Hybridity and the Iraqi Immigrants' Negotiation of Cultural Identity in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*.

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Abstract:

The aim of this thesis is to investigate the Iraqi immigrant's negotiation of cultural identity and belonging in two selected novels; Diana Abu Jaber's Crescent (2003) and Inaam Kachachi's The American Granddaughter (2008). These two novels were selected for comparative study because they present similar narratives of Iraqi immigrants' experience in diaspora. The thesis uses the framework of hybridity that was developed by the postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha to explore the identity crisis of the Iraqi immigrant in each novel. The thesis theorizes that each of the portrayed Iraqi immigrants in the novels selected for study negotiates his\her cultural identity crisis. This negotiation works along the lines of cultural hybridization.

KEYWORD: (Immigration, Hybridity, Cultural Identity and Belonging)

Analysis

Hybridity played an operative model in forming or negotiating cultural identity in the case of Iraqi immigrants as it is presented in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*. For Stuart Hall, it is the mutual or real self-hidden within the various other identities, more superficial or unnaturally imposed selves that a people with a common past and ancestry share; which can stabilize, fix, or ensure an unchanging oneness or cultural sense of belonging underneath all those other differences. Again, Stuart Hall writes that:

It accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and constantly in process of change and transformation (4).

The identity politics underlines much of *Crescent*. For instance, the protagonist Sirine had declared the way of preparing the Thanksgiving meal in their house as the restaurant will be closed for that occasion; saying:

At work, Sirine announces that this year will be an Arabic Thanksgiving with rice and pine nuts and ground lamb in the turkey instead of cornbread, and yogurt sauce instead of cranberries. Mireille sulks and says she doesn't like yogurt and Sirine say, annoyed,

why can't we ever do things differently? . …In the past Sirine would be absorbed for weeks with thinking about what she would cook for Thanksgiving. It was her mother's favorite holiday and the traditional American food…. But things are different now. Her mind has been taken up by Han (*Crescent* 180)

This is notably attached to a sense of accepting the cultural differences as a way to Sirine to negotiate her own cultural identity in things that she prefers notably food. Hence, one's cultural identity could rightly be changed due to the long experience with more than one culture. Besides, this highlights Sirine's will for adaptation with the Arab community despite the fact that she is "half" Iraqi and doesn't speak Arabic. Moreover, she integrated her American culture with that of the Arabic one which is as well part and parcel of her identity. Knowingly, this is what Bhabha calls for as the consent, asserting "[i]t is the will that unifies historical memory and secures present-day consent. The will is, indeed, the articulation of the nation-people" (*The Location of Culture* 160). Therefore, interrogating cultural identity is a worldview in a sense that individuals accept the norms and values of several communities in their life. Notwithstanding, being like Sirine as from an Iraqi father and an American mother gives her the access to obtain a bicultural background; and this would highly broaden her consciousness of what Anne Campbell describes as “the difference between self and others” (37), meaning that the attitudes and norms undoubtedly vary from person to another. Especially when Sirine asserts for doing "things differently" a sense of consent as well as acceptance of the difference and adapting herself with the Arabic cuisine. Thus, this is indeed how she negotiates her own identity. Again, this fusion of the culinary narratives in fact reinforces and redefines cultures.

Spatial restraints play a crucial role in negotiating cultural identity in diasporic contexts. Han for instance, wonders about Sirine's current residency in Los Angles, asking:

“why you'll never leave L.A” she simply said I guess I’m always looking for my home, a little bit. I mean, even though I live here, I have this feeling that my real home is somewhere else somehow” (…). “What makes a place feel like home for you, then? [Han askes]” “Work,” she says. “Work is home.” (*Crescent* 116)

Sirine's attempt to do things differently reflects her endorsement of the universal set of values like showing mutual respect as well as ethical behaviors. Similarly, it is a strategy of globalization that helps negotiate her cultural identity because globalization essentially transcends the prospective national boundaries. Thus, this act, doesn't lead to a sense of being exclusionary rather to multicultural blending (Chenchen et al. 3).

However, this mixedness of food preparing in the contact zone is theoretically attached to what Bhabha emphasizes on hybridity and the difference of cultures: "[w]hen two cultures or nations meet, ideas, language and material goods are shared between them"

(*The Location of Culture*11). Outwardly, this share, is an obvious adaptation which leads rightly to hybridization among individuals.

This is clear in the case of Han who still feels as if he is an identity-have not. This is proven through his conversation with Sirine about social identities that are difficultly attained or achieved by the *others* who with no doubt represent immigrants. Nonetheless, he describes himself as an absent, or a torn body. So, he is even unable to identify himself with family nor religion, but rather as a torn body even though he lives in a safe place:

"For me, it's more complicated than that. I've heard of people defining themselves according to their work or religion or family. But I pretty much think I define myself by an ***absence***." She [Sirine] dares a glance at him. "What absence?" "Well, I'm no longer a believer but I still consider myself a Muslim. In some ways, my religion is even more important to me because of that." "How can you be Muslim if you don't believe in it?" "I don't believe in a specific notion of God. But I do believe in social constructions, notions of allegiance, cultural identity…. Oh." [. . .] But then he says, "The fact of exile is bigger than everything else in my life. Leaving my country was like—I don't know—like part of my body was torn away. I have phantom pains from the loss of that part—I'm haunted by myself. I don't know—does any of that make any sense? It's as if I'm trying to describe something that I'm not, that's no longer here." (*Crescent* 159; emphasis added; the first ellipsis in source).

So, it is the claim of the current study that Han still feels as an exiled individual who (really) has no certain cultural identity. Such a claim comes from the fact that he cannot even ascribe himself to the country he resides in now, which means that his cultural identification is threatened with instability. That is suggestively why he is still in an interrogative manner of his sociocultural, physical and even psychological makeup. Theoretically speaking, Bhabha writes that "the act of negotiation will only be interrogatory" (*The Location of Culture* 43). This additionally articulates that immigrants will live in wonders about their real belonging and the way they can negotiate it. This what makes them think about attaining such an aim by mastering the host culture language, eating their food, sharing their rituals (e.g. Thanksgiving) and other means of social constructions. Yet, most importantly, they to do seek so in order to avoid the unstoppable questions that make them feel as if they are the culturally have-nots just like the case of Han who defines himself by "absence," although he highly believes in these social constructions.

Again, despite the fact that Han never used to define himself with religion, Islamic cultures nor any other "specific notion of God" (*Crescent* 159), he was a religious. He repudiated not to do so. In a letter he got from a known friend who lives in England,

exhorting to maintain his original cultural traditions of Islam besides keeping doing his prayers:

I hope you received the veil I sent last year. I frequently wonder what your life is like there in such a cold, distant place. I cannot quite manage to imagine it. And most probably you can no longer imagine ours either . . . I think of you daily and, God willing, we will find each other again in the next life, if not this one. Do you remember, when we were both in school, you telling me that you never missed saying your prayers? Your faith, you said, was what shaped your character and mind and gave you hope for the future. I wonder, Hanif, do you still say your prayers every day? (*Crescent* 154-55)

Han keeps read this letter repeatedly in order not to forget everything related to his country, family, religion, and identity. According to Charles E. Bressler, "language shapes and ultimately structures our unconscious and conscious minds while also shaping our self-identity" (134). This is touched through the way the letter-sender ends: "[t]here's a line in Arabic" (155), which indicates that the sender intends to remind Han of his Arabic belonging and more important, Islamic identity which is about to be crumbled and exchanged by another social one. Nevertheless, Han finds positivism lied in the "social constructions, notions of allegiance, [and] cultural identity" (*Crescent* 159), which work as unconscious ameliorations for Han's hopelessness after leaving Iraq behind. With these factors, Han transcends the suffering he has experienced when he was in Iraq (due to certain social issues) and the feelings of hopelessness he experiences now (in the host culture). To be fair, he is not prevented from practicing his religious rituals there. But the fact is that he believes that identifying himself with religion is something out of his interest, instead he finds it better to negotiate his identity with the factors aforesaid, despite the fact that he can practice his language with other immigrants belong nationally to Iraq and enjoy this freely, Bhabha provides an important insight here:

[O]ne of the two main implementing conventions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, supports - the right of minorities, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.' However, Article 27 emphasizes the need for minorities to 'preserve' their cultural identities, rather than to affiliate across minority emergent communities. . . . [A] minority only discovers its political force and its aesthetic form when it is articulated across and alongside communities of difference, in acts of affiliation and contingent coalitions. (*The Location of Culture* xxii)

In accordance with this, Han has no means to claim that he is either physically or psychologically restricted when traying to practice or enjoy the things he likes. Moreover, he himself avows that in America one can freely do what s/he wants. But he

disavows that he likes to label himself with religion that is a sort of restriction for him. In short, his iterations of Arabic conduct stemmed from his being influenced by the cultural differences and his desire to hegemonize in the culture of the host community. That is how he negotiates his cultural identity.

Han has negotiated his earned cultural identity in the sense that he accepts as well as appreciates American social norms and disciplines as liberal and unrestrained. But this is absolutely not without Sirine's presence. Indeed, she has intellectually opened his eyes all into the American social and cultural values that he prefers. To textually back this idea, Han consent to Sirine's attending a determined socio-religious meeting she was invited to, although he has hesitated at first:

He hesitates, looks amused. The black of his eyes blends into the black of his lashes like melted chocolate, dark slants under folds of skin. A soft wing of stubble covers his lower face. “Well, sure, if you like.” “You don’t have an opinion?”

He doesn’t respond right away: the longer he is quiet, the more she thinks she wants to attend. He lays back in the bed and she slides over him. His lips are pale and soft, his hands unfold. “Well, it’s fine either way.” He fills his hands with her hair. “That’s what I like about this country,” he says. “You can do whatever. A meeting is only a meeting. There doesn’t have to be anything more to it than that.” (*Crescent* 164)

After all, this conversation indicates that Han finally accepts to impressively adopt American social habits with which he can negotiate his own original cultural identity. Likewise, this analytically implies that Han seems to work through the host culture's traditions, believing that he can mend the differences that are undeniably exist between this culture and his. In accordance with what has just been aforementioned, Bhabha theorizes that "[i]t is in the emergence of the interstices —the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (*The Location of Culture* 2).This theorization indicates that there is no cultural identity negotiated unless there are cultural differences between immigrants and that of the host nation. So, the negotiation of Han's cultural identity, according to the theory, was achieved through these differences which he mentions: “You can do whatever. A meeting is only a meeting. There doesn’t have to be anything more to it than that” (*Crescent* 164). To ensure clarity, such distinguished cultural differences are highly present in American societies, but not in Iraq, which is Han's country of origin. To answer part the of current thesis questions, it is found that both Sirine and Han negotiate their cultural identities through the conception of home and belonging. In the sense that Sirine adapts the traditions of Arab culture which is part and parcel of her identity besides enjoying to

learn more about them she works up a sort of equilibrium. Han, on the other hand, had negotiated his cultural identity by accepting the customs, notions and values of the host culture that highly affected him.

According to Homi Bhabha, the context of hybridity is culturally occurred "when two cultures, or nations meet"(*The Location of culture11*), sharing languages, material goods and food between them. In the selected novel, *Crescent*, there are characters who are culturally hybridized. Thus, the endeavor of the present section is to see how and why these characters were influenced by the culture of settlement's norms so they are hybridized. In so far as it being touched in the previous part of this chapter, there are two characters who have spontaneously but highly been affected by these norms that lead them to a sense of hybridity in the contact terrain. These characters are Sirine and then Han.

To begin with Sirine, she has the access to two different ethnicities, Arabic and American. On such a case, Bhabha, writes when a person descends from a family of different ethnicities, s/he will be with no doubt a product of hybridity that he describes as a melting-pot that mixes people of different cultures altogether. Again, Bhabha asserts that "[t]his new society is characterized by mass migrations and bizarre interracial relations. As a result, new hybrid and transitional identities are emerging" (*The Location of Culture* 313). To elaborate, this theoretical framework is literally applicable to Sirine's ethnical case, particularly when Han asks her about her real identity:

Then he[Han] says, “Okay, now you tell me—where is your family?” Sirine holds out her hand. “Here. That’s it—my dad and uncle were originally from Iraq but I don’t know where exactly. My mom’s from Santa Barbara—you know, California—and I don’t know her side of the family. My parents are both dead, I don’t have any brothers or sisters. It’s all pretty much just been me and my uncle for a long time.” (*Crescent* 116)

Via her response, one can see her real identity which was hybridized by the difference of her parents who belong to two different continents. In relation to Bhabha's previous assertion, Sirine can theoretically be described as a hybrid figure of these two cultural differences. Notwithstanding, Bhabha theorizes that the blending of such cultures melts them harmoniously in the sense it appears to blur up the difference into the in-difference. So, what is operating here is the process of partializing and "metonymy of the presence" (*The Location of Culture* 115). This denotes that Sirine is identified or described by what she is now, and to which nation she really ethnically belongs. Because she does not belong to neither America nor Iraq, as she told, it can be determined that she is a hybrid of American and Iraqi cultures. This is the meaning of

being identified with metonymy, as it is evidently narrated in the novel, especially when she looks at herself through the mirror or being asked about her nationality:

She stares at the portrait of herself in the metal-framed mirror. All she can see is white. She is so white. Her eyes wide, almond-shaped, and sea-green, her nose and lips tidy and compact. Entirely her mother. That's all anyone can see: when people ask her nationality they react with astonishment when she says she's half-Arab. I never would have thought that, they say, laughing. You sure don't look it. When people say this she feels like her skin is being peeled away. She thinks that she may have somehow inherited her mother on the outside and her father on the inside. If she could compare her own and her father's internal organs—the blood and bones and the shape of her mind and emotions—she thinks she would find her truer and deeper nature. She imagines her parents, young, expecting their first child, expecting, perhaps, a true amalgam of their two bodies. Were they disappointed, she wonders, to have an entirely fair-skinned child? (*Crescent* 201)

So, this is in fact the ultimate result of being produced and milted by the pot of cultural differences on which Bhabha elaborates that "most of the ingredients do melt [in the melting pot], but some stubborn chunks are condemned merely to float" (*The Location of Culture* 313). This is, however, not to claim that Sirine's identity construction is part of stubborn chunks, instead, it is to raise that her hybrid physicality and psyche stemmed from the attachment of her parents' bodies "to have an entirely fair-skinned child" (*Crescent* 201). Sirine's father, nationally, belongs to Iraqi-Arab culture, but as he is engaged with a nationally different individual(his wife) and melt in that pot (American culture, or the area of contact), they produced a new hybrid individual with totally new but "fair-skinned" figure, who is named Sirine (*Crescent* 201).

Although she belongs originally to Iraq, Sirine hesitates to count herself as so. This is textually found in her inquiry speech as she was pausing thoughtfully, monologizing herself "[w]hat if I was an Iraqi?" (*Crescent* 290). Here, Sirine is not totally sure that she is a really Iraqi figure despite the fact of labelling herself as "half-Iraqi." For instance, she sometimes considers herself as American, particularly when she asks the airlines woman to have a ticket to Baghdad, but the latter replies politely "[t]her's a travel ban for Americans. I don't think they would let you in even if you drove yourself to the border" (*Crescent* 290). This is why she hesitates about her identity. On the contrary, she sometimes feels that she does not(rightfully) belong to America as she told Han ""I guess I'm always looking for my home, a little bit. I mean, even though I live here, I have this feeling that my real home is somewhere else somehow"" (C*rescent* 116)., Bhabha provides a deep insight into this sort of hybridity of in-betweenness:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'inbetween' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (*The Location of Culture* 2)

What Bhabha highlights is that a person is hybridized by the way or the moment s/he is born into the world of differences. To explain, if the subject was affected by the cultural styles of the immigrants, there would consequently be many kinds of hybridities stemming from the attachment of those people of differences. For instances, people may be hybridized socio-culturally, effectively, materially, violently, or sextually. Thus, the way Sirine was born into the world was via the amalgam attachment bodies of her parents so they begot her to be socio-culturally in the position of 'in-between.' According to Bhabha, this is the reason that stimulates her to rethink about her originality hesitatively.

Extensively and in relation to what was explained above, Sirine's hybrid halfness represents her liminality of being settled 'in-between' or what Bhabha calls it the third space, "which is a space of in-between the rules of engagement" of people of different ethnicities, beliefs, and places (*The Location of Culture* 193). But one should always have in mind that this engagement might be occurred culturally, romantically or sextually. So, the hybrid that the engaged cultures produce will somehow exist restlessly in the liminal space, which means that s/he does not totally accept to adapt or identify herself with the father's identity and sometimes partially work through the mother's cultural identifications. Eventually, the product/hybrid of that complex engagement will always describe themselves as a collection of halfness of different cultures. This is exactly apparent in the case of Sirine's liminality: "[t]hat’s all anyone can see: when people ask her nationality, they react with astonishment when she says she’s half-Arab" (*Crescent* 201). This is how she is settled in the third space which resulted from different parents' bodies. Thus, she is separated, or restricted so to speak, by the edge of her parents' differences. Overall, half of her identity belongs physically to her mother, while the second interior part belongs nationally to the mother's original nationality, which is American. This is in line with what Bhabha Theorizes:

the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an 'in-between' temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double edge, which like the coloured . . . subject represents a hybridity, a difference 'within', a

subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality. And the inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive 'image' at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. (19)

To repeat, this occurs when one or something is produced by the mixture of differences, having a cultural ambivalence separating the attachment of these differences of bodies and colors. Knowingly, Sirine is a result of the intimacy "a true amalgam of their [her parents] two bodies" (*Crescent* 201). Ethnically, her father was a physically colored Arabic figure but Sirine and people around her see her as "an entirely fair-skinned child" (*Crescent* 201). However, what is more important to include, Sirine sees that "[s]he is so white. . . . [She is] entirely her mother (*Crescent* 201). To be born with a fair skin because of your multicolored parents, is to be physically not a highly white or black but in-between of the two cases. So, in sum, Sirine's hybridity is theoretically symbolized by the attachment tied her parents' different bodies, ethnicities, and nationalities that left her on the bridge of liminality or third space. Bhabha reports that hybridity is a form of liminal or in-between space which the "cutting edge of translation and negotiation" (*The Location of Culture* 56). In an interview with Bhabha, Jonathan Rutherford, the interviewer, accords Bhabha's last quoted declaration, saying:

The act of cultural translation (both as representation and reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or regionary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitutes it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (211)

This is how the two different parts attached to each other, resulting in a new hybrid form which, according to Bhabha, cannot be viewed as part of any one only. However, they bridge the differences by their interventions and performances but they put these interpolated lines equally and leave their hybridized subject all in-between. This is, indeed, why the research argues that Sirine is a hybrid structure of differences so she is neither Arabic nor American, but she is a half of each. Again, this is the case of being left in the third space of in-betweenness of differences without tending to any of which completely. As an ultimate result, she becomes "half-Arab" (*Crescent* 201).and half-American. By ensuring clarity, Sirine's attitude, as it was shown, attached to what Salman Rushdie describes saying"[w]e are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools."(19). In other words, she is culturally perplexed

Unlike Sirine, Han despite the fact that he was a vulnerable to the notion of hybridity, he was not totally hybridized. The notion of hybridity has notably been critiqued for imposing a harmonic image of what is clearly fragmented and combative and for ignoring cultural and social inequality. It is self-evident that long-term interactions between human communities have featured a significant amount of social strife. Nonetheless, it may be beneficial to distinguish these social disputes or conflicts from their protracted unintended repercussions, such as cultural mixing, depiction, or hybridization of cultures.

However, in Han's case, he integrated himself, and accepted certain customs and values of the west to be part of his worldview. But this was not for a long time. This is partly due to his longing for Iraq that ultimately led him to regress. While being in America, Han was unable to forget Iraq and was obsessed with imagining being back home:

Leaving my country [Han speaking] was like—I don't know—like part of my body was torn away. I have phantom pains from the loss of that part—I'm haunted by myself. I don't know—does any of that make any sense? It's as if I'm trying to describe something that I'm not, that's no longer here." (*Crescent* 159).

This in fact, leaves Han in a situation of ambivalence for being thrown and "torn away" between two ostensible cultures. Therefore, this situation is clearly attached to that of Bhabha's *third space* that Esmaeil Zohdi describes as a space "full of ambivalence" that has resulted from the boundary-crossing circulations. Again Han, can be described as a threshold person to the fact he is notably betwixt neither here (in America) nor there (in Iraq). This is similarly a fitting to Bhabha's third space as "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space- that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."(2: 56). This is reflected in Han's discussion with Rana concerning the writings of Naguib Mahfouz and Hemingway

"Mahfouz exemplifies the Abbasid Arab 'Renaissance man,' if you will— both politically and artistically sophisticated and socially aware…." […] "You might even contrast him [Mahfouz] with Hemingway…." "I[Rana] don't see the connection, Professor," [….] "It seems strange," Rana says coyly, clearly enjoying the attention. "Well, look at it this way—it's all about place and identity," Han says. […] "Hemingway slipped easily between national identities, traveling all over the world, meeting everyone, having whatever adventures he could, yet he's considered the most quintessentially American writer. Mahfouz, on the other hand, has spent almost his entire life in the same streets and neighborhoods, writing about Cairo and its people, yet he's considered an international author—" [….] "That's just because he's not an American!" Rana says, tossing her head. "Okay, but consider this—Mahfouz once said,

‘If I had traveled like Hemingway, I’m sure that my work would have been different. My work was shaped by being so Egyptian.’” […] “The question in the contemporary era is, what does it mean to call oneself an ‘Egyptian writer’ or even a ‘Middle Eastern writer’ anymore?” he says, his voice softer now. “The media is saturated with the imagery of the West. Is it even possible—or desirable—to have an identity apart from this?” [Han speaking]. (*Crescent* 96-97).

This elaborates that Han resists being totally Westerner, despite being assimilated for a lot of occasions to it. This is far from what Bhabha has put in the case of hybridity. For instance, it is possible to say that Han is not to be labelled as a hybrid person in the sense that Bhabha announces in an interview with Rutherford that hybridity "denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity." (211). In this way, it has become obvious that the contrary happened; Han firmly does not deny his prior culture. Nevertheless, at the same time, he does not deny the norms and attractions of the western culture to be seen or labelled as an exclusionary person. Furthermore, what makes Han's circumstances obviously difficult, is that he entails a double ambivalence, that he had to at least wrestle with his emotional response towards his country of origin (Iraq). Therefore, Han in this act is thrown in the in-between spaces that Bhabha describes: [t]hese 'in-between spaces' provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites collaboration, and contestation."(2:2). This identity for Han, is defined very well as unattainable as he says "I define myself by an absence" (Crescent 159). This absence, while dwelling in America, caught him up in a traumatic moment, a sense of being neither here nor there, an ambivalent act.

Eventually, Han decided to go back to Iraq, the place of his nostalgia. His decision, comes as an emotional reaction when Sirine shows him some photos of his sister (Leila):

> Lately she has started thinking about her last evening with Han, remembering the things he had said and done. The way he covered his eyes when she showed him the photograph of his sister and said, no more photographs, I’ve seen too much. She wonders: why did he say that? (*Crescent* 315).

This is particularly due to his memories of his family that increasingly overwhelmed his thoughts. In addition to this, he is unable to cope with his current life in America which is unaffordable just living with his memories. He is being haunted by his memories of home and family in Iraq. Bhabha has elucidated such a state of a memory "that flashes

incessantly through… a dangerous repetition in the present of… the edge of human life that translates what will come next and what has gone before" (*The Location of Culture* 224). Likewise, this denotes that what has previously happened to us will always be regressed in our unconscious part of psyche. Thus, such a preservative memory affects our emotions the moment it comes to the mind. This is similar to Freudian return of the repressed. Han all of a sudden, without telling anyone, is now gone back to Iraq leaving everything behind. It is now possible to say this is a failure of hybridity and a failure to integrate himself with the host culture; rather he resists it and goes home. Han's sudden return to Iraq is told indirectly at the end of the novel. When an Arabic student in Um Nadia's café was reading an Arabic newspaper Sirine noticed in it, Han's picture and something was written in Arabic. She asks the student to read to her:

> He patiently turns the paper over and reads the short article, whispering to himself in Arabic. He shakes his head and laughs and says, "It's a crazy story. It says this guy's a political prisoner who broke out and then escaped from Iraq by following the migration of these animals across the border into Jordan. He says he's on his way home [….] She [Sirine] closes her eyes again and tells herself, relax, and she opens her eyes. Han. It cannot be, but of course it is, it undeniably, certainly is. (*Crescent* 335-6)

Hence, rather than incurring the cultural principles of hybridity and verbally applying them in the host culture, Han finally affiliates himself to Iraq, the national spot of his origin, striping himself away from the one in which he is/was about to be hybridized. So, Han's negotiation of cultural identity fails as he reasonably resists cultural hybridization, although he adapted himself to many of American cultural norms. In doing so, Han consciously or unconsciously, shows his ambivalence, which is throwing him all in between two parts represented by hybridity and the third space, or what Bhabha defines as in-between. Thus, he cannot claim that he is a completely Arabic individual nor a western one, instead just lives in-between these different identical worlds. As an Arabic man, he used to rethink and talk about Arab cultures, literature, and some other important contributors, like Najeeb Mahfouz. Again, as an American citizen but is still known as an immigrant, Han accepted to partially work through American norms that he found closer to his desires and after all leaves everything behind and this is notably ascribed to his failure as not being able to coalesce these two cultures altogether.

Hybridity played an operative model in forming or negotiating cultural identity in the case of Iraqi immigrants as it is presented in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*. For Stuart Hall, it is the mutual or real self-hidden within the various other identities, more superficial or unnaturally imposed selves that a people with a common past and ancestry share; which can stabilize, fix, or ensure an unchanging oneness or cultural sense of belonging underneath all those other differences. Again, Stuart Hall writes that:

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The identity politics underlines much of *Crescent*. For instance, the protagonist Sirine had declared the way of preparing the Thanksgiving meal in their house as the restaurant will be closed for that occasion; saying:

At work, Sirine announces that this year will be an Arabic Thanksgiving with rice and pine nuts and ground lamb in the turkey instead of cornbread, and yogurt sauce instead of cranberries. Mireille sulks and says she doesn't like yogurt and Sirine say, annoyed, why can't we ever do things differently? . …In the past Sirine would be absorbed for weeks with thinking about what she would cook for Thanksgiving. It was her mother's favorite holiday and the traditional American food…. But things are different now. Her mind has been taken up by Han (*Crescent* 180)

This is notably attached to a sense of accepting the cultural differences as a way to Sirine to negotiate her own cultural identity in things that she prefers notably food. Hence, one's cultural identity could rightly be changed due to the long experience with more than one culture. Besides, this highlights Sirine's will for adaptation with the Arab community despite the fact that she is "half" Iraqi and doesn't speak Arabic. Moreover, she integrated her American culture with that of the Arabic one which is as well part and parcel of her identity. Knowingly, this is what Bhabha calls for as the consent, asserting "[i]t is the will that unifies historical memory and secures present-day consent. The will is, indeed, the articulation of the nation-people" (*The Location of Culture* 160). Therefore, interrogating cultural identity is a worldview in a sense that individuals accept the norms and values of several communities in their life. Notwithstanding, being like Sirine as from an Iraqi father and an American mother gives her the access to obtain a bicultural background; and this would highly broaden her consciousness of what Anne Campbell describes as “the difference between self and others” (37), meaning that the attitudes and norms undoubtedly vary from person to another. Especially when Sirine asserts for doing "things differently" a sense of consent as well as acceptance of the difference and adapting herself with the Arabic cuisine. Thus, this is indeed how she negotiates her own identity. Again, this fusion of the culinary narratives in fact reinforces and redefines cultures.

Spatial restraints play a crucial role in negotiating cultural identity in diasporic contexts. Han for instance, wonders about Sirine's current residency in Los Angles, asking:

“why you'll never leave L.A” she simply said I guess I’m always looking for my home, a little bit. I mean, even though I live here, I have this feeling that my real home is

somewhere else somehow" (…). "What makes a place feel like home for you, then? [Han askes]" "Work," she says. "Work is home." (*Crescent* 116)

Sirine's attempt to do things differently reflects her endorsement of the universal set of values like showing mutual respect as well as ethical behaviors. Similarly, it is a strategy of globalization that helps negotiate her cultural identity because globalization essentially transcends the prospective national boundaries. Thus, this act, doesn't lead to a sense of being exclusionary rather to multicultural blending (Chenchen et al. 3).

However, this mixedness of food preparing in the contact zone is theoretically attached to what Bhabha emphasizes on hybridity and the difference of cultures: "[w]hen two cultures or nations meet, ideas, language and material goods are shared between them" (*The Location of Culture*11). Outwardly, this share, is an obvious adaptation which leads rightly to hybridization among individuals.

This is clear in the case of Han who still feels as if he is an identity-have not. This is proven through his conversation with Sirine about social identities that are difficultly attained or achieved by the *others* who with no doubt represent immigrants. Nonetheless, he describes himself as an absent, or a torn body. So, he is even unable to identify himself with family nor religion, but rather as a torn body even though he lives in a safe place:

"For me, it's more complicated than that. I've heard of people defining themselves according to their work or religion or family. But I pretty much think I define myself by an ***absence***." She [Sirine] dares a glance at him. "What absence?" "Well, I'm no longer a believer but I still consider myself a Muslim. In some ways, my religion is even more important to me because of that." "How can you be Muslim if you don't believe in it?" "I don't believe in a specific notion of God. But I do believe in social constructions, notions of allegiance, cultural identity…. Oh." [. . .] But then he says, "The fact of exile is bigger than everything else in my life. Leaving my country was like—I don't know—like part of my body was torn away. I have phantom pains from the loss of that part—I'm haunted by myself. I don't know—does any of that make any sense? It's as if I'm trying to describe something that I'm not, that's no longer here." (*Crescent* 159; emphasis added; the first ellipsis in source).

So, it is the claim of the current study that Han still feels as an exiled individual who (really) has no certain cultural identity. Such a claim comes from the fact that he cannot even ascribe himself to the country he resides in now, which means that his cultural identification is threatened with instability. That is suggestively why he is still in an interrogative manner of his sociocultural, physical and even psychological makeup. Theoretically speaking, Bhabha writes that "the act of negotiation will only be interrogatory" (*The Location of Culture* 43). This additionally articulates that

immigrants will live in wonders about their real belonging and the way they can negotiate it. This what makes them think about attaining such an aim by mastering the host culture language, eating their food, sharing their rituals (e.g. Thanksgiving) and other means of social constructions. Yet, most importantly, they to do seek so in order to avoid the unstoppable questions that make them feel as if they are the culturally have-nots just like the case of Han who defines himself by "absence," although he highly believes in these social constructions.

Again, despite the fact that Han never used to define himself with religion, Islamic cultures nor any other "specific notion of God" (*Crescent* 159), he was a religious. He repudiated not to do so. In a letter he got from a known friend who lives in England, exhorting to maintain his original cultural traditions of Islam besides keeping doing his prayers:

I hope you received the veil I sent last year. I frequently wonder what your life is like there in such a cold, distant place. I cannot quite manage to imagine it. And most probably you can no longer imagine ours either . . . I think of you daily and, God willing, we will find each other again in the next life, if not this one. Do you remember, when we were both in school, you telling me that you never missed saying your prayers? Your faith, you said, was what shaped your character and mind and gave you hope for the future. I wonder, Hanif, do you still say your prayers every day? (*Crescent* 154-55)

Han keeps read this letter repeatedly in order not to forget everything related to his country, family, religion, and identity. According to Charles E. Bressler, "language shapes and ultimately structures our unconscious and conscious minds while also shaping our self-identity" (134). This is touched through the way the letter-sender ends: "[t]here's a line in Arabic" (155), which indicates that the sender intends to remind Han of his Arabic belonging and more important, Islamic identity which is about to be crumbled and exchanged by another social one. Nevertheless, Han finds positivism lied in the "social constructions, notions of allegiance, [and] cultural identity" (*Crescent* 159), which work as unconscious ameliorations for Han's hopelessness after leaving Iraq behind. With these factors, Han transcends the suffering he has experienced when he was in Iraq (due to certain social issues) and the feelings of hopelessness he experiences now (in the host culture). To be fair, he is not prevented from practicing his religious rituals there. But the fact is that he believes that identifying himself with religion is something out of his interest, instead he finds it better to negotiate his identity with the factors aforesaid, despite the fact that he can practice his language with other immigrants belong nationally to Iraq and enjoy this freely, Bhabha provides an important insight here:

[O]ne of the two main implementing conventions of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, supports - the right of minorities, in community with the other members of their group, to enjoy their own culture, to profess and practice their own religion, or to use their own language.' However, Article 27 emphasizes the need for minorities to 'preserve' their cultural identities, rather than to affiliate across minority emergent communities. . . . [A] minority only discovers its political force and its aesthetic form when it is articulated across and alongside communities of difference, in acts of affiliation and contingent coalitions. (*The Location of Culture* xxii)

In accordance with this, Han has no means to claim that he is either physically or psychologically restricted when traying to practice or enjoy the things he likes. Moreover, he himself avows that in America one can freely do what s/he wants. But he disavows that he likes to label himself with religion that is a sort of restriction for him. In short, his iterations of Arabic conduct stemmed from his being influenced by the cultural differences and his desire to hegemonize in the culture of the host community. That is how he negotiates his cultural identity.

Han has negotiated his earned cultural identity in the sense that he accepts as well as appreciates American social norms and disciplines as liberal and unrestrained. But this is absolutely not without Sirine's presence. Indeed, she has intellectually opened his eyes all into the American social and cultural values that he prefers. To textually back this idea, Han consent to Sirine's attending a determined socio-religious meeting she was invited to, although he has hesitated at first:

He hesitates, looks amused. The black of his eyes blends into the black of his lashes like melted chocolate, dark slants under folds of skin. A soft wing of stubble covers his lower face. “Well, sure, if you like.” “You don’t have an opinion?”

He doesn’t respond right away: the longer he is quiet, the more she thinks she wants to attend. He lays back in the bed and she slides over him. His lips are pale and soft, his hands unfold. “Well, it’s fine either way.” He fills his hands with her hair. “That’s what I like about this country,” he says. “You can do whatever. A meeting is only a meeting. There doesn’t have to be anything more to it than that.” (*Crescent* 164)

After all, this conversation indicates that Han finally accepts to impressively adopt American social habits with which he can negotiate his own original cultural identity. Likewise, this analytically implies that Han seems to work through the host culture's traditions, believing that he can mend the differences that are undeniably exist between this culture and his. In accordance with what has just been aforementioned, Bhabha theorizes that "[i]t is in the emergence of the interstices ––the overlap and displacement of domains of difference—that the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness*, community interest, or cultural value are negotiated" (*The Location of*

Culture 2).This theorization indicates that there is no cultural identity negotiated unless there are cultural differences between immigrants and that of the host nation. So, the negotiation of Han's cultural identity, according to the theory, was achieved through these differences which he mentions: “You can do whatever. A meeting is only a meeting. There doesn’t have to be anything more to it than that” (*Crescent* 164). To ensure clarity, such distinguished cultural differences are highly present in American societies, but not in Iraq, which is Han's country of origin. To answer part the of current thesis questions, it is found that both Sirine and Han negotiate their cultural identities through the conception of home and belonging. In the sense that Sirine adapts the traditions of Arab culture which is part and parcel of her identity besides enjoying to learn more about them she works up a sort of equilibrium. Han, on the other hand, had negotiated his cultural identity by accepting the customs, notions and values of the host culture that highly affected him.

According to Homi Bhabha, the context of hybridity is culturally occurred "when two cultures, or nations meet"(*The Location of culture* 11), sharing languages, material goods and food between them. In the selected novel, *Crescent,* there are characters who are culturally hybridized. Thus, the endeavor of the present section is to see how and why these characters were influenced by the culture of settlement's norms so they are hybridized. In so far as it being touched in the previous part of this chapter, there are two characters who have spontaneously but highly been affected by these norms that lead them to a sense of hybridity in the contact terrain. These characters are Sirine and then Han.

To begin with Sirine, she has the access to two different ethnicities, Arabic and American. On such a case, Bhabha, writes when a person descends from a family of different ethnicities, s/he will be with no doubt a product of hybridity that he describes as a melting-pot that mixes people of different cultures altogether. Again, Bhabha asserts that "[t]his new society is characterized by mass migrations and bizarre interracial relations. As a result, new hybrid and transitional identities are emerging" (*The Location of Culture* 313). To elaborate, this theoretical framework is literally applicable to Sirine's ethnical case, particularly when Han asks her about her real identity:

Then he[Han] says, “Okay, now you tell me—where is your family?” Sirine holds out her hand. “Here. That’s it—my dad and uncle were originally from Iraq but I don’t know where exactly. My mom’s from Santa Barbara—you know, California—and I don’t know her side of the family. My parents are both dead, I don’t have any brothers

or sisters. It's all pretty much just been me and my uncle for a long time." (*Crescent* 116)

Via her response, one can see her real identity which was hybridized by the difference of her parents who belong to two different continents. In relation to Bhabha's previous assertion, Sirine can theoretically be described as a hybrid figure of these two cultural differences. Notwithstanding, Bhabha theorizes that the blending of such cultures melts them harmoniously in the sense it appears to blur up the difference into the in-difference. So, what is operating here is the process of partializing and "metonymy of the presence" (*The Location of Culture* 115). This denotes that Sirine is identified or described by what she is now, and to which nation she really ethnically belongs. Because she does not belong to neither America nor Iraq, as she told, it can be determined that she is a hybrid of American and Iraqi cultures. This is the meaning of being identified with metonymy, as it is evidently narrated in the novel, especially when she looks at herself through the mirror or being asked about her nationality:

She stares at the portrait of herself in the metal-framed mirror. All she can see is white. She is so white. Her eyes wide, almond-shaped, and sea-green, her nose and lips tidy and compact. Entirely her mother. That's all anyone can see: when people ask her nationality they react with astonishment when she says she's half-Arab. I never would have thought that, they say, laughing. You sure don't look it. When people say this she feels like her skin is being peeled away. She thinks that she may have somehow inherited her mother on the outside and her father on the inside. If she could compare her own and her father's internal organs—the blood and bones and the shape of her mind and emotions—she thinks she would find her truer and deeper nature. She imagines her parents, young, expecting their first child, expecting, perhaps, a true amalgam of their two bodies. Were they disappointed, she wonders, to have an entirely fair-skinned child? (*Crescent* 201)

So, this is in fact the ultimate result of being produced and milted by the pot of cultural differences on which Bhabha elaborates that "most of the ingredients do melt [in the melting pot], but some stubborn chunks are condemned merely to float" (*The Location of Culture* 313). This is, however, not to claim that Sirine's identity construction is part of stubborn chunks, instead, it is to raise that her hybrid physicality and psyche stemmed from the attachment of her parents' bodies "to have an entirely fair-skinned child" (*Crescent* 201). Sirine's father, nationally, belongs to Iraqi-Arab culture, but as he is engaged with a nationally different individual(his wife) and melt in that pot (American culture, or the area of contact), they produced a new hybrid individual with totally new but "fair-skinned" figure, who is named Sirine (*Crescent* 201).

Although she belongs originally to Iraq, Sirine hesitates to count herself as so. This is textually found in her inquiry speech as she was pausing thoughtfully, monologizing

herself "[w]hat if I was an Iraqi?" (*Crescent* 290). Here, Sirine is not totally sure that she is a really Iraqi figure despite the fact of labelling herself as "half-Iraqi." For instance, she sometimes considers herself as American, particularly when she asks the airlines woman to have a ticket to Baghdad, but the latter replies politely "[t]her's a travel ban for Americans. I don't think they would let you in even if you drove yourself to the border" (*Crescent* 290). This is why she hesitates about her identity. On the contrary, she sometimes feels that she does not(rightfully) belong to America as she told Han ""I guess I'm always looking for my home, a little bit. I mean, even though I live here, I have this feeling that my real home is somewhere else somehow"" (*Crescent* 116)., Bhabha provides a deep insight into this sort of hybridity of in-betweenness:

What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'inbetween' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood - singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (*The Location of Culture* 2)

What Bhabha highlights is that a person is hybridized by the way or the moment s/he is born into the world of differences. To explain, if the subject was affected by the cultural styles of the immigrants, there would consequently be many kinds of hybridities stemming from the attachment of those people of differences. For instances, people may be hybridized socio-culturally, effectively, materially, violently, or sextually. Thus, the way Sirine was born into the world was via the amalgam attachment bodies of her parents so they begot her to be socio-culturally in the position of 'in-between.' According to Bhabha, this is the reason that stimulates her to rethink about her originality hesitatively.

Extensively and in relation to what was explained above, Sirine's hybrid halfness represents her liminality of being settled 'in-between' or what Bhabha calls it the third space, "which is a space of in-between the rules of engagement" of people of different ethnicities, beliefs, and places (*The Location of Culture* 193). But one should always have in mind that this engagement might be occurred culturally, romantically or sextually. So, the hybrid that the engaged cultures produce will somehow exist restlessly in the liminal space, which means that s/he does not totally accept to adapt or identify herself with the father's identity and sometimes partially work through the mother's cultural identifications. Eventually, the product/hybrid of that complex engagement will always describe themselves as a collection of halfness of different cultures. This is exactly apparent in the case of Sirine's liminality: "[t]hat's all anyone can see: when people ask her nationality, they react with astonishment when she says she's half-Arab" (*Crescent* 201). This is how she is settled in the third space which resulted from

different parents' bodies. Thus, she is separated, or restricted so to speak, by the edge of her parents' differences. Overall, half of her identity belongs physically to her mother, while the second interior part belongs nationally to the mother's original nationality, which is American. This is in line with what Bhabha Theorizes:

the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy. It is an intimacy that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed. These spheres of life are linked through an 'in-between' temporality that takes the measure of dwelling at home, while producing an image of the world of history. This is the moment of aesthetic distance that provides the narrative with a double edge, which like the coloured . . . subject represents a hybridity, a difference 'within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality. And the inscription of this borderline existence inhabits a stillness of time and a strangeness of framing that creates the discursive 'image' at the crossroads of history and literature, bridging the home and the world. (19)

To repeat, this occurs when one or something is produced by the mixture of differences, having a cultural ambivalence separating the attachment of these differences of bodies and colors. Knowingly, Sirine is a result of the intimacy "a true amalgam of their [her parents] two bodies" (*Crescent* 201). Ethnically, her father was a physically colored Arabic figure but Sirine and people around her see her as "an entirely fair-skinned child" (*Crescent* 201). However, what is more important to include, Sirine sees that "[s]he is so white. . . . [She is] entirely her mother (*Crescent* 201). To be born with a fair skin because of your multicolored parents, is to be physically not a highly white or black but in-between of the two cases. So, in sum, Sirine's hybridity is theoretically symbolized by the attachment tied her parents' different bodies, ethnicities, and nationalities that left her on the bridge of liminality or third space. Bhabha reports that hybridity is a form of liminal or in-between space which the "cutting edge of translation and negotiation" (*The Location of Culture* 56). In an interview with Bhabha, Jonathan Rutherford, the interviewer, accords Bhabha's last quoted declaration, saying:

The act of cultural translation (both as representation and reproduction) denies the essentialism of a prior given original or regionary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity. But for me the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. This third space displaces the histories that constitutes it, and sets up new structures of authority, new political initiatives, which are inadequately understood through received wisdom. (211)

This is how the two different parts attached to each other, resulting in a new hybrid form which, according to Bhabha, cannot be viewed as part of any one only. However,

they bridge the differences by their interventions and performances but they put these interpolated lines equally and leave their hybridized subject all in-between. This is, indeed, why the research argues that Sirine is a hybrid structure of differences so she is neither Arabic nor American, but she is a half of each. Again, this is the case of being left in the third space of in-betweenness of differences without tending to any of which completely. As an ultimate result, she becomes "half-Arab" (*Crescent* 201).and half-American. By ensuring clarity, Sirine's attitude, as it was shown, attached to what Salman Rushdie describes saying"[w]e are now partly of the West. Our identity is at once plural and partial. Sometimes we feel that we straddle two cultures; at other times, that we fall between two stools."(19). In other words, she is culturally perplexed

Unlike Sirine, Han despite the fact that he was a vulnerable to the notion of hybridity, he was not totally hybridized. The notion of hybridity has notably been critiqued for imposing a harmonic image of what is clearly fragmented and combative and for ignoring cultural and social inequality. It is self-evident that long-term interactions between human communities have featured a significant amount of social strife. Nonetheless, it may be beneficial to distinguish these social disputes or conflicts from their protracted unintended repercussions, such as cultural mixing, depiction, or hybridization of cultures.
However, in Han's case, he integrated himself, and accepted certain customs and values of the west to be part of his worldview. But this was not for a long time. This is partly due to his longing for Iraq that ultimately led him to regress. While being in America, Han was unable to forget Iraq and was obsessed with imagining being back home:

Leaving my country [Han speaking] was like—I don't know—like part of my body was torn away. I have phantom pains from the loss of that part—I'm haunted by myself. I don't know—does any of that make any sense? It's as if I'm trying to describe something that I'm not, that's no longer here." (*Crescent* 159).

This in fact, leaves Han in a situation of ambivalence for being thrown and "torn away" between two ostensible cultures. Therefore, this situation is clearly attached to that of Bhabha's *third space* that Esmaeil Zohdi describes as a space "full of ambivalence" that has resulted from the boundary-crossing circulations. Again Han, can be described as a threshold person to the fact he is notably betwixt neither here (in America) nor there (in Iraq). This is similarly a fitting to Bhabha's third space as "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation, the inbetween space- that carries the burden of the meaning of culture."(2: 56). This is reflected in Han's discussion with Rana concerning the writings of Naguib Mahfouz and Hemingway

"Mahfouz exemplifies the Abbasid Arab 'Renaissance man,' if you will— both politically and artistically sophisticated and socially aware…." […] "You might even

contrast him [Mahfouz] with Hemingway…." "I[Rana] don't see the connection, Professor," [….] "It seems strange," Rana says coyly, clearly enjoying the attention. "Well, look at it this way—it's all about place and identity," Han says. […] "Hemingway slipped easily between national identities, traveling all over the world, meeting everyone, having whatever adventures he could, yet he's considered the most quintessentially American writer. Mahfouz, on the other hand, has spent almost his entire life in the same streets and neighborhoods, writing about Cairo and its people, yet he's considered an international author—" […] "That's just because he's not an American!" Rana says, tossing her head. "Okay, but consider this—Mahfouz once said, 'If I had traveled like Hemingway, I'm sure that my work would have been different. My work was shaped by being so Egyptian.'" […] "The question in the contemporary era is, what does it mean to call oneself an 'Egyptian writer' or even a 'Middle Eastern writer' anymore?" he says, his voice softer now. "The media is saturated with the imagery of the West. Is it even possible—or desirable—to have an identity apart from this?" [Han speaking]. (*Crescent* 96-97).

This elaborates that Han resists being totally Westerner, despite being assimilated for a lot of occasions to it. This is far from what Bhabha has put in the case of hybridity. For instance, it is possible to say that Han is not to be labelled as a hybrid person in the sense that Bhabha announces in an interview with Rutherford that hybridity "denies the essentialism of a prior given original or originary culture, then we see that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity." (211). In this way, it has become obvious that the contrary happened; Han firmly does not deny his prior culture. Nevertheless, at the same time, he does not deny the norms and attractions of the western culture to be seen or labelled as an exclusionary person. Furthermore, what makes Han's circumstances obviously difficult, is that he entails a double ambivalence, that he had to at least wrestle with his emotional response towards his country of origin (Iraq). Therefore, Han in this act is thrown in the in-between spaces that Bhabha describes: [t]hese 'in-between spaces' provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood- singular or communal – that initiate new signs of identity and innovative sites collaboration, and contestation."(2:2). This identity for Han, is defined very well as unattainable as he says "I define myself by an absence" (Crescent 159). This absence, while dwelling in America, caught him up in a traumatic moment, a sense of being neither here nor there, an ambivalent act.

Eventually, Han decided to go back to Iraq, the place of his nostalgia. His decision, comes as an emotional reaction when Sirine shows him some photos of his sister (Leila):

Lately she has started thinking about her last evening with Han, remembering the things he had said and done. The way he covered his eyes when she showed him the photograph of his sister and said, no more photographs, I've seen too much. She wonders: why did he say that? (Crescent 315).

This is particularly due to his memories of his family that increasingly overwhelmed his thoughts. In addition to this, he is unable to cope with his current life in America which is unaffordable just living with his memories. He is being haunted by his memories of home and family in Iraq. Bhabha has elucidated such a state of a memory "that flashes incessantly through… a dangerous repetition in the present of… the edge of human life that translates what will come next and what has gone before" (2: 224). Likewise, this denotes that what has previously happened to us will always be regressed in our unconscious part of psyche. Thus, such a preservative memory affects our emotions the moment it comes to the mind. This is similar to Freudian return of the repressed. Han all of a sudden, without telling anyone, is now gone back to Iraq leaving everything behind. It is now possible to say this is a failure of hybridity and a failure to integrate himself with the host culture; rather he resists it and goes home. Han's sudden return to Iraq is told indirectly at the end of the novel. When an Arabic student in Um Nadia's café was reading an Arabic newspaper Sirine noticed in it, Han's picture and something was written in Arabic. She asks the student to read to her:

He patiently turns the paper over and reads the short article, whispering to himself in Arabic. He shakes his head and laughs and says, "It's a crazy story. It says this guy's a political prisoner who broke out and then escaped from Iraq by following the migration of these animals across the border into Jordan. He says he's on his way home [….] She [Sirine] closes her eyes again and tells herself, relax, and she opens her eyes. Han. It cannot be, but of course it is, it undeniably, certainly is. (*Crescent* 335-6)

Hence, rather than incurring the cultural principles of hybridity and verbally applying them in the host culture, Han finally affiliates himself to Iraq, the national spot of his origin, striping himself away from the one in which he is/was about to be hybridized. So, Han's negotiation of cultural identity fails as he reasonably resists cultural hybridization, although he adapted himself to many of American cultural norms. In doing so, Han consciously or unconsciously, shows his ambivalence, which is throwing him all in between two parts represented by hybridity and the third space, or what Bhabha defines as in-between. Thus, he cannot claim that he is a completely Arabic individual nor a western one, instead just lives in-between these different identical worlds. As an Arabic man, he used to rethink and talk about Arab cultures, literature, and some other important contributors, like Najeeb Mahfouz. Again, as an American citizen but is still known as an immigrant, Han accepted to partially work through American norms that he found closer to his desires and after all leaves everything

behind and this is notably ascribed to his failure as not being able to coalesce these two cultures altogether.

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