/11 contained:

> **"what baffled him [Jake] was that he had never really noticed her until late in the fall, when she had glided onto his radar screen one morning, a golden apple dropped into his lap. (Halaby, p. 171)**

After infidelity, "Salwa felt lost, which is how it came to be that she began thinking again about going home. Back to Jordan, with her family and her language and her predicable world" (Halaby, 176). She does not depart at once. Before determining to depart America for good, she fulfills her relationship with Jake twice. When she attempts to tell Jake, the promise of forgiveness and respect that he explains in his early romantic overtures are replaced by a blind, drug–induced rage. He savagely beats her and goes to the hospital as she is unable to make her flight home.

The same motive is in Jassim's relationship with his boss and friend, Marcus. Despite the loss of customers and progressively intrusive FBI investigation, Marcus is opposed to give in to the office's suspicions surrounding Jassim. Marcus feels deceived and fires Jassim when he learns of Jassim's accident secondhand.

Marcus's actions are not inspired by 9/11. Halaby has given no tendency Marcus views himself as a watchdog of the homeland. Instead, Marcus's actions are inspired by a sense of misplaced trust. Marcus justifies his firing of Jassim by spinning a narrative of himself as ethically superior, trusting, and inclusive he dissuades himself on the back for having a Muslim friend. His response to Jassim is not completely different from the teenager at the mall who called security. As a potential security risk, Jassim is escorted out of the office, unable to gather papers. In both settings, the promise of an inclusive America that accepts Arabs and Muslims is proven false no matter the events of 9/11. The construction of this Other–Same binary is problematic in that the Other we intend to resemble is the terrorist Other, but the Other we want to address in scholarly

conversation is the Arab and Muslim Other (DeRosa, 2011, p. 4).

Finding themselves apart from both American and Arab cultures, Arab American writers have answered by depicting figurers making an attempt to return to codes with the perplexity of each their replete status in the U.S. and hybrid identity. Arab American figures who are incapable to post themselves in each Western or Eastern cultures are popular to several imaginary regards after 9/11, and this performance is beyond question suitable to the main figures in Laila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*. Before the assaults of 9/11Halaby's characters, Jassim, and Salwa Haddad live as affluent suburbanites simply outgoing of Tucson, Arizona. Jassim becomes the major focus of not verified FBI inspection after the assaults, and Salwa starts to expertise yearning for her place of origin,

feeling discarded by the people of the country where she was raised (Lloyd, 2012, pp.1, 2).

Elouafi (2009) states that the title of the book *Race and Arab Americans Before and After 9/11 : From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* which is edited by Amaney Jamal and Nadine Naber sets the assaults of September 11, 2001 as a change point in the expanded "visibility" of Arab Americans and querying of their citizenship, this minute is contextualized inside the more drawn out channels of U. S. government in the Middle East and Cultural articulations of political control through the outline of Arabs Muslims, and Arab Americans as totally unexpected from different Americans (p. 154).

Jarmakani (2009) illustrates that Nadine Naber's introduction provides a beautiful framing for the

gathering by foreground processing the complexities of Arab American racial formation as an important site of the query. Carefully locating the gathering inside contesting conversations about race, racial classification, racial formation, and the "politics of naming" in addition to the constructions of pan–Arab ethnic American identity, Naber posits forth a primary attention of the book: "How have dominant U. S. racial schemas positioned ' the Arab ' and how have Arab immigrants and Arab Americans been required to engage with ' race ' and racism?"(p. 83).

Nadine Naber depicts the attacks of 9/11 as ' a turning point ' rather than 'the starting point' of histories against Arab racism in the United States. Naber disputes that since 9/11, Arabs and Muslims Americans have been combined together into a new realized category that conceals the significant diversity

that exists within these populations. Newspapers, films, and TV shows are sturdy tools for spreading the racializing of Arabs and Muslim Americans and forming public opinions (Bhat, 2014, p.108). In Laila's novel, Penny a working–class white American woman has "become obsessed by it [the Television] ever since the Twin Towers had been destroyed" (Halaby, p.280). Debating with her flatmate what the U.S. government should do in the Middle East, Penny depends on pictures transmitted on the T.V to indicate her thoughts concerning Jassim:

> Penny continued staring at the television. "The one has nothing to do with the other. And he's from Jordan, not from Afghanistan. Jassim is a good guy – he's not like them, shouldn't be judged like them. But those people over there, they oppress women and kill each other. They're the ones who should be bombed". (Halaby, p. 281)

Penny felt an unutterable pride when she heard the President saying nearby "all the American men and women who served for freedom, freedom all around the world" (Halaby, p. 280). Penny's reaction is absolutely loaded with the ideology of the American empire that appoints America a savior role within the world that concerns America as the great guardian and beneficiary of mankind. Penny feels that she is a free and virtuously superior person. Similarly, when Jassim is fired from his job, Marcus, Jassim's boss, appears to use the logic that "racism is wrong but essential":

> **Jassim stood up…. Marcus felt himself losing ground…. "Jassim, it is not because of the accident that I am firing you." *Why is it, then?* "Bottom line, we're going to lose the business if I don't make an act of good faith to the people we do business with." "And firing me is your act of good faith."**
> **"Yes." Though he didn't like the way that sounded. (Halaby, p. 227)**

The first example of racial visiblization that Jassim expertise takes place on 9/11 itself, when at the gym a man called Jack Franks queries concerning Jassim's origins, and upon saying that he's Jordanian. Jack responds, "I went to Jordan once. … Followed my daughter there. She married a Jordanian. Not one like you, though. This one was from the sticks – or the sand, as the case was…She converted. She's an Arab now" (Halaby, p. 6). Jack equates Arab with Muslim and does not perceive that one cannot convert into Arabness. His incorrect ideas regarding the Arab world are supported by the following question he asks Jassim, that is whether his wife is veiled. After he says no, and that in fact, though he is culturally Muslim, he does not believe in God, Jack tells him about a Jordanian lady at his bank and he is stunned by her beauty, he is pertaining to Salwa. Jack queries appear innocent,

however, later the reader becomes conscious of the actual fact that he was called the FBI to report Jassim. Even before the events of 9/11occur, Jack is prepared to view Jassim and Salwa as not western others. He displays his overwhelming ignorance about Islamic culture in a short time prior the assaults appeared. Jack sees Jassim at the fitness center and is suspicious of him immediately solely founded particularly on his appearance. Moreover, at his workplace, Jassim begins to hear comments concerning possible terrorists damaging the water supplies, (Halaby, pp. 230, 231) after which his colleagues start mistrusting him:

> Now, in his cool home, Jassim felt a vague prickle as he reviewed his comments at the meeting, as he analyzed the dropped gazes of several of the staff members, the less than warm reception he had received from some of the city's engineers, a group who usually welcomed him with doughnuts and laughter. (Halaby, pp.

Jassim recognizes that he is located in the wrong place where the stable identity that he had constructed as a flourishing Arab American is being questioned after the visiblization and sequent racialization of Arabo–Islamist masculinities in the United States. As Jassim is experiencing this backlash, Salwa goes through a traumatic expertise of her own, that denotes the lack of communication between her and her husband. Whereas Salwa combines her job in a bank with her newly started career as a real estate agent, Jassim feels lonelier and lonelier. At the identical time, Salwa feels neglected by her husband and attempts to fill the void through consumerism also as pregnancy. Not feeling consummated in the "promised land" she was expecting, Salwa would really like to try and alter that by becoming a mother, thus she decides not to take her

contraceptive pills and gets pregnant and keeps it a secret because Jassim does not want to have children (Vilarrubias, 2016, pp. 231, 232). He is engaged about the terrorist attacks of September 11 within the following weeks. As is put in the novel, "Each day that Jassim had gone swimming since that fateful Tuesday when the planes hit, his mind had not cleared on entering the water but rather captured memories, mostly of home, and rolled them around the duration of his swim" (Halaby, p. 62). The images are no longer those of the "two massive buildings collapsing to the ground so neatly beneath the columns of smoke, that he turned to the impossibility of what he had seen" (Halaby, p. 20), however, reminiscences of his ethnic origins.

As stated by Llyod (2012), Halaby proposed the Arab Americans capability to preserve hybridity of culture that is related to category construction. On one side, they reside fellowships with other Arab American families and regularly make dishes different to their household; on the other, they gaily foster an American style of life, appealing in American economic policies by embracing themselves with fancies such as expensive cars, costly silk pajamas and towels bigger than sheets. However, it is progressively hard for Jassim

and Salwa to preserve their acknowledged position in American identity sequent the assaults. Their identity of Arab American becomes slighter since their mutual actions with Americans become increasingly more exhausted (pp. 6,7).

Being loyal consumers, Jassim and Salwa preserve their loyalty to Islam. They hardly reveal their practices of religion. Jassim is depicted as not especially spiritual:

> Jassim delighted in the stillness the morning offered, a time before emotions were awake, a time for contemplation. This day was no exception as he got up, washed his face, brushed his teeth, and relieved himself, the beginning of a morning ritual as close to prayer as he could allow. (Halaby, p. 3)

Arab American characters are described by Halaby as performing active traditions of Arabs, however, she portrays in some parts of the novel, Jassim and Salwa as nearly not cultured in distinction to her other Arab American figures. Halaby suggests that the isolation Jassim and Salwa feel sequent the assaults is increased due to their accepting of an American style of life and

chase of the American dream. Halaby depicts nearsighted American characters inserting flags on their cars rather than returning to comprehending of the particular time of great stress nearby. An American flag decal was offered to Salwa by one of her coworkers in an attempt to oppose the racism she is assured, Salwa is restricted to defy: "you should put one on your car, on the back window. You never know what people are thinking, and having this will let them know where you stand." (Halaby, p.55).Moreover, Penny, a waitress at Denny's who Jassim assists post the assaults, wishes she were younger in order that she might join within the American armed forces to indicate "all those terrorists what Americans were made of, how they were continuing the great history of this country, getting out there and saving poor people from the oppression of living in their backward countries" (Halaby, p.280).

In the novel, there are a lot of proofs to propose that the contests subsequent 9/11 participate in the separated association of Jassim and Salwa . Ulrike Tancke oversees the agony of the two characters endure immediately ensuing from the post 9/11 American image of Arabic culture generated by government – supported racism. The meeting of the

Americans Salwa and Jassim become progressively biased and skeptical, after the assaults on the World Trade Center and Pentagon. yet Halaby portrays the American characters as racially tolerating and open to new thoughts at an earlier time in the novel start to either mistrust Jassim and Salwa or have interaction against Arab racism as a consequence of the activities of the United States government. For instance, Jassim's boss, Marcus who at first have confidence in his friend Jassim yet when he realizes the inspection of FBI, he began to mistrust Jassim, and Jassim's otherness afterward turns into all the more visible to him(Llyod, 2012, pp.12, 13).

Halaby surpasses to expose Americans seeing the world with a mentality of "us" versus "them". This binary divides each West from East and poor from rich alike (Llyod, 2012, p. 15). The purpose of Halaby is that, unless Americans are ready to consider themselves as a worldwide people, the cultures of West and East will stay isolated and excluded, everlasting the recent turning point of destitution, drought, and war taking place in all angles of the world.

The post 9/11 surroundings in which Salwa and Jassim's story develops and therefore the sequences of these

events to the character's identities create this couple's marriage deteriorate even more. Both Jassim and Salwa have romantic relationships. Salwa with a young trainee, Jake, and Jassim with a waitress, Penny. Their extramarital relationships are difficult by their ethnicity. While Penny likes Jassim but at the same time desires vengeance towards Arabs / Muslim post 9/11, Jake likes Salwa as a consequence of the exoticization that he schemes onto her. Unable to search out happiness in their "Once Promised Land", Jassim finds himself yearning for his origins, and Salwa determines that she needs to return to Jordan. Their privileged status in American society has been questioned by the racialization projected onto them post 9/11, which has renewed their interest for their origins (Vilarrubias, 2016, pp. 233, 234). In the case of Jassim, it has made him investigate his love for the United States as "for the first time he felt unsettled in his beloved America, vaguely longed for home, where he could nestle in the safe, predictable bosom of other Arabs" (Halaby, p. 165).

Jassim finds himself in an identity crisis that makes him yearn for his origins. Jassim expresses his yearning in the following manner; "Funny how nostalgia breathes heavily under pressure, how longing blossoms under

the veil of hatred. Veiled by them. Hated by them. Hated for living. Hated for veiling " (Halaby, p. 234). For Jassim, longing and yearning stem from America's recent denial of his ethnicized self. Moreover, Jassim connects hatred to a kind of veiling which does not permit the mainstream to see Arabs outside of stereotypes, and to a veil which Arabs themselves have historically put onto women. In this case hatred against Arabs is connected with their religion and amended with the Muslim faith.

The post 9/11moment needs the entire reconsidering of patriotic and private devotion. During this specific condition, Halaby's Arab American figures are obliged to visit again America, the embodiment of perfection of their dreams and to acknowledge their major part during this process of idealization. While not descending on solid ethnic shapes and appealing shelter in adequate eloquence, the novel examines the uncommon and surprising devotion faked in seizure: allegiances that display themselves to be docile and malleable within the status of essential political modification (Valassopoulos, 2013, p. 1).

Hatem (2011) considers the incidents of September 11, 2001, offering American society and its

people sophisticated defiance. These confronts were profoundly felt in the unrivaled position of Arab American societies. Just like the larger American society, Arab Americans were scared by the large loss of civilian lives that resulted from the use of aircrafts as weapons to target the World Trade Center and the Pentagon as symbols of American military and economic power. Around the same time, many members of Arab American societies were fully conscious and crucial of the overall disdain for Arabs as outsiders and insiders in U.S. society. Cultural prejudice against American foreign policy and Arab culture in the Middle East. This status as outsiders and insiders in the U.S. national community made Arab Americans crucial to the domestic and global policies of U.S. secluding them from other Americans who closed ranks and became unified within the desire for revenge against the national and international collections related with the criminals (pp.10, 11).

Halaby retraces a traditional story concerning a ghula (an evil female figure from Arabic folklore, the same character to hag in Western folk tales) who attracts kids to play with her and eats them up when they become in her fist. In this incident, solely a very clever poor boy named Nus Nsays succeeds to beat the ghula by his

patience and tricks. He gets rid of her grip and decided to capture her: "The villagers were pleased by his cunning and bravery. He said to them, "what would you think if I brought you the ghula?"...."I will bring her. I will catch her for you." Although ghula attempted to attract the boy using all kinds of offers: "Open up, Nus Nsays. Open up and I'II give you all my gold and silver and money," the ghula screamed "I don't want gold or silver or money. I want peace for my village," Nus Nsays replied (Halaby, p. 97). (Altwaji, 2016, pp.118, 119) states that the boy's decision to beat the ghula in *Once in a Promised Land* piers the restrictions between the immigrants' history and memory. This cavity is a disturbing trait of Halaby's novel, where the restrictions between history and memories of immigrants' life in Arabia resorts the protagonists. This determination exemplifies the mutual action of the past and the present of the immigrants whose memories fictional or real, of the Palestinian suffering determine the future of these immigrants who fight to conquer the ample racism and discrimination against them in America after 9/11.

Nus Nsays' tale informs the reader to the boy's unequaled strength that "Even though he was so tiny, his shadow was tall, tall, taller than all of their shadows.

He got on his goat and rode back to his mother". He prevailed a brutal creature and gained the esteem of the village: "When the villagers saw that Nus Nsays had captured the ghula, they looked at him with surprise. He was standing across from them, and the sun shone on him with his shadow behind him" (Halaby, p.98). His inner identity combination is more significant here than his physical shape because it works both to reflect the past and to make an identity. The birth of this little boy and his fight in the novel illustrate the fact concerning what is like to be an Arab Muslim in the post – 9/11America. Further, the struggle of "tiny boy" through the entire scenes has been the paradigmatic of the huge strength and stability characterizing Arab immigrants. Contrary to Nus Nsays, the ghula who continues to be present till the end of the novel exemplifies the unfulfilled promises, amazed potential, immigrants' fascination with consumerism and sensitivity to racism and attacks: "The hairy hideous ghula saw the beauty in the child's face and grew madly jealous, wanted the baby for her own, but knew she wouldn't get past security, so she took out her wild ghula threads and began to stitch them under the baby's skin in all sorts of places … When the ghula thought the girl would be grown and ripe for eating,

she began to reel in the remaining threads, pulling the girl away from her familiar world, gently turning the skein a bit more each day" (Halaby, 331–332). Ghula tempts innocent people and eats them up once they are in her fist. Only the clever people like Nus Nsays can flee this trap (Halaby, p.10).

The ghula, who entices naive people and eats them, can indicate to the American Dream that tempts people and snares them once they are in America particularly after the evaporate of terror issue. However, only clever immigrants can conquer difficulties.

A ghula, in Arabic culture, is a female devilish existence which decoys innocent people only to defile on them when they are inside her grip. Only the really wise, like Nus Nsays (which in Arabic means half of halving) can escape this fate. At one occasion, Nus Nsays, using his deceit, succeeds in escaping with his friend from the evil clutches of this vicious ghula that had held them hostage (Bhat, 2014, p. 114). Halaby suggests that recovery can only come after return home from the temptations and fake attract of the promised land.

Salwa and Jassim feel homesick; the novel involves an open ending for them. Salwa visits her lover Jake to say goodbye to him before her trip to Jordan, but he is

incapable to accept her departure since his mind exoticizes Salwa was an obedient woman. Jake beats her (Halaby, p. 321). In the hospital, with Salwa laying distorted in bed, Jassim has an epiphany. First, he **recognizes that his in–between identity marked who he chose as a wife. As Halaby illustrates:**

> **He loved Salwa because in her he saw home, which made her both more precious and a source of resentment. This realization, this seeing, was at once so sad as to twist his stomach and so liberating that he felt he could float in the air…. He had married Salwa because he had wished to protect and nurture her.Because he needed her. Quite possibly she had married him for need as well (Halaby, p. 325)**

Jassim confesses his inability and tells the entire truth to Salwa "I've not provided for you what you needed, allowed you to be who you wanted. I should have recognized that you would have been better off staying in Jordan. I was selfish to have brought you here. I realized that today. Salwa, I am so sorry. All of this is my fault for being weak, for not being able to tell you

what I've done, first killing the boy. And then, Salwa, I've lost my job. Marcus fired me. The FBI investigation, they've fired me" (Halaby, pp.326, 327).

Admitting the importance of his origin in his American life cements Jassim to see his life from a more thematic point of view and, as a result, reside a more equal and easy relationship with his wife, not based on need or displeasure for unfulfilled dreams, but on love. This cements a new beginning for their relationship, and it is Jassim's perception of fluidity prolonged to both identity and relationships, that makes this possible.

Similarly, Salwa is also freed from her engagement to America. She no longer believed in the Disney America, and no longer she remained the "Queen of Pajamas" (Halaby, p. 47) as she was called because of her love for sexy and silky American lingerie. The felon behind their lies and infidelity, according to her, is the supposed Promised Land, America. As she sees it, her mistakes of judgment would have never gone incorrect "back home" to Jordan: "Here in America, no one said anything, no one intruded in other people's business or stopped things like this from occurring. No one tiptoed into the dark rooms of other people's homes with their buckets of judgment and said what really thought.

There were no intrusive neighbors or blunt aunties to announce what they knew and say, *you'd better not, or else*" (Halaby, p. 181).

Halaby proposes that sadness, loss, and pain, are the bonds which grapple mankind jointly, passing differences towards religion, class, and culture. Simultaneously, however, she also illustrates that those bridges are flimsy and that for some like her protagonists, recovery can only come after returning home from the temptations and fake attract of the promised land (Vinson, 2007, p.2). "Wishes don't come true for Arabs in America" (Halaby, p. 184), at least not post 9/11.

The novel ends with the hope that Salwa will heal and the couple will be happy. Hope for the end of the sharp dull view of Arab and American cultures. This novel mirrors the writer's understanding of the affluence of her history and consciousness in making cultural heritage relevant to the modern issues related to the community of the immigrants. The author has successfully attempted to develop and humanize the image of Muslim populations who have been submitted to a long term process of stereotyping in American literary and communal outputs.

In the Quran, in surah Al – 'Isra' Ayah (15) it says that "In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Most Merciful. Whosoever is guided is only guided for his own self, and We punish until We have sent a Messenger" and in Surah Al – Hujurat Ayah (13) says that " In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Most Merciful. People, We have created you from a male and a female and made you into nations and tribes that you might know one another. The noblest of you before Allah is the most righteous of you. Allah is the Knower, the Aware" (Electronic Quran).

Being young, Arab and Muslim in America does not mean terrorist. If one member in any community commits a mistake this does not mean that the whole community is bad. Every soul earns only to its account.

4. Conclusion

Laila Halaby is one of the greatest Arab American authors. What makes her great is the simplicity of her writing about the struggles of Arab American and their situations particularly sequent 9/11. Halaby's novel *Once in a Promised Land (2007)* focuses on cultural, racial and political notions. In her novel, Halaby illustrates many Americans dislike Muslims and Arabs and consider them as their enemies, specifically

sequent the attacks of the Twin Towers. Her characters, the Arab immigrants are exposed to ethnic and racial discrimination and physical attacks. They lose their dreams and insulted. There is no promise in the Promised Land. They should prove that they are innocent otherwise; they will remain guilty in the eyes of people around them.

Halaby interweaves Arabic expressions and words with the American employment of her characters. She puts to life the cultural background of her characters. They long for meaning in their lives and search for relationship and rescue upon pain. Jassim's and Salwa's lives go with human hardness as a result of mistrust and doubt. They are torn between the East and the West and faced psychological injuries by the American hostility. They try to adjust themselves to the American lifestyle with no religious belonging, mixing at the beginning with the middle – class neighbors and friends avoiding lower class ones. But they fail, no matter how they are westernized.

Halaby exposes the discrepancy between the two cultures and racial discrimination and shows their effects on the psychology of the immigrants who are

marginalized and weakened by the American mainstream after 9/11, in spite of their hybrid identity.

One should think that ethnic diversity, cultural and religious pluralities are not dangerous. Islam means peace and forgiveness. Islam does not mean Terror or have the right to kill people. In the Quran, in Surah Al Maaida, Ayah (32) says that "In the Name of Allah, the Merciful, the Most Merciful. That was why We wrote for the children of Israel that whoever killed a soul, except for a soul slain, or for sedition in the earth, it should be considered as though he had killed all mankind; and that whoever saved it should be regarded as though he had saved all mankind. Our Messengers brought them proofs; then many of them thereafter commit excesses in the earth".

9/11 attacks affected the lives of both American and Arab Americans with different ethnic and religious background Muslims and Christians inside the Twin Towers and outside them. Any community whether in the East or in the West consists of different ethnics and religious groups and has its culture. So, one should respect the other and accept his identity in order to live in peace. The world is diverse and the beauty of it lies in its diversity.

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