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Tradition and Modernity in Laila Halaby's West of the Jordan (2003) and Leila Aboulela's Lyrics Alley (2010)

Presented by :

MS. BENGHANEM Thiziri

MR. AMRANE Brahim

Supervised by

MRS Naima MAIDI

Board of Examiners :

Mrs. Fatiha BENSAFI, MAA, Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou**, Chair**

Mrs. Naima MAIDI, MAA, Mouloud Mammeri University, Tizi-Ouzou, **Supervisor**

Mrs. Zahra TAFROUKHT, MAA, Mouloud Mammeri University Mammeri University, Tizi – Ouzou**, Examiner**

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Dedication

We dedicate this work to our families, whose unwavering love and support made it possible for us to complete this dissertation. Special thanks to our parents for their endless encouragement. We also extend our gratitude to our friends.

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Abstract

This dissertation is a study of tradition and modernity in Leila Halaby *West of the Jordan* (2003) and laila aboulela *lyrics Alley* (2010) it has examined the ways in which the two authors have subverted cultural heritage and contemporary realities within Arab societies and Diaspora contexts. Focus has been put on how both authors have provided similar visions of their respective countries. To frame this analysis, the dissertation draws on Homi K. Bhabha's theory of The Location of Culture (1994), particularly his concept of hybridity where cultural meaning and identity are negotiated. Additionally, the study incorporates insights from Chandra Talpade Mohanty's postcolonial feminist theory, which allows for a nuanced reading of gender dynamics and the impact of colonial and patriarchal structures on women in postcolonial and Diasporic contexts. Through a detailed textual analysis, the dissertation explores how both novels depict central themes such as tradition, family structures, gender roles, religious values, and personal identity. The research reveals how characters in these narratives confront the challenges of integrating modern values with traditional norms, often resulting in the emergence of a hybrid cultural space that reflects both resistance to and assimilation of change.We have come to the conclusion that both novels highlight family gender roles, religion and identity and portray how diasporic societies struggle toward modern values trying to integrate it to their own, landing to a third space which we explored. finally, the analysis of the two texts has revealed the authors' stance on patriarchy and its traditional norms and how it was infected by the modern codes changing it into a hybrid system that reflects both resistance to and acceptance of change.

Key words: Tradition, Modernity, Homi K. Bhabha, *West of the Jordan, Lyrics Alley.*

Contents

Introduction

Many literary works produced by Arab Diasporic women writers set the bridges to reach their origins, their mother land, via forging new discourses that oppose the Western stereotypes and the Orientalist presentations. In doing so, they put the spotlight on recounting immigrant experiences to describe Arab Diasporic women's, issue of identity negotiation in the Diaspora. Instead of negating these stereotypes, Arab Diasporic women attempt to engage in a dialogue with the west to refashion Diasporic identity positions. In the Diaspora, they seek to stand in opposition to racial thinking and Orientalist representations which usually portray women as silent and oppressed subjects. Instead, they endeavor to re-introduce their cultural heritage to resist Oriental clichés; accordingly, they assume the role of cultural mediators to their native communities.

In contemporary Diasporic literature, the tension between tradition and modernity emerges as a powerful theme, particularly in narratives cantered on women. Arab women in the Diaspora often inhabit a 'Third Space' between their culture, and the values of western societies. In addition, Arab Diasporic literature offers an important counter- narrative to the dominant Western narrative of Arab culture and the Middle Eeast. Through stories of identities, displacement, and cultural hybridity, Arab Diasporic literature explores how Arab culture interact with the West.By reading and engaging with these stories, readers can gain a better inderstanding of the complexities of Arab culture and its place in the world.

The complexities of identity, gender and culture belonging have become central themes in contemporary literature particularly in works that examine the experience of Diasporic individuals, of Arab women. Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003) and Leila Abouleila's *Lyrics Alley* (2010), are two seminal works that engage with these tensions of

arab women with their identities within diasporic settings. Both authors examine.the intersection of cultural tradition and the forces of modernity presenting the struggles and aspiration of Arab women who find themselves in conflicting worlds.

Our work is a comparative study between two novels from the levant and North East Africa. The first one entitled *west of the Jordan* (2003) is written by the Arab American author Laila Halaby. Her works often explore themes of Arab American identity,cultural.Hybridity and the complexities of belonging.The second novel entitled *Lyrics Alley* (2010) is written by the Sudanese writer Leila Aboullela's.She is acclaimed for her novels and plays that deleve into themes of identity, migration and Islamic spirituality. The novel discusses the tension between tradition and modernity in 1950s Sudan, a time of political, cultural and personal transformation.

Halaby's *West of the Jordan* presents the intertwined stories of four young Arab American women who struggle to reconcile their Palestinian and Jordanian heritage with their life in the United States. Their experiences highlight the cultural dissonance faced by many diasporic women as they navigate issue of family expectations, gender, norms, and personal freedom.

In contrast, Abouleilla's*Lyrics Alley* is set in 1950s Sudan and written from a Diasporic perspective. It examines the complexities of a society's modernization through a prominent Sudanese family, while not set in the West, the novel reflects Aboulela's own Diasporic voice and explores the role imposed on women within traditional frameworks.

Review of the Literature

Leila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003) and Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* (2010) have emerged as seminal texts in contemporary Arab women's literature, offering nuanced explorations of identity formation, cultural displacement, and resistance against intersecting systems of colonial and patriarchal oppression. Both novels have generated substantial scholarly discourse due to their complex portrayals of Arab women negotiating multifacet cultural landscapes.

Critical examinations of *West of the Jordan* frequently highlight its fragmented narrative architecture as a formal manifestation of diasporic subjectivity. As Carol Fadda-Conrey (2014) demonstrates, the novel's polyvocal narration articulated through four female cousins constitutes a literary embodiment of Palestinian exilic consciousness. Halaby constructs each cousin as representing discrete modes of cultural negotiation: Hala's adoption of punk subculture signifies a dual rejection of Arab patriarchal norms and Western cultural commodification, while Khadija's constrained existence within an arranged marriage exemplifies what Edward Said (1978) might term the "Burden of Representation" faced by displaced communities.

Similarly, Nadine Sinno (2016) reveals how Mawal's strategic silence and eventual escape from domestic violence reconfigure passive endurance into an act of subversion, effectively deconstructing Orientalist tropes of Arab female victimhood.

Moreover, Steven Salaita (2011) extends this reading by emphasizing Halaby's dismantling of reductive stereotypes, instead presenting her protagonists as psychologically complex agents navigating intersecting oppressions.

Another critic, Layla Al-Maleh (2014), further illuminates the novel's engagement with patriarchal systems through her comparative analysis of Ruba's sexual autonomy and Khadija's traditional compliance, framing their narratives as emblematic of intergenerational

conflict within diasporic communities. Notably, Hala's simultaneous rejection of both Arab and American gender paradigms positions the novel within what Saba Mahmood (2005) identifies as the "politics of piety" debate in postcolonial feminist discourse.

On the other hand, *Lyrics Alley* by Leila Aboulela redirects the analytical lens toward Sudan's national identity crisis during decolonization, employing the Abuzeid family as an allegorical representation of the nascent nation-state. As Wail Hassan (2011) interprets, patriarch Mahmoud Abuzeid's psychological schism torn between the modernity symbolized by his Egyptian wife and ancestral Sudanese traditions mirrors what Frantz Fanon (1963) describes as the "pitfalls of national consciousness" in postcolonial societies. In contrast, his son Nur's physical paralysis serves as what Mona Fayad (2017) characterizes as a potent metaphor for colonialism's debilitating legacy. However, Nur's intellectual virtuosity complicates simplistic narratives of colonial victimization.

Furthermore, Sara Ahmed's (2015) disability studies perspective reveals how Nur's condition interrogates conventional Sudanese conceptions of masculinity and value, even as his agency remains circumscribed by familial and historical determinants. The novel's feminist critique emerges most forcefully through Soraya's repudiation of arranged marriage, which Mai Al-Nakib (2018) theorizes as a form of quotidian resistance against both indigenous patriarchy and colonial class structures. Yet, the narrative's deliberate constriction of Soraya's autonomy following Nur's accident underscores what Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1988) might term the "epistemic violence" embedded within elite familial frameworks.

Taken together, *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley* present rich, and layered portrayals of Arab women's navigation through intersecting structures of power, displacement, and cultural expectation. While both novels engage with common themes such as the tensions between tradition and modernity, modes of feminist resistance, and the psychocultural legacies of

colonialism and migration, they ultimately diverge in their structural techniques and in the extent to which they prioritize individual versus collective historical consciousness.

Issue and Working Hypotheses

This research aims to conduct a comparative analysis of Laila Halaby's West of the Jordan and Leila Aboulela's works, focusing specifically on the themes of tradition and modernity. It seeks to explore how these two authors intertwine modernity with tradition to construct a "third space." Although both novels have faced significant criticism.

This study is motivated by the lack of direct comparisons centered on these themes. Our initial hypothesis posits that despite sharing many commonalities, the novels highlight tradition and modernity in distinct ways. The second hypothesis suggests that, regardless of their differing geographical and cultural contexts, both authors use female protagonists as a means to critique patriarchal traditions and propose alternative models of empowerment.

Our intention in this research is to deal with how Halaby and Aboulela explore the tention and negotiating between tradition and modernity within Arab and Arab Diasporic societies. It is important to show how both Halaby and Aboulela portray their characters as embodiment of the struggle between modernity and tradition, highlighting the pressure of traditional expectations especially for women and the challenges of adapting or resisting Western norms in relation to their Arab identity.

Therefore,*West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley novels* lead themselves to a comparative study in the aim to develop and clarify the themes of tradition and modernity, hybridity and cultural clash, and the role of the Diaspora. In both novels, the confrontation between tradition and modernity is articulated through female and marginalized characters

whose identities are shaped by cultural hybridity, displacement, and the negotiation of belonging. These novels demonstrate that tradition and modernity are not binary opposites but are instead intertwined forces that shape the evolving identities of individuals and communities in the Arab World and its Diaspora, we intend to link our analysis to postcolial concepts borrowed from Homi.k Bhabha's The Location of Culture(1994).

Methodological Outline

At the methodological level, we intend to undertake our research by following the IMRAD method .Our dissertation is composed of five parts. It contains a general introduction that states our main purpose .It includes a review of some critical studies conducted on both works. Besides, it raises our issue and working hypotheses. In method and materials section, we explained and discussed briefly the concept of tradition and modernity with references to some scholars such as Homi Bhabha. After that, we summarize the two novels *West of the Jordan* by Leila Halaby and *Lyrics Alley* by Leila Aboulela respectively in a brief way relaying to our themes.

The results section contains the finding of our research. Concerning the discussion section, it will be divided into two chapters. The first is related to tradition in both novels especially the exploration of traditional values and social norms .The second part deals with another common theme in both novels which are depiction of change and modern influence of Arab Diasporic women. Our dissertation will end with a general conclusion that summarizes the main ideas that we treated in this dissertation.

II- Methods and Materials

a. Methods

Post-colonial theory emerged from the historical context of Britain's former colonie, in the Caribbean, Africa, and India. Many writers within this framework compose in English and explore common themes such as the quest for independence, migration, national identity, loyalty, and childhood experiences. This theory serves as a literary framework that addresses works produced in nations that were once colonies or are currently under colonial rule. It may also encompass literature created by authors from colonizing nations that focus on their colonies or the people.Homi K. Bhabha is a key postcolonial theorist known for ideas like hybridity, mimicry, and the ‘’Third Space’’ He explores how cultures change through contact, especially in colonial and postcolonial settings. Bhabha questions fixed identities and focuses on how ne meanings are created when different cultures meet and interact.

Cultural hybridity happens during significant historical changes, involving interactions between different sides, like colonizers and the colonized, or tradition and modernity. Bhabha suggests that culture exists in a "borderline" space where new ideas emerge, which are not just a repeat of the past. Art, for instance, does not just remember the past; it reshapes it, creating a new space that influences the present. The past and present become essential for living, not just something to be nostalgic about.In addition to that, Bhabha says

> The borderline works of culture demands an encounter with 'newness' that is not part of the continuumn of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as insurgent act of cultural translation, such as art does not merely recall the past as social cause or aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it us a contingent 'in-between' space, that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. 'The past-present' become part of the necessity, not the nostalegie of living. (P.10)

The term "hybrid" refers to the blending of cultural signs and practices from both colonizers and the colonized. This blending can be chaotic and reflects how people adapt to new cultural influences while still holding onto their own understanding, resulting in something that is both familiar and new. Hybridity shows the complex nature of postcolonial power, highlighting how identities can be formed through both acceptance and rejection of colonial influences.

Hybridity is the sign of the productivity of postcolonial power, its shifting forces and fixities; it is the name for the strategies reversal of the process of domination through disavowal (that is the production of discriminatory identities that secure the pure and original identity through the repetition of authority). Hybridity is the revolution of the assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. (pp 159.160)

Another point, Postcolonial feminism is a form of feminism that developed as a response to feminism focusing solely on the experiences of women in Western cultures and former colonies. Postcolonial feminism seeks to account for the way that racism and the long-lasting political, economic, and cultural effects of colonialism affect non-white, non-Western women in the postcolonial world. Postcolonial feminism originated in the 1980s as a critique of feminist theorists in developed countries pointing out the universalizing tendencies of mainstream feminist ideas and argues that women living in non-Western countries are misrepresented.

The theory argues that by using the term "woman" as a universal group, women are then only defined by their gender and not by social class, race, ethnicity, or sexual preference. Postcolonial feminists also work to incorporate the ideas of indigenous and other Third World feminist movements into mainstream Western feminism. Third World feminism stems from

the idea that feminism in Third World countries is not imported from the First World, but originates from internal ideologies and socio-cultural factors.

In addition, Postcolonial feminism is a relatively new stream of thought, developing primarily out of the work of the postcolonial theorists who concern themselves with evaluating how different colonial and imperial relations throughout the nineteenth century have impacted the way particular cultures view themselves. This particular strain of feminism promotes a wider viewpoint of the complex layers of oppression that exist within any given society.

Postcolonial feminism began simply as a critique of both Western feminism and postcolonial theory, but later became a burgeoning method of analysis to address key issues within both fields. Unlike mainstream postcolonial theory, which focuses on the lingering impacts that colonialism has had on the current economic and political institutions of countries, postcolonial feminist theorists are interested in analyzing why postcolonial theory fails to address issues of gender. Postcolonial feminism also seeks to illuminate the tendency of Western feminist thought to apply its claims to women around the world because the scope of feminist theory is limited.In this way, postcolonial feminism attempts to account for perceived weaknesses within both postcolonial theory and within Western feminism. The concept of colonization occupies many different spaces within postcolonial feminist theory; it can refer to the literal act of acquiring lands or to forms of social, discursive, political, and economic enslavement in a society.

Chandra Talpade Mohanty, a principal theorist within the movement, addresses this issue in her seminal essay "Under Western Eyes"(1986).In this essay, Mohanty asserts that Western feminists write about Third World women as a composite, singular construction that is arbitrary and limiting. She states that these women are depicted in writings as victims of

masculine control and of traditional culture without incorporating information about historical context and cultural differences with the Third World. This creates a dynamic where Western feminism functions as the norm against which the situation in the developing world is evaluated.Mohanty's primary initiative is to allow Third World women to have agency and voice within the feminist realm.

Moreover, this movements look at the gendered history of colonialism and how that continues to affect the status of women today. In the 1940s and 1950s, after the formation of the United Nations, former colonies were monitored by the West for what was considered social progress. The definition of social progress was tied to adherence to Western socio-cultural norms. The status of women in the developing world has been monitored by organizations such as the United Nations. As a result, traditional practices and roles taken up by women, sometimes seen as distasteful by Western standards, could be considered a form of rebellion against colonial rule. Some examples of this include women wearing headscarves or female genital mutilation. These practices are generally looked down upon by Western women, but are seen as legitimate cultural practies in many parts of the world fully supported by practicing women. Thus, the imposition of Western cultural norms may desire to improve the status of women but has the potential to lead to conflict.

In order to understand the postcolonial feminist theory, one must first understand the postcolonial theory. In sociology, postcolonial theory is a theory that is preoccupied with understanding and examining the social impacts of European colonialism, its main claim is that the modern world as it is now is impossible to understand without understanding its relation with and history of imperialism and colonial rule.

b- Materials

b.1. Synopsis of *West of the Jordan*

ila Halaby's novel *West of the Jordan* is a nuanced coming-of-age story that explores the complex identities and struggles of four Palestinian-American female cousins Mawal, Hala, Khadija, and Soraya who navigate the tensions between their Arab heritage and American lives. Through their interwoven narratives, Halaby offers a rich portrayal of the diasporic experience, highlighting the challenges of cultural hybridity, gender roles, and family expectations.Furthermore, the novel is structured around the perspectives of these four young women, each representing different facets of the Arab-American experience. Mawal, the most rooted in tradition, remains in her Palestinian village of Nawara, embodying the stability and cultural continuity of Palestinian life. Her narrative provides a deep connection to homeland and tradition, emphasizing the importance of place and memory in shaping identity.

Halaby's novel delves into the psychological and social borderlands these young women inhabit caught between patriarchal traditions, cultural expectations, and the pressures of assimilation in a post-9/11 America that often views Arab identities with suspicion and prejudice. The title West of the Jordan itself symbolizes this duality, referring both to the Palestinian village west of the Jordan River and to the Western world of the United States, illustrating the characters' constant movement between these two worlds. Moreover, the narrative's fragmented, multi-voiced structure allows readers to see the diversity and complexity within a single family, countering monolithic stereotypes about Arab and Muslim women. Halaby emphasizes that these women's experiences are not uniform but shaped by

varying degrees of cultural adherence, personal trauma, and aspirations. The novel highlights themes of identity negotiation, cultural conflict, gender politics.

b.2. Synopsis of *Lyrics Alley*

Leila Aboulela's Lyrics Alley is a richly layered novel set in 1950s Sudan, a country on the cusp of independence and caught between the forces of tradition and modernity. The story centers on the affluent Abuzeid family, whose fortunes and influence have been built over decades through their trading firm, one of the few indigenous businesses thriving under British colonial rule. At the heart of the narrative is Nur Abuzeid, the brilliant and handsome heir to the family empire, whose promising future is tragically altered by a debilitating accident that leaves him quadriplegic.

Aboulela's novel deftly explores themes of love, loss, faith, and the struggle between tradition and change. The characters are portrayed with nuance, revealing their complexities and contradictions without seeking to elicit simple sympathy. Mahmoud's attempts to balance his responsibilities to family and business, Waheeba's fierce maternal devotion, Nabilah's yearning for freedom, and Nur's frustration and resilience all contribute to a vivid portrayal of a family and a nation in transition.Set against the backdrop of Sudan's political upheaval and the waning days of British rule, *Lyrics Alley* captures the intimate effects of historical change on personal lives. The novel's multiple viewpoints allow readers to understand the emotional and cultural conflicts from various angles, enriching the narrative's depth. Moreover, Aboulela challenges stereotypical depictions of Sudan by focusing on the richness of its society, the diversity of its people, and the enduring power of faith and art.

In sum, *Lyrics Alley* is a compelling and evocative portrait of a Sudanese family caught between eras, whose members must reconcile their dreams and desires with the

realities of a changing world. Through the story of Nur and his family, Leila Aboulela offers a profound meditation on identity, resilience, and the enduring bonds of love amid adversity.

III- Results

This thesis research and compared Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003) and Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* (2010) through the theoretical lens of Homi Bhabha's concepts Hybridity,'Third Space' and mimcry from The Location of Culture (1994). Despite the author's differing cultural backgrounds Halaby being Jordanian-American and Aboulela Sudanese the comparative analysis revealed profound thematic and ideological similarities. These emerge most strikingly in their treatment of tradition, identity, and modernity within post-9/11 and postcolonial contexts.

The study has demonstrated that Halaby and Aboulela draw on their cultural and diasporic experiences to craft narratives interrogating the complexity of Arab identity. In West of the Jordan, Halaby juxtaposes traditional Jordanian life with challenges faced by Arab immigrants in the United State after 9/11. In *Lyrics Alley,* Aboulela explores Sudanese society during the postcolonial period, highlighting social and cultural transformations triggered by British colonialism. In both novels, colonial or diasporic pressures destabilize traditional norms, forcing characters to redefine their identities.

Bhabha's concept of hybridity central to postcolonial theory proves pivotal in both works. It illustrates how cultural encounters avoid total assimilation, instead creating hybrid identities in a "third space" where native and Western influences coexist and transform one another. Protagonists navigate these complex cultural landscapes marked by tension, adaptation, and resistance.

Furthermore, both authors address themes like marriage, religion, identity, and gender to reveal how characters especially women negotiate patriarchal structures and restrictive

cultural norms. Halaby and Aboulela critique these norms while depicting their characters' struggles for autonomy and self-affirmation.

Modernity emerges as another core theme: the novels trace shifting gender roles, urbanization's impact, and aaWesternization/globalization through education and technology. Modernity is portrayed as an ambivalent force offering new opportunities (particularly for women) while disrupting existing social orders.

In summary, this research confirms that *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley* address postcolonial concerns of identity, tradition, and modernity through complementary perspectives. Despite distinct historical and geographical settings, Halaby and Aboulela use literature as a space for resistance, negotiation, and cultural critique.

IV. Discussion

Chapter One: Tradition in Halaby's *West of the Jordan* and Aboullela's *Lyrics Alley:* Devotion and Contest

This chapter aims to explore tradition in *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley*. Both *West of the Jordan* by Laila Halaby and *Lyrics Alley* by Leila Aboullela explore traditional values and social norms with a particular focus on family, religion and gender roles. But they do so within different cultural and historical context offering nuanced depections of Arab and Sudanese families respectively. In addition, the representation of tradition in the novels of *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley*, reflects the complex interactions of culture gender and power in postcolonial and Diasporic environment.Both novels present tradition as a multilayered structure characterized by religion, patriarchy and national history. The chapter argues that traditions in these texts are not merely static heritage but dynamic sites of negotiation and struggle, especially for women who face overwhelming pressures within their families, societies, and their own identities.

A-The Depection of Family

Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* and Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* explore the theme of family through the prism of tradition. It highlights how cultural expectations shape and often constrain individual identities, espicially those of women.Using a postcolonial femenist theory, the novels reveal the complex interplay between patriarchal tradition, colonial legacies, and gendered power dynamics within Arab families, particularly in Jordan, Sudan and the Arab American Diaspora.

To start with, in *West of the Jordan* (2003) Laila Halaby chooses to explore the value of family.She explains how family is presented as a major social unity, and traditions are both preserved and controversial. The Jordanian family structure shown is deeply patriarchal, with male authority enforcing strict honor and behavior, particularly against women. This traditional framework regulates marriage, social behavior, and family reputations, and often limits the autonomy of women.

In *West of the Jordan*, Halaby constructs Hala as a hybrid figure negotiating the friction between patriarchal tradition and diasporic modernity. Following her mother's death, Hala's father remains in Jordan, remarries, and imposes rigid gender roles rooted in familial and communal expectations. Hala's rejection of this framework symbolized by her return to the United States. Illustrates the clash between individuated agency and prescribed feminine obligations. Her father's admonition, "You must think about your life now, and plan to put your roots here as a woman" (Halaby 45), encapsulates the sociocultural entrapment of women within traditionalist paradigms, framing marriage and rootedness as non-negotiable facets of female identity.

Similarly, other female characters negotiate traditions differently. Mawal, a cousin of Hala represents acceptance and integration into traditional roles, embodying the continuity of cultural values. In contrast, Soraya and Khadija, in the United States fight against bicultural identities and oppose patriarchy. Khadija's domestic violence. American identity and agency claims highlight the conflict between traditional family dynamics and the possibility of approval outside of these standards.

Homi K. Bhabhas's postcolonial theory provides a compelling framework for understanding the representation of the novel's family and traditions. Bhabha argues that cultural identity is not determined, a hybrid in which colonized subjects negotiate conflicting cultural influences. He states: "Black skin, white masks is not a neat division; it is a doubling, dissembling image of being in at least two places at once" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86).

This hybridity is energised by Hala and Khadija, navigating between traditional Arab expectations and Western norms.In fact, Hala's resistance to patriarchal tradition exemplifies this hybridity. When she asserts, "I am going back with Hamdi and Fay," she reclaims agency influenced by her American upbringing, rejecting the imposed destiny of marrying and settling in Jordan (Halaby, 2003, p. 45). Her identity is neither fully Arab nor fully American but a negotiated hybrid that challenges fixed traditional roles

Khadija's act of defiance-calling 911 to stop her father's violent behavior-illustrates mimicry and ambivalence. Bhabha explains mimicry as a "profound and disturbing" imitation that unsettles colonial authority by exposing its instability (Bhabha, 1994, p. 86). Khadija's use of Western legal protection against domestic violence simultaneously adopts and subverts traditional family loyalty, revealing the ambivalence in her bicultural identity (Halaby, 2003,

p. 207). This act destabilizes patriarchal authority within the family, showing how tradition is contested from within. Bhabha also notes that: "the recesses of the domestic space become sites for history's most intricate invasions" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 87) the family home in *West of*

the Jordan is not a static space of tradition, but a dynamic place where authority is claimed and damaged.

Similarly, in her novel *Lyrics Alley*, Leila Aboulela explores how tradition influences family dynamics. She illustrates how the family represents a blend of both colonial heritage and the complex, evolving traditions of Britain. The Abuzeid family serves as a symbol of Sudanese society, caught between the forces of tradition and change. The patriarch, Mahmoud Bey embodies the tension between modern efforts and firmly fixed cultural practices. His two women express contrasting attitudes towards tradition. The first woman, Wahiba, is deeply rooted in traditional Sudan and Islamic values, living a remote life behind veils and closed doors. Nabila, the second young woman in Egypt, longs for cosmopolitan modernism and looks backwards at Sudan. This domestic sector reflects the broader social conflict between tradition adherence and modernization pressures. Its paralysis represents the vulnerability of traditional expectations under the power of change. The ultimate claim of the self outside of strict cultural limits indicates negotiation of identity beyond strict traditions. This tension corresponds to the notion of Bhabha's imitation in a way that colonial subjects mimic colonial culture, yet challenge and worry about colonial authority. Only life between his family expectations and his personal limitations reflects this ambiguity and the instability of patriarchy.

In addition, Nur, Mahmoud's son suffers from weak accidents that interfere with his expected path in university education, marriage and family management. On his paralysis represents the vulnerability of traditional expectations under the power of change. The ultimate claim of the self from the strict cultural limits of parents demonstrates negotiation of identity beyond strict traditions.

Finaly, both Leila Aboullela's *Lyrics Alley* and Leila HaLaby's *West of the Jordan*.represent family as central locations in their deepest identity, relationships and social expectations, but also serve as spaces of tension and transformation.

est of the Jordan portrays family traditions as a family patriarchy, gender roles, and a powerful force to enforce family within the context of Jordanian and Arabian-Americans. Characters such as Hala and Kadidja oppose the restrictive habits. Hala must marry as expected, and Kadija calls 911 and escapes domestic violence to judge the tension between tradition, personal freedom and cultural identity. This novel examines how tradition can maintain family and impose restrictions on women, particularly for those who navigate the Diasporic reality.

Similarly, in *Lyrics Alley*, family and tradition are dynamic, contested terrains where postcolonial identities are forged. Through Bhabha's framework, the Abuzeids' struggles reveal the ambivalence, mimicry, and hybridity inherent in cultural transitions. Nur's poetic assertion, Nabilah's fraught modernity, and Mahmoud's fractured authority collectively illustrate Bhabha's assertion that "cultural identity is a question of 'becoming' as well as 'being'" (Bhabha, 1994, p. 177). The novel ultimately affirms the resilience of hybrid identities in transcending colonial and patriarchal confines, offering a nuanced portrait of a society.

Together, these novels portray family traditions as a site of debate and negotiation, where cultural identities are shaped amid social and political change. Both novels emphasize the emotional and social complexities of maintaining traditions, adapting to new reality, highlighting both the resilience of family and the potential for transformation of individual institutions.and a family between tradition and transformation.

-Identity and Religion

Identity and religion are seen as body and soul, they are two inseparable parts. Additionally, since religion is frequently linked to the concept of identity, we always refer to religious identity. For instance, when the issue is related to a person's being, we often focuson his identity that includes religion as the most important part. Hence, the focused the meincludes identity and religion. In this regard, James Fearon defines identity as the way individuals and groups define themeselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, individuals and groups define themeselves and are defined by others on the basis of race, ethnicity, religion, language and culture (Fearon, 1999, P.4). Laila Halaby in *Weste of the Jordan* offers a detailed study of religion and identity in the context of tradition, especially from Palestinian Arabian-American women negotiating cultural heritage in the diaspora. The novel shows Islamic religious norms and Arabic cultural traditions as deeply intertwined forces that form personal and collective identities, simultaneously highlighting the tensions that arise when these traditions of Western modernity and diasporic reality are confronted.Through the perspective of Mawal, Hala, Khadidja, Soraya and halaby examines how islamic and Arab cultural traditions shape female identity in the Diaspora.

At first, Religion in the *West of the Jordan* plays two roles; it helps keep things stable and also causes disagreements. Mawal, who lives in the Palestinian village of Nawara, represents the strong connection to tradition, living deeply connected to Palestinian customs. Her identity is closely linked to the community religious practices, where faith is a big part of everyday life. On the other hand, her cousins living abroad see Islam as something that makes them different in Western countries, while pushing back against its male-dominated aspects.

In addition, Hala, who travels between Arizona and Jordan, faces criticism from her family for wearing "blue jeans and 'very unfeminine dresses" when she returns for her mother's funeral (Halaby, 2003, p. 77). This criticism illustrates what Berrebbah (2021) refers

to as the "socio-cultural policing" within Arab communities, where a woman's compliance with religious and cultural standards is seen as a reflection of her moral value (p. 12). Hala's challenge to balance American individualism with Jordanian family expectations highlights Bhabha's idea of liminality, where individuals in the diaspora exist in a transitional space that encourages the formation of hybrid identities (p. 56).

On the other hand, one of the most striking illustrations of this tension is Soraya's declaration: "I am sick of everything being haram or halal, but nothing in between. I am in between" (Halaby. p. 117). Here, Soraya expresse grievances about the strict religious binary files of halal (acceptable) and haram (prohibited) that regulate moral and social behavior in the traditional Arab Muslim context. Her statement captures the border positions of many Arabian-American youth sailing between inherited Islamic values and liquids, and the contradictory cultural expectations of American society. This maintenance is a central aspect of the novel's identity negotiation.Furthermore, khadidja's father's strict control over her actions to maintain family honor shows how religious traditions enforce patriarchal authority and form female identity within the family.

The character's adherence to religious practices does not act much as a personal belief and less than mechanisms to maintain the social order and family reputation. This dynamic illustrates the complex role of religion as a source of identity and as a social regulator of Arab families.

Finaly, the novel illustrates how religion is communicated by cultural practices, not purely through spiritual devotion, which reflects the intertwining of religion with tradition and community identity. This is shown in the arranged marriage, the expectations of women's humility, and struggle against family honor.

Initially, in the novel *Lyrics Alley* Islam is portrayed as a fundamental aspect of identity and a source of tension among characters who have varying degrees of commitment and interpretation. The pious Ustaz Badr represents the spiritual richness of Islamic practice,

with his Ramadan prayers depicted as "a journey filled with its own challenges and joys; its worries and vulnerabilities, its longing for God's mercy." This stands in stark contrast to Soraya's confession that she has "never felt spiritually inclined," emphasizing the diverse levels of religious involvement within the same Muslim community. Ustaz Badr admitts:

> Allah Almighty will say on the Day of Resurrection: O Child offAdam, I fell ill and you did not visit me...As he walked the dark narrow alleyways of Umdurman, onhis way to the lighted saraya of Mahmoud Bey Abuzeid, UstazBadr assigned himself the task of reciting every verse from theQur'an and every Hadith which pertained to the subject ofillness. There were three benefits to this exercise. One, it refreshed his memory; two, it soothed the irritation triggered bythe letter he had received this morning and three, it stopped hismind from wandering to the form and voice of his luscious wife,Hanniyah. (p.15).

In addition, the two women of Mahmoud Bey, Waheeba and Nabilah, embody the relationship between tradition and religion. Wahiba is deeply rooted in Sudanese Islamic customs since the Hijab is a symbol of religious and female empowerment.In contrast, Nabila, a young Egyptian woman, represents cosmopolitan modernity and criticizes certain Sudanese traditions. Their rivalry reduces the wider social conflict between compliance with fixed habits and the pressures of modernization during Sudan's transition to independence. Wahiba says,

> His clapping, his cries, 'Ya Satir', to announce himself so the unveiled women could either flee or cover their heads, when largely ignored. The wide, open-air hoash was lined with beds, little stools and tables. It was a massive kitchen, sitting room andbedroom in which women, servants and children cooked, slept, ate and socialised. Eyes lowered to avoid seeing anything for-bidden, Badr waiting to be noticed. (p.16)

oreover, the novel specifically examines the relationship between religion and disability through the character of Nur. Following his paralyzing accident, Nur transitions from deep despair to a spiritual awakening, guided by Badr, who advises: "Allah tests our patience and resilience. He tests our faith. Be patient and you will receive endless rewards, insha'Allah." This Islamic viewpoint on suffering reshapes Nur's identity from a tragic victim to a reflective poet, demonstrating what Robin Yassin-Kassab refers to as Aboulela's depiction of "Islam's significant role" in offering meaning in times of hardship.

In fact, Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* intricately portrays religion and identity as deeply interconnected and shaped by tradition, yet also subject to negotiation and transformation. Through the lens of postcolonial theory, the novel reveals how Islamic faith and Sudanese cultural practices inform and complicate identity formation amid colonial legacies and social change. The characters' diverse engagements with religion-from devoutness to ambivalencereflect the hybrid, evolving nature of identity in postcolonial contexts. Aboulela's work challenges reductive views of Muslim identity, emphasizing the complexity of faith and tradition as lived experiences that shape selfhood and community.

The analysis of the theme of identity and religion in Laila Halaby's and Leila Aboullela's novels reveals that the female characters in *West of the Jordan* navigate religious traditions mainly through resistance and negotiation in a diasporic, patriarchal context, while in *Lyrics Alley*, women negotiate tradition by balancing conservative and modern religious identities within a Muslim family and society, sometimes reinforcing patriarchal structures themselves.

3-Gender Roles

Gender is another common socio- cultural theme in the novels.*West of the Jordan and LyricsAlley* include all aspects and concerns related to women's and men's lives and situation in society, to the way they interrelate, their differences in access to and use of resources, theiractivities, and how they react to changes, interventions and policies Postcolonial literaturerepresents a new chapter in the emerging dialogues on the issues of race, class, gender andsubalternaty offering new perspectives on the ramification of liberation,Diasporas, emigration and assimilation.

To start with, in *West of the Jordan*, Laila Halaby's offers a profound critique of traditional Arab society through its exploration of gender roles, particularly focusing on the experiences of Arab women caught between the demands of patriarchal tradition and the pressures of modernity and diaspora. The novel's four female protagonists, Hala, Soraya, Mawal, and Khadija embody diverse responses to the gendered expectations imposed by family, community, and culture, revealing how tradition shapes and often restricts women's identities and freedoms.

Ultimately,in *West of the Jordan*,female characters such as khadija and Hala are multifaced individuals navigating the challenges of tradition,patriarchy,and the experience of living in the Diaspora,pushing back against oversimplified portrayals of victimhood.This complexity calls into question the western feminist inclination to depict Arab women as uniformly oppresed For instance, Hala confronts her father's patriarchal authority after her mother's death, threatening self-harm if forced to stay in the village:"If I stay here, I will kill myself. I will go to my mother and then you will have the blood of two people on your hands" (Halaby, p. 45). Because of male identities are also problematized,showing troubled Arab

masculinity in both homeland and Diaspora,caught between tradition and modernity, Mohanty argues that Western feminism constructs the "third-world woman" as a singular, powerless victim, erasing differences of class,culture, and agency"The 'third world woman' is constructed as a singular monolithic subject, an always already constituted group, one that has been labeled as powerless, exploited, sexually harassed and so on" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 335).

In addition, Khadija suffers harsh punishment from her father based on a false rumor about her behavior, illustrating how women's sexuality is rigorously policed and how reputation is a fragile social currency. She repports : "Scary is the rumor started by my brother, Muhammad, whose two dollars I took to buy a barrette, that he saw me at school kissing Michael behind the gym at lunch and having baba not believe me because he doesn't have any reason to" (Halaby, 2003, p. 174). This control reflects the broader societal expectation that women prioritize family and tradition over personal aspirations.Concerning that Mohanty highlights how Western feminist scholarship exercises a colonial power by defining non-Western women as "The Other". "Western feminists are the true subjects and third-world women never rise above their objectstatus" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 337).

On the other hand, Halaby uses the perspective of a female narrator to criticize genderspecific oppression embedded in tradition. The novel invites readers to take part in the character's emotional struggles. For example, Aunt Farah only knows what symbolizes joy, which represents the dissonance between imposed identity and reality, it is mentionned that "One whose name means joy could only know misery" (Halaby, 2003, p. 50). By presenting women who endure domestic violence, social judgment and cultural restrictions, Halaby reveals systemic sexism in patriarchal Arab society and opposes passive victims in Arabic women's reduction stereotypes (Berrabah, 2022)

Likewise, Mohanty (1984) critiques Western feminism for homogenizing non-Western women as passive victims. Mawal's quote complicates this by showing Palestinian women as active critics of cultural imperialism, even as they navigate patriarchal constraints, Mawal reflects on women's grief over the impact of American culture on their men: "You will find many women here [Palestine] grieving over sons and husbands who have forgotten them, or grieving over the evils that country [USA] has introduced their sons to, like drugs and drinking and loose women and gambling" (Halaby, p. 15). This quote critiques Western cultural hegemony (Mohanty, 1984), framing American influence as a destructive force that alienates men from their roots. This aligns with postcolonial feminist critiques of how colonial and neo-colonial powers disrupt indigenous gender norms.

Finaly, in *West of The Jordan*, Laila Halaby uses gender to criticize the traditional Arab society by showing how patriarchy limits women's freedom, and monitors its bodies and decisions through cultural and family expectations. The novel's female protagonist shows the complexity of negotiating gender-specific identity at home and at the diaspora, highlighting the emotional and social costs of tradition. Through empathetic narratives and subtle characterization, Halaby seeks stereotypes and engages in a more integrated understanding of the lives and struggles of Arab women.

qually, in *Lyrics Alley*, Leila Aboullela explores the theme of gender by obstructing the literary tropes of common feminists, where women like automatic resistance at home to male oppression. Instead, the novel shows that women can also act as enforcers of patriarchal norms, follow each other's actions, and continue genderspecific oppression. For example, Wahiba a Sudanese woman often Nabila is troubled by Egyptian women, reflecting how women's solidarity is complicated by differences in culture, generation, and individuals

(Steenkamp, 2020). This dynamic shows how feminism solidarity is not monolithic, but can be broken by internalized patriarchy and social expectations.

Initially, Aboullela's explores how women find solidarity through shared faith and cultural practices, which can be both empowering and limiting. Female characters draw strength from religious education and communal bonds.Yet these same frameworks often reinforce traditional gender roles. This duality reflects the nuanced ways feminisme solidarity operates in contexts where religion and tradition are central to identity .As an illustration, Aboullela's use of the female protagonist like Nabilah and Soraya in *Lyrics Alley* can be seen fighting against stereotyped roles and conventions in society. They want to be free to make their own decisions about relationships, careers, and personal ideologies.

The significance of agency in feminist discourse is emphasized by this resistance.It is noted that: "She left Sudan, but her brother's letters warned: 'Remember who you are'" (Aboulela, 2010, p. 201). which means her libiration limited, and highlighting intersectional barriers , her freedom remains dependent to male approval.Also, Waheeba's resentment and confinement: "Waheeba is confined to her open-air kitchen and resents Nabilah's influence on her family" Mohanty's theory emphasizes the importance of situating women's experiences within their specific historical and cultural contexts, avoiding universalizing assumptions.

Lyrics Alley does this by showing how Sudanese women's lives are shaped by overlapping forces of colonialism, nationalism, religion, and family tradition. Toward Situated and Autonomous Feminisms.*Lyrics Alley* situates gender within Sudanese colonial/postcolonial history and Islamic culture. Mohanty calls for feminist analyses grounded in local histories and cultures: "The construction of 'third world feminism' entails... formulation of autonomous, geographically, historically, and culturally grounded feminist concerns and strategies" (Mohanty, 1984, p. 342).

On the other and, the novel also depicts women's subtle forms of resistance and negotiation within patriarchal constraints. Nabilah's desire to return to Egypt and her influence on the family challenge traditional authority, while Waheeba's eventual confrontation with change reveals internal conflicts over identity and agency. These dynamics resonate with Mohanty's call to recognize women's agency in complex power structures, rather than reducing them to victims of patriarchy.

At the end, Both Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* and Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* critically explore the theme of gender in relation to tradition, revealing the complex ways patriarchal norms shape and constrain women's lives within Arab and Sudanese societies. In *Lyrics Alley*, Aboulela portrays female characters like Nabilah and Soraya who resist stereotypical gender roles imposed by family and society, striving for personal ability to macke their own descision despite cultural and religious expectations. The novel highlights how tradition and patriarchy are not only enforced by men but also reproduced within women's domestic interactions, complicating feminist solidarity and illustrating the nuanced negotiation of power within the home (Sharma & Swami, 2024; Steenkamp, 2020). Similarly, Halaby's *West of the Jordan* presents women caught between tradition and modernity, emphasizing how patriarchal authority controls female sexuality and autonomy, while also portraying women's resistance and identity negotiation in diasporic contexts (Berrebbah, 2021; 2022).

In addition, Both novels employ feminist theoretical frameworks.Aboulela's work aligns with Chandra Talpade Mohanty's feminist postcolonial critique that challenges homogenizing narratives about "Third World women" by emphasizing situated, complex female experiences, while Halaby's novel draws on Arab feminist and postcolonial perspectives to expose hegemonic masculinity and gendered social control. Together, they

reveal that tradition shapes gender roles through cultural, religious, and familial expectations, but also that women actively negotiate, resist, and sometimes reproduce these norms within their specific socio-historical contexts.

In conclusion, *Lyrics Alley and West of the Jordan* offer rich, multifaceted portrayals of gender related to tradition, highlighting both the oppressive structures women face and their agency in challenging and redefining those structures. These narratives contribute significantly to feminist discourse by illuminating the intersections of gender, culture, tradition, and identity in Arab and Sudanese societies.

2. The impact of traditional values on character development in *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley*

1-2.Marriage and immigration

The novel *West of the Jordan* by Laila Halaby explores the theme of traditional values, particularly focusing on marriage and immigration, and their profound impact on the characters' identities and life choices. Traditional values in the novel are deeply rooted in Arab cultural norms, especially regarding marriage and family roles. The expectation for women to marry and stay within the family framework is a dominant cultural norm. By tracking the lives of three female characters in the novel, there is a window into a rich, complicated Arab world. Hala, khadija and Soraya are three cousins, all of whom live in the United States, but with the exception of Mawal, the fourth cousin of the West Bank, this is still not stable in the traditional Palestinian methods of the West Bank. Mawal is the balance of all three other cousins who live in America

Halaby's reinforces the diversity of Arab American girls through the female characters in the novel *West of the Jordn*. Though they are cousins, Khadija and Soraya are completely different. Soraya is open minded, regardless of the will of her parents and her Arab conservative background. Soraya likes to go to wedding celebrations. She dances better than all the other girls in her family. Her mother shows a movie about Jalal's wedding party.

Soraya dances shamelessly, moving her back sexy. Your cousin Jafar is surprised “like those boys who are at school who stare at the posters of naked ladies in their lockers” (27). Jafar says “Wow she knows how shake it .she is really shaking it”. He asks his mother who is the girl. Soraya’s mother feels shame and tries to change the conversation .Halaby supports the idea of cultural shock. Soraya’s mother tells her daughter “it is not proper to behave like that, like a loose woman”. Halaby depicts the suffering of Arab mothers trying to protect their daughters from assimilating the western culture, and this is clear in the family restraints in the life the of three female cousins.

To start with, Hala is the protagonist character in the novel. She moves from Jordan to America to escape the family's traditional values. She wants to release herself from the old days with her Jordanian family. We can see this clearly, as her father hides her book and tells her that she should only read the school books. Her Aunt Suha, tells her mother "you shouldn't let her do this, or no one will marry her"(8), Hala herself says "I was so tired of being made fun of for reading, for being too headstrong, for speaking my mind"(p.9). The Arabian traditional society could not expect a girl who is interested in reading in this way and has this strong character who expresses her thoughts bravely. These features of Hala are very queer, unusual, and unfamiliar and not appropriate to a patriarchal environment, apatriarchal society, which expects a girl to marry and take care of her children.

In the same way, Halaby exposes the thoughts of the traditional Arab family parents who are very careful and ambitious to find husbands to their daughters at the end of their Secondary School. The Arabic society considers a girl as a burden, and when the family finds a husband for the girl they relax from that burden. Hala's father does not allow her to travel to America to live with her uncle Hamdi and his American wife easily. Only her mother insisted and told him if she stays here in Jordan she will rot as her sister Latifah and as her mother, she says: "if Hala stays here she will rot like me and like Latifah. Look at us. We have rotted. Let Hala grow, and dream"(p.9). Halaby wants to hint that Jordan environment is

not suitable for girls like Hala who is active and all the time reading. Maybe if she moves to America she will achieve her dreams. When Hala comes back to Jordan to attend the funeral of her mother, most of the visitors in her house imagine her coming back for marriage not for death as she says,

> I know that they see me with curious eyes. I left before marriage age. I have finished high school and I should be coming back for marriage, not for death. I should have longer hair. I should not wear makeup; I should not wear blue jeans and extremely unfeminine dresses (p.77)

Furthermore, men and women around Jordan view Hala as not known with her short hair, tight pants and blue jeans. All of this is strange and she should not. Her classmate Nira is now married and pregnant, so she has to be like her. She must begin her life as a woman. Hala finds life very difficult to endure with constant criticism and censorship, of her social restrictions in Jordan.regarding that, Hala's experience reflects the complex ways in which patriarchal and cultural norms in Jordan shape and restrict women's identities. Mohanty emphasizes that women's oppression cannot be understood outside their specific socio-political contexts. In Hala's case, the expectation to conform to traditional roles- marriage, motherhood, modest appearance- is a form of gendered social control rooted in local cultural and patriarchal structures.

Indeed, Halaby presentes several social and cultural issues in the lives of our Eastern women. Khadija When her mother's brother said her friend Jennifer Mickey was named after famous American musician singer Mick Jagger, she replied, "this is the problem with America, instead of naming their children after family or prophets or heroes, they name them after Rock stars who would believe such a thing" (p.151).

nother point that influences the acculturation process in Khadija's life is the openness and wild freedom of her friends in America. The evil magazine of her friend Jennifer and her

brother is what Kadija herself describ as accepting. Saying "and I know that I shouldn't be looking at them"(p.151). She knows that she must not watch the nasty and naked pictures in the magazine of Jennifer. When her mother discovers her watching the nasty magazines, "she slapped my face, cursed me, cursed America, cursed my father and cursed God" (p.152)

Halaby wants to present a response to the poor behavior of sons in a traditional conservative family. When Khadija asks her mother for permission to go to a sleep party, she refuses her directly. Saying "You are not going to sleep anywhere outside this family until the day you are married" (p.173).). Khadija knows that her mother will refuse and she knows that if she asks her father he will directly hit her. When Khadija told her friend Pasty that her mother refused, Pasty laughed at her saying "How are you ever going to have sex with a boy if you always have to sleep at home" (173). Khadija was amazed to hear that easiness in the matter of sex and open friendships of Pasty. She exclaims "I have never thought about sex with a boy before I get married"(173). Khadija knows that American girls do, and perhaps even her cousin Soraya does, but she believes she is different.

hadija's mother warns her that boys and friends, especially American boys will take secret things free between their legs for nothing saying "Your husband has to be the one to take it from you|"(179). Otherwise, you are a disgrace to us and we are stuck with you forever"(p.179.) Halaby exposes the issue of virginity and hymen as a symbol of virtue to a girl before marriage and as one of the main factors in the success of Marriage. When Khadija saw her friend Pasty sleeping together with Michael, her American boyfriend, she could not imagine that and "I felt horrible like can't see and can't think"(p.79) She left the room quickly without collecting her books. She went home crying and fell sick for three days from the trauma.

The second character in the novel is Soraya who is represented by Halaby as an example of the Eastern Arab woman who tries to acculturate and assimilate American culture. Despite all her trials, she cannot overcome the Western stereotype of Arabs. Soraya struggles to be American but she could not and feels despair to such a degree that she stops arguments and decides to tell her American friends what they want to hear, and what they expect to hear. She says,

> I tell them what they want to hear which is nasty stories about young men sticking their things into goats and some twelve years old girl being carried off on a camel to be third wife to old Shaykh so and so and the five oil wells my father owns (P.24)

Halaby gives a clear description how the Western society looks at Arabs. She records decades of negative cliches and discrimination and explores the features of her ethnic native history. Soraya breaks the convention of her Arab culture, and adopts Western values. Her Mother thinks that she is a bad girl. Soraya says "she is always comparing us and telling me what good girls are and how I am just a headache" (P.25). Her mother's Arabic cultural background would not accept her loose behaviors Soraya wants to enjoy herself opposing to her sister Pauline, who, though she has an American name, is very conservative. Ishrak Berrebbah, (2021, 2022) asserts that Diaspora space is the site of the immanence of the concepts of diaspora, border and socioeconomic and political issue.

> Diaspora space as a conceptual category is ‘inhabited’ not only by those who are constructed and represented as indigenous. In other words, the concept of diaspora space (as opposed to that of diaspora) includes the entanglement of genealogies with those of ‘staying put’. (p.190)

The generational gap between Soraya and her mother manifests itself clearly in their different reactions to the same situation. As Brah rightly points out, identity is constituted within every day experiences; in the daily stories ‘we tell ourselves individually and collectively’ (P.191)

Along the same line, in *Lyrics Alley* Aboullela's takes readers to the heart of what it means to have faith in an unforgiving world. Moving from the alleys of Sudan to cosmopolitan Cairo and a decimated post-colonial Britain, this sweeping tale of desire and loss, faith, despair, and reconciliation is one of the most accomplished and evocative portraits ever written of Sudanese society at the time of independence.

Seen through this lens, the marriage of the upper class Sudanese merchant Mahmoud Abuzeid to middle class young Egyptian Nabilah in *Lyrics Alley* is something of a common and widespread phenomenon. Equally prevalent is Mahmoud Abuzeid's marriage to his Sudanese cousin, Waheeba, who after her husband‟s marriage to Nabilah resigns herself to the quarters of the mansion the family owns in Umdurman.

At one point, Nur the heir of the Abuzeid family, and the son of Mohamed bey, seemed to be the natural inheritor of the Abuzeid family‟s wealth. He actually prepared to play an important role in the direction of the family business after independence. Only Soraya has already decided on her future lifestyle.They recognize that they are the heads of communities that cause social change during the post-colonial era. In Sudan, when decolonised, as in other African and Asian countries, directly in response to independence, "the possibilities for independent social, economic, and political development seemed within reach," to quote Sivanandan (2005, p. 55).Nur and Soraya has already begun a revolution against the older generation. For example, it laughs out narrow sympathy and male Satanism. When Soraya complains that her father did not allow her to walk to college, he criticizes the brief visibility of his uncle (p. 153).

Nur‟s relentless mimicry of his uncle‟s conservatism represents the criticism of male-chauvinist mentality on a national issue which was hotly debated particularly in postcolonial Sudan. Before Nur capitulates to his fate as handicapped as a result of a diving accident on the

beach of Alexandria, Nur has frequently attended poetry readings that ignite nationalist and patriotic feelings. He shares his thoughts and feelings about this approaching historic moment with his beloved Soraya: "It is the time were living in; everyone is talking about self-determination and independence" (Aboulela, 2010, p. 12) Nur and Soraya "were stirred by the patriotic sentiments that the poem aroused carried a strong sense of their Sudanese belonging. "Their glittering future was here, here in this southern land" (Aboulela, p. 12).

Even after the accident, Nur still feels that "[h]e wants to be the hero of his own life. He wants to do, to reach, to contribute" (Aboulela, 2010, p. 161) Nur violates his mind by writing a poem about his beloved Soraya. Paradoxically, his love poem is misunderstood by his fellow citizens as a national all-talk of the current political relations between Sudan and Egypt. Nur attributes his constant suffering to the accident he experienced on the beach of the Egyptian resort in Alexandria, describing it as the cause of his physical disability. However, within a context deeply influenced by nationalism and patriotism, some Sudanese interpret this poem as a nationalist appeal to end Egypt's presence in Sudan, viewing Egypt as the root of the nation's suffering.

> One day on campus, Soraya passed a Sudan for the Sudanese" rally and stopped to listen. The speaker was adamant in his rejection of any kind of Egyptian influence over a future, independent Sudan. He spoke with passion and serious purpose, then, as if to change tactics, he smiled and said, „"Haven"t you heard the poet say in you Egypt is the cause of my troubles?"(Aboulela, 2010, p. 244)

Soraya believes she plays a role in an ambitious country. She plans to pursue higher education from her family's wealth, her family's infinite support, and sincere love for her. Soraya's future appears to be intertwined with the future of emerging countries. Thus, Soraya's psychology, particularly her libidinal investments, is read primarily in political and social terms when Frediric Jameson reminds us of how Third World texts project political aspects in the form of all stories of the nation (1986, p. 69).

She enrolls in medicine at school and maries to Western-educated man, but Soraya's dream of freedom and progress like that of her country is not satisfied. Soraya's position is the same as the few other Sudanese girls who received an after-school college education. According to Lillian Sanderson, Sudanese girls who reached university training often lived in the liberated world - in a world where two normalized resistance - the university and their home environment.

Soraya wants to challenge what she sees as stagnant Sudanese traditions that render her inefficient, invisible and insignificant. She loves her country, but she loves to be in Egypt where she "[does not] have to wear a tobe in Cairo" (Aboulela, 2010, p. 4) her admiration of Nabilah, her uncle‟s Egyptian wife, is an admiration of a modernity she desires to bring home: "Nabilah was everything that Soraya considered modern" (p. 9). She is eager to discuss the political situation in her country with her elders (p. 158). When she is not allowed to attend nationalist poetry readings, she is about to cry "because exciting, transforming things would happen and she would only hear about them and not be part of them" (pp. 12-13). Shortly, she "wants to be at the centre of everything" (p. 13). Unlike her older sisters, Soraya is conscious of the responsibility she has to shoulder once the new era commences. She even envisions how her sisters "would do her housework for her and look after her children while she went to work" (p. 13). For Soraya, "work" means helping build the nation on solid grounds, a mission that Badr has heftily and wholeheartedly contributed to, but Nabilah has been unaware of.

To conclude, both novels portray marriage as a contested space where tradition collides with changing values. *West of the Jordan* highlights diasporic struggles and inter-generational conflict. Together, they underscore how marriage remains a powerful, often oppressive institution, yet one that is continually reshaped by those who live within its

boundaries while *Lyrics Alley* emphasizes the impact of colonialism and modernization on marital customs.

2-2.Dress as Symbol of Identity

In *West of the Jordan*, dress-especially traditional embroidered dresses-functions as a potent symbol of cultural heritage, female identity, and social expectation. Through detailed descriptions of embroidery and the contrasting experiences of characters who conform to or challenge dress norms. Halaby explores how tradition shapes identity and community belonging.

In the first place, Halaby depicts traditional Palestinian embroidery, practiced in the village of Nawara, Mawal, as a powerful symbol of cultural identity and continuity. The embroidery on the Rosa dress combines Palestine and western stitching and patterns, reflecting the hybrid cultural identity that was rooted and developed. Mawal describes embroidery as the spirit of Nawara, a village that maintains his cultural structure through these traditional crafts despite political upheavals. Mawal on embroidery declared that: "The complicated embroidery on our Rozsa with both Palestinian and western stitches and patterns – capture the spirit of Nawara…" (Halaby, 2003, p. 15).

In fact, Laila Halaby's portrayal of Palestinian embroidered dresses (*rozas*) in *West of the Jordan* exemplifies Mohanty's theory. Mohanty's theory highlights that clothing is not merely functional but a powerful cultural signifier that carries memory, identity, and belonging. Diasporic subjects often experience a "culture clash" when confronted with unfamiliar social norms and dress styles in their host countries, which intensifies their attachment to traditional attire as a way to assert and preserve their ethnic and cultural identity (Mohanty, 2024) The embroidery, combining Palestinian and Western stitches, captures the

“spirit of Nawara” and symbolizes the persistence of tradition despite political and cultural upheaval (Halaby, 2003, p. 15). Characters’ dress choices reflect their negotiation of identity between homeland and diaspora, tradition and modernity.

The communal activity of dress making and embroidery also serves as a social space where women express creativity, village pride, and solidarity. The preparation of hand-embroidered dresses for young girls’ trousseaus, meant to last a lifetime, underscores the importance of tradition in marking life stages and social belonging (Traditional Jordanian Clothing, 2024).

On the other hand, the traditional dresses in the novel are not only cultural artifacts, but also markers of social expectations, especially for women. Wearing traditional clothing means adherence to community values and respect. Conversely, deviations from these clothing codes invite the women to social judgment and alienation. For example, Soraya's choice to wear Westernstyle closed clothes at her wedding in Nawara, and her harsh criticism of the community, is considered to be shameful and threatening to the village's conservative social order. Soraya’s provocative dress and dancing at the wedding: “People say vicious things about Soraya and what she does… ‘Look at Soraya. Can you believe she dances like that with no shame?’” (Halaby, 2003, p. 82) Observing Soraya's behavior, Hala feels sad and concerned, and is aware of the social risks of rebellious traditions.

In addition, Hala herself experiences cultural tensions when she returns to Nawara from the United States. There, her Western dresses (blue jeans and very endless clothes) and language use make relatives and neighbors look with doubt and judgment Hala’s experience of cultural judgment: “I should not wear blue jeans and ‘extremely unfeminine dresses,’ as Aunt Suha says… I have walked so far away from them” (Halaby, 2003, p. 77). This shows how dress functions not only as a symbol of cultural affiliation but also as a visible expression

of identity negotiation, reflecting the struggle between preserving traditional values and supporting modern, diasporic influences.

Equally, *Lyrics Alley* has received remarkable critical acclaim. Yousef Awad (2014) argues that Aboulela populates her novel with characters of diverse socio-political backgrounds that define, delineate and configure the nation in infinite ways. In the process, Awad maintains, each character "[…] anatomizes his/her relationship with the emergent nation, gradually exposing and revealing its crudeness and complexity" (Awad, 2014, p. 70). Seen from this perspective, one may look at each character's choice of clothes as a part of this ongoing process of defining the nascent nation. The novel abounds with examples that highlight the significance of dress codes in the overall discussion of independence, freedom, and progress. In this sense, dress and politics intersect in Aboulela's novel: the ways in which Mahmoud Bey, Nabilah, Soraya, Ustaz Badr and other characters dress up parallel their positions on the circulating nationalist, cultural and socio-political discourses on the eve of the nation's independence. Like Faqir, Aboulela uses dress to highlight the gap between modernity and traditions.

Hence, she sets the differences between Mahmoud Bey and Idris and Nabilah and Hajjah Waheeba. One is reminded of Calefato's view on traditional costume and fashionable dresses. According to Calefato, costume maintains "[…] a close relation between the individual and the community to which he/she belongs" whereas fashionable dress "[…] has a cosmopolitan status" (Calefato, 2004, p. 9).

In the novel, Mahmoud Bey wears expensive modern dress while Idris, for example, in a firsttime meeting with Mr. Harrison the manager of Barclays Bank in Umdurman, wears slippers (Calefato, 2004, p. 12). Mahmoud Bey reproaches Idris because he is worried about

the impression he will make on Mr. Harrison when the two bothers meet him for the first time: "[…] on a day like this! Slippers, in front of Mr. Harrison?" to which Idris answers: he going to listen to me or look at my feet?" (Calefato, 2004, p. 48) While Mahmoud Bey represents modernity, the latter stands for traditions: "Unlike Idris, who was in a jellabiya, he Mahmoud

Bey was wearing his best suit, purchased from Bond Street, and his bally shoes" (Calefato, 2004, p. 49). The way Mr. Harrison is dressed for the meeting is equally telling. Writing a historical novel, Aboulela accentuates the exploitative colonial affairs of the Anglo-Egyptian Administration of Sudan through the meticulous description of the dress code of Mr. Harrison who is the main representative of the British Empire in the novel and he highly reflects his power, authority and self-assertion through his extremely elegant dress. In fact, Mr. Harrison comes to the meeting clad in his comfortable cotton suit.

Hajjah Waheeba looks out of place in cosmopolitan Alexandria; her dress renders her an outsider in Alexandria just as Nabilah's dress code, conversely, reveals her otherness in Umdurman. Throughout the whole novel, Nabilah's relationship with her dress is highly conspicuous. In fact, the first time the reader encounters Nabilah, she is busy adoring herself in front of the mirror: Nabilah put on her navy blue dotted dress and combed her hair, fixing the waves with a touch of cream. She put on her lipstick and used a tiny black brush to smooth her broad eyebrows, then she studied her reflection in the mirror and felt that something was missing. A handbag (Aboulela, 2010, p. 30). Nabilah is conscious of her superiority over other Sudanese women and of her modernity and acute knowledge of fashion; thus, she is aware of her sense of alienation from the Sudanese society through her dress. Through the representation of the ways in which Nabilah is dressed, Aboulela gives hints about this woman's inner thoughts and feelings. Aboulela maintains an effective control over

the cues, namely the psychological ones that can be inferred from the selection of dress of the main characters. Soraya is fascinated by Nabilah's dress code. Soraya sees in Nabilah an icon of modernity.

According to the principle of dress as an "[…] adaptation to the social group", individuals tend to imitate those who are in a higher social rank in order to become a member of that group (Carter, 2003, p. 66; Kawamura, 2005, p. 13). Soraya tries to imitate Nabilah's style of dress because she is "everything that Soraya considered modern" (Aboulela, 2010, p. 9) Naturally, Soraya prefers "Nabilah's elegant clothes that were modelled on the latest European fashions" to the traditional Sudanese tobe. For Soraya, the sartorial choice is not merely a personal taste; rather it is an opportunity to wear the clothes that she thinks suit her identity as a modern Sudanese girl. Soraya's aspirations of progress, freedom, and emancipation are strongly tied to her ability to take off the traditional tobe and replace it with modern attires (Aboulela, 2010, p. 245).

n conclusion, In *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley*, dress, especially traditional embroidered dresses, functions as a potent symbol of cultural heritage, female identity, and social expectation. Through detailed descriptions of embroidery and the contrasting experiences of characters who conform to or challenge dress norms.

3. Exploration of cultural memory and legacy in *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley*

Both *Lyrics Alley* (2010) by Leila Aboulela and *West of the Jordan* (2003) by Leila Halaby delve into the complexities of cultural memory and legacy though they do so in distinct historical and geographical contexts. While *Lyrics Alley* examines Sudanese identity

during the waning years of British colonialism, *West of the Jordan* explores Palestinian and Arab-American experiences in the late 20th century. Despite their differences, both novels highlight how personal and collective histories shape individual identities, often in ways that are full of tension, displacement, and resilience.

irstly, Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* (2003) is deeply involved in Palestinian cultural heritage, which acts as both a source of identity and a site of conflict for the characters. Mawal, who remains in the ancestral village of Nawara in the West Bank, symbolizes rootedness in Palestinian traditions and collective memory. Her storytelling preserves the legacy of Palestinian life and history, anchoring the family's cultural memory in the homeland (Stambouli, 2019). In contrast, the three cousins living in the United States grapple with the pressures of assimilation and cultural insularity. For example, Hala's return to Nawara for her mother's funeral reveals the judgmental attitudes of the local community, which views her as "Americanized" and disconnected from Palestinian social values. This moment highlights the tension between preserving cultural legacy and adapting to new sociocultural environments.

Ultimately, Bhabha's theory of hybridity is central to understanding negotiation of these identities. He design the formation of identity like a third room. This is a boundary zone in which culture is cut and hybrid identity occurs, disrupting robust binary files between colourat and colonization or home and diaspora. Hala embodies this hybridity, a complex identity that is neither completely Palestinian nor completely American. This third room allows characters to creatively reinterpret cultural memory and oppose the essential or monolithic definition of identity. The multiple narrative perspectives of the novel emphasize that cultural heritage is experienced differently by each character.

Also, the novel foregrounds socio-cultural mechanisms such as conservatism and judgmentalism within Arab communities, which contribute to the characters' feelings of liminality and anxiety. Hala describes her experience upon returning to Nawara:

> I feel a mixture of relief and fatigue to be back. So many relatives and neighbours coming to pay their respects […] I know they see me with curious eyes. I left before marrying age […] I should not wear blue jeans and 'extremely unfeminine dresses,' as Aunt Suha says. I should stop using English words. […] I am unconnected. There is discomfort to be in my own house, to wake up in my own language, but all those faces I have carried with me for so long wear suspicion in their eyes as they greet me. I have walked so far away from them (Halaby, 2003.p.77)

This passage illustrates how cultural memory and legacy are policed within the community, enforcing conformity and creating anxious spaces for diasporic women who embody hybrid identities. Furthermore, Kadija's experiences in Los Angeles torn between conservative Arab education and liberal American cultures show even more diverse diasporic identities. Her fear of the sexual freedom of her American friends reflects a conflict of traditional values and modernity, highlighting the complex negotiation of cultural heritage in a diasporic setting. Through a presentation of the history of individual cousins with concept-based titles, Halaby emphasizes the position of individuals within the collective heritage, showing the multiplicity and argument inherent in the formation of cultural identity.

Finaly, *West of the Jordan* explores cultural memory and legacy as dynamic, negotiated processes shaped by diasporic experiences and socio-cultural pressures. Through the lens of Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the "third space," the novel reveals how Palestinian American women inhabit liminal spaces where identities are continuously redefined. The characters' struggles and adaptations illustrate that cultural memory is not a static inheritance but a site of ongoing translation, resistance, and transformation

In parallel, at the heart of *Lyrics Alley* lies the tension between tradition and modernity, indigenous culture and Western influence, which shapes the characters' engagement with their cultural legacy. Mahmoud Abuzeid, the family patriarch, embodies a deep patriotic connection to Sudan and strives to uphold his family's social standing and cultural values amid the shifting political landscape. Yet, the novel also reveals cracks in this legacy, as younger family members and marginalized figures negotiate their identities in a society caught between colonial past and postcolonial future.For instance, Mahmoud's efforts to maintain his family's social and economic status while navigating the complexities of colonial and nationalist politics illustrate the struggle to preserve cultural legacy amid change. His business dealings and social interactions reflect mimicry's ambivalent role as both adaptation and subtle resistance to colonial power.

Additionally, the characters' adoption of Western customs, language, and education-such as Nur's poetry, which resonates with themes of loss and longing, and his physical disability symbolize marginalized voices within Sudanese society. His quest for identity and acceptance exemplifies the creation of hybrid cultural expressions that challenge dominant narratives and embody the "third space" of cultural negotiation. Further, Soraya's journey from orphanhood to finding a place within the Abuzeid family mirrors Sudan's own search for postcolonial identity. Her experiences highlight the fluidity of cultural legacy and the possibilities of redefinition in the liminal "third space" At the end,L eila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley* offers a rich exploration of cultural memory and legacy as dynamic, contested, and negotiated processes shaped by colonial histories, political change, and individual agency.

To conclude, these novels demonstrate that cultural memory and legacy are not merely inherited traditions but lived, negotiated experiences shaped by displacement, colonial histories, and the interplay between tradition, and modernity. Employing Homi Bhabha's

postcolonial theory, both works reveal how diasporic and postcolonial subjects inhabit liminal "Third spaces" where cultural identities are continuously redefined, allowing for new hybrid forms that challenge monolithic narratives and affirm the complexity of cultural belonging.

Chapter two: Modernity in *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley:* Change and Modern Influences

This chapter examines how modernity is represented in Laila Halaby's *West of Jordan* and Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley*. These two novels depict how Arab and Arab-American societies navigate the social and cultural changes brought about by modernity. Through themes such as education, technology, gender roles, and social mobility, the authors highlight the tensions between tradition and modernity. Drawing on postcolonial theories—such as Homi Bhabha's hybridity and Edward Said's Orientalism this chapter seeks to understand how the characters negotiate their identities in a transforming world.

1. Urbanization and its Results on Characters in *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley*: A Postcolonial Perspective

In this chapter, we will explore how urbanization shapes the trajectories of the characters in Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* and Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley*. More than just a backdrop, the city becomes a space of tension, movement, and transformation—where modernity, colonial legacy, and individual aspirations intersect. We will examine how these urban environments influence identity formation and redefine the relationship between tradition and social change.

Urbanization operates not just as a backdrop but as a dynamic force in Halaby's *West of the Jordan* and Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley*. In these postcolonial narratives, the city emerges

as a crucible for cultural negotiation, identity formation, and the tension between tradition and modernity. Urban areas are depicted as zones of disruption and transformation, where characters are compelled to renegotiate their roles within shifting sociopolitical landscapes.

At its core, urbanization involves a profound transformation of both physical and social landscapes. It reconfigures land use, alters economic priorities, and redefines communal relations. As emphasized in *Cities and Urban Life,* urbanization entails changing "land use from rural to urban economic activities… and alters the social structure and social organization of that area". This structural transformation generates deep emotional, psychological, and cultural effects for individuals navigating these rapidly evolving spaces.

In *West of the Jordan*, Halaby's portrayal of Amman exemplifies how urban growth fragmentstraditional familial structures and amplifies cultural dislocation. Hala, a bicultural Arab American, articulates her sense of alienation amidst the city's paradoxes: "The city was a place of contradictions, where old and new collided, where the familiar was constantly unsettled by the unexpected" *(*Halaby.p, 60) Amman, with its modern gated communities and sprawling markets, mirrors the hybrid nature of Hala's identity. Her experiences underscore the psychological toll of urbanizationcaught between cosmopolitan modernity and rooted village life, she struggles to find belonging.

In *Lyrics Alley,* the portrayal of 1950s Khartoum encapsulates Sudan's transition from colonial rule to independence. The city's shifting architecture and social composition reflect the erosion of established hierarchies. Mahmoud Bey, the family patriarch, finds himself increasingly estranged in a city that no longer conforms to the world he once commanded: "Khartoum was not the city of his youth, where traditions held sway and his word was law. The streets buzzed with new voices, new interests" (Abouleila, p. 45). Here, urbanization

signifies more than economic development; it signals the disintegration of patriarchal authority and the unsettling of historical certainties.

Concerning that, Homi Bhabha's idea of the "third space" provides a critical lens through which to examine the ambiguous identities emerging from urban encounters. According to Bhabha: It is that third space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity (*The Location of Culture*, p. 37).

Hala personifies this third space in *West of The Jordan*. Her dual heritage and experiences in Amman place her at the intersection of cultures, where identity is continuously contested and reconstructed. Her statement"I felt like a stranger in my own family, stuck between worlds I could never fully belong to" (p. 60) captures the essence of hybrid subjectivity. Amman becomes a metaphor for this hybridity: an urban landscape rife with tensions between Western modernity and Arab tradition.

Likewise, In *Lyrics Alley*, Nabila's narrative further reflects the ambivalent promises of urban modernity. Educated and ambitious, she views the city as a realm of potential autonomy. Yet, her aspirations are limited by patriarchal norms embedded within the urban environment: "She wanted to break free from the cage of tradition, but the city's streets whispered reminders of the roles she was expected to play" (*Lyrics Alley*, p. 130) . Her trajectory illustrates Bhabha's belief that the Third space is fraught with contradiction offering agency while reinforcing cultural limits.

In *Lyrics Alley*, Mahmoud Bey's ambivalence toward British colonialism exemplifies the internalization and negotiation of Orientalist frameworks. He does not ideologically align

with colonial modernity but values its material advantages: “He disliked English… at the same time, he was in no hurry for them to leave… not for the modernity they were establishing but for the business opportunities they brought” (p. 78) [2]. This strategic complicity reflects the nuanced power dynamics of urban colonial spaces.

Building on these theoretical insights, the novels also employ spatial imagery as a powerful allegorical tool to externalize internal turmoil. In *West of the Jordan*, gated communities represent emotional isolation, while crowded marketplaces evoke cultural saturation and chaos. These physical spaces function allegorically, reflecting the characters’ internal negotiations of identity, security, and alienation. Hala’s trajectory through Amman’s fragmented topography mirrors her psychological disorientation.

However, In *Lyrics Alley*, Khartoum is portrayed as a city suspended between two epochs. Its colonial buildings stand in uneasy juxtaposition with traditional marketplaces, illustrating a city riven by temporal and ideological contradictions. This divided geography becomes a metaphor for the fragmented identities of its inhabitants. Drawing on Anthony King’s theories of colonial urbanism—particularly his analysis of how colonial cities spatially reinforce imperial power through segregation and symbolism—one can argue that these cities reproduce imperial hierarchies through built form. King notes that "colonial urbanism was not merely the result of functional necessity but a deliberate attempt to structure racial and class divisions through architecture and space" (*Colonial Urban Development*, 1976).

This theoretical framework emphasizes how the spatial arrangements in both novels reflect broader postcolonial struggles. The emotional resonance of these spaces underscores how urban geography is inextricably linked to postcolonial identity. Characters’ movements

through these divided spaces become enactments of their broader struggles with memory, belonging, and transformation.

Another point is that Urbanization, in *West of* crucible where identities are tested, transformed, and reasserted.*the Jordan and Lyric Alley*, is not merely a matter of physical expansion it is a deeply postcolonial process, fraught with ideological, cultural, and emotional implications. It destabilizes traditional structures, provokes identity crises, and exposes the contradictions of modernity. Through Bhabha's lens of hybridity, characters are revealed as products of multiple cultural influences, constantly negotiating their place within a shifting world. Through Said's critique of Orientalism, the enduring impact of colonial frameworks becomes evident in how characters perceive and inhabit urban spaces. Ultimately, Halaby and Abouleila do not present cities as utopias or dystopias. Rather, they offer nuanced portrayals of urban environments as contested terrains spaces of both dislocation and renewal.

2.1 Westernization and its Impact on Arab Identitfication and Subculture in *West of theJordan* and *Lyrics Alley*

This section looks at how Westernization- the spread of Western ideas and values- shapes Arab identities in Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* and Leila Aboulela's *Lyrics Alley*. Both novels show how colonialism and globalization create mixed feelings: they bring new opportunities but also threaten to erase local cultures. Through their characters' stories, Halaby and Aboulela explore the struggles of people caught between traditional ways of life and modern Western influences. In the end, these characters create new, hybrid identities though not without conflict and change

Westernization understood here as the adoption, imposition, or internalization of Western cultural norms, values, and socio-political frameworks serves as a crucial lens via which to look at the transformation of Arab identity in Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan* and Leila Aboullela's*Lyris Alley*. These novels monitor how the legacy of colonialism and the forces of globalization generate a profound ambivalence: they offer both emancipatory ability

and cultural erosion. Via nuanced characterizations and layered narratives, both Halaby and Aboullela discover how Arab individuals navigate the complicated terrain between inherited traditions and encroaching Western ideologies, often ensuing in hybrid identities marked via dislocation, resistance, and reinvention.

To start with *West of the Jordan*, Halaby centers on reviews of four Palestinian-American cousins Hala, Randa, Soraya, and Mawal each of whom confronts the cultural and mental ramifications of Westernization in awesome methods. Those younger ladies, divided between the United State and Jordan, conflict to reconcile the expectancies in their Arab households with the values of yank individualism, gender autonomy, and secular liberalism. Halaby's portrayal underscores the fissures and opportunities that rise up from this cultural in-betweenness.

Hala, possibly the maximum vividly drawn individual, voices her alienation in a second of deep introspection: "I felt like a stranger in my own family, caught between worlds I could never absolutely belong to" (*West of the Jordan*, p. 60). This statement exemplifies what Homi Bhabha identifies as the "unhomely circumstance," a symptom of postcolonial identification in which people now not feel at domestic in both the tradition of beginning and the host society. Consistent with Bhabha identity isn't always formed in isolation but emerges inside a "0.33 area," a liminal sector of negotiation,

> It is that third space…, which ensures that the meaning and symbols of tradition have not any primordial team spirit or fixity; that even the equal signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew (The Region of Culture, p. 37).

Hala's fractured sense of identity is not only caused by being physically displaced, but also reflects a deeper crisis in understanding brought on by the influence of Western modernity. Her story highlights that cultural hybridity does not always lead to empowerment, it can also result in psychological disorientation and social exclusion.

Moreover, Halaby reviews Western representations of Arabs through satirical and biting statement. The yank characters regularly express specific Orientalist assumptions,

which reinforce the West's cultural superiority and reduce Arab identification to a cool animated film,

> They think inside the Arab global there are not any furnishings or dishwashers, simplest oil… nasty memories about younger guys sticking their things into goats and some twelve-12 months-old female being carried off on a camel to be 1/3 spouse to old shaykh (West of the Jordan, p. 24).

Such remarks reflect Edward Said's foundational argument in Orientalim, where he states that the West constructs the Orient as its cultural different, a space of exoticism, irrationality, and stagnation:"The end result is usually to polarize… the Oriental will become greater Oriental, the Westerner more Western" (Orientalism, chapter 1).

Equally, Halaby's narrative therefore stands as a counter-discursive task that resists and reclaims Arab identification. Via her complex female characters, she dismantles the monolithic and patriarchal depictions regularly located in Western narratives. Scholars like Najua Stambouli emphasize this method, noting that Halaby "renders Arab characters intelligible of their emotional complexity, refusing to reduce them to the binaries of sufferer or terrorist" ("Pics of Non-Arabs in *West of the Jordan*," 2019)

2.2 Westernization and the Politics of Modernity in *Lyrics Alley*

Set in mid-twentieth-century Sudan, *Lyrics Alley* dramatizes a society undergoing rapid socio-political transformation beneath the lingering shadow of British colonialism. Westernization is embedded within the novel not as a monolithic pressure, but as a contradictory set of influences, instructional development, capitalist ambition, gender reforminteracting with entrenched traditions. Via its significant characters, the novel provides a multilayered account of how Arab identities are reshaped via those pressures.

To start with Mahmoud Bey, a wealthy patriarch and businessman, he personifies the ambivalence of the colonized elite. His mind-set towards the British presence in Sudan is pragmatic but conflicted,

> He disliked English, now not because they had invaded his country, however because of the attempt required to apprehend their one-of-a-kind languages and customs. At the identical time, he was in no hurry for them to go away, for he

> widespread them… no longer for the modernity they have been setting up however for the commercial enterprise opportunities they introduced with them (*Lyrics Alley*, p. 78).

This nuanced stance displays a principal subject in postcolonial research the internalization of colonial ideologies and the simultaneous choice for self-willpower. Mahmoud Bey's admiration for British performance and structure coexists with a tacit acknowledgment of cultural encroachment. His man or woman echoes Frantz Fanon's concept that the colonized situation often aspires to adopt the values of the colonizer even as resenting them (*Black Skin, White Masks*, 1952).

Equally, Nabilah, Mahmoud's more youthful wife, embodies the postcolonial anxiety between tradition and Western beliefs of freedom and selfhood. Her craving to redefine herself past prescribed gender roles captures the generational shift in values:"She desired to break unfastened from the cage of lifestyle, but the city's streets whispered reminders of the roles she become expected to play" (*Lyrics Alley*, p.130).Her internal war demonstrates that Westernization does no longer result in the wholesale abandonment of Arab tradition; as a substitute, it produces layered subjectivities where inherited norms are puzzled but not usually discarded. This complexity aligns with Bhabha's belief of cultural negotiation in preference to substitution. Furthermore, it reflects the insights of scholars like Nawel Meriem Ouhiba, who argue that both Halaby and Aboulela utilize narrative multiplicity to reveal "how resistance and accommodation feature simultaneously in the colonial matrix of electricity" ("Resistance and Counter-Hegemonic Discourse in West of the Jordan," 2021). Along the same line, Aboulela also resists a reductive birthday party of Westernization the radical suggests that at the same time as Western education and financial improvement provide new freedoms, additionally they convey with them alienating ideologies and gendered expectations that may not align with nearby realities. The radical for this reason reviews the belief that Western modernity is universally appropriate or morally superior.

Each *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley* perform in the theoretical frameworks of Bhabha and stated to interrogate the cultural ramifications of Westernization. Bhabha's principle of hybridity is in particular relevant in expertise how the characters in each novels

construct identities which are neither completely traditional nor entirely Western: “Hybridity is the third space that enables different positions to emerge” (The vicinity of lifestyle, p. 38). This third space becomes a domain of each empowerment and estrangement, wherein characters inclusive of Hala and Nabilah articulate a reimagined selfhood that defies inflexible binaries.

In a similar way, each authors venture the hegemonic narratives critiqued by using Edward said in Orientalism. The novels do not merely represent the Arab world for a Western audience; they actively dismantle the gaze that seeks to outline it from with out. They offer a platform for Arab voices to narrate their very own complexities, struggles, and aspirations, thereby participating in what Gayatri Spivak phrase the "epistemic violence" of reclaiming representation from colonial discourse (Can the Subaltern Communicate, 1988).

Moreover, Westernization as depicted in *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley,* is neither a uni-directional pressure nor an uncontested process. It is far fraught with contradictions, presenting each avenues of liberation and modes of cultural imperialism. Intimate individual studies and richly specified narratives, Halaby and Aboulela illustrate how Arab people navigate those tensions through forging hybrid identities within a globalized international. Drawing on the theories of Bhabha and Said, the novels emphasize that postcolonial identity is a continual act of negotiation concurrently fashioned by using historic legacies and the evolving needs of modernity.

3. Changing Gender Roles and Identity i in *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley*

First, In *West of the Jordan*, Halaby examines the lives of four Palestinian-American women navigating the clash between Arab cultural traditions and Western modernity. The novel critiques rigid gender roles while illustrating the psychological toll of patriarchal oppression.Female characters like Hala, Khadija, and Aunt Farah confront societal

expectations that confine them to roles defined by chastity, obedience, and domesticity. Aunt Farah's forced marriage to an abusive older man reflects the patriarchal control over women's bodies and choices: "He gave her fists that pounded her with welts to cover her body… until it broke her father's heart and he convinced her husband to release her with divorce" (*West of the Jordan*, p. 51). Her story underscores the violence embedded in traditional marital arrangements and the limited agency afforded to women in rural Palestinian society.

In addition, male characters like Khadija's father and Haydar embody toxic masculinity, enforcing control through violence and emotional repression. Their rigid adherence to tradition highlights the fragility of patriarchal power in the face of modernity. As Berrebbah notes, these men's identities are "troubled" by their inability to reconcile traditional roles with changing social dynamics. (Berrabah, 2021)

Similarly, *Lyrics Alley* juxtaposes traditional gender roles with emerging modernist aspirations, particularly through the Abuzeid family's internal conflicts. Nabilah and Waheeba, Mahmoud Bey's two wives, represent opposing responses to modernity. Waheeba adheres to Sudanese customs, wearing traditional dress and prioritizing familial duty, while Nabilah embraces Egyptian cosmopolitanism: "Nabilah surrounded herself with the sights, accents and cooking smells of Egypt, closing the door on the heat, dust and sunlight of her husband's untamed land" (*Lyrics Alley*, p. 130). Nabilah's desire for education and autonomy mirrors the aspirations of Arab feminists who seek to reconcile modernity with cultural authenticity.

However, Nur Abuzeid, the family's heir, becomes paralyzed after a diving accident, symbolizing the fragility of patriarchal authority. His physical incapacitation forces him to redefine his identity beyond traditional masculine roles, turning to poetry as an outlet"This was where she belonged with Nur, right here, here in his songs. Here within the lyrics they were intimate, caught in the rhythm of his words, propelled by the substance of his dreams.

These songs would be their story and these lyrics their home" (*Lyrics Alley*, p. 4). Nur's lyrical voice becomes a site of resistance, challenging stereotypes of Arab masculinity as unemotional or rigid.

In addition, the novel critiques British colonial influence while depicting the "intentional hybridity" of Sudanese society. Characters like Mahmoud Bey admire Western economic opportunities but resist cultural assimilation, embodying Edward Said's observation that colonialism creates polarized identities:"He disliked the English… but admired them for the business opportunities they brought" (*Lyrics Alley*, p. 78). This ambivalence reflects the broader struggle to navigate postcolonial identity without erasing local traditions.

Equivalenly, both novels align with Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity, where characters negotiate identities in a "Third Space" that transcends rigid binaries of tradition/modernity or East/West. For instance, Hala's bicultural existence and Nabilah's cosmopolitanism illustrate how Arab women craft fluid identities amid cultural flux.While Edward Said's *Orientalism* frames the Western gaze that exoticizes Arab women, as seen in Jake's fetishization of Salwa in *West of the Jordan*:"Her foreignness made her sophisticated. Exotic. And married. The challenge… turned him on" (*West of the Jordan*, p. 171).This critique underscores how Western stereotypes perpetuate gendered oppression, even as characters resist these narratives.

Moreover, *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley* reveal the complexities of gender identity in Arab societies undergoing modernization. While tradition imposes constraints, characters like Soraya, Nabilah, and Nur demonstrate agency through rebellion, creativity, and hybrid selfexpression. These narratives challenge Orientalist stereotypes and contribute to broader feminist discourses advocating for a "middle way" that harmonizes tradition and modernity, affirming the dynamic, evolving nature of Arab gender role.

Gender Roles, Honour, Shame, and reputation.

Indeed, gender roles are deeply entwined with the socio-cultural constructs of honor, shame, and reputation. Both novels portray Arab and Arab diasporic societies where femininity and masculinity are not simply personal identities but communal performances regulated through collective notions of respectability. These narratives demonstrate how patriarchal control over women's bodies and men's authority functions to preserve social order, while also revealing how such systems are contested and negotiated in shifting cultural and modern contexts. female honor is predominantly framed through chastity, modesty, and obedience. Women's behavior is symbolic of family reputation and communal morality. In *West of the Jordan*, Khadija's experience encapsulates the constant scrutiny over female sexuality. Her frustration with rigid binaries of morality is made explicit: "I'm so sick of everything being haram or halal, but nothing in between. I am in between" (*West of the Jordan*, p. 117).Her expression of "in-betweenness" suggests a liminal identity one that resists simple categorization and challenges the cultural expectation that women function as guardians of family honor. The quote signals her emotional and cultural conflict, illustrating how honor operates as a mechanism to police femininity.

Similarly, in *Lyrics Alley*, Nabilah's desire for autonomy is constrained by her role as a woman responsible for maintaining family respectability. Though she longs for freedom and education, her surroundings serve as a reminder of what is expected of her: "Nabilah surrounded herself with the sights, accents and cooking smells of Egypt, closing the door on the heat, dust and sunlight of her husband's untamed land" (*Lyrics Alley*, p. 130).Here, Nabilah retreats into a cosmopolitan Egyptian identity that contrasts with the patriarchal norms of Sudanese society. While her escape is symbolic, it reveals the emotional toll of performing femininity under the weight of honor-based expectations.

While women are tasked with preserving honor through moral conduct, men are expected to uphold it through authority, strength, and protection. Any perceived failure results in shame— a powerful social sanction that polices male identity.In *Lyrics Alley*, Mahmoud Bey's patriarchal control is destabilized by the paralysis of his son, Nur. Nur's disability disrupts traditional ideals of male vigor and lineage: "This was where she belonged with Nur, right here, here in his songs. Here within the lyrics they were intimate, caught in the rhythm of his words, propelled by the substance of his dreams" (*Lyrics Alley*, p.4).Though not directly from Mahmoud's perspective, this description illustrates how Nur's identity as a poet and disabled man redefines masculinity. His physical vulnerability and emotional depth challenge the traditional Arab masculine ideal of control and strength, revealing the fragility behind hegemonic masculinity.along the same line In *West of the Jordan*, Khadija's father enforces patriarchal codes through emotional abuse and authoritarian behavior. His concern with honor reflects deep anxiety about his own authority being undermined. Male characters such as him are not only enforcers of honor but also its victims, compelled to maintain control under threat of public shame.

Shame functions as a disciplinary force across both texts, used to maintain gender norms and protect social hierarchies. It operates externally through community surveillance and internally through self-regulation. As Aneta Barbara Stępień notes, shame "protects the powerful hierarchies that exist between different masculinities and between men and women," producing anxiety and marginalization when individuals fail to conform (Stępień, 2013, p. 299).

Soraya's sexual rebellion in *West of the Jordan* exemplifies this dynamic. Her behavior challenges communal definitions of honor: "She enjoyed playing the Palestinian daughter who had run away from her culture, her father, her shame" (*West of the Jordan*, p.

170).her selfawareness reflects a defiant reappropriation of shame. Rather than internalizing it, she performs her transgression as a critique of the social structures that seek to define and limit her. Her rebellion destabilizes the assumed link between female virtue and family honor.

Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity offers valuable insight into how characters navigate these strict gender roles. His concept of the "Third Space" describes a site of negotiation where cultural binaries—such as tradition and modernity, masculinity and femininity—are deconstructed: "Hybridity is the 'Third Space' which enables other positions to emerge" (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, 1994, p. 38).Characters like Khadija, Soraya, Nabilah, and Nur occupy this hybrid space. Their identities are not confined to traditional expectations; instead, they navigate between cultural systems, creating new modes of being that resist fixed definitions of gender.Edward Said's critique of *Orientalism* also illuminates how honor and shame are misrepresented in Western discourse. Orientalist frameworks often reduce Arab societies to caricatures of oppression, especially concerning gender. In *West of the Jordan*,

Soraya's exoticization by her American lover reflects this dynamic: "Her foreignness made her sophisticated. Exotic. And married. The challenge… turned him on" (*West of the Jordan*, p. 171).This quote exemplifies how Arab women are fetishized through orientalist lenses—as mysterious, dangerous, and sexually alluring. Such portrayals distort the lived realities of honor and shame, turning complex cultural codes into eroticized tropes.

To conclude, *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley* offer nuanced critiques of how gender, honor, and shame intersect in Arab and Arab diasporic societies. Femininity is burdened with preserving moral reputation, while masculinity is bound to authority and strength. Yet both men and women are subject to the disciplining force of shame, which

enforces conformity and punishes deviation. Through rebellion, introspection, and hybrid identities, the novels' characters resist the rigid honor codes imposed upon them. Drawing on Bhabha's and Said's theories, the texts expose both internal and external systems of control—offering a critical lens on the gendered dynamics of modernity, tradition, and cultural negotiation.

Education, Technology and Social Mobility in *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley*

Today, education, technology, and social mobility play an important role in how people see themselves and build their future. In stories about Arab and Arab American life, these themes often show the struggle between old traditions and modern changes. This part will look at how these forces affect the characters in *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley,* helping us understand how they deal with questions of identity, opportunity, and change.

Both *West of the Jordan* and *Lyrics Alley* explore the subject matters of education, technology, and social mobility as effective forces shaping identity and social positioning in cutting-edge Arab and Arab American contexts. Those novels gift training now not only as a method of personal empowerment and economic advancement but also as a contested area in which characters negotiate between tradition and modernity, among colonial legacies and globalized futures.

First , in *West of the Jordan*, training emerges as a critical automobile for social mobility and self-willpower, mainly for Arab American kids navigating bicultural identities. Hala, a younger Arab American protagonist raised in Arizona, is making ready to enter college,a symbolic gateway to upward mobility and private enterprise: "Hala has just finished

excessive faculty in Arizona and intends to go to college" (Publishers Weekly). Her instructional trajectory gives a stark evaluation to that of her cousin Mawal, who remains inside the rural village of Nawara insidethe West bank, where educational possibilities are restrained by using traditional gender expectancies and political instability.the novel implicitly evaluations the choppy international get right of entry to to schooling and modernization, highlighting the disparities between diasporic Arab people and people living in the Arab global.

Halaby also conveys the psychological burden involved in navigating between cultures.as Arab American children struggle to reconcile their history with the individualistic values promoted through Western schooling. Despite the fact that Halaby does not explicitly focus on digital or technological equipment, the novel's urban and diasporic settings suggest the influence of worldwide media and conversation networks. These invisible but pervasive forces make contributions to the formation of hybrid identities that are constantly mediated via cultural alternate and Western technological modernity.

Equally, in *lyrics Alley***,** schooling performs a further transformative role but is situated within the socio-political context of 1950s Sudan a society undergoing decolonization and modernization. Nabilah, the second wife of the patriarch Mahmoud Bey, aspires to intellectual independence and education as a means of escaping patriarchal constraints: "She wanted to break free from the cage of tradition, but the city's streets whispered reminders of the roles she changed into predicted to play" (Aboullela, 130). Her longing for education reflects not only a personal desire but also a broader shift in gender roles catalyzed by colonial contact and global modernity. The novel also depicts schooling as intricately linked to social mobility and family dynamics. Mahmoud Bey's mindset toward British colonialism is marked by ambivalence resentment of cultural domination coexists with admiration for the business opportunities and infrastructure introduced by the colonizers: "He disliked the English, not

because they had invaded his country, but because of the effort required to understand their distinct languages and customs. At the same time, he was in no hurry for them to leave, for he noticed them… not for the modernity they were setting up but for the business opportunities they brought with them" (Aboulela 78).also the Technological development, though not foregrounded explicitly, is woven into the fabric of urban modernity in *Lyrics Alley*. The growth of printing, commerce, and urban life signals a new era of social reordering, in which access to knowledge becomes a key determinant of status and mobility.

Furthermore, education in both novels serves as a key mechanism for reshaping identity and challenging structural barriers. For Arab American characters in *West of the jordan*, Western education offers a pathway to autonomy and cultural negotiation, though complicated by systemic racism and internal cultural tensions. In *Lyrics Alley*, education becomes a symbol of social progress, especially for women like Nabilah, while also revealing the gendered and colonial constraints embedded in Sudan's evolving society.The narratives confirm sociological understandings of education as both a domain of emancipation and a site of cultural reproduction. They also suggest that educational access is never neutral it is shaped by colonial histories, gender norms, and economic stratification.

omi Bhabha's theory of hybridity provides a useful lens through which to interpret the characters' educational journeys. According to Bhabha, hybridity enables the emergence of a "third space" where fixed cultural identities are disrupted and renegotiated: "It is that third space…which ensures that the meanings and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew" (Bhabha, 37). Education and technology, in both novels, facilitate entry into this third space, allowing characters to resist essentialist identities and discover new social roles.

Simultaneously, Edward Said's concept of Orientalism contextualizes the power asymmetries inherent in Western educational and technological systems. These systems, while offering avenues for advancement, also carry embedded hierarchies that have historically devalued and exoticized Arab and Islamic cultures. In both novels, characters navigate these paradoxes—adopting aspects of Western modernity while remaining aware of their cultural marginalization.

At the end, both novels depict education and technology as powerful, yet ambivalent, forces that shape social mobility, gender roles, and cultural identity within the contemporary Arab and Arab American experience. While education opens doors to empowerment and hybrid identities, it also surfaces tensions between tradition and modernity, indigenous knowledge and colonial frameworks, homeland and diaspora. Together, these novels underscore the complexity of cultural negotiation in a globalized world, where the quest for understanding remains both a personal and political act.

V. Conclusion

This piece of research is a comparative study between Laila Halaby's *West of the Jordan (2003)* and Leila Aboulella's *Lyrics Alley (2010)* as.

It reveals a nuanced portrayal of Arab identity which negotiate amid cultural, social, and political upheavals. We have relied in this research on Homi Bhabha's theoretical approach, developed in his book the *Location of Culture*.

In fact, the two cited novels are good examples on which Bhabha's theory can be applied. This theory allowed us to study and show how tradition and modernity are not binary opposites but intersecting forces shaping personal and collective identities Ultimately.These works contribute to a richer understanding of Arab identity formation, emphasizing the ongoing dialogue between past and present, home and diaspora, and the local and the global.

Through our research we have explored the traditional values and social norms in both Jordanien and sudaness societies. We have tried to mitigate the daily life of Arab people in the postcolonial periode and how people mixt tradition and modern vlues in both novels,and how traditional life experiences and values are depicted whether in Sudan or Jordan. Specifically portraying the familly structure, the gender roles whithin, identity and religion .Highliting the impact of tradition values on charachter developmment in both novels.

At the end, we have evoked the changes end the influenc that have been brought by Westernization and Globalization .In addition, we have studied urbanization and its effects on thier socities in general.We have also analyzed how gender roles and identity change in the modern world due to the influence of technologie and education.

We have come to the conclusion that these novels underscore that tradition and modernity in the Arab world and diaspora are fluid, contested, and deeply interconnected. Both authors illuminate how individuals, especially women, negotiate these forces to carve out spaces of empowerment and belonging. *West of the Jordan and Lyrics Alley* contribute significantly to postcolonial and diaspora literature by challenging simplistic binaries, and offering layered insights into the evolving Arab experience in a globalized world. This comparative study has enriched our understanding of identity formation as a continuous dialogue between past and present, home and exile, tradition and innovation. The scope of this research did not allow us to deal with all the issues.The novels are still rich grounds for new perspective and researchs.

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