Representations of 'Home' from the Setting of 'Exile': Novels by Arab Migrant Writers

Submitted by Assmaa Mohamed Naguib to the University of Exeter
as a thesis for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy in Arab and Islamic Studies
in November 2011

This thesis is available for Library use on the understanding that it is copyright material and that no quotation from the thesis may be published without proper acknowledgement.

I certify that all material in this thesis which is not my own work has been identified and that no material has previously been submitted and approved for the award of a degree by this or any other University.

Signature: ……..

Abstract

The attempt to come to terms with the meaning of home, both literally and metaphorically, has become a major concern in literary studies. This dissertation explores the various novelistic representations of home from the point of view of Arab migrant novelists. Home, which contains various references to architectural structures, nations, states, or belonging, can no longer be thought of as a generalized or unified experience. For the migrant writer, the concept of home takes shape as a result of interaction between the past and the present, with memory playing a powerful role. It is created as a result of various forces in tension that include personal and national experiences, the context within which migration from the traditional home place occurred, ideological allegiances and identity politics. I argue through my exploration of a number of novels written by Arab writers who migrated from their home countries that the concept of home can no longer be referred to as a generalized, definite or a fixed notion.

Given the different circumstances of the movement from one country to another, even among nationals of the same country, what are the themes that will be stressed in an Arab writer's imagination and portrayal of home? Will writers stress the exclusions of exile, and define their presence away from the original country clearly as 'exile', fixating on painful nostalgia? How does memory influence the perception of home? Will those writers who have lived a long time in a new 'foreign' country emphasize the adaptations in the diaspora and the privileges of migration? Will they offer critiques of the national project, making a clear distinction between the personal home and the national project? Will such boundaries be as clearly defined for all the writers?

Those questions guide my investigation into the representation of home in the novels of Palestinian, Lebanese and Iraqi writers living away from their three countries of origin. This investigation takes place within the postcolonial theoretical framework of the implications of the site of migration about the revision of the centrality of the nation as a referent of identity. The analysis uncovers a variety of illustrations in the imagination of home and the portrayal of the national experience in the novels. The analysis also highlights the inextricable link between the personal experience and the political experience, whereby the ideological stance on issues of nation and nationalism cannot be easily isolated in an assessment of the cultural product at the site of migration.

Table of Contents

ABSTRACT 2

TABLE OF CONTENTS..... 3

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

NOTE ON TRANSLATION AND TRANSLITERATION ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

INTRODUCTION ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. Contribution to the Field of Arabic Literary Study..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

2. Emergent Literature of the Middle East ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

3. A Note on Interpretation ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

CHAPTER ONE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

CONTEXTUALIZING MIGRANT LITERATURE..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. Migration in Postcolonial Theory..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
   1.1 The Problem with Metaphorization ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
   1.2 Metaphorizing Migration and the National Question ... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2. Migrants' Journeys and the Dynamics of Memory ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
   2.1 Remembering Home ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
   2.2 Nostalgia as (Home-)Sickness..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
   2.3 Distinguishing between Home and Homeland ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

3. Classifications of Migrant Literature ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
   3.1 Exile and the Exilic..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
   3.2 Diaspora and the Diasporic ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

CHAPTER TWO..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. The Significance of the Homeland in the Aftermath of the *Nakbah*.. Error! Bookmark not defined.
   1.1 The *Nakbah* of 1948..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

1.2 The Palestinian Writer: Exile and the National Preoccupation .. **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2. Land and Return in Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's (1920-1994) *al-Safīnah* (*The Ship* 1970) Error! Bookmark not defined.

2.1 Jerusalem as Paradise ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.2 The Nation as a Site of Violence ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.3 Escaping Defeat ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

3. Finding Home in the Multiplicity of Narratives in Anton Shammas's (1950) *Arabeskot* (*Arabesques* 1986) ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

3.1 The Tale and the Teller ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3.2 Reactions to the First Palestinian Novel in Hebrew ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3.3 The Home is Israel, the Homeland is Palestine ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3.4 Finding Home in the Multiplicity of Narratives ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4. Finding Home in Wandering in Randa Jarrar's (1978) *A Map of Home* (2008)..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

4.1 The Imposed Map of the Homeland ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
4.2 Palestine is the Homeland and not the Home ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
4.3 Erasing the Borders of the Nation..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

5. The Collective Homeland and the Personal Home in Susan Abulhawa's (1970) *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

5.1 Home: the Personal and the Political in *Mornings in Jenin* ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
5.2 Return: The Imagined Home ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
5.3 1948: Refugees in Fact and Fiction ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6. Conclusion ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

CHAPTER THREE ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. The Significance of the Civil War in the Lebanese Novel written in Exile..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

1.1 Lebanese Migrant Writers ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
1.2 Divergent Representations of Home among the Lebanese Diaspora **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
1.3 Writing about the Civil War ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
1.4 Selection of Novels ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2. Narrating the War from a Gendered Perspective in Hanan al-Shaykh's (1945) *Ḥikayat Zahra* (*The Story of Zahra* 1980) ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

2.1 Hanan al-Shaykh: Changing Reactions to the Home in the Homeland .....Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.2 Zahra ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.3 In Absence of Memories of Home..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.4 Rejecting the Nation..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

3. Contesting the Supremacy of Narratives in Amin Maalouf's (1949) *Le Rocher de Tanios* (*The Rock of Tanios* 1993) ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.1 Justifying Migration..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.2 The Role of Truth in Resolving/Creating Conflicts..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.3 Homeland versus Exile ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

4. Diasporic and Exilic Narratives in Jad el-Hage's (1946) *The Last Migration* (2002)Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1 A Novel of Diaspora and Love..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.2 Determining a Diasporic Narrative..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.3 Exilic Manifestations in el-Hage's Narrative ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

5. Different Images of Home in Nada Awar Jarrar's (1958) *Somewhere, Home* (2004) Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.1 Three Tales in *Somewhere, Home*..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.2 The Search for Home ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.3 Returns: "Nobody crosses the same river twice" ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.4 Home is a Recurrent Investment in Place ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

6. A Critique of Immigration in Rawi Hage's (1964) *Cockroach* (2008) ... Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.1 The Nameless Immigrant in *Cockroach*..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.2 Mal-integration in the Host Country..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.3 The Global Cycle of Migration..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
6.4 The Personal Experience of Immigration..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

7. Conclusion ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.1 Different Representations of Home amongst the Lebanese Diaspora .....Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.2 Categories and Classifications in Lebanese Literature . Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.3 Ambivalence as a Distinctive Characteristic of Migrant Literature . Error! Bookmark not defined.
7.4 Migration as a Lived experience..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

CHAPTER FOUR ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. Home, Nation and Migration in the Iraqi Novel in the Diaspora..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

1.1 Iraq after the 2003 Anglo-American Invasion..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
1.2 The Iraqi Novel: Gradual Progression ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

2. Probing the Nation's Narrative in Najm Wālī's (1965) *Ṣūrat Yūsuf* (*Yūsuf's Picture* 2004)..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
2.1 Writing National Identities..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.2 The Narrative Structure overshadows the National Story..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
2.3 The Recollection of the Past in an Exilic Setting ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

3. Nostalgic Yearnings in Iqbal Qazwini's *Nāfidhat Zubaydah* (*Zubaida's Window* 2006) Error! Bookmark not defined.
3.1 Zubaida's Window to Iraq in Exile..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3.2 Features of Exilic Literature in *Zubaida's Window* ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3.3 Alienated from the Nation..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
3.4 The Futility of Return from Exile ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

4. Assessing the Viability of having Two Homes in Two Countries in Inaam Kachachi's (1952) *al-Ḥafīdah al-Amrīkīyyah* (*The American Granddaughter* 2008) . Error! Bookmark not defined.
4.1 The History of Migration from Iraq..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
4.2 Resolving Belonging to Two Countries in Conflict ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

5. Home as a Reconciliation between the Past and the Present in Muḥsin al-Ramlī's (1967) *Tamr al-Aṣābiʿ* (*Fingers of Dates* 2009) ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.
5.1 The Host Country as a Station for Peace..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
5.2 Three Generations Negotiate Home..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**
5.3 Active Process of Creating 'Home' ..... **Error! Bookmark not defined.**

6. Conclusion ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

FINAL CONCLUSION..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.

1. Representing Migration ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

2. Critiques of the Nation..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

3. Gendered Accounts ..... Error! Bookmark not defined.

BIBLIOGRAPHY ..... ERROR! BOOKMARK NOT DEFINED.