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Postmodern Tendencies in Contemporary Arab American Novel

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POSTMODERN TENDENCIES IN CONTEMPORARY ARAB AMERICAN NOVEL

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

in Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

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Title: Postmodern Tendencies in Contemporary Arab American Novel

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This dissertation studies postmodernist tendencies in the narrative style and thematic structure of the novels of three contemporary Arab American novelists: Laila Halaby, Diana Abu-Jaber, and Rabih Alameddine. Reading these texts from postmodernist perspectives shows that while many readers of the Arab American novel are tempted to see this tradition in terms of postcoloniality and otherness, Arab American novelists employ urgent postmodern tendencies which, while maintaining their distinctiveness, relate them to a larger critical landscape and readership. Moving from a postmodernist political awareness and cultural relativism in Halaby's and Abu-Jaber's novels, my study argues that contemporary Arab American novel reaches a fully developed postmodernist attitude with the novels of Rabih Alameddine whose experimental and self-reflective novels point to a more complicated Arab American novel that moves away from cultural translation.