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ARAB AMERICANS' IDENTITY FORMATION PROCESS: EXILE AND HYBRIDITY
IN ARAB AMERICAN LITERATURE BEFORE 9/11 AND AFTER

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: Arab Americans' Identity Formation Process: Exile and Hybridity in Arab American Literature Before 9/11 and After

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This dissertation offers a critical study of the stages of Arab American identity expressed through the concept of exile and hybridity seen at work in the Arab American literary tradition before 9/11 and after. I am using both postcolonial and feminist theoretical approaches in my research. As postcolonial survivors and mostly women, Arab American authors wrote about being marginalized and alienated in the American culture. They also examined the indelible influence that living in the American peripheries left on constructing their identities. My focus is on hybridity as one of the major stages of the Arab American identity formation process. I am using Homi Bhabha's theory of "Hybridity" to explain its influence in constructing an Arab American identity.

In part of my dissertation, I develop my argument through conducting a critical analysis of writers such as Ameen Rihani and his first Arab American novel *The book of Khalid* (1911), Khalil Gibran's *The Prophet* (1923), and other early works from 1940s to the 1960s. After that, I analyze Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Arabian Jazz* (1993) and Edward Said's Memoir *Out of Place* (1999). Mohja Kahf's novel, *The Girl in the Tangerine Scarf* (2006) and Randa Jarrar's short story *Lost in the Freakin' Yonkers* (2009), are the examined from a feminist perspective to expose the double layered oppression of cultural hegemony that Arab American women go through.

Finally, I am highlighting the Islamophobia against Muslims in America in both media and fiction. I criticize Edward Zwick's movie, *The Siege* (1998) to discuss the American anti-Arab racism in America before 9/11. Laila Halaby's masterpiece *Once in a Promised Land* (2007) and Toufic El-Rassi's graphic novel *Arab in America* (2007) are thoroughly analyzed to expose the American racist ideology and hatred towards Muslims after 9/11. Arabs in America are exiled, displaced, or marginalized because of the negative stereotypes in American media and literature. To my mind, the only way of inclusion in the American culture is to be either more prolific writers or active politicians to represent the Arab and Muslim communities in a positive way to the American public.