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Trauma in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2007)

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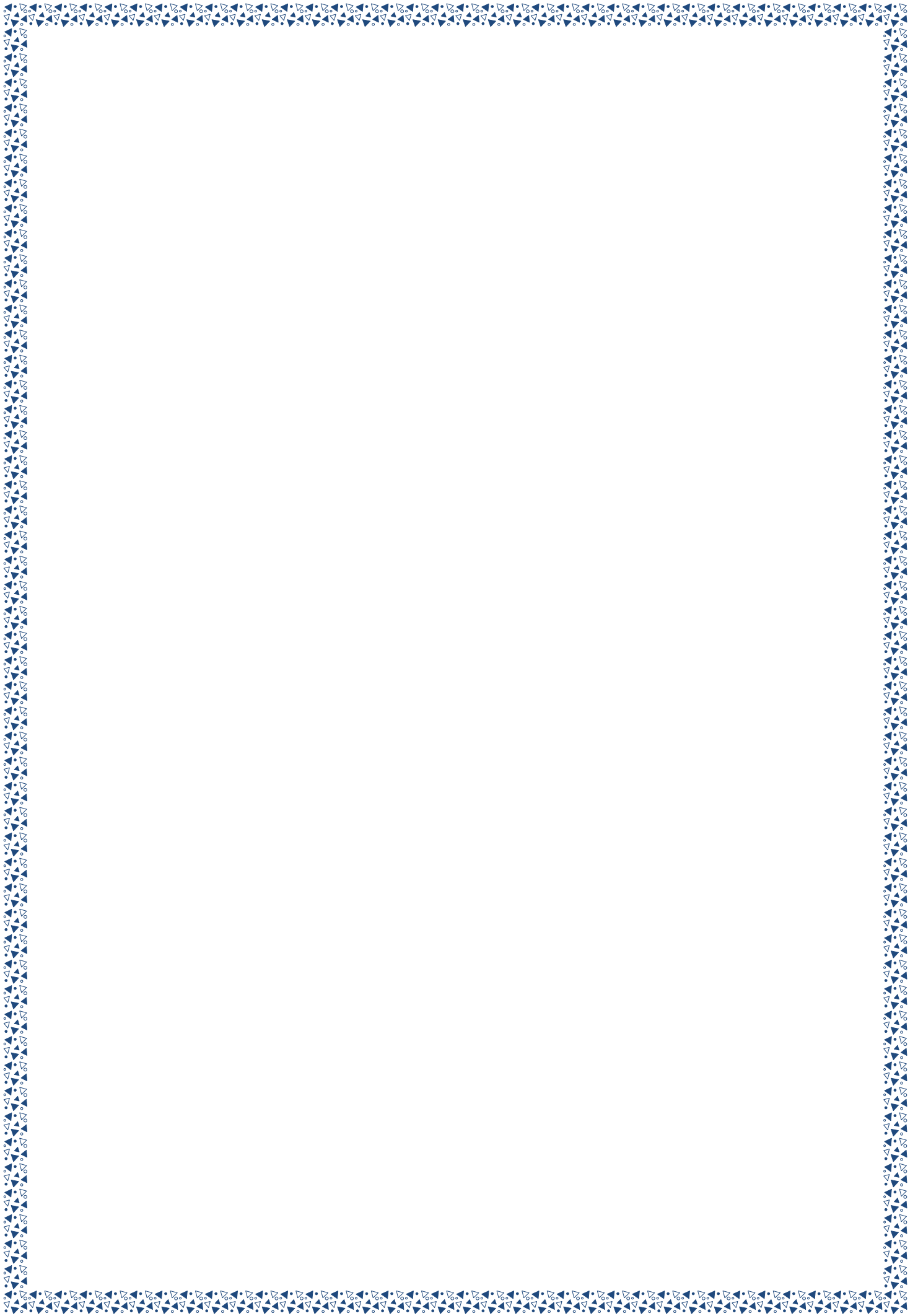
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This piece of research is dedicated to

All of my family members who have meant and continue to mean so much to me.

I express my gratitude goes to my paternal grandfather, whose unconditional love for me had no bounds and who instilled in me the importance of hard work.

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Abstract

Trauma literature is a fertile and plentiful field for investigation and study, especially when it comes to the works of post 9/11 novelists; Leila Halaby and Jess Walter. The present dissertation aims at analyzing the theme of Trauma in Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Walter's *The Zero* (2007). It focuses on the way the two novelists portray post 9/11 America in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001, as well as the repercussions on post 9/11 individuals. In order to reach my aim, I compared the two novels using Trauma Theory. The research emphasizes that the two fictitious narratives are products of the post 9/11 era. As a result, it portrays the Trauma of that period. Furthermore, it reveals the catastrophic impact of the terrorist attacks on both individuals and society. It also explains how people grappled with the images put on survivors after the deadliest attacks. Most notably, the current study places a strong emphasis on what it means to be an American or Arab-American after September 11, 2001, and how these events have affected people's psychological, personal, social sides. Finally, it explains the way the survivors sought to escape the personal and social Trauma of the post 9/11 world through escaping from their true selves and adopting new behaviours.

Key words: Trauma theory, 9/11, Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*, Jess Walter's *The Zero*, post 9/11 Fiction

I-GENERAL INTRODUCTION

It is nearly two decades that the world radically changed on September 11, 2001; known as the most traumatic event to remember. Undoubtedly, the reminders of that day are still constant, and the pain of the World Trade Center's bombing is still fresh for many years.¹ Thus, the post 9/11 fiction became worldly recognized. The role of this fiction is to provide an analysis of the American cases after the attacks. Since that day, there is a considerable turn at the psychological, political and social levels which pushed the 9/11 authors to mention. The novels' perspective-shifting brought a valuable addition to the bookshelf, that is to say; the indescribable truth of the 9/11 impact is now revealed in traumatic theory.²

The concept of Trauma sparked a great impact on literature. Post 9/11 fiction took on a new turn. The authors pause to make a portrait of Trauma revealing the survivors' experiences. Thus, novelists linked Trauma to literary texts through adopting a new style of writing, settings and subjects. They created a perfect capture of the suffering and Trauma after the incident. The meaning of the term Trauma stands for a traumatic shock involving a single event; it involves feelings and emotions. In other terms, it refers to a state of mind which results from an injury. Trauma is represented in literature for a particular purpose; that is for the people who want to externalize their painful experiences.³

Numerous authors focused on Trauma as a central theme of their novels. In fact, this is the main subject of my dissertation; the representation of Trauma in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2007). It is a study of the impact of Twin Tower fall on the survived population after the attacks. The 9/11 terror brought the two authors to look into the post traumatic stress disorder among the individuals traumatized by the disaster. The selected novels; captured the atmosphere of the period and the subjection

to terrorist events. Walter and Halaby seek to show the sacrifice of the 9/11's survivors under the image of their novels' characters.

In the context of my study, Trauma is linked to, and resulted from the 9/11 terrorist attacks; a deadliest operation in the United States, to which the American president; George W. Bush, referred as: "the worst day in America's history".⁴ Indeed, the attacks inflicted thousands of people enduring severe cruelties which brought America to decline. In fact, after the fall, the incidents altered the writers' words to be incongruous. In this sense, Richard Gray (2012) argues: "If there was one thing writers agreed about in response to 9/11, it was the failure of language; the terrorist attacks made the tools of their trade seem absurd."⁵ Effectively, the post 9/11 writers used fragmented and absurd language in order to stress on the seriousness of the incident and to demonstrate its impact on the post 9/11 world.

1. Review of Literature

Dealing with the aftermath of 9/11 attacks, *Once in a Promised Land* and *The Zero* garnered a lot of criticism. In reality, they were studied from different perspectives. For instance, Shihabudheen (2015) has dealt with Halaby's novel from a political standpoint. His analysis is based on the exploration of the attacks particularly the Arab-American experience in the wake of terrorist onslaughts. According to him, the novel carries a considerable amount of significance on the international political scenarios. In fact, the author emphasized on Halaby's concern about the shifting nature of the Arab-American community with reference to the fears, anxieties, obstacles, and the prodigious sense of insecurity experienced by the Arab-American Diaspora. In addition, the critic particularly analyzed the very title of Halaby's novel which tends to explain the undesirable disappointment of Arab-Americans

after their initial dream of freedom and peace in the United States of America. In this regard,

Shihabudheen (2015) says:

The title of the novel... is a cue to the novel's central theme of the disillusionment of Arab-Americans in the US, the country they had chosen, journeyed to, and made their own, dreaming of freedom, prosperity, and equality. The word 'once', used in the title is what beautifully subverts the vaunted virtues of the Promised Land, and underscores that they are now defunct.⁶

To put it in another way, the Arab descent's move for American immigration is a correct step to make, searching for peace and equality but the terror increased fear to the Diaspora.

Abdelhaq Jniyene (2016) also discusses Halaby's novel from a social perspective. In his research, Abdelhaq focuses on the social instability of the Arab-American community in the post 9/11 world; he claims:

Arab Americans were no exception; traumatized, as all other Americans, by the devastating event, they were also affected in specific ways, since the event weakened their social position and made their presence in the American ethnic map subject to question.⁷

Effectively, the disastrous incident marginalized the Arab-Americans thus they seek a sense belonging in the wide American multi-cultural society. In addition, Jniyene claims that Halaby put emphasis on the identity-hybridity dilemma reflected in the couple's unexpectedly unsecure experience in the aftermath of 9/11. He states:

Leila Halaby...mirrors in her novel the identity-hybridity dilemma an Arab American couple have faced in their host land... depict about their experience aftermath of 9/11, amplified by the effect of this tragedy, the discrimination, intolerance and other cultural boundaries which make their integration into the American society more doubtful.⁸

In other words, Jassim and Salwa immigration caused them to cross the boundaries of their native identity and culture making better condition and societal transformation establishing a mixture of the two influences. Nonetheless, because of their belongingness to a Muslim society, the 9/11 incident unhesitantly draws a humiliating and terrorist image of them.

Ulrike Tancke (2009), in his turn, also analyzes Halaby's novel from a traumatic perspective. He claimed that the novel is a reflection of the persistent 9/11 Trauma and the characters are a representation of the 9/11 people. In his study, Tancke analyses the collective side Trauma. Evidently, he put emphasis on the various changes and circumstances that were imposed in the wake of the attacks, as well as the conditions to which the society is compelled to obey. In fact, Tancke suggests that Halaby, makes reference to a collective traumatized consciousness. He compares the ancient pre-9/11 bewitching allure of the New-York City and the World Trade Center with the post 9/11 dreadful view. In this regard, he states:

Pre-9/11 we would simply have seen something that looks like a comet against a lightly city skyline, the shadow of a plane on the surface of a swimming pool, and a plane against a blue sky. These images hold an undeniable grasp on our imagination now, and this is one of the reasons why 9/11 is generally considered an event that has violently disrupted our perceptions of the world and had left an indelible mark on our collective consciousness.⁹

In this way, the World Trade Center's bombing left a terrifying traumatic impression on the imagination of the survived victims. As the fascinating images of the Ground Zero have been clouded by the smoke, the pictures of the 9/11 have been rooted in the victims' minds.

Using the same traumatic approach, Raouf Sellami analyses Halaby's text. In his research, the critic involves several aspects of Trauma that have been mentioned in the novel. The post 9/11 world remained traumatized from different sides. Thus, he shows the Arab-Americans' dream failure to give a concrete evidence of the novel's critique of post 9/11 period. This point is clarified through the critic's review of the Arab-Americans' dream in relation to the novel's characters. In one part of his analysis, Sellami referred to the couple's both personal and social Trauma involving Halaby's representation of Jassim and Salwa as optimist Muslims and Arabs who try to improve their conditions then shifts to describe how traumatizing their situation became after the fall of the towers. In fact, in the aftermath of the attacks, the former financially and socially stable life of Jassim and Salwa transformed into fright. This fact caused alarming traumatic manifestations at different levels. In this

perspective, Sellami says: “Because they constantly seek to draw a position for themselves, however they fail, encountering social rejection and exclusion, leading to their hybrid identities.”¹⁰ 9/11 brought the young couple to detention. Despite their efforts to maintain a strong social position and to get the fixed identity they always sought for, they have been rejected by society. Thus, they remain in struggle with their hybrid identities.

Similarly, criticism on *The Zero* has been carried under numerous perspectives. For instance, Leila Ahamad (2017) claims that *The Zero* is an absurd portrayal of the post 9/11 world since it is the description of all the side effects remained in the aftermath. Indeed, the critic states that in his work, Walter juxtaposes the effects of the incident with the protagonist’s image. In fact, according to her, the attacks influenced Remy’s personal life bearing traumatic experience from which he cannot escape. Remy witnessed the attacks first hand, and then suffers from a memory loss which enables him to remember who he is, what he believes in and why his nation is in such a paranoid shamble.

Moreover, the critic shifts to the political consequences. She states that Walter juxtaposes the novel with the public state of affairs comparing Remy’s psychological Trauma to the American political Trauma. Effectively, the wake of the 9/11 was a terrorist and suffering period to America, typically as it was to Brian, thus, Remy’s personal relations are allusions to the American domestic situations. In this sense, she claims:

His son pretends Remy died in 9/11, and Remy tries to form a relationship with April Kraft while she is in grief over the death of her husband and sister. The state of exception he explains is when “President Bush’s executive order of November 13, authorized the ‘indefinite detention’ and trial by ‘military commissions’ of noncitizens suspected of involvement in terrorist activities, which” is a paradigmatic example of the “immediately biopolitical significance of the state of exception,” wherein the law operates “by its own suspension”¹¹

The quote is a demonstration of the American affairs in the post 9/11 era. *The Zero* highlights great examples of closeness among Remy’s and the American connections’. Therefore, each of Remy’s relational steps has its equivalent in American political step.

She states further the social side of the novel. indeed, for her; *The zero* is a depiction of real experiences of the policemen right after the bombing contrary to what the American press reported. According to her, the novel tackles the policemen horrible trauma showed in Remy's terrifying experience after being neglected by the American media. Therefore, all Americans saluted and supported the policemen and fire-fighters sacrifice at Ground Zero.¹²

Another important critic of *The Zero* is Kristin A. Miller (2014). This latter focuses on the political Trauma and media coverage of the attacks in the United States. Thus, Miller tackles numerous contradictions on this basis. The American television news focused less on Al Qaeda despite the disastrous deaths and indirect costs; whereas in the novel, Kristine suggests that, it is a revelation of real experiences of the events. Miller further compares the media discourse and Walter's narrative concerning the description of the New York Police Department in that period. Moreover, Media reports were not explicitly focused on the terror of the attacks and totally neglected its impact on the policemen. Whereas in the novel, Kristine argues, several hidden details have been uncovered. *The Zero* is the revelation of media coverage of the terrorist organization and its traumatic effect on the police officers. Therefore, it portrayed the concerning effects that the victimized cops endured in and after the attacks.¹³

2. Issue and Working Hypothesis

From the previous review of literature, I can notice that the two novels have been carried under various perspectives, by different scholars, and from miscellaneous viewpoints. Yet, according to my best knowledge, no comparative study has been devoted to analyse the two novels. In other words, there is no depiction of neither the differential nor the similar points between the subjects matter. Therefore, these studies remain fragmentary. This is why I have undertaken the task of dealing with the issue of Trauma. Thus, the aim of my research is

to depict the enduring Trauma in the aftermath of the attacks as well as the terrible impact on the protagonists. More expressively, my study seeks to demonstrate how the two texts' central characters struggle with the post traumatic impact. Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to shed the light on the aspects that reflect Trauma in Halaby's and Walter's works.

As the dissertation falls within the trend of comparative literature, it attempts to expose the way in which the authors refer to the post 9/11 involving the psychological Post Traumatic Stress Disorder faced by the protagonists. It aims to externalize the shared affinities among the two novels i.e. the way in which each author symbolizes the conditions that the post 9/11 passed through. In general, Post Traumatic Stress Disorder is the most important category of psychopathology experienced by those traumatized. Effectively, thousands of individuals were directly exposed to the terrorist event thus tormented by traumatic experience.

In order to conduct my research effectively, I rely on the Trauma Theory and present its various features dealing with the study of Trauma in the two works. First, I provide evidence that the authors have been influenced by the impact of the attacks on post 9/11. Then, I depict the way the Trauma has affected the protagonists' individually and collectively. Furthermore, my research will carry an in-depth exploration of the results, going into the details about the meaning of Trauma and citing relevant sources to put them into context.

3. Method and Materials

3.1- Method

In order to achieve my aim, I will rely on Trauma Theory showing its importance in literary texts analysis. Additionally, I will borrow its major concepts as well as its important scopes to show the way the attacks traumatize the post 9/11 people. To begin with, the meaning of the term Trauma has been taken from a "stress or blow that may produce

disordered feeling or behavior”¹⁴ to a “state or condition produced by such a stress or blow”.¹⁵In other terms, the term Trauma stands for a mental attitude that results from an injury. It is a disastrous and damaging experience that Negin Heidarizadeh describes as an “experience lived belatedly at the level of its unspeakable truth which is revealed in psychoanalytic theory”.¹⁶ Trauma is about people who strive to express an emotional response to a terribly painful experience. These people’s reactions may be longer and include unpredictable emotions and even physical pain.

Trauma as a new phenomenon makes an interdisciplinary role for itself. It became a theory which represents an interdisciplinary school of theory of Western scholarship which includes branches of study in psychology, psychiatry, public health history and literature. The term Trauma Theory firstly appeared in Cathy Caruth’s *Unclaimed Experience* book, thus Caruth is recognized as a pioneer of Trauma Theory. Her book rewarded to be a remarkable text for reading Trauma. In her work, Caruth offers an original analysis on Trauma Theory that was able to form some criticism on Trauma. It is when *Unclaimed Experience* was firstly published that Trauma Studies became formally a declared field of study. Moreover, Caruth’s book offers an extensive framework for reading narratives of traumatic experience through psychoanalytic and literary theory. She poses a crucial question for the experience of Trauma in her introduction, she says; “is the Trauma the encounter with death or the ongoing experience of having survived it?”¹⁷ a question she then approached through analyzing the “double telling”¹⁸, an oscillation between a “crisis of death”¹⁹ and “the correlative crisis of life”²⁰; or, a confrontation of death and then of survival, which is elucidated by an intersection between the language of literature and psychoanalytic theory.²¹ Moreover, in the different chapters of her book, Caruth makes reference to different explicit sources of Trauma studies. She brought over Sigmund Freud’s, Marguerite Duras’ and Alain Resnais’s studies of Trauma. Significantly, Caruth insists on the close relationship between Trauma and

Literature. In particular, in order to demonstrate this closeness, Caruth relies on Freud reliance on literature in order to describe a traumatic experience. In this regard, she says:

If Freud turns to Literature to describe traumatic experience, it is because literature, like psychoanalysis, is interested in the complex relation between knowing and not knowing, and it is at this specific point at which knowing and not knowing intersects that the psychoanalytic theory of traumatic experience and the language of literature meet.²²

In other words, Caruth shows to what extent do Trauma studies explore the impact of Trauma on literature through analyzing its psychological significance, and the intersection existing between Trauma, Psychoanalysis and Literature. Thus, Caruth insists on the belatedly understanding of the events and listening to the indirect expressive experiences.

Trauma Theory emerged as a literary theory in the 1990's through cross fertilization between psychology and the humanities. It is relied on Freudian theory to develop a model of Trauma that imagines an extreme experience which challenges the limits of language and even ruptures meaning altogether, it indicates that suffering is unrepresentable.²³ The main goal of Trauma Theory is to understand literary texts from a traumatic viewpoint, and this through exploring their traumatic context. Effectively, it considers the role of experience, memory and place which function to portray Trauma's effects on both self and others.²⁴ It involves different models in the representation of Trauma novel.

Trauma novel is a descriptive expression standing for a work of fiction that conveys profound loss or fear on individual or collective levels. More precisely, it is the portrayal of the self transformation ignited by an external experience. This experience is often traumatic and terrifying, so it involves a new perception of the self and the world through illuminating the process of coming to terms with the dynamics of memory.²⁵ Also, Trauma novel involves also the interplay that occurs between language, experience, memory and place. Significantly, it considers the role of place which functions to represent Trauma's effects through metaphoric and material means. Moreover, it demonstrates how Trauma disrupts attachment

between self and others by carefully describing the place of Trauma because the physical environment offers the opportunity to examine both the individual and collective; cultural histories imbedded in landscapes that define the characters meaning of traumatic experience.²⁶

Trauma is a descriptive word which refers to a psychological or emotional reaction to physically or emotionally terrible event. Yet, not any person who experiences a terrible event will develop Trauma. Still, there are several types of Trauma. Some persons develop responses that resolve after few weeks, other take more long-term effects that may last a lifetime. However, a traumatized person can feel a range of emotions immediately after the terrible event.²⁷These emotions are the major features of Trauma.

The first and mostly known feature of Trauma is the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder. It describes psychiatric disorder that remains in people who have experienced a traumatic event such as a terrorist act making them threatened with death or serious injury.²⁸ PTSD can occur in all people despite their ethnicity, culture and at any age. People with PTSD have disturbing thoughts and feelings in relation to their terrible experience. This may last too long after the happening of the traumatic event. Moreover, they also may relive the shocking moment through flashbacks and nightmares. Post Traumatic Stress Disordered person carries several symptoms. Effectively, they may feel a sudden sadness and fear. Too, they are estranged and alienated from others especially the ones who make them remember the traumatic event. More, they may have strongly terrible reactions to loud noises and accidental touch.²⁹

To add, depression ranks among the important features of Trauma; it is a form of extreme sadness, a disorder that affects both brain and body, including cognition, behaviour, the immune system and the peripheral nervous system. Depression may be mild or extremely severe depending on the intensity of the Traumatic event. A depressive person carries symptoms as loss of pleasure and interests in life or activities that that person previously

enjoyed, feeling of inferiority, guilt, worthlessness, despair and self-hatred. Depressive individuals also have intense self-criticism and suicidal ideas. Fatigue, lethargy, sleep disruption are also symptoms associated with depression.³⁰

Additionally, memory loss or Amnesia is another important feature of Trauma, it is the inability to remember new events or recall past memories. It is a traumatic symptom that can be caused by both physical Trauma; brain injury or psychological trauma; traumatic events. A stressful or traumatic event minimizes or blocks out the traumatized person's memories.³¹

Moreover, Melancholia is another feature of Trauma. It is a major depressive disorder that is characterized by a profound presentation of a severe traumatic experience. It causes a complete loss of pleasure, emptiness and despair, a distinct quality of depressed mood, slowing of normal movement as well as a remarkable anorexia; an abnormal weight gain or loss.³² However, the traumatic reactions are not on the psychological level only. Trauma may also affect the traumatized individual's physic. Some symptoms are common among people with Trauma and can include headache, back pain and muscular pain. These symptoms are said to be linked to depression.³³

The appropriateness of the Trauma Theory to my research is highlighted by the fact that Trauma theorists claim that literature cannot be isolated from Trauma and that a literary work should be studied within its traumatic context. The 9/11 shock brought several authors to diversify the concepts of their works. After the 9/11 experience, Halaby and Walter adopted a new dimension in order to express their feeling towards the impact of the 9/11 world, this is what is called the fiction of terror; a literary genre which aims to describe a feeling of dread and anticipation that precedes a traumatic experience.

Now, relying on Trauma Theory, I will include its two important types; individual and collective Trauma, in order to demonstrate the protagonists' profound and deep traumatic

impact in the wake of attacks. They are two concepts which stand as a remaining effect after a terrible incident. Individual Trauma is the impact of the attacks on the survived people after the attacks. It is the persistent mental, personal, health, relational impact that post 9/11 people endured because of their exposure to the World Trade Center terrorist attacks. Whereas the collective Trauma highlights the cultural, social, political as well as the economic consequences existing in the aftermath of the bombing.

3.2- Materials

a) Summary of Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land*:

Once in a Promised Land (2007) depicts the shift that occurred after the 9/11 attacks, and the deep impact left on the post 9/11 America. Indeed, the main protagonists of the novel, Jassim and Salwa, are the main characters who suffer from Trauma in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks, though it influences their relations in different ways. As a matter of fact, after the bombing, the young couple has been shattered by traumatic breakdown.

In her novel, Halaby narrates the story of a young couple named Jassim and Salwa. Jassim; is a hydrologist specializing in rainwater harvesting who strives to make water accessible to all people and Salwa is a banker and a part-time realtor grappling to put down roots in an inhospitable climate. Optimistically, this couple left their native home-land seeking for a flourished life attainable to opportunities and freedom. In fact, the protagonists had left the deserts of Jordan for those of Arizona. Despite the fact that the couple live far from the Ground Zero, their life has been disturbed by the attacks. Basically, the couple thought of getting an untroubled peaceful life, still, they could not escape the marginalization of their new area, a fact to become suspicion after the attacks.

The newly-married couple's comfortable life started to be disturbed from the very beginning of the novel when Salwa and Jassim lied to each other. Salwa lied to Jassim about

her broodiness; she claimed not to want children but soon becomes pregnant against her husband's wishes then decided to lose the baby. Jassim in his turn lies to Salwa when he killed a teenager boy in a car accident but did not actually confess his death to his wife. As their married life is henceforth characterized by anguish, Salwa's attention is drawn into a drug-dealer named Jake. Whereas, Jassim where shifted to a waitress named Penny. Thereafter, Jassim, who has an access to the city's water supply, definitely loses his work after an FBI investigation.

b) Summary of Jess Walter's *The Zero*:

The Zero is a novel written by Jess Walter, published in 2006. Throughout his novel, Walter stresses on the traumatic effects of the explosion of the World Trade Center on the post 9/11 America. The novel opens up five days after the 9/11 terrorist attack. It came up as a description of the life of a police officer right after the incident. In fact, Brian Remy's life; the novel's protagonist, has been so affected that he is unable to restore his old self. Walter, in his novel, strives to report the post 9/11 people's struggle to reinstate their former unaffected life before the bombing of the World Trade Center.

In his literary work, Walter tells a story of a police officer named Brian Remy. Remy is portrayed as the first responder to the attack in the World Trade Center. Thus, he has saved several lives but left fragmented from his old self after the 9/11. Throughout the novel, Brian Remy sought to remember who he is and what he believes in. But, he must bring over his old memories. The protagonist's perception of the world has been totally changed that he does not remember some scenes he passed through. Due to his lost memory, Remy could not remember a smallest thing and could not adapt his old life with the new one.

The novel also introduces Egdar Remy; Brian Remy's son. He seems to be unfazed to tell the truth to his father and more importantly, he mourns the death of his ascendant who is

not actually dead but considered as so because the traumatic shock cost his memory. Although Brian Remy helps to save lives, to pulled dead and living bodies out of the rubble and put out fires, he gradually loses swaths of his memory which made his feel as being dead. The hero cop loses huge parts from himself and end up desiring to shoot himself in the head.

4- Methodological Outline

Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to compare Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Jess Walter's *The Zero* (2007). In doing so, I rely on Trauma Theory which studies post 9/11 America in the two novels to provide evidence that the two authors are influenced by the post 9/11 Trauma. Also, I borrow Trauma theory in order to provide a demonstration of the post 9/11 Trauma in the two novels, that is to say; to show how the attacks' impact is depicted in Halaby's and Walter's narratives. To add, my analysis gives a detailed portrayal of post 9/11 people's endurance and of the way they are subjugated to the imposed post 9/11 life.

My dissertation will follow the IMRAD method. The study is divided into an introduction in which I introduce the topic of my study. Then, I review some of the literary critics written on the novels from various perspectives. After this, I move to the method section in which I present Trauma Theory and its different aspects and sub-aspects. Finally, I step to the results section in which I focus on the findings of my research. This discussion will be divided into two chapters in which I provide an analysis of the way the authors portray post 9/11 America relying on Trauma Theory. The first chapter will deal the individual dimension of Trauma reporting how the protagonists' psychological and personal life is severely influenced by the post attacks. The second chapter will deal with the collective perspective of Trauma portraying the American and Arab-American societies struggle after the bombing.

Endnotes

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¹³Kristine A. Miller, *Reading and Writing the Post-9/11 Cop: Trauma, Personal Testimony, and Jess Walter's The Zero* (Arizona: University of Arizona, 2014), 30. Accessed in: file:///D:/r%C3%A9sum%C3%A9s/MEMOIRE/critics/Project%20MUSE%20-%20Reading%20and%20Writing%20the%20Post-9%2011%20Cop%20Trauma,%20Personal%20Testimony,%20and%20Jess%20Walter%E2%80%99s%20The%20Zero_i.html on May 2021.

¹⁴ Kai T. Erikson, *Notes on Trauma Theory and Community* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995), 184.

¹⁵Ibid.

¹⁶Negin Heidarizadeha, *The Significant Role of Trauma in Literature and Psychoanalysis* (Iran, Department of English, 2014), 789.

¹⁷Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.

¹⁸Ibid.

¹⁹Ibid.

²⁰Ibid.

²¹Brittany Hirth, *Restricted Access Unexplained Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History by Cathy Caruth* (Canada, 2018), 345.

²²Cathy Caruth, *Unclaimed Experience Trauma, Narrative, and History* (Baltimore and London: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 3.

²³Nasrullah Mambrol, *Trauma Studies* (Literariness, 2019).

²⁴Michelle Balaev, *Trends in Literary Trauma Theory* (Manitoba: Mosaic, 2008), 150.

²⁵Ibid.

²⁶Ibid.

²⁷Jayne Lonard, *What Is Trauma? What to Know* (United Kingdom: Heathline Media , 2020).

²⁸American Psychiatric Association, *What Is PTSD* (Washington, 2021). Accessed in: <https://www.psychiatry.org/patients-families/ptsd/what-is-ptsd?fbclid=IwAR2Qg5bvOTInC88A-yE5UkWQ9OR51IDKU9eP3WHXbiJiT0WSgbXcSgksuy8> on June: 2021 at 13:00.

²⁹Ibid.

³⁰Mark Widdowson, *Depression A Litratione Review on Diagnosis, Subtypes, Patterns of Recovery, and Psychotherapeutic Models* (United Kingdom: Transactional Analysis Journal, 2011), p1.

³¹Cleveland Clinic, *Amnesia: Types, Tests, Diagnosis, Symptoms and Causes* (Ohio, 2020).

³²Marcia Purse, *An Overview of Melancholic Depression* (Dotdach, 2021).

³³Mark Widdowson, *Depression A Litratione Review on Diagnosis, Subtypes, Patterns of Recovery, and Psychotherapeutic Models* (United Kingdom: Transactional Analysis Journal, 2011), p352.

II- RESULTS

Throughout this dissertation, I focus on the study of Trauma theory and its sub-features all in illustrating the individual and collective traumatic experiences of the characters in the two novels. The present dissertation depicts how the social circumstances of the 9/11 are reflected in the narratives. Besides, it describes how individuals repress their desires and unconsciously hide their anxious feeling and replace them with opposite and pleasant ones. Moreover, it demonstrates the way media affect post 9/11 societies. Finally, It depicts the way the characters flee the Trauma and reality and attempting to adopt new behaviours.

I have come to the findings that both narratives depict the post 9/11 people as traumatized, alienated and psychologically un-rested. Indeed, this is all the product of the traumatic and social impact of the attacks by which the two authors are influenced and later wrote in their works. Furthermore, the novels depict the characters' suffering from traumatic depression, identity crisis, post social Trauma and media coverage, all of which contribute to their psychological distress and as a result of the post-September 11th American and Arab-American societies. In fact, the characters buried all their past and unwanted memories, particularly that of the attacks, and do not externalize what they experienced in the bombing. At last, in both novels, the characters seek strategy to get rid of post traumatic depression, social oppression and prejudice by hiding their true identities and adopting new behaviours in order to fit the norms of the post 9/11 American and Arab-American societies.

III- DISCUSSION

Chapter One: Individual Trauma in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*.

The following chapter will discuss the individual dimension of Trauma in Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Walter's *The Zero*. Indeed, individual Trauma is a psychological response from circumstances deemed as harmful having negative impacts on individual's mental and physical health.¹ However, the two famous narratives provide a literary voice that expresses post 9/11 individuals' suffering. They share the same leaning but different plot, time, place and events which describe the ongoing of the post 9/11 individuals in the aftermath of the bombing. Therefore, I intend to analyze the way in which the two novelists depict the individual Trauma of September, 11 on the post 9/11 individuals. In this sense, I will focus my study on a traumatic approach which asserts that Trauma theory is applicable to individuals and influential within literary criticism in recent decades.²

Trauma is a significant theme in Halaby's and Walter's novels. Effectively, the novelists tell a tale through the traumatized character's narration.³ Past Trauma and traumatic memories engage serious long-term consequences in the life of the characters. Catastrophic events like terrorism, war, violence and insecurity cause Trauma.⁴ People who are individually traumatized are not only psychologically or psychoanalytically traumatized but react differently to a terrorizing situation.⁵For this reason, they may be traumatized at personal, psychological and mental levels.

In their novels, Halaby and Walter reflect the circumstances of the post 9/11 people through tackling several issues. Almost all the issues analyzed in the two novels are sub-aspects of Trauma. The concept of Trauma attracted a great deal of interest in literary studies. Thus, Halaby's and Walter's post 9/11 fictional novels are concrete proofs of the genesis and

growth of literary Trauma theory and the evolution of the concept 'Trauma' in relation to literary studies.⁶ In this sense, one can understand that the core of Trauma theory is to show a literary work's strong influence by the traumatic circumstances of its era. So, it aims to demonstrate the great interest of Trauma in literary studies and to prove that a literary work is associated with its traumatic context especially when it is influenced by the conditions of the time of its production.

Halaby's novel ranks among the first edited novels on post 9/11 tragic outcome. In this sense, Mudasir A. Bhar confirms that: "*Once in a Promised Land* is the first attempt by an Arab-American novelist to represent the repercussions of 9/11 on Arab-Americans."⁷ Therefore, it reports the perplex level of hardship endured by 9/11 individuals. He adds: "The novel goes beyond representing the consequences on Arabs in the post 9/11 and skilfully investigates the psychological ... dimensions of the experiences of Arab-Americans."⁸ Of course, the novel examines the psychological impact of the Twin Tower fall on Salwa and Jassim. Moreover, "*Once in a Promised Land* basically revolves around a crumbling marriage of an Arab-American couple (Salwa and Jassim) in the post 9/11 chaotic period."⁹ In other words, the post 9/11 Trauma brought Jassim and Salwa's marriage to reach a disintegrating level.

On the other hand, Walter's *The Zero* is a recent American novel. The narrative, "whose protagonists are the survivors in New York City after the World Trade Center's fall, succeeded to make after all in making readers feel what it was to be alive in September, 2001."¹⁰ Effectively, Walter's novel provides a current depiction of the Americans' post 9/11 individual Trauma after the Twin Tower's fall and the policemen experiences and individual suffering. For that, the audience of the novel perceives exactly the traumatic endurance of post 9/11 survivors.

Therefore, Halaby's and Walter's novels aim to significantly familiarize the post 9/11 individual Trauma with their novels' protagonists' terrible experience all in portraying the endured shock during and after the attacks. The authors allow us to listen to the voices of the Americans and Arab-Americans. Through their novels' protagonists; Jassim, Salwa Haddad and Brian Remy, the novelists take into account real-life individual reactions of the survivors of the attacks. For this reason, my analysis will explore two sub-aspects of individual Trauma; depression and identity loss from the American and Arab-American perspectives.

a. Depression in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*:

The World Trade Center's bombing, known under the name of 9/11 terrorist attacks, is a traumatic event. It affected both the American and Arab-American individuals. These individuals endured the post traumatic impact of the attacks. Indeed, in the aftermath of the bombing, the survivors develop serious depression. From one side, the Arab-Americans suffer from depression because of their subjection to prejudice in the wake of the attacks, from another side, Americans faced a severe post traumatic depression for witnessing America's traumatic incident. In this perspective, Te hinga Haoura claims that; emotional and psychological Trauma can be caused by both one-off and ongoing events. A one-off event would be something like an attack. Ongoing Trauma can result from relentless stressful events. Whether you are; personally involved in, witness a traumatic event, or you are a rescue worker, you might experience emotional responses that interfere with your daily life and lead to depression and anxiety.¹¹ This is highlighted in Halaby novel when the Arab-American couple remains depressed as a result of being stressed by the impact of the 9/11 on their lives. On the other hand, Walter shows it through the depiction of the police officer's post traumatic depression due to his involvement in the terrorist attacks.

Moreover, Halaby's and Walter's novels' protagonists are immediately familiarized with the discourse that describes post 9/11 major depressive disorder. In her article; *Risk Factors for Depression and Posttraumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD)*, Wahiba Abu-Ras explains:

The current literature pertaining to depression, anxiety, and fear in the face of Trauma suggests that the effects of Trauma on individuals may include physical ... psychological and spiritual... dimensions...Trauma can contribute to the manifestation of intense feelings of vulnerability, anger, depression, physical illness and increased difficulty in interpersonal relations...the definition of traumatic event is any incident that involves "actual or threatened death or serious injury; or a threat to a physical integrity of self and others ... the person's response involves intense fear, helplessness or horror... and a disorder that could result in long-term psychological difficulties.¹²

Abu-Ras chiefly draws attention to the link existing between literature and Trauma. She then put emphasis on the individual's unstable psychology in the post traumatic events. according to her, a person who experiences a horrific incident will develop long-term psychological issues among them depression. Yet, it is a psychological state which appears differently in a traumatized individual.

In Halaby's post 9/11 novel; *Once in a Promised Land*, depression is manifested through sadness, despair and psychological dysfunctions which appear differently in the main characters; Jassim and Salwa. In this perspective, the theorist Meaghan L O'Donnell presumes that: "Major depression occur frequently following traumatic exposure...it raises as a disorder in the aftermath of Trauma."¹³ Halaby's novel depicts the attacks as the main cause that leads to the protagonists' melancholic behaviour, it is strongly noticed in Jassim and Salwa who can be regarded as the characters' who endure depression in the novel. This is clearly shown in the narrative when the young couple remained depressed, hopeless and despaired because their wish became too far to be realized after a series of traumatizing events.

Moreover, in Halaby's novel, loss, disillusionment, and shattered psychology by which the protagonists' depression is characterized, are also symptoms of repression being a

major factor of Psychoanalysis. It is defined by Sigmund Freud, the founding father of Psychoanalysis, as an operation whereby the subject repels, or confines to the unconscious a desire that cannot be satisfied because of the requirements of reality or of the conscience.¹⁴ In fact, the newly married couple is originally Palestinian. Optimistically, they migrated from Jordan to America with a big dream in their mind, that is; the American Dream. Jassim and Salwa believed that America is a land of miracles, where everything is possible. However, with the bombing of the Twin Towers, Jassim and Salwa drive back their desires being aware that their dreams cannot be realized. Even though they succeeded to get a prosperous life in a short time after their immigration but this did not last long. As a result, their psychological state ruined and devastated.

In this sense, Shihabudheen claims: “the feeling that they can no longer occupy ... a successful ... space in America eventually overwhelms them.”¹⁵ In other words, Salwa and Jassim are rejected and marginalized which resulted in an extreme depression. This was the feeling of all the Arab-American individuals who lived the post 9/11 period in America. In this perspective, Mona Amer; an Arab-American Muslim being traumatized by the terror attacks, affirms that the Arab-Americans experienced a significantly high level of depression and anxiety in the post September-11.¹⁶

Similarly, Like Halaby, Walter, also portrays depression in his post 9/11 novel; *The Zero*. The 9/11 terrorist attacks changed the lives of the American people forever. As a matter of fact, post 9/11 Americans suffered from a psychological depression. In the aftermath of the World Trade Center’s bombing, individuals felt depressed and dejected. Of course, according to Hartig and Doherty:

following the attacks ... a sizable majority of adults said they fell depressed, nearly half had difficulty concentrating and a third said they had trouble sleeping... they got most of the their news about the attacks from television... and the televised images of death and destruction had a powerful impact. Around nine-in-ten

Americans agreed with the statement, “I feel sad when watching TV coverage of the terrorist attacks.” A sizable majority also found it frightening to watch- but most did so anyway.¹⁷

In other words, Americans grieved for their country being under attacks, some of them got even frightened by the images shown in Media and remained sad and depressed thereafter. Another majority of American Individuals, particularly the ones who experienced the attacks directly, suffer from lasting psychological troubles. In this respect, Robert Brackbill reports that among people who had a closer experience of the disaster, such as occupants of the buildings, or rescue and recovery workers’ rates of depression are high.¹⁸ In addition, America was no longer the same, as a half of post 9/11 adults said: the country “had changed in a major way.”¹⁹ Evidently, after the attacks, America bounded down by sadness and fear widespread. The impact of the September, 11 deadliest attacks were deeply felt and slow to dissipate.²⁰

Indeed, in his novel, Walter gives a clear picture of the mood that covered the post 9/11 individual Trauma. Americans were severely depressed and disordered during that period. Certainly, the consequences of the events are characterized in the protagonist’s psychological suffering. In *The Zero*, Walter portrays the depressed life of Brian Remy, a police officer being one of the survivors of the attacks. Indeed, in the very beginning of the novel, Walter describes Brian Remy’s perception of the disaster. He provides a portrayal of the tragic scenes shortly after the 9/11 scenes. Remy woke up in his apartment in New York and wonders why his country is in a chaotic shamble. Indeed, the police officer comes in the aftermath of the bombing with a gun in his hand and he has apparently shot himself in the head; a fact he does not remember doing. Therefore, by this illustration, Walter reports that the protagonist suffers from depression that prevents him to act and react properly.

Additionally, Remy is not the only character whose psychology is shattered by 9/11 bombing, but his partner Paul Guterak too. Since both Remy and Paul are police officers, the

two men experienced the post 9/11 Trauma in equal ways. In fact, depression is manifested in Guterak through disillusionment and psychological dysfunctions which appear in the character. These psychological troubles are the result of reaction formation being one of the key concepts of psychoanalysis.²¹ It is defined by Sigmund Freud; as defence mechanism involving a fixation in consciousness of an idea, affect or desire that is opposite to a feared unconscious impulse.²² Thus, individuals unconsciously deny and replace an unwanted feeling in their consciousness with the opposite. So they hide them in their unconscious to forget about them. However, this results in depression and anxiety.

As far as *The Zero* is concerned, reaction formation is the key factor that leads to strange behaviour. It is strongly noticed in the narrative when the policemen drove off and Paul is talking out loud weird things he should not mention, like the expression of his extreme happiness and his desire to be a celebrity and what “it was like to be famous”²³, he states: “to have people desperately reflected in the glow of your passing”.²⁴ In other terms, Guterak externalizes his desire to be famous rather than traumatized by the tragic views of the attacks. He scrambled to save the lives of the seriously injured people. Therefore, the cop was severely shocked witnessing the traumatic scenes. Depressed, he reacted differently to the Bombing. In fact, to conceal his contribution in pulling out dead people out of the rubble, the policeman identifies himself a celebrity.

However, People experiencing depression can feel anxious for years after Trauma. Yet, this might affect their interpersonal relationships. In this perspective, Mark Widdowson, in his article *Depression: a Literature Review on Diagnosis, Subtypes, Patterns of Recovery and Psychotherapeutic Models*, States that; Depression is not just a form of extreme sadness, unlike a passing sad mood, depression is a disorder because of its interference with an individual’s ordinary functioning in work and relationships and affects their behavior.²⁵ To put it simple, depression is different from the feeling of sadness; a depressed person raises

extreme emotions of anxiety, negativity and loneliness. Eventually, it causes an overwhelming detachment that hinders any relationship. This is the case with the post 9/11 individuals being portrayed in Halaby's novel in the aftermath of the tragic attacks. Since they endured the post 9/11 traumatic depression, their interpersonal relations were seriously affected.

Halaby's depiction of depression in *Once in a Promised Land* goes deeper since she demonstrates how it affected the newly-married couple's relationship. In fact, after the terrorist attacks, Salwa and Jassim's formerly perfect marriage suffers from a series of tragic events. The attacks rendered the couple less affectionate to each other. Moreover, the feeling of severe anxiety and fear lowered attention among the two partners. In this respect, Sellami affirms that: "America is no longer the Promised Land, nor a country to celebrate the Arab-American couple's marriage".²⁶ The young couple cannot get the life they sought for in America. Their marriage remained boring and beyond hope. As a result, the post 9/11 tensions affected the couple's individual behaviour. Jassim and Salwa unconsciously let off their good conduct and adopted a worst attitude toward each other.

Moreover, traumatic tensions do not seem to stop for the young Arab-American couple, this fact raises psychological problems and fear in Salwa. She does not really worry about herself or her partner but she is afraid that if she gives birth to a child, it will be as marginalized the way she and her husband are. Thus, a feeling of fear haunted her. She knows that America was no more the 'Promised Land'; neither for her, nor for her small family. She claims "It is different now"²⁷ she thinks: "If I am pregnant, I cannot raise my child here, away from everything I know. If I am pregnant"²⁸ Her feel of dislocation is daily increasing and her will to become pregnant is reducing. It is not safe to let her baby live in a fully anti-Arab racist society. In addition, shortly after the Twin Towers bombing, Salwa's family is also living a tough moment, they called her several times to make sure that she and Jassim

were secured, even if they live a bit far from Arizona. Salwa reassures her family but prefers to express herself to her friend Randa to whom she confesses “how horrible it was and how she feared for the repercussion toward Arabs in this country”.²⁹

Moreover, shortly after the attacks, Salwa and Jassim’s marriage knows a set of cover-ups and lies. Since the American after-life in the wake of 9/11 is not perceived as wanted, and the American dream is out of reach, their successful and professional life remains unfruitful and worrying. Therefore, the Arab-American conjugal relation begins to disintegrate when they both start to lie and misbehave to each other. This fact is clearly highlighted in the novel when Salwa stops using contraceptives, thus; got pregnant against her husband’s wish then continues to keep it secret when she miscarries; even though she knows that her husband; Jassim, does not want to have a baby in an Anti Arab environment.³⁰

Furthermore, in depression, Salwa gets attracted to an untrustworthy white-American banker. Analyzing Salwa’s new love, Raouf Sellami comments: “it is within these circumstances that Salwa feels a void to be filled physically, emotionally, and ethnically.”³¹ He adds: “She gets attracted to a young white American part time banker, and a professionally drugs dealer. Jake, whom Salwa always considers as an aimless American adolescent and whom she has never thought that she would date one day.”³² On the other hand, Jake sees her as following:

Mature without seeming old. This mixed with her foreignness made her sophisticated exotic and married. The challenge of this combination turned him on, and he wondered if all Arab women had this allure (the 47 physical one and the shadow of a man behind them) and if that was why they veiled themselves.³³

In other terms, the psychological pressure of the 9/11 tragic event rose relational tensions among Salwa and Jassim. Therefore, it drove Salwa to get a disorderly conduct; that is, to get attracted to other men and let off her husband.

Depression also causes Jassim to misbehave against Salwa's awareness. The psychological stress, that the Post 9/11 tragic bombing left, gives rise to relation disintegration and dishonesty among Jassim and Salwa. The two partners are being estranged from each other. This is portrayed in Halaby's novel when Salwa's husband gets involved in an affair and hides a tragic accident in which a teenager boy is killed. In fact, Jassim refuses to tell his tormented wife about this incident because she is already depressed and anxious. However, Jassim watching Salwa in such a badly psychological state renders him hopeless and helpless.

Walter also portrays the way post traumatic depression influence Brian Remy's relations. In fact, due to the impact of 9/11 on Brian Remy, the cop reaches a shaky stage of depression. Indeed, the police officer finds himself disoriented in a foreign world where nothing makes sense. In addition, he suffers from traumatic and unstable psychological attitudes towards his surroundings; thus, became haunted with fear and loneliness. As a result, his relations are badly affected. In fact, Brian Remy is no more a caring nor an existing father. More expressively, in the wake of the incident, the father-son relation remained split because of Remy's severe depression. In addition, Walter portrays Remy as being displaced from his former environment to another where he cannot remember getting himself into. Remy seems not able to return to his other self lost in the bombing. As a result, his son; Edgar, is portrayed in *The Zero* wearing a black armband and pretends his father is dead in the attacks.

It is contended in Abu-Ras's article that individuals who have already experienced Trauma; such as survivors of war, are more vulnerable to severe stress reactions following a traumatic event. These individuals may be at greater risk for mental health problems, including depression and anxiety.³⁴ By the way of explanation, the survivors of the terrifying attacks are the ones who are likely to develop a post traumatic depression. This is demonstrated in the text, when the novelist portrays the disordered and inarticulate Brian Remy's symbolic representation of post 9/11 individual Trauma. In fact, Remy was 'lying on

his side, panning across a fuzzy line of carpet fiber³⁵ and realizing that he must have committed suicide. Since Remy attempts to commit suicide which is one of the symptoms of depression, this scene, indicates that Brian Remy suffers from a post 9/11 depression.

Furthermore, struggling with a shattered psychology, the post 9/11 policeman remained alienated from his former self in the wake of 9/11. Remy wakes up few days after the terrorist attacks, surrounded by horrifying views and is, apparently, so traumatized and depressed that he is unable to communicate. This is mentioned in the novel when Mrs, Lubach; Brian Remy's landlady, cannot stop asking him if he "heard a bang"³⁶ and whether "everything is okay"³⁷ but Walter stated that; Remy is, "capable of nothing but lying among the crumbs"³⁸. The policeman is deteriorated from his post 9/11 Trauma, thus, he cannot figure out precisely who was the girl that was talking to him. Too, the protagonist is even incapable to utter a meaningful sentence, his utterances are small, sometimes fragmented and non-complete with a small and a tinny voice.³⁹ These details report exactly the experiences of post 9/11 survivors whose psychological state is deteriorated.

Besides, Kristine A. Miller likewise studies the traumatic experience of the 9/11 attacks on the American individuals and the influence that these attacks left on their individual lives including the police officer's incarnation of the post 9/11 atmosphere in Walter's narrative. She states: "Remy symbolically represents America's post-9/11 trauma"⁴⁰. Indeed, the bombing has undoubtedly marked the protagonist's personal life. Therefore, as the post 9/11 survivors', Remy's psychology has been destabilized. Remy, who has been in the Ground Zero during the explosion, experienced the attacks in the immediate moment. As a result, his psychology was fully inclined to depression that it affected his daily functioning. In this perspective, Abu-Ras explains that: "posttraumatic symptoms generation ongoing insecurity and fear of exposure to danger or the threat of danger, which may impede daily functioning."⁴¹ This is displayed in the novel through the decrease of the cop's level of

functioning in every day of his new life; Remy remained with lack of motivation and general disinterest in the post 9/11 world. Undoubtedly, the policeman's post-traumatic stress disorder is a concrete embodiment of post 9/11 individuals.

Besides, Americans became psychologically disturbed and nervous by the events. In Walter's narrative, Policeman and fire-fighters are shell-chocked. The character that reflects the psychological traumatic aftermath of 9/11 is Brian Remy. This hero cop is traumatized because of all the horror he has experienced during the attacks. He feels scared and traumatized. This is represented in the novel when Brian Remy presented himself as "a police"⁴² with a small voice when his landlady asked to "call the police"⁴³ right after the bombing. In this sense, Becky Ohlsen depicted Remy as: "the tough guy finds himself in foreign surroundings, but he hasn't moved anywhere. It is the world that has changed or maybe his perception of the world".⁴⁴ Significantly, this was the feeling of all the 9/11 first-responders, policemen and fire-fighters in the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks.

Moreover, the novel starts five days after September 11, 2001; it is precisely the day when the terrorist organization Al-Qaeda exploded the world Trade Center in New York City. The bombing injured nearly 10.000 people. Being the survivors of the attacks, policemen are considered the heroic figures of the events. This idea has thereafter been contradicted by Kristine A. Miller who describes the psychological state of post 9/11 characters as being more traumatized than epic, she claims: " Brian Remy's post 9/11 psychological collapse is far more traumatic than heroic".⁴⁵ Properly, in the day of the attacks, Remy and his partner helped save lives. However, despite their psychological disorder and detachment from themselves in the aftermath of the bombing and despite their unconsciousness and memory loss which enable them to remember a thing about the bombing, Paul and Remy help to pull living and dead bodies out of the rubble and contributed to put out fires and healed wounds on the streets of New York. Thus, they are labelled as "heroes amid horror".⁴⁶

The 9/11 Twin Towers' fall irrevocably changed the course of 9/11 characters' psychological state. The suicidal attacks brought post 9/11 individuals to decline. It was an era of fear and horror which ended in chaos, trauma and rubble.⁴⁷ The men of law's sacrifice during the 9/11 horrifying disaster is psychologically beyond repair. They knew several psychological long-term issues. Therefore, Walter strives to best capture the haunted depressive aftermath of the attacks. In this sense, Miller contends that: "the novel is able to translate Trauma as personal happening for the reader."⁴⁸ In other words, Walter's narrative incarnates the post 9/11 individual Trauma under Brian Remy's anguish. However, post 9/11 individuals do not only suffer from sadness in the aftermath of the attacks, but they also struggle with identity loss. As a result, the second part of my chapter will focus on the novel's protagonists' loss of identity following the attacks.

b. Identity Loss in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*:

The events of the 9/11 and the severe Trauma affected the Arab-American and American societies, and because of the harshness and cruelty of this traumatic event, people suffered from an identity crisis. In the period following the terrorist attacks, post 9/11 individuals woke up from a traumatic event that renders them struggling to find a sense of self. The alienation of the Arab-Americans due to their belonging to Arab-Muslim community and the Americans' witnessing their country being under attacks disconnected them from their sense of identity. As a result, they suffer from dissociative identity disorder. In this perspective, Smitha Bhandari defines it as a complex psychological condition that is likely caused by severe Trauma. It produces a lack of connection in a person's thoughts, memories, feelings, actions, or sense of identity.⁴⁹ This is demonstrated in Halaby's and Walter's novels when Salwa and Jassim lives remain disintegrated and hopeless and when Remy remains estranged from himself and fails to recall his old memories in the wake of the attacks.

Arab-Americans begin to question to nature their existence in the United States, after that the racial prejudice and mistreatments following the attacks render them outside the nation's border. In this regard, Gaby Semaan argues that:

Post September attacks against Arab American and south Asian communities created awareness among individuals belonging to these groups that they cannot debase race by way of class belonging because they all came to realize that no matter what class they belonged to, they were still not white.⁵⁰

In other terms, the post 9/11 attacks on the United States opened the Diaspora's eyes to reconsider their belongings because of their Arab-American background. Also, the quotation makes it obvious that, the post 9/11 Individuals endure "racial profiling"⁵¹ because they are depicted as suspect of the 9/11 bombing. Consequently, this change in attitude raised questions about identity. This is clearly depicted in Halaby's novel through the White-American bank client who kept asking Salwa unpleasant questions;

Sorry. Could I ask you a question first?"

"Sure. Go ahead."

"Where are you from?" asked the woman.

"I am Palestinian from Jordan."

The woman continued to look at her. Chewed it over. Spat it back out.

"What does that mean?" she asked, her thin lips pursed.

Salwa's perfect eyebrows lifted. "What does what mean?"

"What do you mean that you are Palestinian from Jordan?" Does it mean you will steal my money and blow up my world?⁵²

In the eyes of the white-American woman, Salwa, being a Palestinian, would steal her money. This mishandled attitude toward the Arab-American woman reflects the white-American consideration of the non-white Arab-Muslims living in America. Also, the American woman refers to America as "my world".⁵³ Which means that America belongs only to the white-native-American and that Salwa and Jassim have no belonging in the American country.

Moreover, Jassim and Salwa soon decided to marry after that Jassim promised America to Salwa. Once there, as highlighted by Halaby, the Arab-American couple were purposely working to keep an American identity and to adopt the American civilized culture.⁵⁴ However, the Arab-American couple take unstable positions in the American ethnic hierarchies. The effects of the 9/11 terrorist events are apparent on the Muslim couple; the American society depicted them as criminals, supervised them everywhere, and prevented them to move freely because Americans are convinced that Arabs are terrorists. In this respect, Ferrari argues that some became mad, and wanted to forget about their past, so they lost the sense of an authentic self. This loss is sometimes the result of social causes.⁵⁵

Resultantly, Jassim and Salwa remain marginalized; therefore, they quest for identity. This is noticed in the novel when the young couple move to the motorcycles shop and Salwa glare at the seller who is following her husband as if he is a “security threat”.⁵⁶ The seller holds that she is doing so in order to “protect the security of that establishment”⁵⁷ but the real reason is soon spoken out and that Jassim is considered a terrorist and suspicious to steal things from the shop. It is then reported that Amber; the seller, lost her uncle in the Twin Tower’s fall and according to Salwa, she is “avenging his death”.⁵⁸ Salwa clarifies this fact to Amber, saying that America is a large country with countless ethnicities and over populations, so why would Arabs then be the first accused category among all communities.⁵⁹

Salwa knew something like this was coming, had been waiting for the moment when it became spoken. I am sorry to hear that. Are you planning to have every Arab arrested now? she paused for just a second. Do you not use your brains? This country has more than fifty million people in it, and you’re worried about your tacky little store. But now you’ll have a lot to talk.⁶⁰

This incident raised extreme tensions between the Americans and the Arab-Americans in the shop. Therefore, Jassim and Salwa feel that they are present in a wrong place and in a wrong time; thus, they remain confused and hopeless.

Besides, the Arab descents made it hard to experience marginalization in America. In this regard, Halaby states: “America once tasted, it is hard to spit out ... Jordan pumps through the blood, but America stays in the mouth.”⁶¹ To put it simply, Jassim and Salwa seek to realize their dream; that is to get a well-established life in American and adopt the American identity and religion; therefore, the newly married couple was purposely practicing the American cultural norms. In this sense, Abdelhaq Jniyene says:

The Arabic couple renounces their religious identity and adopts the same American way of life as a way towards assimilation into the American mainstream. This is clear in Jassim, Salwa’s husband, whom the reader meets through many inner reflections that disclose a degree of self knowledge that grows ever more distant from the original belief system.⁶²

In other words, the young Arab couple assumed their belonging to American society through their adoption of the American way of life and consider themselves as American output. However, the Americans rejection of the young couple left them lost and experience identity crisis.

On nearly similar lines, Shihabudheen C refers to “Americans of Arab origin”⁶³ as “seekers of the Golden Fleece in America”⁶⁴ he asserts “ The novel throws light on how gratifying the Golden Fleece is now to them.”⁶⁵ *Once in a Promised Land* illustrates the sudden shift that occurred in the life of the Arab descent whose dream was hit but a radical breakdown with the Twin Towers fall. It was proved that Americans do actually consider Arab Americans as terrorists and most of all they have a strong anti-Arab sentiment.⁶⁶

Seeman provides more evidence about the attacks on Arab-Americans’ sense of identity, he asserts that: “The attacks forced Arab Americans, Muslims and South Asian communities to accommodate and strategically adapt to embrace their American identity by displaying and waving flags in order to prove their belonging.”⁶⁷ To put it in simple words, American patriotism compelled Arab-American individuals to show their belonging and loyalty to America in the wake of the tragic events. However, in this sense, Sellami says that:

Americans have always been proud of their belonging, culture, customs, language and civilization. But, it would be better said, culture that many ethnicities have brought, customs that several communities have influenced, and a civilization that is a direct outcome of old histories of many nations.⁶⁸

Halaby, in her novel, illustrates this pride in a scene when Joan gives American flags and asks Salwa to put them on her car and Jassim's in order to prove her constant belonging to America and to clean her image from what happened in the attacks. Joan exclaims: "You should put one on your car, on the back window. You never know what people are thinking and having this will let them know where you stand."⁶⁹ Salwa accepts Joan's request but wonders "Why it would matter where on her car she placed it."⁷⁰ The Arab-American lady also tries to recall the significance of the stars, "is it of the American dream because stars always symbolize dreams, hope, and happiness however it was not the case with Salwa at all. She is a racialized other in a white society."⁷¹

However, this conversation is a concrete portrayal of the post 9/11 suffering of the Arab-Americans in the aftermath of the Twin Towers fall. All the Arabs and Muslims living in America were subjugated to prejudice. Throughout this scene, one can notice that Joan is giving hints to Salwa's and Jassim's involvement in the 9/11 terrorists attacks, thus accuses them to be terrorists only because they are Arabs, Muslims. This fact leads the couple to seek for identity. Moreover, Joan goes further to portray Arab-Americans as "heavy burdens."⁷² This is depicted with the fact that Joan never utters Jassim's name but often refers to him as "your husband"⁷³ means Salwa's husband. "Joan always referred to Jassim as your husband, as though the six letters that filled his name in English were too scary, as though in trying to say them she might trip, or show some secret, private part of herself."⁷⁴ In other terms, these acts of repression are evidence of Americans' rejection, mistreatment, and consideration of Arab-Americans because they are perceived as terrorists and criminals.

Similarly, Walter likewise portrays identity loss as an effect of the post 9/11 individual Trauma. In his novel, the author portrays a police officer; named Brian Remy, wakes five days after the terrorist attacks unconsciously reactive to his new surroundings. He is apparently trying to recover the man he lost in the bombing but fails. He seems to be broken from his pre 9/11 person. In this regard, Orla T. Muldoon, et al argue that:

Traumatic events ... are a particular kind of event associated with actual or threatened risk of life, serious injury or serious violence... In narrative accounts, Trauma is often seen as a life changing...social-identity changes that occur in the wake of Trauma might influence posttraumatic trajectories....Posttraumatic responses can be understood as manifestations of social identity change associated with the impact of traumatic events on people's group-based sense of self... Trauma weakens or undermines valued social identities.⁷⁵

Indeed, in the aftermath of September, 11 devastating attacks, post 9/11 individuals' life took turn to the worse because they perceive a seriously altered world. The survivors of the attacks fail to adapt to the news circumstances of the post/11 world. Therefore, Americans remained fragment from themselves and started to question the nature of their identity.

Brian Remy wakes up after the disaster with no sense of belongings. The suddenly altered view in which the cop comes up made him wonder where he is. The bombing radically shifted Remy's environment to the worse, rendering him severely traumatized. Therefore, the post 9/11 Trauma disrupted his identity and shattered his sense of self. In this sense, Becky Ohlsen provides a brief description of the opening of the novel. She says: "The New-York policemen wake up few days, having apparently shot himself in the head... Walter describes a tough guy caught off-guard by finding himself displaced from his normal gangster environment."⁷⁶ In other words; Remy lost his belonging in after the terrorist attacks. Thus, he remains with no direction and spends the rest of the novel trying to get back his former self lost in the 9/11 terrorist attacks.

To add, Edgar Remy likewise remains lonesome in the aftermath of the bombing. Because of the traumatic impact of 9/11 on his father, Egdar also lost a part of his belongings.

With a serious depression, a severely shattered psychology, and a fragmentary perception of the world, the disastrous incident brought the police officer to decline. Brian Remy has not moved anywhere, but the world has shifted and he left his prior self and relatives in his former environment. The 9/11 terrorist attacks omitted Edgar Remy's existence from his father's mind. As a result, Edgar Remy also remains with no belonging.

It is defined in the beginning of the present part of my analysis by Smitha Bhandari that identity loss is a complex psychological condition caused by Trauma, involving a lack of connection in a person's memories. In other terms, identity loss affects a person's memory. On the other hand, Cleveland Hospital presumes that dissociative amnesia occurs when a person blocks out certain events, often associated with stress or Trauma leaving the person unable to remember important personal information... this forgetting may include much of the person's identity,⁷⁷ that is; dissociative amnesia involves identity loss. Clearly, identity loss and dissociative amnesia are interrelated. Indeed, shortly after the 9/11 bombing, post 9/11 victims were seriously traumatized, the shocking scenes that post 9/11 people witnessed are terrible and dreadful. As a result, post 9/11 individuals suffered from dissociative amnesia and identity disorder.

Moreover, the repression of the anxious memories of 9/11 terrorist attacks can result in a crisis of identity. In this sense, in his *Studies on Hysteria*, Freud and Breuer came to the point that traumatic recollections haunt the memories of their patients. Thus the undesired memories are driven back to the conscious of the patients so that they can recover.⁷⁸ This is illustrated in Walter's narrative when Brian Remy is unable to recall important details of his life. The novel's protagonist could not figure out who he is, and what he believes in. The police officer comes to in a series of situations he cannot remember getting himself into; a torture scene, and the shot in his head, thus, he wonders why his city is in such a paranoid

shamble.⁷⁹ He then decides to believe his landlady; Mrs Lubach, witness on the bang, Walter states:

Remy had heard no bang himself, although he tended to believe literalists like Mrs. Lubach. Anyway, a bang of some sort would explain the muffled ringing in his ears, and how it hurt to move his head. He strained to raise his chin and saw, to his right, just past the bottle, his handgun, inert and capable of nothing but lying among the crumbs and hairs on his carpet.⁸⁰

In other words, the hero cop was unaware of the 9/11 disaster until being informed about. This proves that the memory of the 9/11 attacks haunts him and pushes him to repeal his unpleasant and traumatic past to him unconscious. As a result, additionally to the loss of his identity, He lost huge parts of his memory too. Therefore, he could not reconcile his new life with his old life.

In the middle of *The Zero*, in a section entitled “Everything Fades”⁸¹, Walter depicts the main character’s escape as a result of identity loss from which he suffers. This is what happened to the American individuals of the post 9/11 period because of the great changes occurred in their country after the World Trade Center’s bombing. The latter affected post 9/11 people deeply and left them confused. As a result, they attempted to hide their traumatic past and experience by completely adopting new ways of living. More precisely, In order to get rid of feeling of non-belongingness, post 9/11 survivors, choose to escape. In this regard, Roy Baumeister suggests that when individuals are aware that parts of their identity do not fit the norms or the standards of society, they choose to escape reality by adopting new behaviours.⁸²

Concerning *The Zero*, Remy; the protagonist, heads to San Francisco with his lover April, who is reeling from the loss of her husband’s and sister’s recent death in the 9/11 deadliest attacks. However, this is not the only reason for their escape. In fact, they imagine

during their time in San Francisco, is an attempt to get out of the feeling of non-belongingness. After their arrival in San Francisco April says: “We can wear wigs and grow moustaches so no one recognizes us.”⁸³ She adds: “They’ll never think to look for us there.”⁸⁴ Clearly, the characters attempt to flee their past that they regarded unpleasant. The two individuals refuse to face the reality of being with no identity, thus, they engage in adopting new behaviours and identities.⁸⁵

Additionally, the failure of imagination is also related to identity loss in Walter’s narrative. No matter how the characters strain, they cannot tear themselves free, they cannot escape from the shackles of identity loss and the past traumatic memories of 9/11. In San Francisco, Each attempt to imagine a life off the grid in San Francisco is preceded and succeeded by a session of terrible images of America from the 9/11 attacks. This is illustrated in Walter’s story shortly after their plane’s arrival into San Francisco when April’s imagination begins to short-circuit, she says: “I will sew all our food. We’ll live off the grid, in a cabin built from empty wine bottles.”⁸⁶ Three times during their stay in San Francisco, April and Remy assume extremely rugged identities, and each time their fantasies are crushed by a failure of the imagination. Imagining a mysterious life as Steve and Monique, April ends up identifying herself as Steve, and Remy as Monique after that the Italian waiter asked for their names.⁸⁷

Later, they pose as expat draft dodgers Dustin and Maggie, who live without “electricity or phone service,”⁸⁸ in “the shadow of a glacier where they carry buckets of ice for drinking water.”⁸⁹ The fantasy remains intact until Remy confesses that “we eat only roots. In the summer we’re always naked. I have a pet moose.”⁹⁰ When the bartender asks if they moved to Canada to avoid serving in Vietnam, April answers, “No . . . Panama.”⁹¹ As a result, when post 9/11 individuals attempt to get rid of their prior traumatic life following the attacks and try to imagine a new life outside of the 9/11 Trauma, even the most basic human

necessities like food, clothing, and shelter become incongruent and unimaginable. In *The Zero* a life disconnected from 9/11 shock is unimaginable.

All in all, the present chapter put emphasis on post 9/11 individual dimension of Trauma. It began with a brief presentation of individual Trauma and the way it is portrayed in the two novels; *Once in a Promised Land* and *The Zero*. In their two narratives, Halaby and Walter depict the real impact of post 9/11 terrorist attacks on individuals. Doing so, the two post 9/11 novelists involved two sub-aspects of individuals Trauma being depression and identity loss. I relied on Trauma theory and its Individual sub-features providing evidence of Halaby's and Walter's influence by the individual traumatic effects of the post 9/11 horrific world. However, the two authors go further in their fictional novels and depict the post 9/11 Trauma from a collective perspective.

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Chapter Two: Collective Trauma in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*

Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Walter's *The Zero* are descriptive works which depict the post 9/11 Trauma in the aftermath of the attacks. The two narratives provide a literary portrayal of the post 9/11 atmosphere sharing the same analogy without being totally similar; that is, the plots are comparable but not identical in terms of setting. In fact, Halaby's novel depicts the Trauma of Arab-Americans, whereas Walter's story depicts Trauma of Americans in the aftermath of 9/11. They both strive to demonstrate the hard sacrifices made by post-9/11 America in the aftermath of the bombing, as well as the drastic changes that happened in the United States of America's social, political, and economic stances.

This chapter will be devoted to analyze Halaby's and Walter's depiction of the post 9/11 collective Trauma in their novels. Collective Trauma is a kind of Trauma that refers to the impact of traumatic experience that impacts and involves entire groups of people, communities, or societies.⁹² Novelists' focus is to capture the mood of that period and the state in which American society found itself in the aftermath of the Twin Towers' collapse. So, I intend to demonstrate how the two authors view the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks, taking into account the various consequences of the incident on American society. Numerous ramifications of the terrible and traumatic tragedy of 9/11 are choking and painful. The two novelists illustrate each of the Americans' horrible suffering in a novel's scene by portraying these impacts under the characters' image. As a result, practically all of the characters' sufferings in post 9/11 fictional novels depict the genuine sacrifices of post 9/11 societies.

The following chapter deals with collective Trauma that affects an entire society in the wake of the bombing. The 9/11 terrorist attacks did not only cause injuries, deaths and destructions. It went further and weakened America's high position. As a result, after the 9/11

bombing, post 9/11 America remained in a serious confusion, radical change and constant disarray. Appalling pictures painted in every coin of New York. Resultantly, these pictures instilled in the minds of the witnesses who suffered from collective Trauma in the wake of the attacks. Certainly, the post 9/11 people mourn the terrible disaster caused by the bombing and are worried about the consequences of this incident on their life in particular and their country in general.

The radical shift that hit 9/11 societies is represented in Post 9/11 fiction. On one hand, Halaby portrays the attacks' impact on Arab-American society. On the other hand, Walter depicts the bombing's effects on American society. They focus on the suffering of post 9/11 people after the bombing of the greatest center in the world. In order to portray the Americans' post 9/11 misery, the novelists externalized their voices in effective literary pieces. The intent of these writers is to produce masterpieces that mirror the realities of post 9/11 America and to demonstrate the situations of the post 9/11 Arab-Americans as well.

Since the novels depict post 9/11 collective Trauma including two of its sub-features; media coverage and social Trauma, this research analyzes the first aspect, namely; Media coverage of the terrorist attacks. Literally, it stands for the fact of reporting news. Surely, the bombing of the greatest Center in the world would not skip media. The Twin Towers fall dominates American media news even years after the terrorist attacks. However, media reports contributed in framing American collective Trauma in the post 9/11 world from the reports it provided. In this sense, Halaby and Walter strive to apprise their novels' readership the way media framed collective Trauma in the wake of the terrorist attacks.

a. Media Coverage in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*:

A significant collective trauma's instance is related to the U.S media coverage of 9/11. The rapid collapse of the Twin Towers is widely reported in Western media “Broadcast and Network doubled down on hard news coverage after the terrorist attacks.”⁹³ As a result, it heightened collective reactions which impacted the entire American society. Gilad Hirscherger contends the following in this light:

The term collective Trauma refers to the psychological reactions to a traumatic event that affect an entire society; it does not merely reflect an historical fact, the recollection of a terrible event that happened to a group of people. It suggests that the tragedy is represented in the collective memory of the group, and like all forms of memory it comprises not only a reproduction of the events, but also an ongoing reconstruction of the Trauma in an attempt to make sense of it.⁹⁴

In other words, collective Trauma refers to a society's psychological reactions to a catastrophic event, implying that the tragedy is preserved in the group's collective memory, which includes not only a re-enactment of the events, but also a continuous reconstruction of the Trauma. Indeed, Journalists contributed to the framing of this collective Trauma by focusing on reporting the massive terrible events that struck New York City in the immediate aftermath of the bombing. They practically aired photographs of the horrific sights to the rest of the world shortly after the attack. As a result, the exclusive 9/11 media news quickly travelled over the globe.

This is exemplified in Halaby's novel, when Hassan returned home with a mountain of press information to submit and fought to escape from Siham's questions to inform her about “what happened”⁹⁵ in America. He says: “Um Siham, isn't it awful what happened?...You haven't heard? In New York... There have been explosions in New York... Also in Washington. Planes. Someone flew planes into buildings. Into the World Trade Center.”⁹⁶ Hassan informs Siham of the details of the terrible bombing that have already been publicized in the American media. As a result, everyone was aware of the Twin Towers' catastrophic collapse and was clearly astonished.

Besides, media coverage of 9/11 aided in the dissemination of current news; it was essential in presenting the 9/11 hijacking planes to the public, and it aimed to deliver facts that best represented the world's deadliest terrorist attacks. So, the 9/11 terrorist attack shocked not only the people who witnessed the attacks nor only the Americans living far from New-York but it also overwhelmed people who have family working or living in America, particularly New-York residents. In this sense, Gianpaolo Baiocchi argues:

hundreds of thousands with relatives in the united states responded to these images with worry followed by desperate attempts to contact family members, whether in America or anywhere else in the United States. For many like us immigrants, this was the first time on the receiving end of phone calls from panicky relatives, who were calling us after news of violence and perhaps even a war on America.⁹⁷

In other terms, people with relatives in the United States were alarmed by media photographs, prompting desperate attempts to contact relatives in America and elsewhere in the country. This is highlighted in Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* in several scenes. This fact is illustrated when Siham and Randa learn of the attacks and Siham hurries to "call Salwa and make sure she is okay"⁹⁸. Randa was concerned for her kids⁹⁹ and Siham also was troubled about her husband Salim who is in New York but quickly been reassured that he is well.¹⁰⁰

In addition, Halaby focuses on the media's coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and its power to connect the globe to America in order to share the feelings of the American people at the time. In the moments following the World Trade Center's bombing, the media worked hard to elicit popular outrage. Halaby depicts varied reactions to the assaults in several episodes of her post-9/11 fictitious novel. The coverage of the 9/11 events in the media caused concern among American immigrants' families. As Baiocchi states; a diasporic man being in the United States at the time of the 9/11 terrorist attacks: Relatives were calling us after news of violence ... Safety was the main subject of these telephone calls and e-mails from friends and relatives."¹⁰¹ More expressively, after hearing about the bombing,

immigrants' relatives were frightened and called to make sure their family members who were exposed to the terrorist attacks were safe.

This is portrayed in the novel when the young couple's families kept calling them in the immediate time of the bombing. In this sense, It is mentioned in Halaby's novel that: "Both his and Salwa's families had telephoned shortly after it happened"¹⁰² But Jassim answers his father in a ridiculous way: "Baba, we are so far away, there is nothing to worry about."¹⁰³ Then, the novel insists more on Jassim's father worry and reported him saying: "You are far away from me, and I always worry."¹⁰⁴ In other words, after seeing the Western media portrayal of the 9/11 disastrous material damages and approximate numbers of deaths and injuries, families were troubled about the safety of their siblings being in America and worried that they become victims of terrorism.

However, in the aftermath of the attacks, the shock was gradually calming down. But several questions remained unanswered in the eyes of people. They began to wonder the cause of the bombing. Shortly after the devastating events, the American media constituted crucial news. In fact, media turned 9/11 terrorism into an Islamist issue; that is called by Jared Ahmad: "Islamisation of terrorism."¹⁰⁵ He adds in this context: "The damaging legacy of 9/11, however, has been the homogenization and Islamisation of the terror threat. This has resulted in the conflation of Islam and Muslims with terrorism in much news coverage."¹⁰⁶ In fact, the Western media revealed that the Center was bombed by an Arab-Islamic organization named Al-Qaeda. Thus, this heavy revelation raised different types of prejudice, discrimination and abasement towards the novel's protagonists because they are an Arab-American Muslim couple. In turn, the Western media has altered its coverage of the attacks, focusing on Al Qaeda's role in the bombing rather than the estimated losses and casualties inflicted by the assaults. As a result, anti-Arab racism and Islamophobia were stoked.

In her novel, Halaby highlights the negative influence of media on American people in particular and the world in general about Arab-Americans' image and focused on the way the Americans label the Muslim Arab-Americans in the wake of the 9/11 devastating attacks. Dora Mekouar recalls being terrified just after the bloodiest events of 9/11 bombing:

When the new channels started speculating on the muslim and arab background of those steering the planes, I started to feel the world closing in on me. I felt separated from everyone else who was watching the news and instantly knew that my life would change after that."¹⁰⁷

In reality, following the attacks, anti-Arab prejudice became a global issue, with the media using racist and aggressive language against Arabs.¹⁰⁸ As a result, it aggravated Americans' aversion to Arab culture. This is highlighted in the narrative when Petra talked to Salwa with an abusive language after being informed about her relationship with an American man, and humiliated her saying that: "Sorry ... I forget you come from a conservative culture."¹⁰⁹ This quote best capture the Arab-Americans endurance in the post 9/11 after the 9/11. That is, this example depicts Americans' perception of Arab culture as rigid and conventional, and that an Arab woman is unworthy of being with an American guy. Truly, because the media shapes public opinion, its public statement of Islam's moral inferiority fostered Islamophobia and bolstered anti-Muslim prejudice.

Furthermore, media discourse produce meditorialized fact that does not often mirror realities. As reported in *How Do the Media Fuel Islamophobia* article, "Media obscures our reality and produces an artificially construed representation of that reality."¹¹⁰ After the attacks, media is said to have promoted violation of Muslims and failed to report much that ought to be known about the Muslims involvement in the fall. In this perspective, Stephen Schwartz laments that: " we have reached the fourth anniversary of the terrible attacks of September 11, 2001 ... I am sorry to say that, in my view, the U.S. and the Western media have completely failed to meet the challenge of reporting on Islam in the four years since

then.”¹¹¹ In other terms, despite the long period since the bombing, media still insists on bringing the perpetration of Arab Muslim in the attacks.

Besides, media incitement on the idea of Anti –Arab Racism and Islamophobia is also cited in Rasha A.Abdulla’s article, she states: “Following the September 11, 2001 tragic events, Islam and Muslims came to the forefront of the Western media... not for a positive reasons.”¹¹² Effectively, after attacks, media entrenched the stereotypical idea that all Arabs and Muslims are terrorists in the mind of the American people. Since the Arab Muslim-terrorist group killed a high number of people in the bombing, and since “Osama Ben Laden cited religious motives for his criminal attacks”¹¹³, media generalized all Arabs and Muslims as criminals. This is highlighted in Halaby's novel when Mary Parker tells Jassim that her son Evan; the boy who Jassim hits by a car, was terrified after the tragic events of 9/11 and wanted to kill an Arab in retaliation for the perpetrators of the twin towers. She claims:

See, when 9/11 happened, Evan was freaked out, totally freaked out. It was weird, because once he was a teenager, he didn’t lose it very often. But he did then, ranted and raved about how Arabic people should all be kicked out of this country, rounded up, herded up, and thrown out. I ignored it for a while, thought he was just scared. We were all scared those people were going to blow us all up. Then he started talking about how he wished he could kill an Arab—my own son talking about killing someone! I sat him down and told him two wrongs don’t make a right, that most Arabic people don’t have anything to do with this. He wouldn’t listen—refused to. Talked like a bigot, and I was so mad at him. I think he got it from his dad, who is a racist prick. That’s why I say that God is one fucked-up bastard, to have Evan die under the wheels of an Arabic person’s car.”¹¹⁴

In other words, Parker, like all the Americans, puts all the Americans and Muslims in the same position; that is, all the Muslim Arab-Americans should be expelled out of America; whereas Evan’s wish to kill an Arab-American demonstrates the Americans’ outrage and hatred towards the Arab-Americans.

Moreover, Halaby discusses media coverage of the 9/11 attacks by looking at the effects on Muslims and Arab Diaspora in America. Indeed, media framed the Muslim Arab-Americans as terrorists subjecting them to American society's oppression and abuse. In the

post 9/11 period, the novel's protagonists faced all sorts of abuse; they were alienated, oppressed and ill-treated. Media coverage of the Arab-Muslims as the perpetrators of the 9/11 hijacked terrorist attacks outraged the American people against all Arabs and so Jassim and Salwa; the victims of the collective American hostility in the U.S. Therefore, there was a rise of a sentiment of hatred and fear towards them.

Furthermore, in addition to being subjected to various forms of discrimination, segregation, and pre-judgment, the Arab-Muslim Americans were alienated, marginalized, and otherized by the Western media. The media's insinuation of Arab involvement in the Twin Towers' fall shattered the tenuous relationship that had existed between Americans and Arab-Americans. Raouf Sellami expresses his viewpoint in this way:

“Nothing and everything...chiefly draws attention to the unstable position Arabs take in America's ethnic hierarchies. They are depicted as criminal people. That's, since 9/11, laws enacted by the federal government have directly suspected any Arab to be involved in the bombings of the Twin Towers. Additionally, most of Americans were convinced that Arabs are terrorists and camel straddlers, due the media propaganda, which have stereotypically marginalized Arabs using —them and —us.”¹¹⁵

In other terms, the idea that Sellami wants to clarify is that; even if the novel's protagonists have nothing to do with 9/11 terrorist attacks. Nonetheless, their membership in the Muslim Arab society paints them as criminals.

Furthermore, the 9/11 destructive events affected the life of every American. It is a tragic unforgettable day which will be behold in the United States history. Thousands of people's lives were abruptly cut short. Several bodies critically injured because of the bombing planned by Al Qaeda. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 influenced the quiet and peaceful relation of the Americans and Arab-Americans. The connection that existed between the two people was lowered by American media coverage of the 9/11. The Western media encouraged the American split from any Arab or Muslim. In addition to media framing of the post 9/11

events, the American president Bush's public declaration concerning the attacks also heightened the communal Trauma in the aftermath of the 9/11. He declared:

On September the 11th, enemies of freedom committed an act of war against our country...Americans are asking, who attacked our country? The evidence we have gathered all points to a collection of loosely affiliated terrorist organizations known as Al Qaeda...Al Qaeda is to terror... the terrorists practice a fringe form of Islamic extremism...Americans are asking: why do they hate us?...How will we fight and win this war ? ...we will direct every source at our command... Americans should not expect one battle, but a lengthy campaign unlike any other we have seen. It may include dramatic strikes visible on TV and covert operations secret even in success. We will starve terrorists of funding, turn them one against another ...until there is ... not rest ... And we will pursue nations that provide aid or safe haven to terrorism. Every nation in every region now has a decision to make: Either you are with us or you are with terrorist."¹¹⁶

In this sense, "The world"¹¹⁷, as Sellami says: "has become a binary one ever since. Therefore, new pejorative terms and concepts have been coined such as; —they, —we, —them, —us, —orient, and —occident."¹¹⁸ In other terms, Jassim and Leila were referred to as "they" whereas Americans as "we" thus Arab Muslims are deniably classified out of the Americans' list. There are different scenes in Halaby's novel which highlight Jassim and Salwa estrangement from American community.

This is demonstrated in the story when a bank client reacts angrily to Salwa's being a Palestinian from Jordan, accusing her of stealing her money because she is a member of the Arab-American society.¹¹⁹ In her novel, Halaby depicted another incident depicting the American people's disdain of Muslims. It is at this point when Salwa gets knocked out by American patriotism.¹²⁰ That is, to display an American flag in her car's back window. Moreover, there is also another scene in which Halaby portrayed media's disintegration of the Arab American and Native American relation. Indeed, this scene shows how the Americans now perceive the Arab-Americans. They are convinced that Arabs are terrorists and accuse them everywhere. This is presented in the novel when Mary Parker confessed that she was not glad of meeting Jassim and that after learning that he is an Arab from Jordan. As a result Jassim "forced himself to turn the key, to drive out of this unwelcoming American

neighbourhood, which clearly blamed him personally for recent suffering, and back through the more liberal streets where fear and hatred were disguised.”¹²¹

Like Halaby, Walter, portrays media coverage of the attacks in his narrative as well as the role that Western media played in framing collective Trauma among American people. Throughout his novel, media coverage is portrayed through its impact on Americans’ consciousness and society. 9/11 Media news framed post 9/11 collective Trauma. Indeed, media ecology which is elaborated by Marshall McLuhan asserts that: “the medium is the message”¹²², by which he means that: “The important thing about media is not the message they carry but the way the medium itself affects human consciousness and society at large.”¹²³ In other words, McLuhan’s theory suggests that media influences human consciousness and society as a whole, rather than the information it conveys. This is illustrated in Walter’s narrative through its depiction of Remy’s anxiety being inundated by flickering television screens and emerging media; “His eyes fell on a small television bolted to a pillar in the center of the waiting room, flickering with cable news. Remy felt a jolt of déjà vu, anticipating each muted image before it appeared, and it occurred to him that the news had become the wallpaper in his mind now.”¹²⁴ Since Remy is surrounded by other injured people watching news in the emergency room, this scene portrays the way media affected Remy’s consciousness and framed collective Trauma among post 9/11 society.

Certainly, *The Zero* is a post 9/11 work which sheds the lights on the American people’s ramifications in the wake of the tragic events. However, it aims to globally depict the Western media’s incitement on collective Trauma and at what extent the attacks reports shifted Americans’ collective life and perception of the events. In this sense, Kathy Gilsinan argues that Teresa Poppelwell and her colleagues watched coverage of the plane that had flown into the first tower just minutes before. She affirms that they were 10 in the room but no one spoke and that they grieved with the poor souls of New-York.¹²⁵ As a result, the

American society was afflicted by collective Trauma but incited event more due to media reports of the 9/11 attacks. In this sense, Zachary s.Mitnik argues: While people ... experience a terrorist attack firsthand, the rest of the world has ... an indirect experience... the aftermath of the most severe incidents can be widespread, the general public ... experiences the attack itself through media coverage.¹²⁶ In other terms, people present during the fall are directly affected by the attacks, whereas the rest of the world is affected in an indirect way which means that they experienced the attacks through the Western media 9/11 news coverage. They are, nonetheless, collectively traumatized as the direct victims. Walter emphasizes on the protagonist's suffering from the Trauma as a portrayer post 9/11 collective Trauma throughout his story. Walter opens his story a few days after the devastating bombing, reporting a police officer waking up with a gun in his hand in his New York apartment, realizing that he had shot himself in the head and is unable to speak. This opening scene displays how the novelist dredges images an immediate vision of the post-9/11 chaos, emphasizing the portrayal of collective Trauma of those who were directly or indirectly affected by the attacks.

However, although media plays vital role transmitting information, yet, this does not mean that it always conveys a true picture of events. Western media do not focus on covering current reports concerning the attacks but told news from a particular standpoint. As a result, media instilled a collective panic and fear in on the American psyche.¹²⁷ Walter accentuates the factual presentation of the post 9/11 atmosphere in order to dump the aggressive propagandistic attempts of the Western media about the post 9/11 situation.¹²⁸ The author presents Remy in various scenes to convey the post 9/11 sorrow of every American who has experienced Trauma. This is shown in the novel through Remy's non-acceptance of his new self after losing his former self in the bombing, he said: "When do you think it will get back to normal?" Normal. The word itself seemed familiar and strange, like a repressed memory. At one time there had been a normal. 'You know,' he said. "I guess I'm not sure."¹²⁹ This

case exemplifies New-Yorkers' calls for a return to normalcy following 9/11 Trauma.¹³⁰ Thus, Walter captures the true atmosphere of the events and their influence on American society.

Media plays a major and a significant role in the framing of the political violence,¹³¹ In this regard, Arda Bilgin states in her article *Terrorism and The Media: A Dangerous Symbiosis* that: “Accordingly, in order to alter the symbiotic relationship between terrorism and media , it is of high importance for the media to re-evaluate and change its rhetoric when covering the terrorism related news and stories”.¹³² In other words, Bilgin sought to convey the idea that media underreporting has a worldly actual impact, and that the media should cover terrorist stories empathically and realistically in order to avoid inciting violence. This fact is supported by the fact that Walter did not instigate violence in his narrative, instead, he provided scenes focusing on the post 9/11 Trauma.

Amy Morins defines collective Trauma as following: Collective Trauma refers to a traumatic event that is shared by a group of people that involves an entire society. Well known Traumas include...the September terrorist attacks.¹³³ The 9/11 deadliest attacks impacted and shocked entirely the American society. Yet, Morins adds: “People don’t necessarily need to have experienced the event first-hand in order to be changed by it. Watching the events unfold on the news can be traumatic.¹³⁴ indeed, watching the events on news can be traumatic but following the traumatic events, the Western media published a misleading account of the Twin Towers' collapse. As a result, they framed American people’s collective Trauma. Therefore, in their literary masterpieces, some post-9/11 authors critique the media's editorialization of the 9/11 terrorist attack. *The Zero* is a stunning post-9/11 literary work that criticizes American media's misrepresentation of the post-9/11 incident. Throughout his fictional novel, the novelist raises issues about media discourse that framed post 9/11 collective Trauma and described the New York Police Department after the attacks.

Walter's narrative is a story within a story; the surface story is about a police officer waking up after a bombing having shoot himself in the head and struggling thereafter with his memory gaps whereas the hidden story is about the 9/11 terrorist attacks. More expressively, *The Zero* is an allegory that reveals the masked truth about the bombing and literally speaks out the post 9/11 victims' hoarse voices and depicts their Traumatic experiences. The novel is an unmasking description of media's report of post 9/11 Trauma and the New-York cops. First, the novelist is concerned with how the Western media's represents the post 9/11 Trauma. The American media reports of 9/11 issues are incomplete and fragmentary. Despite the catastrophic ruins and the high estimates of fatalities and injuries of 9/11 disaster, the American media provided minimal coverage of the post 9/11 traumatic stories. In this perspective, Kristine A. Miller says: "media stories mask individual suffering."¹³⁵

Despite media's scattered coverage of 9/11 attacks, Walter's novel; *The Zero*, gathers actual and lasting pictures of the post 9/11 suffering under the police officer's characterization. The novelist began his work with a tragic incident in which the main character, Brian Remy, suffers a serious brain injury. The rest of the novel shows Remy's "struggles with 'dissociative gaps in consciousness that leave him unable to remember what happened between his blackouts."¹³⁶ This scene gives an insight about what is skipped in the media's reports of the bombing. That is; the American citizens' post 9/11 traumatic and physical sufferings as well as the confusion in which America remained after the disaster.

Furthermore, the attacks shattered collective American Trauma, which was exacerbated by Western media. Walter's novel *The Zero* is a fictitious narrative work representing a character with some degree of realism. Throughout his novel, the writer provided vivid scenes in which he undoubtedly links collective Trauma to media coverage. Media coverage framed collective Trauma through reporting traumatizing scenes of the attacks; as a result, the American society is completely chocked. This is demonstrated in the

narrative when Remy went to an emergency department while news was being broadcast on television and a little girl began staring at him every second as if he was the source of her suffering.¹³⁷ To explain, the girl seeing Remy makes her remember the calamity because of media coverage of Remy following the 9/11 attacks. That is how the attacks are collected in the Americans memory. Furthermore, the same scenario depicts the aftermath of the 9/11 attacks in the media when an elderly guy at the same emergency room tells Remy, “Please sit down. The doctors know all about you.”¹³⁸ He adds: “they are aware of your condition.”¹³⁹

These scenes are reality out of fiction, that is to say; Walter strove to make his novel’s readership know what is like to be in post 9/11 media ecology. the narrative focuses on the realistic depiction of collective Trauma and how it is framed by the American media all in portraying its impact on the novel’s characters and protagonist; a police officer being present in the Twin Towers bombing. Furthermore, Walter came up with various, clear, strong and believable scenes typical to the ones experienced by the Americans in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks and all the persons present at that time and after the bombing. As a result, Jess Walter’s post 9/11 novel shifted the way people viewed the post 9/11 atmosphere and opened their eyes toward the reality of the events.

The Zero raises concerns about media coverage of the attacks. In addition to Western media’s involvement in framing the Americans’ collective Trauma; Walter evokes the Western reports misleading depiction of the policemen. In fact, Western media attempted to pin the terrorist assaults on police officers who failed to halt the bombings. On the morning on September 11th, as smoke billowed out of the top of the World Trade Center after airplanes hit both towers, a news reporter was doing a television live shot. The reporter told the audience, while the cameraman panned to the law enforcement figures standing nearby: “You can see the firemen assembled here, the police officers, FBI agents.”¹⁴⁰ He then continues: “and you can see the two towers; a huge explosion, now raining debris on all of us.”¹⁴¹

It is evident from the reporter's statement that he is fanning public outrage against the cops; he wants to blame the bombing on the New York policemen. This is clearly exemplified in *The Zero* when Brian Remy is indirectly accused when he reads an old man's book in the emergency room saying: "nothing more hopeless, than this freedom, this waiting, this inviolability....and he tore himself free"¹⁴² in other words, Walter makes reference to the police being accused on media of failing to prevent the 9/11 attacks as well as how collectively traumatized people treated police in the aftermath of the attacks.

Moreover, Kristine A. Miller states in this sense: "media discourse described New York Police Department (NYPD) cops as confident heroes"¹⁴³ She adds: "and the Trauma discourse cast them as speechless victims."¹⁴⁴ Indeed, police officers differ from the rest of the American population present during the attacks merely because they are trained to run toward the fire rather than away from it. This instinct is their most powerful weapon in defending their communities. As a result, they are reported in media news as confident heroes. However, reporting collective Trauma news, Western media overlooked police post Trauma and the cops were dubbed as heroes in news reports despite their individual suffering.

Walter, makes the American media reports of the 9/11 policemen and their traumatic experiences fall under suspicion through his portrayal of the real imagery of the wake of 9/11 in general and his depiction of the cops' real sufferance and Trauma in particular. Not only that, but the novelist seeks to highlight what the Western media downplayed concerning the cops' pain and victimhood in the greatest terrorist assaults. This is distinctly shown under the novel's characters' depiction when Brian Remy and Paul Guterak; two police officers present in the Twin Tower bombing, encountered various sorts of Trauma, injuries and shock as they witnessed the dreadful scenes of pulling out a severely injured and dead bodies out of the wreckage. As a result, portrayal of Remy and Guterak characterize post 9/11 Americans'

sufferings from a post 9/11 collective Trauma. However, post 9/11 collective Trauma ranks another important facet from which post 9/11 people suffer, that is, social Trauma.

b. Social Trauma in Leila Halaby's *Once In A Promised Land's* and Jess

Walter's *The Zero's*:

Halaby portrays another facet of 9/11 collective Trauma, that is, social Trauma. It is a kind of collective Trauma that entails humiliation and rejection in social situations.¹⁴⁵ To put it another way, social Trauma is when a society rejects someone; it causes him to become socially traumatized. As a result, they develop a persistent fear of humiliation and embarrassment.¹⁴⁶ After the revelation of the Muslims' involvement in the perpetration of 9/11 bombing, American society raised a feeling of hatred and anger towards all the Muslim and Arab-Americans existing in the world. As a result, they became subject to rejection and marginalization, thus, they developed social Trauma. Halaby depicted the post 9/11 social Trauma in her literary work which means that her narrative is influenced by the social circumstances of its time. In this perspective, New Historicist approach asserts that: "Literary history cannot be seen in isolation from other historical forces."¹⁴⁷ In other words, a literary work cannot be detached from its historical context. Halaby exemplified post 9/11 social Trauma in her story when Salwa refused to tell Joan about what bothers her because she knows that she is "very American and patriotic."¹⁴⁸ This scene shows Halaby's depiction of Salwa, an Arab-American woman who is afraid of being humiliated in social situations.

The explosion of the World Trade Center by the Arab-terrorist group Al-Qaeda affected the Arab-American community. The interaction between the Arab-Diaspora and the American ethnic groups got increasingly complicated. "The Notions of Patriotism"¹⁴⁹, as Steven Salaita states in his article, "have altered both American and Arab-Arab American life."¹⁵⁰ In other words, there was a strong sense of patriotism and nationalism after the 9/11

terrorist attacks. Americans show a national pride that brought about feelings of loyalty toward their country and sought to make Arab-Americans patriotic too. This is exemplified in the novel, when Joan asked Salwa to put an American flag on her car to show their love to America in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, a fact to be lately expressed by Salwa to her husband as a ‘knock in the head by American patriotism’¹⁵¹ and by Steven Salaita as social offense.¹⁵² Additionally, patriotism is also displayed in Halaby’s novel when Marcus asks Jassim to get a lawyer that will protect him of being arrested or suspected of the attacks.¹⁵³

The novel opens up few days before the terrorist events of 9/11 reporting the Arab-American couple’s peaceful life. Jassim goes through his usual routine of swimming before they both go to work. However, Salwa stops taking contraception then becomes pregnant against her husband’s wish and suddenly, she miscarries; a fact to be a turning point in the social life of the young couple. In fact, according to Altaf Bhat: Salwa’s miscarriage creates a gap between Salwa and her husband.¹⁵⁴ Significantly, in is mentioned in Halaby’s novel that : “it was not just her lie that had brought distance between her and her husband and surrounded them with tension.”¹⁵⁵ In this context, Bhat adds, referring American patriotism: “This gap is further widened by the patriotic breathing of those around them.”¹⁵⁶ Salwa and Jassim's deteriorating relationship is exacerbated by the pressure of American patriotism.

Social Trauma continually appears in Halaby’s work besides the impact of the American patriotism on the couple formerly tight relationship. In addition to all what is cited above, the gap being created between them and the effects of patriotism on their relation irritated their relation. In fact, Jassim continues to live his life and refuses to accept that his surroundings' attitudes have altered following 9/11. This is highlighted in the novel when Marcus tells Jassim that: “The FBI came to our offices today. They asked about you, about what you do here, about your behaviour. They asked me if you talk about your religion or any political issues.”¹⁵⁷ and Jassim answered coldly: “Good God, Marcus. This is very serious.”¹⁵⁸

On the other hand Salwa becomes more irritated by the loss of her baby and the prevalent patriotism that pushes her to the margins and renders her outside the nation's borders. As a result, the couple's suffering from post social anxiety disorder and are unable to maintain a social stability in an anti-Arab society. Also, Salwa is tormented by the abortion of her baby and the American offensive Patriotism. Therefore, the novel's protagonist remains in a self-defeating dialogue and begins to question the nature of her existence in America.

Furthermore, the scarred social interactions between Americans and Arab-Americans existed before the bombing. This idea is supported by Raouf Sellami affirming: "If one digs deeply into the Americans' perspective and stereotypical images toward Arabs in the US, it would be remarkable even before the events of 9/11."¹⁵⁹ This is highlighted by Halaby when the American Jack Franks meets Jassim at the pool. Both of them strike up a discussion; however, Jassim appears indifferent and troubled, because swimming for him; is a spiritually balancing prayer. Jassim is obviously uninterested since Franks' statements have anti-Arab connotations. Moreover, Halaby provided more Anti-Arab scenes; Franks adds: "Followed my daughter there. She married a Jordanian. Not one like you, though. This one was from the sticks—or the sand, as the case was."¹⁶⁰ In other words, Halaby proved the existence of the Americans society' rejection of the Arab immigrants even before the Twin Towers fall.

Furthermore, the tense pre-relationship between Americans and Arab-Americans that existed prior to the attacks deteriorated much further after the bombing. The Arabs' role in the collapse of the Twin Towers created an unfavourable social perception of the Arab Diaspora. Indeed, Arab-Americans were subjected to a slew of discrimination in the aftermath of the disaster. Racism and prejudices were prevalent among Arab and Muslim New Yorkers. However, Jassim and Salwa are presented as criminals in Halaby's work, and are categorized as terrorists by the concept that all Muslims and Arabs are terrorists. In this respect, Mudasar Altaf Bhat says: "Their Arab, Muslim background seems to render them suspect in the eyes of

people around them.”¹⁶¹ The couple’s Arab Diaspora status made them suspect, and they faced racial prejudice as a result. This is the experience of the pair in the novel as a result of their Arab heritage. This fact had a profound impact on the Arab-American couple’s marriage; who were left unable to escape the gloomy ruminating of the post-9/11 time.

The Zero likewise deals with social trauma. In fact, various facets of collective Trauma have emerged after the attacks. In this sense, the American author describes the social Trauma of post-9/11 America society, as well as the sacrifices of police officers and fire-fighters, throughout his book. In effect, the fall of the Towers was so traumatic that the American people were unable to cope. People who were directly affected by the attacks received significant and long-lasting social trauma. On this basis, Walter explores the collective Trauma of the events and presents an excellent depiction of post-9/11 social anxiety disorder.

The novelist begins his narrative few days after the destruction giving a clear portrayal of a police officer waking up in his New-York apartment with serious wounds in his head. Apparently, the cop is not aware of what actually happened in his nation, thus he remained in wondering. Social Trauma bases on an extreme fear to talk with other so that they do notice your anxiety.¹⁶² In other terms, Social trauma is characterized by an intense fear of conversing with others so that they are aware of your uneasiness. In fact, in the period following the terrorist attacks, people's social interactions decreased. People were so traumatized that they refuse to communicate with others in order for their depression to go unnoticed. These features appear in Walter’s story in its very first scene when Remy; one of the people present during the bombing was intensively afraid to interact and talk with Mr.Lubach; his land lady, despite her continuous question concerning the bombing. In fact, Remy responded with fragmented utterance, sometimes fragmented and non-complete with a small and a tinny voice.¹⁶³ In other terms, the police officers wakes up surrounded with horrifically

traumatizing views; thus, he does not want to admit that he “heard the bang”¹⁶⁴, because for Remy, the non-recognition of the disaster would erase its existence.

Moreover, in the aftermath of September 11, there was a high increase in post 9/11 people’s nervousness about social situation. Americans skip the broaching of anything concerning the 9/11 deadliest attacks. Still, in the wake of the attacks, the Twin Towers disaster became central in everyday interactions, thus, it causes significant social anxiety to Americans. The American writer, Jess Walter, depicts other action in the same opening scene of his narrative about the post 9/11 social Trauma. Additionally to the brief definition of Trauma mentioned above, social Trauma is not only a fear of communication and interaction but even a fear that physical symptoms cause one an embarrassment.¹⁶⁵ Indeed, Walter portrayed a scene of fear and subject avoidance when Brian Remy’s landlady asks him the cause of the injury of his head but Remy remained silent.

The social anxiety disorder of the post 9/11 American people is probably out of repair and may be a chronic health condition to last a lifetime. Jess Walter’s novel is published few days right after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Brian Remy, the novel’s central character portrays what is like to be a first responder of the devastating events of 9/11; he experienced the attacks first-hand. However, as Bryan M.Santin reports in his article:

“Remy’s vision is distorted by mysterious spots ... he suffers from random, dissociative gaps in his consciousness that leave him unable to remember what happened in between his blackout which renders the novel’s narrative structure equally discontinuous and disorienting”¹⁶⁶

In other terms, Walter, through his depiction of Brian Remy sufferance from memory block outs, non communication, fragmentary utterances and inability of recalling important details of his life, highlight the post 9/11 Americans’ inability to restore their joyful memory in New-York after that their mind is painted by pictures of traumatizing depictions of the 9/11 attacks and their failure to get back to their past non-traumatized and peaceful life.

Additionally, the strong feeling of discomfort, fear and anxiety interfered among post 9/11 people relationships in the period of after the attacks. Indeed, these symptoms appeared on Americans few days after the attacks. Since 9/11 severely traumatized the persons being present the time of the incident, they feared of situation that brings up the events and everything that reminds them of it. As a result, there was a remarkable increase in a social isolation. Walter incarnates this idea through the dissolution of Edgar's relationship with his father Brian with whom he no longer communicates after the terrorist attacks because he reaches a shaky stage of post social anxiety due to the tragic events. As a result, Edgar prefers to ignore the communication with his father as he remembers him of the 9/11 bombing.

The present chapter presents collective Trauma in the period following the 9/11 attacks. It put emphasis on post 9/11 collective dimensions of Trauma. It demonstrates post 9/11 people deep suffering from the terror of the 9/11 bombing and the radical shift that occurred thereafter. It started with a quick overview of collective trauma and how it is depicted in the two books. In their narratives, Halaby and Walter, portrayed the impact of the attacks on American and Arab-American societies. By doing so, the two novelists incorporate two sub-aspects of collective Trauma; namely media coverage of post 9/11 Trauma and social Trauma, thus, *Once in a Promised Land* and *The Zero* reflect the period of their production.

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IV- GENERAL CONCLUSION

This dissertation aimed to study the depiction of Trauma in Leila Halaby's *Once in a Promised Land* and Jess Walter's *The Zero*. Throughout my study, I relied on Trauma theory and its two sub-aspects; namely individual and collective Trauma. The two narratives depict the traumatic effect on the World Trade Center's bombing from individual and collective dimensions. While *Once in a Promised Land* deals with the post 9/11 Trauma of the Arab-American society, the zero focuses on the traumatic impact from which suffered the American society in the wake of the Twin Tower's fall.

The main characters of the novels experience the attacks and are consequently deeply traumatized by the event. The discussion part of my thesis on individual and collective Trauma has shown that literary devices can be used to portray depression, identity loss, media coverage of 9/11 and social Trauma. The novels' theme of the unrecoverable trauma is portrayed through new structures, styles and settings which the two authors adopted in order to make a rousing portrait of the post 9/11 personal and collective Trauma. The story opens right after the attacks and describes the post 9/11 traumatic disturbance, suggesting that there is no escape from the Trauma.

In Addition, both novels respond to the 9/11 attacks in their own manner and contextualization should not be disregarded. Undoubtedly, Halaby; an Arab-American author, responds in by showing that 9/11 has disintegrated an Arab-American couple and portrays the main characters as a broken, depressed and lost, unable to recover from Trauma. While Jess Walter, an American author, portrays the post 9/11 anti-terrorist traumatized atmosphere and shows that the main character is psychologically disconnected with split personality as an asset to being an anti-terrorist agent.

Due to the scope of this thesis, I am not allowed to study more issues in relation to the two novels. This thesis analyses individual and collective impact of Trauma on the novels' characters. Yet, it exists other sub-features of these dimensions of Trauma other than depression, identity loss, media coverage and social Trauma. Post-traumatic stress disorder and political Trauma are also sub-features of individual and collective Trauma which could have been the subject for analyzing post 9/11 Trauma. It would also be interesting, for example, to analyse the post 9/11 effect on characters and intersect Trauma theory, 9/11 discourse, and politics. This would provide a thorough analysis of the two novels and its implications on 9/11 and Trauma.

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