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Negotiating Borders: Cultural Communication in Abu-Jaber`s Literary Works

Abstract: Diana Abu-Jaber is one of the prominent Arab American women writers. The article aims at discussing the literary works of Diana Abu Jaber that focus on the theme of border crossing and establishing cultural dialogue between different ethnic groups. In writing novels, Abu-Jaber is curious to write about Arab American life and about characters that belong to the Arab world, mainly from Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq. In her novel, *Arabian Jazz* Abu- Jaber explores a thorny scene of interconnecting cultural norms and addresses issues that have long been socially unacceptable in both the United States and Arab community. She exposes us all with the racial prejudice, detestable depredation, gender violence, and adultery, all put into the context of migrants family search to maintain their identity in New York City. Using numerous narratives and constantly trying to bridge the gap between the past and present, the literary work of Abu-Jaber offers a robust substance criticism of America while somehow invoking a critical eye on chauvinistic relics of the past Arab world.

The researcher used the descriptive and analytical approach in analyzing Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent*. The researcher highlighted the love story of a Jordanian American widower who faces difficulties related to the differences in cultures and crossing borders. In a witty way, Abu-Jaber expresses her curiosity about presenting themes that highlight the experience of the immigrant people from the Arab world. She is keen to highlight the feeling they undergo living in exile, and their inability to lead a stable life.

The article highlighted the experiences that Arab American women have to face in exile whether mentally or physically. These women, who are all looking for an interconnected hyphenated identity, cross cultures, resist double clashes and acknowledge that any area is linked to gender, ethnicity, and political situations.

Keywords: Culture, Immigrants, Identity, Borders, Exile, Homeland, Displacement, Gender,

and Racial Discrimination.

1- Introduction

Diana Abu-Jaber was brought up in Syracuse to a father from Jordan and an Irish-German mother. When she was seven years old, her family relocated to Amman for two years. After that, she had stayed in both the U. S. and Jordan. Diana`s father was a storyteller whose stories shaped her mind and inspired her in writing literary works. Diana`s father regaled her with stories about himself, his region, and his relatives that both captivated and informed her about his origin and worldview. These stories had a significant influence on Diana's ingenuity, influencing topics she wrote about, the language style, and the story forms. In this respect, it can be acknowledged that her father was the primary source of inspiration for the majority of her literary works.

Despite being an American, Diana's mother could not tell stories that Diana's father possessed. Her mother, unlike her father, was not a native storyteller, but she has taught Diana something equally valuable: how to listen to stories. She created a space in their house for her father to shape his talent in telling folk tales. Diana learned from her mother's attentiveness and focus that being quiet could be just as transformative a skill as the skill of speaking. Diana`s father constantly reminded them that in America they had to behave as good Arab girls. Therefore, they were not permitted to go to public festivals or school parties. He urged them to study hard, compete fiercely, and carve their path in the world. His words empowered Abu-Jaber to write skillfully and imaginatively, depicting and focusing on every aspect of her Arab cultural issues. This eventually led her to emphasize Arab identity in the literary works she produced.

Almost all Arab American women suffered from loss and discrimination. These women had to live in two worlds while being a part of neither. They were constantly on the move, looking for a sense of belonging and a place to call home. They did not seem to find an in-between area that connected here and there, abandoning them to someplace that synchronizes neither their Arab culture nor American cultures. Feeling rejected in American culture, they switched to their Arab culture for an alternative. These women from Arab origin were unable to concede the constrained, chauvinistic rules that have been foisted on them. They found themselves constantly opposed to the marginalization of their identity by the United States. Arab women immigrants not only failed to belong to the American culture, which always marked them as other but also found it difficult to become part of the Arab culture.

Diana was restless at work; she did not only write novels, but she also liked to write food and film reviews, interview politicians, and profile country fairs. According to Shalal Esa (2002),

Diana would sit down and write for endless hours at a time, and after that, she would rehearse what she had written to her friends and family members. She would sit for hours in her garden, thinking about her roots and native home, then she would embark on telling stories that would usually revolve around her heritage. Diana`s literary narratives manifest her Arab-American identity and shed light on Arabian cultural aspects, which are usually the focal point of her major literary works. Her writings are a true reflection of Arab culture.

Diana Abu-Jaber was good at writing about Arab American life and characters from Middle Eastern countries such as Palestine, Jordan, and Iraq, but she presented characters who resembled her in many ways being funny, quirky, and hard to classify. *Arabian Jazz*, widely regarded as the first conventional Arab American novel, was awarded the Oregon Book Award in 1994. The novel spurred Jean Grant to write, Abu-Jaber's narrative will presumably do more to persuade the general public to renounce what mainstream press forecaster Jack Shabeen says America's extreme hatred of the Arab than any multitude of rhetoric or negative publicity. The novel was released in 1993, at a time there were only a few authors from Arab nationalities living in America. Diana Abu-Jaber (2006) remakes that part of the issue is scarcity depictions of Arabs in America. The book aroused debates concerning its main themes. People probably thought the novel was denigrating and fatuous. A lot of people thought it was an imaginary piece of literature that wasn't related to their life or experience in life. In the novel, she explores a landscape brimming with conflicting societal values, addressing issues that have long been socially unacceptable in American and Arab society. She exposed racial prejudice, deplorable poverty, abuse of women, and adultery, all put into the context of migrants` family struggle to find an identity in upstate NY. Using umpteen narrators and trying to bridge the gap between the past and present, *Arabian Jazz* offered a powerful criticism of America while also displaying a critical perspective on the male domination view of the Arab world. This novel focuses on a young Jordanian-American widow who admires Coltrane. He plays drums in a nightclub called Won Ton a Go-Go. This man has a relaxed and happy relationship with his blessed daughters.

Diana`s remarkable novel *Crescent* (2003), inspired by Shakespeare's *Othello*, was set in early modern Los Angeles. It talked about the life of a culturally diverse love story between an Iraqi exile and an Iraqi-American cook. It won the PEN Center Academic Library Narrative Award and the American Book Award. The novel *Crescent* continues to emphasize the dissatisfaction and pain of immigrants. The novel is set in Los Angeles and contains the two main protagonists from Iraqi origin. The novel was published in 2004, shortly after US-led troops occupied Iraq. Journalists as well as some readers hoped that Abu-Jaber and her work would disentangle Iraq's

violent history and portray a more rigorous picture of the situation in Iraq. Hanif Al Eyad, an eloquent Iraqi instructor, was the main character in *Crescent*. He was devoutly fallen away, but still deemed himself a devoted Muslim and had physical attributes and attractiveness. Abu-Jaber depicted his silhouette after the character of Antonio Balderas. She probably called him after scriptwriter Hanif Kureishi imbued him with some of Edward Said's qualities.

2. Study significance

This study revealed Diana`s skill in writing literary works to set up connections between people of different ethnicities. In her literary works, Diana Abu-Jaber has a keen interest in cross-cultural communication. The researcher critically analyzed the literary works of Diana with a special reference to her novel *Arabian Jazz* to shed light on the writer`s power to strike a balance between two radically different cultures, between self-determination and commitment, between past and future, between humor and emotional turmoil.

3. Literature review

Several studies have been conducted to investigate the cultural communication between people of different ethnicities. Diana Abu Jaber and several other Arab-American novelists emphasized in their literary works the urgent need to find a reliable way to maintain communication between countries with different backgrounds. Diana Abu-Jaber is a well-known Arab-American woman writer. In her literary works, she demonstrated her skills as a master of storytelling (Majaj, 2007). She has created stories that are not only superb, but also sure to please a wide readership by writing with exquisite prose, well-integrated solid scientific facts, and insight of socio-psychological detailed information, and a gift for presenting captivating heroes and villains. (Jopi Nyman, 2009). It is said that while digging into the heart, her novels can also give play to thoughts. Her images are vibrant and visually stunning, revealing the frozen landscape of Syracuse as an ideal backdrop for two mysteries, which eventually melted as they were corrected (Raymond Mar and Keith Oatley, 2008).She is a profoundly brilliant writer who has provided us with multi-layered works of fiction that focus on immigrants` life away from their native homes. Brinda Mehta (2007) says that “Abu-Jaber goes beyond the equation, meandering the mystery in prose as hauntingly beautiful as verse. She has written a literary mystery that combines a fascinating psychological character study with a stressful and captivating plot that leads to a satisfying conclusion. She told a fascinating story.

The study conducted by Sarnou, 2014 revealed that In Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, the author emphasizes the difficult journey of Arab transformation and the re-territorialization of the hidden hyper-expanded Arab-American community. According to Naous (2009, like several

other fourth-generation Arab American fiction writers, Abu-Jaber emphasized important features of the daily reality of Arab Americans, including racism and segregation and anti-Arab stereotypes. Diana`s primary emphasis on the compassionate, imaginative, and cultivating facets of Arab and Muslim culture stoke an assertive setback against the negative perceptions of the Middle East held by almost all Americans (Lebedko, 2014).

According to Robin (2016), Abu-Jaber affirmed the power of literature to convey political issues in her literary works. According to her, the primary objective of political fiction was not to make a ridiculous argument but to unveil a widespread pro-human message through a brilliantly written piece of art. Abu-Jaber expounds fictional works about people and their social identities. In *Crescent,* she intends to come up with some methods to make ethnic cultural borders an area of communication between different ethnic minorities (Schiller, 2005). It is a prospect that would, in time, led to the revival of ethnic relations. However, the purpose of creating boundaries between isolated communities should not lead to the expansion of ethnic differences. It is a prospect that would, in time, led to the revival of ethnic relations. Added to the purpose of creating boundaries between isolated communities should not lead to the expansion of ethnic differences. Today, the recognition of shared culture takes place in a changing context, leading to the formation of artificial bridges (Anzaldua, 2002). Yousef (2020) stated that Abu-Jaber has cleverly established a favorable and effective relationship in which cross-cultural relationships can be formed and maintained between and within various oppressed minorities. Her literary works represent the Arab-American literature of various ethnic boundaries, and at the same time exemplify such boundaries on a limited basis.

Abu-Jaber uses the process of making and serving food as another method to set up communication between people of different ethnicities. Cariello (2009) pointed out that in Diana's literary works, food language provides access to the history, heritage, and origin of national culture. This language serves as a gastronomic touch zone in cafes, kitchens, and displaced homes where displaced persons meet and reinvigorate their identities and enclaves (Gardaphe and Xu, 2007).

4. Methodology

The researcher, in the critical analysis of Diana Abu- Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent,* relied on the descriptive and analytical techniques to underscore problems about border crossing, and the pressing need to boost communication and connections between people from various ethnic communities. Researcher has proposed a comprehensive and analytical approach when discussing cross-cultural communication. This article demonstrated the writer's aesthetic aspects as viable, evocative, and eloquent trends. In addition, the researchers also revealed how

novelists have successfully integrated into these trends, consolidating the themes of communication among individuals in different ethnic communities.

5. Textual discussion

This article critically analyzes the urgent need to question the restrictions imposed on ethnic minorities who are forced to leave their homes and diasporas. The article critically analyzes the main plots and character exchanges in the main plots of Diana's literary works to highlight the main concerns of the novelist. The author is keen to set up common communication and understanding between exiles of different nationalities. The researcher conducted a text analysis of Diana's two main literary works: *Arabian Jazz* and *Crescent* to reveal the author's concern for the need for cross-cultural communication.

5.1. *Arabian Jazz* promotes the need for human interaction and the abolition of racial boundaries

Diana's masterful handling of fictional work is evident in her masterpiece, *Arabian Jazz*. The novel was published in 1993. In the novel, Abu-Jaber portrays the events of a Jordanian diaspora family and their connection with American culture. The plot line of Mutusseum (father) consists of his two daughters. He is very eccentric. His aggressive sister (Fatima) and brother-in-law (Zaeed) discuss the status of immigrants in the United States and how they make a significant contribution to the United States socio-economic field. The novel provides an insider's view of the intricacies of ethnic traditions and the adventure that an ethnic minority, or the child of an expatriate, must take to explore his most natural heritage. Salwa Essayah (2003) states that Diana Abu-Jaber represents a compromise in her novel—a compromise between two fundamentally different cultures, between identity and commitment, between past and future, between exhilaration and disappointments. In the novel, Abu-Jaber investigates the nature of Arab American life, painting a vivid and multidimensional depiction of a vibrant and multifaceted community. A Community that is full of energy and real meaning, alluding to the optimum but never dampened by surplus precision, this is a novel written by a writer who fully understands how to haunt her tale, a book written by a woman who has never for a moment let go of this graciously delightful reader. We discover a writer who is cheerful, sensitive, and inspiring. While reading Diana's *Arabian Jazz* one discovers that the writer has never been straightforward, or obvious.

Diana Abu-Jaber (Palestinian-Jordanian) objects to the notion that Arab American literature should indeed be restricted to the political or expatriate affidavit. In an interview with Shalal Esa (2002), Diana said that she has always had the impression that both poetry and dames letters are much more attainable to Arab American writers because of their endorsement

reliability. It's as if we're still at a point where it's acceptable to write from personal experience, but there's a presumed timidity in constructing or creating a story. *Arabian Jazz* goes further than endorsements prevalent in traditional Arab American writings. The narrative styles of novels vary greatly. *Arabian Jazz* isn't only literary fiction, but it is also broader, deeper, and less autobiographical. Diana Abu-Jaber (2003) stated in an interview that although she tried to start from the core of real life (that is, actors who eventually looked similar to people she knew), narrative always dominated when she was writing. She knew she needed to write about living in a very Arab-centric household in New York, as well as the unavoidable cultural clashes that will occur as a result of such dislocation. Politics, gender norms, and more ethnic or aesthetic concerns, such as music and art, are all touchstones of internal conflict or related areas.

Arabic jazz is full of interesting examples of recontextualized cultural heritage, cultural provocations, and deceptive satire. *Arabian Jazz* transcends Arab circumstances to embellish socio-ethnic underpinnings in contemporary America. Abu-Jaber's novel follows the events of an expatriate Jordanian family as they integrate into American culture. The tale of Matusseum and his family members discusses the influence of immigrants in the U.S. and their contributions to the larger socio-economic domain. *Arabian Jazz* provides an introvert's glimpse at the implications of national heritage and the procedure that a refugee, or the child of a refugee, must go through to explore their identity. Abu- Jaber's main purpose in this novel is to promote the importance of identity, not only for refugees but also to inhabitants who are brought up in their new place but are communally overlooked based on family circumstances. Abu-Jaber introduces another touch to the already complicated identity storyline by having Jemorah nudge Portia away and storm out from the building after disclosing that her father's mother was, in fact, dark-skinned. However, the pull of the office, an epitome of America, eventually tends to draw her back. This time, however, Melvina faces Portia and pauses her. This recognition is a complex example of negotiation. One of Jemorah's alternatives is to marry her cousin Nassir and relocate to Jordan, which she sees as the only viable way to permanently leave the office. Even if she accepts the offer, it soon becomes clear that Nassir is here to stay. In the end, neither Arabism nor Americanism was abandoned, and the text became particularly unstable. Instead of imposing a straightforward replicated solution to Jemorah's quandary, Abu-Jaber obfuscates definitions of ethnic and national affection. She creates a setting in which Arab and American social conventions interact in non-linear designs of complex interactions using faceted language.

5.2. Immigrants strive to interact with the new environment

The events surrounding the Ramouds are at the heart of the novel *Arabian Jazz*. His widowed father, Matusseum Ramoud, was accompanied by his sister and brother-in-law to the United States. Matusseum and his daughters live in a middle-class family in a moderately managed area. His daughters born in the United States are getting older, but they seem to be affected by their identity. They questioned their position in American and Middle Eastern culture. Aunt Fatima, Mutusseum's sister, wishes for Melvina and Jemorah to adopt the norms and customs of their ancestral homeland, Jordan. Fatima is worried about Melvina and Jemorah's dating lifestyles and is engrossed with the scuttlebutt about their new American life. Fatima is embarrassed that both of her nieces are still single, so she makes it her life's mission to find them suitable, rich and, powerful suitors. Melvina, the younger daughter, has found a respectable career and is satisfied as a nurse; the older sister Jemorah, on the other hand, has yet to find a satisfying successful career and continues to struggle all through the novel with her ethnic diversity. Her father is obviously Middle Eastern and retains a strong hold on eastern traditions, but her mother blended seamlessly into Western society and fashions. As a result, Jemorah felt caught in the middle, neither Arab nor American. Her aunt obviously wanted her to strictly abide by Jordanian traditions and customs, but Jemorah found that these customs could neither fill her cultural void nor make her feel confident and relaxed in this situation.

The Ramound family provides an intimate view into one family's Arab American mind, blending two generations of endearing, colorful family members, many of whom are recent visitors whose fragmented English contributes to their idiosyncratic charm. Formed a double date with Melvina and Jemorah's cousin, Sa'id exclaims, "*I must be in heaven, man." You're our cousins, man? This is complete, like, my mind is psyching out" (Arabic Jazz 2003).* What we discover in this novel is that each page is a genuine pleasure; Abu- Jaber's chapters are filled with memorable images and intimate portraits of amazing characters. They erupt with energy and an awesome appreciation of family ties. Jemorah's Jordanian American family is her most valuable asset. It is a truly remarkable gift. There is always a squishy place to fall, melody to dance at the assurance of tomorrow, no matter what the future brings. Their surroundings are reminiscent of a hazardous dumping ground, with their house surrounded by broken-down cars and mobile homes that lack running water and a proper domestic wastewater system. The novel is a lighthearted and colorful portrait of a family establishing roots in America while remaining intimately connected to their Jordanian legacy. Abu-Jaber

has her thumb on the pulse of wholehearted love and devotion in New York close relatives. In one chapter titled "Family Function Season is Fast Approaching," the specific time of the year for relatives to get together, but this moment is of no value for Mutusseum's sister whose primary purpose is to find appropriate suitors for the daughters. The theme of *Arabian Jazz* is marriage. It is the source of many squabbles and a topic of many discussions. Marriage is a crucial ritual in Mutusseum's culture. Marriage is essential for maintaining a family's name and lineage as well as for maintaining class status. In Jordan, marriage is always arranged by parents. The bride's parents use an application-style process to find a groom. Dowry is included in the pursuit by both the bride's and groom's parents. Jemorah and Melvina, Mutusseum's daughters, opposed to this arranged marriage. Neither of them is satisfied with the custom of other family members selecting their spouse. Fatima is debating this issue because she wants native people to treat her niece with respect in the Arabian community and to maintain the family name.

5.3. Feminism strives to promote interethnic dialogue

Another prominent theme in the novel is feminism. The theme of marriage heavily influenced the theme of feminism. Within the confines of Abu-Jaber's novel, it is an integral part of the narrative. The dominant female characters, Jemorah, Melvina, and Fatima, appear frequently throughout the novel and frequently argue with one another about issues related to marriage and their current situation in the United States. Fatima, a confrontational Jordanian aunt, wants her niece to live her life according to Arabian cultural traditions. Her view of feminism is that it is not a rebellion, but rather cultural conformity. She, alternatively, does not conform to this role either. She is constantly disrespectful to her husband and often disobeys her older, wiser brother. It is only in times of weakness that she becomes submissive and caters to the traditions of the Middle East. Jemorah and Melvina too do not want to find themselves in a submissive community but rather want to go to college and live the life and do a career they wish for themselves. They do not want life-changing decisions made on behalf of them.

In *Arabian Jazz*, Abu-Jaber deliberately transcends cultural restrictions, positioning the focus of American Arabs in a more general coherent framework. For a long time, the novelist has been looking for a metaphor for Arabs that Americans could relate to profoundly (Evans, 2003). According to Diana (2003), America has a tendency to separate itself from the mainstream and garbles from what's going on outside its boundaries. She gradually confirmed that the perception of Native Americans was parallel to what has been happening to Palestinians, how they were slowly phased out or forced back, how there were occasions of conflict, but that Native Americans were always comprised as brutes or invaders. This

recognition becomes ingrained in *Arabian Jazz* when Jemorah and Ricky Ellis, half-Onondagas attendant, fall in love. Both were ostracized by society, but they found solace in each other when they were children, even if they didn't use words to express their passion. Their first physical encounter strengthened their relationship. Their exchanges represent the entrance of one ethnic group's movement into another. In an environment where Arabs and Indians are often portrayed as non-humans, mutual communication brings comfort. Therefore, their relationship provides an emotional counterpart to the witty negotiation in the novel. It also provides a somewhat convincing way for critics to access the larger American literary landscape. Abu- Jaber's strategy here is similar to those used frequently in literary works and criticism of another ethnicity. Redefining the Arabs within the larger perspective of minority dialogues will produce a literary dichotomy, which is worth mentioning in Arabian Jazz. Abu-Jaber has produced an indispensable integration of others-Arab Americans-who communicate with other marginalized groups to minimize and ultimately reshape the current dominant social essentialist preferences. However, this is more than just strategic existentialism. Rather, it broadens on tactical existentialism to highlight an increment of identity-Arab American-that is eventually negotiated into a contemporary ethno cultural community. That is Arab American-via artistic indicators such as laughter, sarcasm, and parody, as well as a discourse with other Arab Americans.

Abu-Jaber's depiction of Arab culture can be viewed as assertive as Portia's speech. For example, Fatima was forced to arrange an arranged marriage for her two nieces. At the same time, Abu-Jaber condemns Matusseum and his children for their inordinately "American behavior." Fatima's behavior emphasizes Arab beliefs and values to the extraordinary, offering a counterpoint to Portia's depiction. Fatima's past extramarital affairs in Jordan taught her a severe lesson about extramarital sexual relations. When she was young, she had a secret sexual relationship with a lover who promised to marry her but he did not keep his promise. This event so far, has taught Fatima an expensive lesson. This kind of sexual contact is normal in the U.S. Fatima opposes it. she was afraid that the two daughters of Matusseum would fall prey in America. Fatima's past was painful. Her parents are Palestinian immigrants and because they have nine children, they cannot support any additional children. One painful episode was when she asked Fatima to assist her father in burying four dead babies close to the Jordan River. These memories, as well as the memories of being arrested in an Israeli prison for no reason at the age of 16, were passed on to the United States with her. As a result, Fatima sought relief and peace in the so-called new dream land, but she did not find it in the diaspora. Melvina provides a further contrast to Fatima. Her sharp ambition is evocative of

sentimental American inspiring stories, and it is the root of the rigorous, no-nonsense debate with which she disparages her family's mannerisms. Her confrontations with Fatima, such as a physical confrontation, are the novel's most intense conflicts. But, as with Fatima, readers discover that Melvina is still more than she appears. She is romantically engaged to drug addict Larry Fasco. She publicly despises him, but stole morphine from the hospital to help him overcome the addiction. In the same relationship, her unbreakable behavior is shattered and reaffirmed. It is striking to notice that in the novel we have a heartbreaking refutation to its characters' sensuous and quirky cultural negotiations.

These conflicts reached a point in Matusseum at the climax of the novel, when Matusseum visited Jordan, and Fatima painted portraits of imprisonment and infanticide for Melvina and Jem. Listening and recounting stories helped to make the past bare and achieved familial closeness. In the novel, Fatima's older sister Rima states,

> "*We laid the babies to rest. You must tell Fatima. It's over. There's no one left to protect, nothing to do now but to mourn and reflect. We want her to come back, to visit and see her home and family again. To know that it's over"*
>
> *(Arabian Jazz 1993).*

In addition to this close and compassionate family relationship, Matusseum learned that his family held a formal funeral for Nora and placed a tombstone for her to demonstrate her baby's resting place. Cultural discord has been resolved through the power of speech and the settlement of people on their land. The unambiguous occurrence of these simultaneous cohesion and divisiveness allows Abu Jaber to investigate relationships in a broader, ethnically and culturally specific context.

5.4. Stuck in the past, dealing with the challenges of the present

This mishmash of family members is like any other ethnic background, complete with old traditional morality tales and generational folly. These are serene introspective moments strewn throughout the frenetic pace of Ramoud’s daily lives. Such times when Jemorah recollects her mother and reflects on her father's lonely life. She fully understands her father's displacement is a part of his personality. He is not the same father who she knew in Jordan. His testimony was part of that tenderness, giving sparks behind his sight, and part of his serious negligence in laughter. Characters' personalities are dealt with in contrast. Matusseum worked as a maintenance technician and enjoyed playing jazz in his spare time. Melvina, twenty-two years old and eight years younger than Jemorah, is strikingly serious, zealously

motivated by her responsibilities as the hospital's staff nurse. Melvina's polar opposite, Jemorah, drifts through her days as a hospital registration clerk without focus on what she was doing. Fatima, whose target is to get her niece married at any cost, is worried about social image than sentimental reality. Jemorah and Melvina's mother, Nora, an Irish American, died of pneumonia during a visit to Amman when Jemorah was a kid. As a memorable figure, she serves both as a unifying force and a source of tension. Nora's family blamed Matusseum for her death, barely concealing their belief that being Arabian had a lot to do with it. Mutusseum's relatives, on the other hand, didn't accepted Nora as a family member. However, it is due to her memories that the characters struggle through the storyline, at certain occasions in parody fashion, toward a deeper understanding of themselves and their world. Matusseum is also struggling with his daughters, as he tries to find his new place in America without his adoring wife. He is not at ease in his job. He finds peace of mind through playing jazz on his drum set. This peace of mind can be found when he is at the local bar playing jazz, which allows him to forget the pain of his wife's death and the personal crisis brought on by immigration. His daughter and sister thought his hobby was strange and a little embarrassing. Mutusseum's return to Jordan harmed the family members because his daughters were unable to locate their heritage and place in their own father's culture. The journey has had a profound impact on Matusseum, who longs for his hometown.

Throughout the novel, the hospital serves as a metaphor for Jemorah's confining social environment. She has tried several times to quit but has given in to Portia's intimidation. Jemorah does not like the atmosphere of her work because the entire staff members appear to be eternally tight to the office's machinery. Jemorah considers her constant hesitancy by recollecting her recent decision to quit for good. In fact, Portia is inevitably responsible for driving Jamorah out of the hospital. In the novel's most harrowing scene, Portia summons Jemorah to her office and launches into a jeremiad to keep Jemorah under her control. This scene turns the hospital office from a symbol of totalitarian control into a white mold, reflecting the storyline of the forced integration of traditional American encounters:

> *Your mother used to be such a good, good gift. She was so beautifully White, pale as a flower. ……. The silly girl wanted attention. She met your father in her second year [of college]. This man, he couldn't speak a word of our language, didn't have a real job. And Nora was so--like a flower, a real flower, I'm telling you. It seemed like three days after she met that man they were getting married. A split second later she was pregnant. I*

> *know for a fact her poor mother--your grandmother-- had to ask for a picture of the man for her parish priest to show around to prove he wasn't a Negro. Though he might as well have been, really, who could tell the difference, the one lives about the same as the other. (Arabian Jazz 1993)*

In another dialogue in the novel, she adds:

> *your father and all his kind aren't any better than Negroes, that's why he hasn't got any ambition and why he'll be stuck in that same job in the basement for the rest of his life.... We'll try putting some pink lipstick on you, maybe lightening your hair, make you American.*
> *(Arabian Jazz 1993)*

This speech's proclamations are straightforward and unvarnished. When it comes to this perspective of the United States, Abu-Jaber appears to be completely uninterested in their nuance. It's a familiar scene to her. According to Abu-Jaber (2001), "sisters were surrounded by uncles, aunts, and cousins who lived in or visited the community, and they were encouraged to identify with their Arab heritage, but they were told by their Jordanian-American relatives to stay out of the sun to protect their milky white skin so they could pass as white.

She believes that true Americans and, by extension, American culture must be white, and she uses the "Negro" as an emblem against which she can assert white privilege; in her mind, the diatribe is an attempt to help. This issue is evident in the well-known analogy between white women and flowers. The flower is a symbol of purity, and its petals protect the uterus from brutal insertion. Here, Abu-Jaber powerfully portrays the general trend of Arabs and other minorities, serving to rebut the prevailing culture's notions of toleration. Abu-Jaber depicts this culture through the eyes of its subjected citizens; her analysis contradicts the depictions provided by the media.

Social class issues often arise in *Arabian Jazz* but are rarely discussed openly. The town where the Ramound family lives is obviously poor. Many of the dwellers do not have homes instead, they live in old, broken-down cars and buses. Pastures and waterways are full of rubbish and dirt. Death is common among the lower class, no government organization provides medical assistance, or they cannot afford it. Many of the students, such as Jemorah and Melvina,

attended school but were unable to succeed academically. They have left them in poverty, much like their parents. The characters struggled to live in such a desolate area, although some of them thought of returning to their hometown.

5.5. Humor as a facilitator of intimacy

The novel's most striking feature may be its sense of humor. According to Abu-Jaber, humor can improve the comprehension of a story. While reading *Arabian Jazz*, one would think it would be a pretty serious novel, but humor seemed to present itself as a natural medium because when readers are not sure what sort of reception the story will have, humor seems to offer more ease of access or affection (Colin Evans, 2003). Take, for example, Uncle Fuad who, while visiting Jordan, rides around in states of undress, eventually wearing only a face cloth to cup his genital area. He thinks it is normal to move around with this dress because it is not part of Jordanian culture.

In another episode, at a church-sponsored feast for visiting Jordanian bishops, a brawl ensues, with everyone shrieking in Arabic about mothers, Arabs, Americans, and nationalism in general. According to Jem, the drunk soon split up, Saudis vs. Saudis, Jordanians vs. Jordanians, and so on. At the back of the St.Yusuf Syrian Orthodox Church, there was the civil war. Earlier in the evening, Aunt Fatima tried to set Jem up with an old-cooking young man named Salaam Alaikum an Islamic way of greeting, which means peace to be upon you. His sadness was so deep and reflected on his face that it seemed to have gotten into the folds of his skin. His eyes popped up to be fluid, leaking into the stitching of his cheeks. Toward the story's end, Matusseum, whose relatives are Syrian-Orthodox, climbs onto his ceiling early one Saturday morning to perform Muslim worship, shouting at his daughter, Melvina, you are a heart grabber, you heart picker!

Numerous theorists have proposed that in fiction, humor can be both contemplative and reflexive. This event is unmistakably true of *Arabian Jazz*. The use of humor reduces Abu-Jaber's need to translate cultural differences into commonplace, stereotypic aspects. She uses it to advise people on how to negotiate, resolve, and renegotiate cultural duality and human conflicts in daily life.

5.6. Stabilizing the power of music

The title of the novel alludes to the power of music in bringing various ethnic groups together. Throughout the narrative, music acts as a stabilizing force for Matusseum. To him, it is much more than just a way to unwind. Although the family had been struggling in poverty, their father generously provided food and shelter for visitors. The entire neighborhood respected him for his knowledge and moral compass. His commanding voice alluded to his ancestral

connections to royalty, intellectuals, and historic poets. It was the voice Matusseum would later generate from his drums; in their undertones, he remembered his father speaking again. He had known, even as he paid attention to his father`s talk of history and consistency, that he would be leaving someday, to a place where he could establish himself. Matusseum left for the new way of life two years later, after the death of his father. His drums were now the only way to hear his father's voice.

Mutusseum's music transcends geographic boundaries. If the language is at the heart of ethno cultural harmony, Mutusseum's music allows ethnic aspects to transcend its boundaries. As an intermediary signifier, it retains the memory in the language. In addition, as a second language, it enables stories to spread across the ocean, establishing negotiated settlement without compromising the cultural gap. This determination is reflected in the title of the novel "*Arabian Jazz*".

5.7. Coupled with the disorientation of the bicultural background

Diana Abu- Jaber's attitude toward her Arab heritage is evident in all of her literary works. Her obsessions with cooking–especially Arab food–stories, and both her father's and his family demonstrate an almost emotive connection to the distinctive Arab cultural roots conjured up in Crescent. Consequently, this memoir not only replicates the disorientation that usually involves multi-ethnic upbringing, but also contextualizes the characteristics to personify the distinctly different components of the multi-ethnic background. The image of the Arab family presented by Abu-Jaber, like the traditional dishes she provides, is spread through her unique understanding and emotional response, which is understandable. While many relatives` scenes are depicted lovingly, others are proffered in a rather sharp tone. A few Arab readers may find the humorous reveals and acerbic treatment to be harsh, especially of what is typically considered private family matters in the Arab world.

However, it is Abu- Jaber's irreverent style that distinguishes her writings from most Arab American literary works. The style encompasses the intricacies of growing up in America with a current Arab background. Diana replicates both the forces of attraction that her legacy presented for them in her youth, and possibly continues even into her middle age. She acquired her American mother's love of books and her Arab father's love of cooking, and storytelling. Abu-Jaber remarked that despite she firmly lives in America, she finds herself an "inclined Bedouin" who was unable to rest in one area, yet evenly intimate for all the areas she has visited and left behind. Like other Arab American writers, such as Lisa Suhair Majaj (who also has an American mother and an Arab father, but whose recognition with her Arab heritage appears more serene), coexistence, and writing is the space to reveal a true feeling of

belonging. That sense of belonging, according to Abu-Jaber, is unstable one, one she identifies as a wilderness of the inner self, the ungoverned consciousness of writing.

The feeling of disorientation continues in the new moon. The protagonist Hanif has an affair with an Iraqi-American character named Sirin. She is a warm white middle-aged like Abu Jabel, who is not sure of her Arab identity. Unlike Abu-Jaber, Sirine is still single and works as a cook in a restaurant named Nadia's Cafe, where she is a part of an orchestra-like atmosphere involving potential partners, food lovers, and people whose lives are in transformation. Sirine, in a fit of rage, drags off the hijab (headscarf) of a student she suspects of having an affair with Hanif. The scene appears to have been lifted from a modern version of "I Love Lucy," and it speaks to Abu-Jaber's sharp sense of humor.

Sirine`s lover escaped to the United States during the period Saddam Hussein's regime, but his life on the run plays only a minor role in the first half of the story. Abu-Jaber remarks "It was great for *Crescent* to come out when the war was being launched; it gave me some initial attention, but it was not appropriated" (Shalal. Esa, 2002). People were asking Diana questions like, 'Why do Arabs hate us?' and asking her to speak for the Iraqi people, which she didn't want to do and had no will of doing at all. The literary works of Diana irritated political activists who read them and wanted her to be more direct in what she said. People are frustrated because they see Abu-Jaber's surname (which means "father of Jaber" in Arabic). Moreover, they hear that she has written about Iraq and Arab Americans. This led them to assume that her work has become political. When they finally meet Abu-Jaber, they discover the truth: she is still struggling with her identity and bicultural upbringing, as she remarks in an interview, "I have learned that identity is both what we tell ourselves it is and what others tell us we are" (Shalal. Esa, 2002). In light of these words, Abu-Jaber is more interested in creating multifaceted characters than in expressing strong opinions about Hussein's years in power. While she was traveling around the United States to read *Crescent* in a bookstore, Abu- Gaber was happy to find that more and more people wanted her to discuss the plot of her novel. Many people want to discuss the plot in her literary works and find out the information she is trying to reveal in the novel. People wanted the writer to reveal certain aspects of her culture, and her method to set up cultural dialogue between people of various ethnicities.

Abu-Jaber wittily articulates herself in both of her novels and her talks. She, for example, learned to speak English and "kitchen Arabic." When she was a child, her father briefly moved the family to Jordan, where Abu Jaber learned a lot of new Arabic phrases. "English is like an automatic car," Abu-Jaber says, "whereas Arabic is like a stick-shift car." Speaking Arabic is

a marvelous experience, the language involves all angles of one`s life. The language is the pulse of the heart there is no meaning of one` life without knowledge of this great language (Shalal. Esa, 2002).

6. Conclusion

Abu-Jaber is a remarkable literary figure in the contemporary Arab American literarure. She cleverly weaves stories about social interaction and social identity, and determines how the interaction space of various ethnic minorities has changed the boundaries of ethnic culture. A space that will undoubtedly lead to the transformation of ethnic relations. The analytical study revealed that dividing borders between countries should not result in an indispensable form of cultural diversity. In her literary works, Diana believes that within the framework of existing unnatural bridges, the recognition of commonality takes place today. It is evident in her novels that identifying distinctions between and within minority groups is an important part of demarcating the connections that unified them in ethnic- religious border areas.

Abu-Jaber complicates the depiction of Arab and Arab-American cultural identities by showing how to imitate and appear certain stereotypes. She did this not only because of the dominant ethnic majority, but also because of the ethnic community itself. These communities cast their racially prejudiced eyes on the Arabs living in the same ethnic cultural area.

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