

**British Arab and British South Asian Diaspora
Writings in Ghada Karmi's *In Search of Fatima: A
Palestinian Story* and Yasmin Hai's *The Making of
Mr. Hai's Daughter: Becoming British***

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Abstract:

This essay makes the case for comparative analysis of Arab and South Asian female memoirs, focusing on the issue of diaspora and the problems involved in any diasporic experience. Through a detailed analysis to Ghada Karmi's *In Search of Fatima* and Yasmin Hai's *The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter*, the study moves beyond national and cultural borders to highlight some of the shared political and aesthetic concerns of Arab and South Asian writers, especially concerning the case of diaspora, displacement and exile writings. The study will deploy comparable literary tropes through addressing similar issues in these memoirs to prove that at least these similarities stem from a shared history of colonialism. Further, drawing upon Homi Bhabha's influential ideas about colonial ambivalence, hybridity and "Third place", the paper will offer an account on some of the problems suffered by any colonised person who lives in a colonial society for a long time through a special focus on the authors' personal lives. Finally, the paper will discuss the life of the female authors as being cultural mediators in the way they functioned as interpreters of the norms of their own cultures by revealing their personal stories as migrant writers. The study will conclude that Karmi's and Hai's diasporic experiences are unique in a way that they focused on the positive perspective of this experience.

Keywords: colonialism, colonial ambivalence, diaspora, exile writings, hybridity and cultural mediators.

The theme of diaspora has been an enduring preoccupation in postcolonial literatures. The term "diaspora" is considered to be complex and debatable in many academic articles. However, etymologically, the term diaspora is derived from the Greek word "dia" which means (through) and "speiro" meaning (scatters). (Cohen 1999: 178) Although diaspora is historically associated with the dispersal of Jewish people, Rajesh Rai and Peter Reeves (2009) argue that "many aspects of this expression are applicable as well to other groups of migrants including those from Africa, South Asia and the like." (2009: 1) The term "diaspora" is often used to represent the experience of displacement by national groups living outside homeland. According to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin (1999), diaspora refers to "voluntary or forcible movements of the people from their homelands into new regions." (1999: 68) Similarly, James Clifford (1994) defines the characteristics of diaspora as " a history of dispersal, myths/ memories of homeland, and alienation in the lost (bad host?) country, desire for eventual return, ongoing support of homeland, and a collective identity importantly defined by this relationship." (1994: 305) Accordingly, the case of diaspora, Lourdes Roper (2003) states, is often connected with: "enforced exile, uprooting, homelessness, perpetual longing for the lost homeland and racial purity." (2003:10)

Diaspora writings include mainly the works that are written by authors who live outside their homeland. In Arab literature, diaspora or Anglophone Arab writing "has recently captured the attention of readers worldwide as a medium through which they can gain a better knowledge of the intellectual and spiritual make-up of Arabs." (Al Maleh 2009: 10) Arab Anglophone literature is strongly connected with postcolonial literatures as its authors are haunted by many postcolonial terms, such as: 'hybrid', 'exilic', 'displacement' and 'diasporic', in addition to issues of belonging, loyalty, identity, affinity and dreams of return which are recognized and dealt with in various works in Arab literature.

Some of the finest literature on diaspora has been written by many postcolonial Arab authors who tried to put their names within other emerging world literatures which use English as a medium of literary writing. To mention few examples, like: Fadia Faqir, Ahdaf Soueif, Leila Aboulela, Ghada Karmi, and many others who present the British-Arab experience of diaspora. Other Arab writers, like: Gibran Khalil Gibran, Leila Ahmed, Mohja Kahf, Amin Rihani, Edward Said..etc. present the American-Arab experience. Such writers, Al Maleh (2009) argues, serve as "cultural mediators" in a way that they describe the nature, lifestyle and ways that negotiate between different cultures. In describing the task of the

Anglophone Arab writers, Al Maleh maintains that:

They present not the exotic or alien but the comprehensible and acceptable. Moving beyond an internal audience, anglophone Arab writers have the capacity to play a crucial role in disseminating through the wider world their images of hyphenated Arabs and of the Arab people as a whole. (2009: 10)

This quotation summarizes the unique task of the Anglophone Arab writers which should be a comprehensible one. In their diasporic experience, the Anglophone Arab authors should not appear alien to the foreign community they had been brought up in, but rather engage this new world by presenting their own culture through which they can achieve acceptance through understanding.

In a similar vein, diaspora writing in South Asian context becomes an increasingly popular genre. South Asian diaspora literature constitutes an important part of the growing field of Anglophone postcolonial literature. The best-known South Asian diasporic literature has appeared in English since the 1960s. (Patil 2013: 4) This diasporic literature has helped in providing a link between South Asia and the rest of the world. Similar to the experience of Arab diaspora, the migrants of South Asia experience "displacement, fragmentation, marginalization, alienation, loss of identity and discontinuity in the cultural discourse of the subject countries. Moreover, a common characteristic of nostalgia about the native country is a powerful element of India diaspora literature." (Gupta 2015: 239) This kind of hybridity, according to Claire Chambers, "in which the individual exists but is deeply rooted in social interactions, is evident in much South Asian fiction and auto/biography." (Chambers 2013: 82)

There are many South Asian diasporic writers who have successfully presented an important body of creative writing in English. Some of the better-known authors include Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Vikram Seth and Yasmin Hai who present the British-South Asian experience of diaspora, while Rohinton Mistry and Shyam Selvadurai present the Canadian- South Asian experience, and Bharati Mukherjee, Amitav Ghosh, Jhumpa Lahiri, Anita Desai and Bapsi Sidhwa present the American- South Asian experience of diaspora. These and other South Asian writers have received a considerable attention and sales on the international stage. In addition to their task as culture mediators, like the Arab diasporic writers, South Asian diasporic writers offer an account on immigrant experiences which reflect the ambivalences and complexities that are connected with the conception of identity. They also investigate some diasporic issues, like: memory, home and belonging.

The purpose of this paper is to highlight the suffering of the migrant as being a hybrid person who often stays in a position of "third place". In the twentieth-first century, the term "hybridity" is often taken to describe

cultural norms that emerged from colonial encounters between the colonisers and the colonised. It involves a combination of two different components which leads to a third element that is different from either of the two components, something in-between. There are many critics who have drawn attention to the dualities resulting from the tensions between the cultures of the coloniser and the colonised. Among these are Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (1996) who argue that a person who faces the complexity of cultural combination will normally suffer from the "duality of binary thinking". (1996: 25) This binary thinking is created as a result of the engagement with two different spaces; one is 'the East' and the other is 'the West'.

In the colonial context, these cultures could not remain entirely distinct; Homi Bhabha, a highly influential figure in contemporary postcolonial studies, speaks about the "hybridity" or "in between-ness" which underlines the interdependence of the coloniser and the colonised. He believes that under the impact of colonisation, a hybrid discourse, language, and system of practices are created, which do not belong to either "coloniser" or "colonised", but rather, situated in-between, and are full of ambivalence and tension. Bhabha also describes the process of hybridity as: "Two contradictory and independent attitudes inhabit the same place, one takes account of reality, the other is under the influence of instincts which detach the ego from reality. This results in the production of multiple and contradictory belief." (1994: 188) In a similar context, Susheila Nasta (2002) discusses the "in-betweenness" that characterizes diaspora and the migrant person who lives in two worlds and shares two different cultures. She states that:

The position of the migrant and immigrant I would add is enabling in this way for it allows a doubling of perspective, a view of the inside from the outside –though in reality the two perspectives are always linked. But this vantage point has both the precision of distance and intimacy and is essentially an ambidextrous one. (Nasta 2002: 42)

Nasta and other scholars have described the special vantage-point that migration may provide for the writer. In this way, diasporic literature appears to offer important insights into the process of diaspora.

Much of the Arab and South Asian diasporic literatures focus on the questions of identity, belonging and making a new home in exile. A considerable number of postcolonial migrant writers have created a body of writing by which they have widely recorded their travelling and settlement experiences outside their homelands. This has led to the emergence of

migrant literature or what is called "Literatures of diaspora". This paper will examine the issue of diaspora in the autobiographies of two female writers, shedding some light on the colonial experience and the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as represented in the personal experience of the Palestinian writer, Ghada Karmi in her memoir, *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* (2002) from one side, and the postcolonial experience of exile, displacement and the problems usually connected with migration; such as dual identity, as represented in the memoir of the Pakistani writer, Yasmin Hai's *The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter: Becoming British* (2008), on the other side.

The texts under discussion in this paper explore the experience of two female writers living in exile. In their memoirs, Karmi and Hai, being postcolonial writers, draw upon their childhood experiences to convey their own cultures; for instance, Karmi presents a great deal of details in her autobiography revealing the colonial experience in her country, and Hai mentions many aspects of her past traditions as well. The authors specify a huge part of their memoirs to describe their struggle to figure out their own identity and their affinity towards two cultures. They also describe their struggle to achieve balance between their Western surroundings and the traditions of their homeland.

Before introducing the main texts in this discussion, it is worth shedding some light on the differences between the autobiography and the postcolonial autobiography. While an autobiography, mostly, reflects upon the writer's personal experience, it can also be representative of an era, just as other literary works may illustrate the history of ideas. In his "Autobiographical Pact", Philippe Lejeune describes the autobiography as "retrospective narrative in prose that someone makes of his own existence when he puts the principal accent upon his life, especially upon the story of his personality." (1971: 4) On the other hand, the postcolonial autobiography, as C. L. Innes (2007) suggests, comes to focus on the life of the author as being a representative of his culture group or "as the embodiment of a new nation's struggle to come into being and its establishment of a cultural and ideological identity." (2007: 56-57) Thus, the paper will also present the Hai and Karmi as representatives for their own cultures.

The first text to be introduced in this discussion is Karmi's *In Search of Fatima*. This acclaimed memoir, with its powerful narrative, sheds the light upon the long Palestinian-Israeli conflict describing in detail the major political events that shaped the fate of the country in 1940s. Karmi's memoir is a fascinating kind of self-writing that offers an account on the author's personal experience of displacement and exile in England.

Ghada Karmi, the author, is a [Palestinian](#) physician, author and academic who was born in November, 1939 in a small neighborhood in Jerusalem, Katamon. She is also a well-know international commentator on

the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as she writes widely about the Arab-Israeli conflict. Karmi, the child, remembers vividly huge scaring events occurring around her. She was only eight years old when the Haganah attacked Semiramis Hotel on the street next to her house in Qatamon town. (Karmi 2002: 8) After her family escaped from Palestine, they settled down in London, while she was still a small child. Although she is a thoroughly anglicised woman, due to her long stay in England, she is also a staunch Palestinian nationalist, who always aims at presenting her country's case to the western audience.

Karmi writes frequently on the Palestinian issues in some newspapers and magazines, including [The Guardian](#), [The Nation](#) and [Journal of Palestine Studies](#). In 2005, she was invited to do something that "most Palestinians can only dream of" (Karmi 2008: 9), which is visiting Katamon again for the first time since she has left in 1948. In fact, this dream of *Al-'awda*, the Arabic term for return or the dream of return, is one of the central concepts of the Palestinians ideology and life. Currently, she works as a research fellow at the [University of Exeter's](#) Institute of Arab and Islamic Studies. One of her academic and popular writing is her book *Married to Another Man: Israel's Dilemma in Palestine* (2007).

Her remarkable memoir, *In Search of Fatima*, provides a unique perspective on the Palestinian dilemma. It examines the conflict between Israel and Palestine through revealing the personal experience of Karmi and her family. It is a story about the author's experience of losing a home, fighting to "fit-in" and then trying to find her roots back. Karmi begins by describing her life on different stages, starting from childhood in Palestine, into exile after the Nakba, and finally coming into Britain. In this memoir, Karmi starts telling the story of her childhood and life with her family in Palestine, then she moves to tell about their travelling to Britain after the catastrophe of 1948, and ironically, resettling in a Jewish neighborhood in London. Karmi describes how she became assimilated and a keen reader of English literature. The final part of the memoir describes her coming of age, in Golders Green, the middle-class Jewish quarter in North London. The memoir also describes Karmi as an impassioned pro-Palestinian activist, especially when she began practicing medicine in a Palestinian refugee camp in South Lebanon in 1977.

The story, generally, explores not only the physical hardship suffered by many Palestinian refugees, but also the psychological impact of displacement, loss of identity and belonging. In addition to Karmi's family, around 750,000 other Palestinians have fled the country and have not been

allowed to go back again to Palestine. (Tucker 2002: n.p) Throughout this memoir, a mix between a tender humor and tense realities can be found especially when describing her life in Tel Aviv and, later, her struggle to get a university grant to study medicine. Karmi's personal story is set against the continuing crisis not only in Palestine, but also in the Middle East. Her struggle for identity is not only a personal issue but also a national one; according to Jean Makdisi, Karmi is "engaged in a perpetual war of identities, unable to accept either her Palestinian past—which includes her situation as a girl—or the permanency of her status as an outsider." (2002: 110)

The second text under discussion, Hai's *The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter* (2008), is set in England. In her autobiography, Hai has the "representative" functions as a cultural mediator in a way that she has mainly exploited her autobiographies to reveal some of her homeland's tradition and past. According to Rehana Ahmed, Peter Morey and Amina Yaqin (2012), "Hai's memoir suggests a will to translate across cultures, and to negotiate between and complicate individualism and communitarianism." (2012: 65)

Yasmin Hai, the author, is a British writer who was born in 1971 in London to Pakistani parents. She is a current affairs journalist in the BBC of London, a documentary director and a television producer. Her father, Syed Samsamul Hai, was forced to leave Pakistan for his political attitudes as he was prosecuted by the Pakistani government for being a communist. He, thus, migrated to Britain in 1964. Mr. Hai was not married and did not have any children yet. Hai's written works include a number of articles for *The Guardian and Sunday Times*, in addition to an animation series, called *Vemblee*, set in a fictional British Muslim community, a screen writing development award sponsored by DNA Films, and her memoir, *The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter*, published in 2008. After her father's death when she was still 17 years old, Hai continued to live the same lifestyle of the modern, educated career woman as she moved to work in several programs in different companies. Currently, Hai is living in North London with her husband and two children.

The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter is a delightful and fascinating story about immigration and identity. Although Hai was born in England, in her memoir she describes her father's life story and his experience of exile and migration from Pakistan to London; she declares that: "I am writing this book about dad and being British." (2008: 333) Hai also reveals how her father's attitudes and lifestyle shaped her Asian-British identity in the twentieth-century London. (Behrends 2011:104) In her memoir, Hai describes in detail her father's strong desire to assimilate himself as well as his family to the norms and traditions of Brittan, using his frequent message "be like the English". Being like the English would of course include the dressing style and language usage. In one of her interviews, Hai asserts that

her father: "ordered to stop speaking Urdu, the only language my mother properly spoke. Instead, it was decided that we only speak to her in English." (Hai 2008b, n.p.) Mr. Hai also encouraged his children to read for Shakespeare and Milton as being integral part of the English culture. Hai's memoir is obviously funny, passionate autobiography. Intelligence, sharp humour and passion are apparently evident in the narration of her memoir which describes the realities of immigration. In *Mail on Sunday*, Yasmin Alibhai-Brown describes this book as "a gem" because it is not very usual to find a young British Muslim woman writing about her life story.

By giving a brief background about the lives of the two authors, the discussion illustrates their main purposes of writing their books. Both of Karmi and Hai use their memoirs to address vividly the issue of migration, postcolonial diasporas and the possibility of return to their homeland. *In Search of Fatima* generally appears to be similar to *The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter* in being a memoir about British Muslim females. This paper draws attention to some of these similarities through offering a detailed study of the nature of the authors' life outside their homelands, Palestine and Pakistan, particularly, in England. Although their memoirs describe a very personal life filled with family stories, their experience of displacement represents the story of millions of diasporic people who live suspended between their old and new worlds, struggling to find a way to balance between two cultures and ways of life. In her essay, "The 1948 Exodus", Karmi describes her family story as: "a story of displacement and exile and loss, replicated in thousands and thousands of cases where Palestinians fled or were driven out in order to make room for the establishment of the new State of Israel in 1948." (Karmi 1994: 31) Similarly, Hai reveals her struggle with displacement and conflict because of generation gap.

Karmi specifies a huge part of her memoir to investigate the Israeli-Palestinian struggle, highlighting the negative impact of Israeli occupation to Palestine and describing the political situation in the country when the memoir was written. Karmi also gives us a vivid account on how she and her family have been impacted by the theft of their country. From the first pages of her memoir, the readers could touch her pain because of the loss of her country starting from the loss of her dog, Rex who was chasing after the taxi that took her away from her home in Qatamon, knowing that she will never see her dog again. Karmi then moves to talk about her new life in England, particularly, her insecurity in the London junior school where she alone does not speak English, her outrage at branding the Palestinians as terrorists as well as the pervasive suggestion that Palestinians "had been no

more than squatters on someone else's property." (Karmi 2008: 387) Karmi also speaks of her humiliation at her friend's wedding when the guests are asked to stand and sing the Israeli national anthem and join in a toast to the State of Israel. Later in her memoir, Karmi examines the tensions of her family trying to adjust to the new life in England, and her eventual return to visit her old house in Qatamon. This house, where Fatima was meant to stay until her family returned, is now inhabited by Americans. (Tucker 2002: n.p.)

The struggling to assert self-identity is one of the main themes that Karmi and Hai addressed in their memoirs since they both have faced this problem due to their living in England. They both felt alienated from their original homeland, and rather more assimilated with the English culture. For example, married to an Englishman, Karmi discussed the way she felt strange to the Palestinian life; she says: "Certainly I, living in Bristol and married to an Englishman, had no awareness of myself as Palestinian and I never gave the matter any thought. I felt distant from the Arab world as a whole." (Karmi 2008: 365) In a rather similar way, Hai, who is married to a Jewish American man, struggled to find her place and identity in the multicultural Britain. For this feeling of self-doubt and uncertainty, she blamed her father who alienated her and her family from their past traditions. Like Karmi, Hai strived to prove her Muslim identity in the society where she is living. In one of her essays, she mentions: "Yes, I was a model British Muslim citizen, but I knew that my upbringing had left me with little sense of who I really was. . . I, on the other hand, felt stuck between two worlds." (Hai 2008: n.p.)

Furthermore, both Karmi and Hai reflected upon the ways in which they negotiated foreign and challenging circumstances in England. They appeared to be aware of the influences of both cultures upon them. They totally considered their position as being hybrid in a "third place". That is why they attempted to negotiate their identities away from the two, heterogeneous cultures and to move to present multiculturalism which exists in one person rather than presenting themselves as being hybrid. Without underestimating the problems that Karmi and Hai have faced with assimilation to the new home, they both consider Britain to be their home where they could relatively have greater independence and rights.

Vijay Agnew (2005) argues that the term diaspora has recently been expanded to include situations that are not necessarily associate with forced moving or even the desire to return back to the homeland. Agnew offered the South Asian diaspora as an example. He asserts that "the South Asian diaspora is not characterized by its orientation to roots nor its desire for permanent return to the homeland. Rather . . . it is defined by its ability to recreate a culture in diverse locations." (2005: 4) This marks one difference between Karmi's and Hai's experience of diaspora. While Hai found it easy to be integrated into the English society and language, Karmi needed some

more time to build her own bases in a new culture that is totally different from her homeland's culture. This perhaps refers to the fact that Hai was born and raised in Britain, while Karmi moved to Britain when she was still a child. However, they both have assimilated to the English life quite easily. Describing her first coming to England, Karmi mentioned that she has easily adjusted with the English life. Being a small child, she could make friends easily and she quickly became very much part of the English life. Not only did she feel integrated, but also assimilated to the English way of life, especially after her marriage to an Englishman.

Apparently, the authors' assimilation to the English life has been heavily depended upon the control of their fathers; for instance, Karmi's father thought of his coming to England with his family as being temporary with certain goals, like education. For most Palestinians, at the times of 1930s, education in British Universities, especially Cambridge and Oxford were considered to be first-class choice. Thus, Karmi's father never wanted his children to be detached from their Arab identity or to be fully assimilated with the English society. In her memoir Karmi says: "Neither of our parents wanted to integrate us into British society, even if they had been able to. Our father regarded our stay in England principally as a means of acquiring a good education." (2002: 207)

Unlike Karmi's father, Hai's father has led an intensive process of assimilation upon his family. For example, he had always tried his best to keep religion out of his children's life, although he is coming from one of Pakistan's most prominent religious families. He even refused to discuss any religious matter with his family. Hai comments in her memoir: "religion was also the last topic my father wanted to discuss with my uncle." (2008: 114) He further claimed that in the school where he was teaching, "the black children and the Muslim ones were always at the bottom of the class." (2008: 115) In one of her essays, Hai describes her father's answer when she asked him about Muslims; "When, aged seven, I had asked him what a Muslim was, he casually replied: Someone who eats too much." (Hai 2008b: n.p.) Furthermore, Mr. Hai never allowed his children to go to Koran classes, preferring his children to learn to speak English rather than waste time learning Koran. In addition, he persistently discouraged his children from taking any interest in their Muslim past, instead, he imposed 'true Englishness' on his English-born children and tried to detach his children from the Pakistani way of life and Urdu language. Hai comments that:

He strongly discouraged us from taking an interest in our Muslim past and urged us to adopt English people's ways. . . We were given crash courses in English table manners,

regularly taken to see English plays and pantomimes, and my sister and I were even given short haircuts in the style of Milly-Molly-Mandy. . . . We weren't subjected to Qur'an classes, or made to watch endless Bollywood movies. All that, in his opinion, could only hinder our progress in England. (Hai 2008b: n.p.)

In addition, becoming English and having English passport had been relatively easy for Hai's father who managed to know all the words of the English national anthem, and who also could "reel off all the English national holidays." (Hai 2008a: 15)

On the other hand, the mothers seem to play a different role in the life of Hai and Karmi. Unlike her father, Hai's mother, Noor Jehan Begum, was a religious woman who, although an educated woman with MA in political science from Karachi University, had very little interest in politics and "had little command of proper English." (Hai 2008a: 23) Despite the efforts that Mr. Hai has done to teach his wife English and to make her "Operation wife" (2008: 24), she could not manage to speak fluent English, as she was very suspicious of western ways. This created difficulties in communicating with her own children who were ordered by their father to speak and reply only in English. The case of Hai's mother appears to be very similar to the case of Karmi's mother, who did not help her children to be integrated with the English society. Like Hai's mother, Karmi's mother did not get along very well with the English society. Instead, she always preferred to speak Arabic, to listen to Palestinian songs and to eat Arabic meals rather than try the English ones. She also never tried to make any friendship with English people. Karmi comments on this:

Her social outlets, in contrast to our father, were limited largely to the confines of our house. . . . she understood nothing of our schoolwork and had no dealings with our teachers or with other parents. Cut off from our lives by language and our growing assimilation and having little companionship with our father, she drew close to the Arab friends she had started to make in London. (2002: 228)

In addition to this, Karmi's mother tried her best to pull her children back anytime she feels they are straying away from their culture and customs. Hai's relationship with her mother resembles in a way Karmi's relationship with her mother. Hai's relationship with her mother was not very strong because of the language barriers. In an attempt from Mr. Hai to improve his family's ability to speak English, he allowed the mother to speak in Urdu, but the children to reply in English. To some degrees, this solution was successful in a way that the children's as well as the mother's ability to speak English has improved. However, for Hai, because it was difficult to express some complex matters and feelings to her mother in English, she lost communication with her mother: "After dropping Urdu,

she became lost to me forever." (2008: 61)

This process of "Operation" has also continued to include the children of Mr. Hai's house. In one situation, Hai felt tensed when she had to straddle both worlds. When uncle Aslam and his wife, aunt Hilda were dining at Mr. Hai's house, aunt Hilda rejected strongly Hai's behaviour of eating with her hands, saying that: "Only Pakis eat with their hands." (2008: 51) Hai already knew that the word "Paki" or "Pakis" does not only refer to Pakistani people. She states that this "dreaded word" has become synonymous with being "uncivilised, primitive, savage, ignorant, backwards, uneducated, illiterate and uncultured. In other words, not English." (2008: 51) This situation has already encouraged Hai, in reaction, to try to look like English and to stop wearing Asian clothes, unless in special occasions. She also had a haircut like "the English heroine, Milly-Molly-Mandy" (2008: 54).

Obviously, both Karmi and Hai felt satisfied as they could, albeit difficult, be part of the British society. At the end of her memoir, Hai appeared to be thankful for her father who taught her and her family how to assimilate with the British way of life, "I wonder whether the price one pays to belong can be too high.. . But I think about what my father did in order to belong. Here, I suppose, I must be thankful to him. Yes, he put me on a path towards assimilation." (2008: 333) Hai also praised London for multiculturalism where "all cultures happily mixed and were tolerant of each other." (2008: 304) Like Hai who ended up with her 'happy hybridity', Karmi yearned to assimilate with the English style of life. She truly believed herself to be "dark-skinned English girl." (2002: 317) She even thinks of her exile in England to be different than her parents' exile which is "material and temporary". At the end of her memoir, Karmi declares frankly that her exile in England was a different exile, "undefined by space and time, and from where I was, there would be no return." (2002: 415)

Conclusion

According to Joe Cleary, "Comparative literary studies in the humanities is one of the few ways through which literary development can be studied in a manner that is not restricted to or dominated by a national frame". (2002: 10) This statement is particularly apt when it comes to a comparative analysis of South Asian and Arab texts. Reading Karmi's *In Search of Fatimah* alongside Hai's *The Making of Mr. Hai's Daughter* exposes numerous unexpected connections which are evident in the shared thematic concerns and interest in the possibilities and limitations of speaking across cultural, national and geographical boundaries. This kind of a comparative study offers new and various ways to read and to pair texts

that have rarely been analysed together. Such an approach not only allows for an examination of parallels that stem from a shared history of colonialism, but it also brings into focus other connections, not least the shared concepts of female writers such as Ghada Karmi and Yasmin Hai who both seek to reveal their own journey of diaspora.

The memoirs of Karmi and Hai make a significance contribution to the nature of diaspora and ambivalence. Their memoirs perfectly catch some of the daily dilemmas of an immigrant life, especially that the authors spend a great deal in these memoirs focusing on their personal experience of living in England. Their memoirs also share common descriptions of an immigrant life in Britain and investigate issues of identity, cultural traditions and familial relations, especially daughter-mother and daughter-father relationship.

This paper makes a unique literary reading of the postcolonial diasporas in Britain. One of the main purposes of this paper was to draw out some of the parallels and divergences between two popular autobiographies to expose a new role for the diasporic writer as a representative for his or her culture. Although these autobiographies present mainly the life of an individual, they are however expansive narratives about the authors' position within society, and they are shaped by cultural, linguistic and ideological difficulties of both diasporic writers who try to find a proper position for themselves within the English society.

Karmi's and Hai's memoirs are rich works that investigate some of the profound challenges that any Muslim community would go through in the process of being British. This paper contributes to our understanding of the different facets of the term diaspora, especially when analysed in a comparative context. When diaspora generally seems to be a negative experience that involves many problems and sufferings to the diasporic person, this paper sheds the light on the different and unique process of diaspora being experienced by Hai and Karmi. A process which is full of challenge, acceptance, understanding and assimilation.

الملخص

كتابات المهجر عند الكتاب البريطانيين العرب والبريطانيين الجنوب آسيويين كما تظهر في روايات غادة كرمي ((البحث عن فاطمة)) وياسمين حي ((تكوين ابنة السيد حي)) عبير الرواشدة

تتناول هذه الدراسة المقارنة تحليلاً لمذكرات نسائية عربية مع جنوب آسيوية مع التركيز على قضية كتابات الشتات والمشاكل التي تنطوي عليها أي تجربة في المهجر. من خلال تحليل مفصل لرواية غادة كرمي ((البحث عن فاطمة)) ورواية ياسمين حي ((تكوين ابنة السيد حي)) تنتقل الدراسة إلى ما وراء الحدود الوطنية والثقافية لتسليط الضوء على بعض الاهتمامات السياسية والجمالية المشتركة للكتاب العرب وكتاب جنوب آسيا، وخاصة فيما يتعلق في حالة كتابات الشتات والتشرد والمنفى. ستوظف هذه الدراسة منهجية التحليل الأدبي المقارن من خلال مخاطبة قضايا مماثلة في هذه المذكرات لإثبات أن هذه التشابهات على الأقل تنبع من تاريخ مشترك للاستعمار. علاوة على ذلك، واستناداً إلى أفكار المفكر (هومي بابا) حول الازدواجية الناتجة عن الاستعمار، التهجين و "المأوى الثالث"، ستعرض هذه الدراسة أهم المشاكل التي يعاني منها أي شخص مستعمّر يعيش في المجتمع الاستعماري لفترة طويلة من خلال التركيز بشكل خاص على الحياة الشخصية للمؤلفين. وأخيراً، ستناقش الدراسة حياة المؤلفات بوصفهن وسطاء ثقافيات كمفسرات لمعايير ثقافاتهن الخاصة من خلال الكشف عن قصصهن الشخصية ككتابات مهاجرات. ستخلص الدراسة إلى أن تجارب الكاتبتين كرمي وحي في الشتات فريدة من نوعها من حيث طريقة تركيزها على المنظور الإيجابي لهذه التجربة.

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