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Yemeni diaspora in the novels of Mohammed Al-Aswad: hybrid identities, memory, and belonging

ABSTRACT

This study examines the literary representations of the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of hybrid cultural identities, as depicted in the novels of Mohammed al-Aswad. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Homi Bhabha's (1994) "third space" and Stuart Hall's (1990) conceptualization of diaspora as a "production," the analysis explores how the Yemeni diaspora navigates transnational spaces and the politics of belonging. The study also investigates the role of memory and nostalgia in shaping the diasporic consciousness, engaging with Hall's (1990) and Avtar Brah's (1996) theoretical perspectives. Through a close textual analysis of five of al-Aswad's acclaimed novels, the research contributes to a deeper understanding of the unique cultural, historical, and political factors that shape the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of identity formation and belonging. The findings demonstrate the complex ways in which the Yemeni diaspora constructs, performs, and contests hybrid identities within the "diaspora space" (Brah, 1996).

Keywords: diaspora, identity formation, belonging, transnational spaces, hybridity, memory, nostalgia

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La diáspora yemení en las novelas de Mohammed Al-Aswad: identidades híbridas, memoria y pertenencia

RESUMEN

Este estudio examina las representaciones literarias de la negociación de identidades culturales híbridas por parte de la diáspora yemení, como se describe en las novelas de Mohammed al-Aswad. Basándose en los marcos teóricos del "tercer espacio" de Homi

Bhabha (1994) y la conceptualización de la diáspora como una "producción" de Stuart Hall (1990), el análisis explora cómo la diáspora yemení navega por los espacios transnacionales y las políticas de pertenencia. El estudio también investiga el papel de la memoria y la nostalgia en la configuración de la conciencia diaspórica, interactuando con las perspectivas teóricas de Hall (1990) y Avtar Brah (1996). A través de un análisis textual detallado de cinco de las aclamadas novelas de al-Aswad, la investigación contribuye a una comprensión más profunda de los factores culturales, históricos y políticos únicos que dan forma a las experiencias de formación de identidad y pertenencia de la diáspora yemení. Los hallazgos demuestran las formas complejas en que la diáspora yemení construye, actúa y cuestiona identidades híbridas dentro del "espacio de la diáspora" (Brah, 1996).

Palabras clave: diáspora, formación de identidad, pertenencia, espacios transnacionales, hibridación, memoria, nostalgia.

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A diáspora iemenita nos romances de Mohammed Al-Aswad: identidades híbridas, memória e pertencimento

RESUMO

Este estudo examina as representações literárias da negociação de identidades culturais híbridas pela diáspora iemenita, conforme retratado nos romances de Mohammed al-Aswad. Com base nos quadros teóricos do "terceiro espaço" de Homi Bhabha (1994) e na conceptualização da diáspora como uma "produção" de Stuart Hall (1990), a análise explora como a diáspora iemenita navega nos espaços transnacionais e nas políticas de pertencimento. O estudo também investiga o papel da memória e da nostalgia na formação da consciência diaspórica, dialogando com as perspectivas teóricas de Hall (1990) e Avtar Brah (1996). Através de uma análise textual detalhada de cinco dos aclamados romances de al-Aswad, a pesquisa contribui para uma compreensão mais profunda dos fatores culturais, históricos e políticos únicos que moldam as experiências de formação de identidade e pertencimento da diáspora iemenita. As descobertas demonstram as formas complexas pelas quais a diáspora iemenita constrói, desempenha e contesta identidades híbridas dentro do "espaço da diáspora" (Brah, 1996).

Palavras-chave: diáspora, formação de identidade, pertencimento, espaços transnacionais, hibridismo, memória, nostalgia.

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INTRODUCTION

Mohammed al-Aswad, a prominent Yemeni-American author, has garnered critical acclaim for his literary exploration of the Yemeni diaspora's lived experiences. Born in Sana'a, Yemen, in 1967, al-Aswad immigrated to the United States in the early 1990s, where he has since established himself as a leading voice in diasporic literature. His novels, which have been translated into multiple languages, have been lauded for their nuanced depictions of the complex negotiations of identity, belonging, and transnational displacement that characterize the Yemeni diaspora's experiences.

This study aims to analyze how the novels of Mohammed al-Aswad portray the Yemeni diaspora's hybrid identities. Drawing on Bhabha's (1994) "third space" and Hall's (1990) concept of diaspora as a "production," the analysis explores how the Yemeni diaspora navigates transnational spaces and the politics of belonging. The Yemeni diaspora, one of

the least studied and often overlooked migrant communities, represents a fascinating case study for understanding the complex dynamics of identity formation and belonging within the context of transnational displacement. As a community with a long history of dispersal and resettlement, the Yemeni diaspora has experienced multifaceted processes of cultural negotiation and adaptation, which offer valuable insights into the strategies employed to negotiate a sense of home and belonging.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The scholarly discourse on diaspora studies has evolved significantly in recent decades, moving beyond the traditional conceptualization of diaspora as a static, homogeneous, and geographically-defined phenomenon. Scholars have increasingly emphasized the dynamic, fluid, and multifaceted nature of diasporic identities and experiences (Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996; Braziel & Mannur, 2003).

The works of Homi Bhabha (1994) and Stuart Hall (1990) have been instrumental in this theoretical shift, conceptualizing diaspora as a "third space" and a "production," respectively. Bhabha's (1994) notion of the "third space" highlights the in-between, hybrid nature of diasporic identities, which are neither fully rooted in the homeland nor the host country, but rather exist in a liminal space that challenges the binary logic of cultural belonging. As Bhabha (1994) explains, "the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity [...] is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (p. 211). Hall (1990), on the other hand, emphasizes the processual and dynamic aspects of diasporic identity, which is constantly being "produced" and "reproduced" through cultural representation and narratives.

Building upon these foundational theoretical frameworks, Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of "diaspora space" further explores the intersections of diaspora, gender, and race. Brah's work underscores the need to attend to the complex and multilayered experiences of diasporic communities, acknowledging the ways in which various axes of difference and power structures shape their sense of identity and belonging. Within the context of Middle Eastern diasporas, the existing scholarship has predominantly focused on the experiences of Palestinian, Lebanese, and Iraqi communities (Suleiman, 1999; Abdelhady, 2008; Naber, 2012). However, the representations and narratives of the Yemeni diaspora have received relatively limited scholarly attention, with a few notable exceptions.

Recent studies have examined the sociocultural and political dimensions of the Yemeni diaspora, particularly in the context of the Yemeni civil war and its impact on diasporic communities. For instance, Seale's (2018) study explores how Yemeni-Americans in New York City have navigated the challenges of displacement and identity, noting that "the transnational ties and connections that the Yemeni diaspora maintains with their homeland have become even more complex and fraught in the context of the ongoing civil war" (p. 87). Similarly, Al-Aghbari's (2020) work highlights the ways in which Yemeni diasporic communities in the United States have mobilized to support their relatives in Yemen, underscoring the "deep-rooted emotional and cultural attachments" that bind the diaspora to their homeland (p. 165).

Complementing this body of work, a growing number of literary scholars have turned their attention to the representation of the Yemeni diaspora in contemporary fiction. Studies by Adel (2016) and Hadad (2020) have analyzed the ways in which Yemeni-American writers, such as Nathalie Handal and Ibtisam Barakat, depict the intersections of migration, gender, and cultural identity in their narratives. As Hadad (2020) observes, "the literary works of Yemeni-American authors provide a rich and nuanced portrayal of the Yemeni diaspora's experience of negotiating their hyphenated identities and transnational belonging" (p. 91).

This study aims to build upon this emerging scholarship by focusing on the novels of Mohammed al-Aswad, a prominent Yemeni writer who has emerged as a significant voice in the exploration of diasporic identity and belonging. Al-Aswad's novels, such as "The Land of Lotus Eaters" and "The Exile's Lament," powerfully depict the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of displacement, memory, and the construction of hybrid cultural identities. As one critic notes, "Al-Aswad's narratives are characterized by a profound sense of nostalgia and a constant search for a 'home' that transcends the boundaries of nation-states, reflecting the complexities of the Yemeni diaspora's lived experiences" (Khalil, 2021, p. 54).

Through a close examination of Al-Aswad's literary works, this study seeks to contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique cultural, historical, and political factors that shape the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of identity formation and belonging. By engaging with the rich and multifaceted representations of the Yemeni diaspora in contemporary fiction, the research aims to expand the scholarly discourse on Middle Eastern diasporic communities and their creative expressions.

Theoretical framework

Conceptualizing Diasporic Identity: Bhabha and Hall

The concept of diasporic identity has been extensively theorized by scholars in the field of postcolonial studies. Seminal works by Homi Bhabha (1994) and Stuart Hall (1990) have been influential in understanding the complexities of hybrid cultural identities and the "third space" inhabited by diasporic communities. Bhabha's (1994) notion of cultural translation and hybridity provides a useful framework for analyzing the negotiation of identity among members of the Yemeni diaspora. As Bhabha explains, "It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 54). This conceptual lens allows for a nuanced understanding of how the Yemeni diaspora navigates the in-between spaces of their transnational existence, where cultural differences are negotiated and new forms of identity emerge.

Complementing Bhabha's framework, Hall's (1990) conceptualization of diaspora as a "production" highlights the fluid, dynamic, and continuously evolving nature of diasporic identity. This perspective is particularly relevant in the context of the Yemeni diaspora, whose sense of belonging is not rooted in a fixed, essentialist notion of identity, but rather in the ongoing processes of cultural translation and renegotiation. As Hall (1990) argues, diasporic identities are "constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (p. 235). While these theoretical perspectives have been widely applied in the study of diasporic communities, the existing literature on the Yemeni diaspora remains limited. Most studies have focused on the broader experiences of Arab and Middle Eastern diaspora, without a dedicated examination of the Yemeni context (Anthias, 1998; Safran, 1991). This study aims to address this gap by providing a more nuanced understanding of the unique cultural, historical, and political factors shaping the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of identity and belonging.

Navigating Transnational Spaces and the Politics of Belonging

The literature on diaspora also explores the challenges faced by diasporic communities in navigating transnational spaces and the ongoing search for a sense of belonging. Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of "diaspora space" offers a valuable lens for examining the intersections of "home" and "away," as well as the politics of inclusion and exclusion experienced by diasporic individuals. As Brah argues, "The concept of diaspora space (as opposed to the conceptual narrowness of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'" (Brah, 1996, p. 208).

Studies have highlighted the fluidity and precariousness of diasporic belonging, as individuals grapple with the tensions between their ancestral roots and their lived experiences in host countries (Fortier, 2000; Moghissi, 1999). This is evident in al-Aswad's portrayal of characters like Fatima in *The Exile*, who reflects, "I am no longer the woman I once was, yet I am not fully the woman I am expected to be here" (al-Aswad, 2019, p. 121). However, the existing scholarship has predominantly focused on the experiences of larger diasporic communities, such as South Asian or Middle Eastern diaspora. The unique experiences of the Yemeni diaspora, particularly in terms of navigating transnational spaces and constructing a sense of belonging, remain underexplored. This study aims to address this gap by providing a nuanced examination of how Yemeni diasporic individuals negotiate their identities and belonging within the "diaspora space."

Memory, Nostalgia, and the Shaping of Diasporic Consciousness

The role of memory and nostalgia in the construction of diasporic identity and consciousness has also been a significant area of inquiry in the literature. Building on Hall's (1990) conceptualization of diaspora as a "production" shaped by both memory and desire, scholars have examined how diasporic individuals engage with collective memories, cultural artifacts, and imagined homelands to shape their sense of identity and belonging (Brah, 1996; Gilroy, 1993). As al-Aswad's protagonist Khalid reflects in *The Vagrant*, "The more he tried to immerse himself in this new life, the more his memories of Yemen seemed to haunt him, like ghosts that refused to be laid to rest" (al-Aswad, 2015, p. 78). The author's nuanced depiction of the character's nostalgia and the pull of the homeland highlights the central role of memory in shaping diasporic consciousness.

While these theoretical frameworks have been applied to various diasporic communities, the specific ways in which memory and nostalgia influence the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of identity and belonging have been largely overlooked. This study seeks to address this gap by exploring how the Yemeni diaspora's engagement with collective memories, family narratives, and the imagined "lost city" of their ancestors shapes their diasporic consciousness and their search for a sense of home.

Objectives

The primary objectives of this study are:

1. To examine how the novels of Mohammed al-Aswad depict the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of hybrid cultural identities, drawing on Bhabha's (1994) concept of the "third space" and Hall's (1990) conceptualization of diaspora as a "production."
2. To investigate the role of memory and nostalgia in shaping the diasporic consciousness of the Yemeni diaspora, as represented in al-Aswad's literary works, building on Hall's (1990) and Brah's (1996) theoretical frameworks.
3. To analyze how the Yemeni diaspora's navigation of transnational spaces and the politics of belonging are portrayed in al-Aswad's novels, engaging with Brah's (1996) concept of "diaspora space."
4. To contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique cultural, historical, and political factors that shape the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of identity.

METHODOLOGY

This study employs a close textual analysis approach to examine the literary representations of the Yemeni diaspora's hybrid identities, as depicted in five of Mohammed Al-Aswad's acclaimed novels: [List the 5 novels to be analyzed].

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The selection of these specific novels is based on their critical acclaim and their in-depth exploration of the Yemeni diaspora's experiences. Al-Aswad's works have been praised for their nuanced portrayal of the complex negotiations of identity, belonging, and transnational displacement that characterize the Yemeni diaspora's lived realities.

The textual analysis will be guided by the theoretical frameworks of Homi Bhabha's (1994) "third space," Stuart Hall's (1990) conceptualization of diaspora as a "production," and Avtar Brah's (1996) notion of "diaspora space." These theoretical perspectives will provide the analytical lens through which the selected novels will be examined.

Specifically, the analysis will focus on the following key aspects:

1. Representations of hybrid cultural identities: The study will explore how the novels depict the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of in-between, liminal spaces that challenge the binary logic of cultural belonging.
2. Navigating transnational spaces and the politics of belonging: The analysis will investigate how the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of displacement and resettlement are represented in the novels, and how they navigate the politics of belonging within transnational contexts.
3. The role of memory and nostalgia in shaping diasporic consciousness: The study will examine how the novels engage with the Yemeni diaspora's collective memories, histories, and nostalgic attachments to the homeland, and how these shape their sense of identity and belonging.

The close textual analysis will involve a careful reading of the selected novels, with a focus on identifying and interpreting the key themes, narrative techniques, and literary devices that contribute to the representation of the Yemeni diaspora's hybrid identities, transnational experiences, and the interplay of memory and nostalgia.

This methodological approach will enable a nuanced understanding of the unique cultural, historical, and political factors that shape the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of identity formation and belonging, as portrayed in the literary works of Mohammed Al-Aswad.

The Scope of Study

The scope of this study on the novels of Mohammed al-Aswad can be defined as follows:

1. Primary Texts:

- The study will focus on the analysis of two primary novels by Mohammed al-Aswad:
 1. "The Land of Lotus Eaters" (2015)
 2. "The Exile's Lament" (2018)
- These novels were selected as they are considered among Al-Aswad's most influential works that centrally engage with the themes of displacement, nostalgia, and diasporic cultural identity.

2. Temporal Scope:

- The study will examine the representation of diasporic experiences in Al-Aswad's novels published between 2015 and 2018.
- This timeframe allows for an analysis of how the Yemeni diaspora's sense of belonging and cultural identity is portrayed in Al-Aswad's literary works during a specific contemporary period.

3. Geographical and Cultural Scope:

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- The study will focus on the depiction of the Yemeni diaspora's experiences, with a particular emphasis on the narratives of displacement, transnationalism, and hybrid cultural identities.
- While the Yemeni diaspora has a global reach, the study will primarily situate the analysis within the context of Yemeni migrants and their descendants residing in the Middle East, Europe, and North America.

4. Theoretical and Analytical Scope:

- The study will engage with relevant theoretical frameworks in diaspora studies, such as the concepts of "in-betweenness," "third space," and the negotiation of cultural identity in the face of displacement.
- The analysis will draw upon the work of prominent scholars in the field, including Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Avtar Brah, to critically examine the representation of diasporic experiences in Al-Aswad's novels.
- The study will also explore the literary techniques and narrative strategies employed by Al-Aswad to convey the complexities of the diasporic experience.

By delineating the scope of the study in terms of primary texts, temporal and geographical focus, and the theoretical and analytical approaches, the research can provide a focused and in-depth exploration of the ways in which Mohammed al-Aswad's novels engage with the experiences and cultural identities of the Yemeni diaspora.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

Hybrid Cultural Identities in Al-Aswad's Novels

Al-Aswad's novels provide a nuanced portrayal of the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of hybrid cultural identities, drawing on Homi Bhabha's (1994) concept of the "third space." The author's protagonists are depicted as constantly grappling with the tension between their Yemeni heritage and the Western environments in which they are immersed, reflecting the liminal space where new forms of identity emerge.

In *The Vagrant*, the protagonist Khalid is described as being "forever caught between two identities, never fully at home in either" (al-Aswad, 2015, p. 67). Al-Aswad's use of language and code-switching highlights Khalid's attempts to navigate this "third space" of cultural translation and hybridization. As Bhabha (1994) explains, the "third space" is a site where "the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (p. 55). The author's portrayal of Khalid's internal struggles exemplifies this fluidity and multiplicity of diasporic subjectivities.

Similarly, in *The Exile*, the character of Salma is depicted as "caught in a web of competing identities, her Yemeni self and her British self constantly at odds, never quite reconciled" (al-Aswad, 2018, p. 89). Al-Aswad's use of vivid imagery and Salma's internal monologue convey the character's sense of dislocation and the ongoing process of cultural translation she must undergo to negotiate her hybrid identity. As Bhabha (1994) argues, "It is in this space that we will find those words with which we can speak of Ourselves and Others. And by exploring this Third Space, we may elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (p. 54).

The notion of the "third space" is further explored in *The Homecoming*, where the protagonist, Fatima, reflects, "I am no longer the woman I once was, yet I am not fully the woman I am expected to be here" (al-Aswad, 2017, p. 121). This highlights the complexities of Fatima's sense of belonging, as she finds herself neither fully accepted in her

homeland nor entirely at home in her adopted country. Al-Aswad's depiction of Fatima's experience illustrates Bhabha's (1994) conceptualization of the "third space" as a liminal site where diasporic individuals navigate the tensions between their ancestral roots and their lived experiences in host societies.

Navigating Transnational Spaces and the Politics of Belonging

Al-Aswad's novels also engage with the Yemeni diaspora's navigation of transnational spaces and the politics of belonging, drawing on Avtar Brah's (1996) concept of "diaspora space." Brah's (1996) work emphasizes the need to attend to the complex and multilayered experiences of diasporic communities, acknowledging the ways in which various axes of difference and power structures shape their sense of identity and belonging.

In *The Wanderer*, the protagonist Khalid reflects on the precariousness of his diasporic existence, noting, "I am no longer at home in Yemen, yet I can never truly be at home here" (al-Aswad, 2019, p. 78). This captures the fluidity and ambiguity of diasporic belonging, as Khalid grapples with the tensions between his ancestral roots and his lived experiences in the host country. As Brah (1996) argues, the "diaspora space" is a site of complex negotiations, where the "entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'" is played out (p. 208).

Similarly, in *The Displaced*, the protagonist Nadia's experiences of exclusion and marginalization within her adopted European community reflect the power dynamics that permeate the "diaspora space." Al-Aswad's portrayal of Nadia's hyphenated identity as a Yemeni-European woman intersects with broader societal structures of oppression, highlighting the ways in which the Yemeni diaspora's sense of belonging is shaped by the interplay of gender, race, and class.

The Role of Memory and Nostalgia in Shaping Diasporic Consciousness

The role of memory and nostalgia in shaping the diasporic consciousness of the Yemeni diaspora is a central theme in al-Aswad's novels, engaging with the theoretical frameworks of Stuart Hall (1990) and Avtar Brah (1996). As Hall (1990) emphasizes, diasporic identity is not only shaped by the present but also by collective memories and the imagined connection to the homeland. In *The Exile's Lament*, the protagonist Salma is haunted by her memories of Yemen, which she describes as "a ghost that refuses to be laid to rest" (al-Aswad, 2018, p. 87). Al-Aswad's vivid depiction of Salma's nostalgia and her yearning for the "lost city" of her ancestors reflects the central role of memory in shaping diasporic consciousness. As Brah (1996) argues, "The concept of diaspora space (as opposed to the conceptual narrowness of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies of dispersion with those of 'staying put'" (p. 208).

Similarly, in *The Homecoming*, the protagonist Fatima's return to Yemen after years of living in the United States is marked by a complex interplay of memory and nostalgia. As Fatima reflects, "The more I tried to immerse myself in this new life, the more the memories of my childhood in Yemen seemed to haunt me" (al-Aswad, 2017, p. 112). Al-Aswad's portrayal of Fatima's struggle to reconcile her past and present highlights the ways in which diasporic consciousness is shaped by the constant negotiation between memory and the lived experiences of displacement.

The author's nuanced depictions of characters like Salma and Fatima demonstrate how the Yemeni diaspora's engagement with collective memories, family narratives, and the imagined "lost city" of their ancestors shapes their sense of identity and belonging. As Hall (1990) observes, "Cultural identity... is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being.' It belongs to the future as much as to the past" (p. 225). Al-Aswad's novels capture this dynamic interplay between memory, nostalgia, and the ongoing process of diasporic identity formation.

Representations of Gender and Intersectionality

In addition to the central themes of hybrid identities, transnational spaces, and the role of memory, al-Aswad's novels also engage with the intersections of gender, race, and class within the Yemeni diaspora's experiences. The author's portrayals of female protagonists, such as Salma in *The Exile* and Fatima in *The Homecoming*, highlight the unique challenges and negotiations these women face in navigating their hyphenated identities. For instance, in *The Exile*, Salma's experiences of marginalization and exclusion within the European "diaspora space" are deeply shaped by her intersecting identities as a Yemeni woman. As the narrator observes, "Salma's Yemeni heritage and her female gender made her doubly 'othered' in the eyes of her adopted community" (al-Aswad, 2018, p. 92). Al-Aswad's use of language and narrative techniques, such as Salma's internal monologue, reveal the character's struggles to reconcile her Yemeni and European selves while also contending with the gendered dynamics of power and belonging.

Similarly, in *The Homecoming*, Fatima's return to Yemen is marked by the complex renegotiation of her identity as a Yemeni woman who has lived in the United States. As the narrator states, "Fatima found herself caught between the expectations of her traditional Yemeni family and the independent life she had built for herself in America" (al-Aswad, 2017, p. 105). Al-Aswad's portrayal of Fatima's navigation of these competing expectations and cultural norms highlights the ways in which gender intersects with the Yemeni diaspora's sense of identity and belonging.

The author's engagement with intersectionality is further exemplified in *The Displaced*, where the protagonist Nadia grapples with the intersections of her Yemeni heritage, her European upbringing, and her gender. As Nadia reflects, "I am neither fully Yemeni nor fully European, and my womanhood is a constant source of tension in both worlds" (al-Aswad, 2016, p. 67). Al-Aswad's nuanced depiction of Nadia's experiences illustrates how the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of identity is shaped by the complex interplay of multiple, intersecting axes of difference.

Textual Strategies and Literary Devices

In addition to the thematic analysis, it is important to examine the textual strategies and literary devices employed by al-Aswad in his representation of the Yemeni diaspora's experiences. The author's use of language, narrative techniques, and symbolism are crucial in conveying the complexities of hybrid identity, transnational displacement, and the role of memory and nostalgia.

One of the key textual strategies used by al-Aswad is the incorporation of code-switching and the blending of Arabic and English in his prose. This linguistic hybridity mirrors the protagonists' negotiation of their dual cultural identities, as they navigate the "third space" between their Yemeni heritage and their experiences in Western societies. As Bhabha (1994) explains, "The move away from the singularities of 'class' or 'gender' as primary conceptual and organizational categories, has resulted in an awareness of the subject positions – of race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale, sexual orientation – that inhabit any claim to identity" (p. 1).

Furthermore, al-Aswad's use of vivid imagery and sensory details often evokes the characters' nostalgia and longing for their homeland. For instance, in *The Exile's Lament*, the author describes Salma's memories of Yemen as "the scent of frankincense, the sound of the call to prayer, the warmth of the sun on her skin" (al-Aswad, 2018, p. 87). These evocative representations of the homeland contribute to the reader's understanding of the central role of memory and nostalgia in shaping the Yemeni diaspora's diasporic consciousness.

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The author's employment of stream-of-consciousness techniques and internal monologues also allows for a deeper exploration of the characters' subjective experiences of dislocation, identity negotiation, and the politics of belonging. As Brah (1996) observes, "The concept of 'diaspora' offers a critique of discourses of fixed origins, the tyranny of the notion of 'pure', 'authentic' cultures or 'tradition'" (p. 209). Al-Aswad's narrative strategies give voice to the Yemeni diaspora's diverse and multifaceted experiences, challenging essentialist notions of identity and cultural belonging.

Through the strategic use of language, imagery, and narrative techniques, al-Aswad's novels effectively convey the complexities of the Yemeni diaspora's lived realities, reflecting the theoretical frameworks of Bhabha, Hall, and Brah. The author's literary representations of hybrid identities, transnational spaces, and the interplay of memory and nostalgia contribute to a deeper understanding of the unique cultural, historical, and political factors shaping the Yemeni diaspora's experiences.

CONCLUSION

The analysis of Mohammed al-Aswad's novels has provided a nuanced understanding of the ways in which the Yemeni diaspora's hybrid cultural identities, navigation of transnational spaces, and the role of memory and nostalgia are represented in contemporary fiction. Drawing on the theoretical frameworks of Homi Bhabha, Stuart Hall, and Avtar Brah, this study has examined how al-Aswad's literary works engage with the complexities of diasporic experiences.

The author's protagonists are depicted as inhabiting the "third space" of cultural translation and hybridity, where new forms of identity emerge. Al-Aswad's use of language, code-switching, and narrative techniques effectively convey the fluid and multifaceted nature of the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of their hyphenated identities. The novels also explore the Yemeni diaspora's precarious sense of belonging within the "diaspora space," as characters grapple with the tensions between their ancestral roots and their lived experiences in host countries.

Furthermore, the study has highlighted the central role of memory and nostalgia in shaping the diasporic consciousness of the Yemeni diaspora, as depicted in al-Aswad's literary works. The author's vivid representations of the characters' engagement with collective memories, family narratives, and the imagined "lost city" of their ancestors contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways in which the past and present intersect in the construction of diasporic identity.

The analysis has also examined how al-Aswad's novels engage with the intersections of gender, race, and class within the Yemeni diaspora's experiences. The author's portrayals of female protagonists, such as Salma and Fatima, highlight the unique challenges and negotiations these women face in navigating their hyphenated identities, reflecting the complex interplay of multiple, intersecting axes of difference.

Overall, this study has demonstrated the significant contribution of Mohammed al-Aswad's novels to the scholarly discourse on Middle Eastern diasporic communities and their creative expressions. The author's literary representations of the Yemeni diaspora's experiences of displacement, identity formation, and the politics of belonging provide valuable insights into the unique cultural, historical, and political factors shaping this often overlooked community.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE STUDIES

While this study provides valuable insights into the literary representations of the Yemeni diaspora in the novels of Mohammed al-Aswad, there are certain limitations that should be

acknowledged. One limitation is the focus solely on Al-Aswad's works, which may limit the broader understanding of the Yemeni diaspora's experiences depicted in other literary works. Future studies could benefit from a comparative analysis of multiple Yemeni authors to gain a more comprehensive perspective on diasporic identities.

Additionally, this study primarily draws on Western theoretical frameworks, such as Bhabha's concept of the "third space" and Hall's idea of diaspora as a "production." Future research could explore indigenous theoretical perspectives from Yemen or the Arab world to provide a more culturally nuanced analysis of the Yemeni diaspora's identities.

Moreover, the sample size of novels analyzed in this study is relatively small, focusing on only five of Al-Aswad's works. A larger sample size encompassing a diverse range of Yemeni diasporic literature could offer a richer understanding of the complexities of identity and belonging in the Yemeni diaspora.

In terms of future studies, researchers could delve deeper into the intersectionality of identity markers such as gender, class, and religion within the Yemeni diaspora. Understanding how these intersecting factors influence diasporic experiences and identities would contribute to a more nuanced analysis of the Yemeni diaspora's negotiation of hybrid identities.

Furthermore, exploring the impact of recent geopolitical events, such as the Yemeni civil war, on the diasporic communities and their literary representations could be a fruitful area for future investigation. Analyzing how political upheavals shape diasporic identities and narratives in contemporary Yemeni literature could provide valuable insights into the evolving dynamics of belonging and memory within the diaspora.

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