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On Diaspora and Culinary Nostalgia: Reterritorializing Identity in the Reconceptualized "Thirdspace" in Diana Abu-Jaber *Crescent* (2003)

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Submitted by

Kaouther CHILI

Panel of Examiners

Mr. Hamza RAHIL, MAA, University of M'Hamed Bougara, Chair;

Dr. Faiza MAHFOUF, MCB, University of M'Hamed Bougara, Supervisor;

Dr. Sonia KHERIF, MCB, University of M'Hamed Bougara, Examiner.

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Declaration

I hereby declare that this dissertation stands as the fruit of my exhaustive investigation, with unwavering assurance that adequate recognition and appreciation are bestowed upon the contributions of fellow researchers, whenever their influence warrants appropriate reference.

June, 2023

Signature

Kaouther CHILI

Dedication

With profound reverence, I dedicate this thesis to myself and my cherished family. To My father Boualem and mother Nadia. To my exceptional siblings Asma, Ikhlasse, Isra, Aya, and Yahia, and my beloved niece Safa. To my grandmother Zoulikha, and my cousin Selma. For their unwavering support and boundless encouragement, not solely in the pursuit of this scholarly endeavor but also throughout the entirety of my educational journey. To my beloved companions, most notably Imane, Tiziri, Dounia, my High-school friends, and Mohamed among many, your steadfast backing, motivation, and invaluable counsel have proven to be influential.

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Abstract

This thesis examines the ramifications and implications of diaspora on displaced individuals, focusing on issues of spatiality and identity as depicted in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* (2003). Drawing on Robin Cohen's conception of "diaspora", as well as Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari's co-founded concepts of "deterritorialization and reterritorialization", the current study unravels the challenges of the diasporic community upon their dislocation, disrupting their spatial perception and self-identification within an unfamiliar host society. Moreover, it analyzes how individuals in diaspora resist cultural erasure and the influence of hegemonic powers by using culinary elements, nostalgia, and memory to reconnect with their lost tradition. Additionally, this research explores how the author reconstructs a radical "Thirdspace" of resistance within the narrative to counter the cultural erasure and re-assert her characters' cultural identities. The analysis draws on the concepts of nostalgia, memory, deterritorialization-reterritorialization, and Edward Soja's theoretical conception of the "Thirdspace". The study concludes that certain characters experience absolute deterritorialization from their cultural identity, while others reterritorialize it within the foreign American territories by strategically employing the culinary elements in a heteroglossic discourse that encompasses nostalgia and memory. This process facilitates the creation of a "Thirdspace" of resistance that enables diaspora individuals to reclaim their agency, preserve their culture, and ensure the continuity of their origin and legacy within the confines of the American territory.

Keywords: Diaspora, Deterritorialization-Reterritorialization, Identity, Culinary Elements, Nostalgia, Thirdspace.

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General Introduction

The global scenario during the last few decades has known a large scale of immigration due to various political and economic factors. Individuals are compelled to depart from their native lands due to the inevitable turmoil of political unrest, seeking refuge in foreign countries in pursuit of security, education, employment, and stability. The concept of "diaspora" is employed to describe the dispersal of people from their original homeland (Toninato 2). The process of dispersal across diverse cultural domains engenders intricate sets of transformations and challenges pertaining to various social and cultural dimensions. In alignment with the complex dynamics characterizing the diasporic experiences, certain immigrants are profoundly influenced by the host country that contributes in the emergence of multicultural societies. Conversely, others engage in creating imagined communities through the interplay between nostalgia and food motifs, as a means of countering globalization while simultaneously maintaining ties with their native homelands and origins.

The phenomenon of diaspora and its consequential influence engender a corresponding disposition within the realm of literature. Immigrant and exiled writers, imbued with a profound yearning for their native land and an enduring attachment to its traditions, religions, and languages, give rise to a new literature of diaspora in which they generate a nuanced web of historical interconnections, spiritual affinities, and cohesive recollections to their homeland. Mention may be made to Leila Aboulela, Rabih Alameddine, Edward Atiyah, Ahdaf Soueif, Khalil Gibran, Suheir Hammad, Lawrence Joseph, and Diana Abu-Jaber whose literary endeavors center around the cardinal concept of home while delving into various distinctive themes, such as marginalized communities, outsider syndrome, restlessness, existential rootlessness, uprooting and re-rooting, nostalgia, and the quest for identity.

Those writers endeavor to amplify the diasporic aesthetic by illuminating their diverse experiences with culture and identity and simultaneously, they assert their ethnic origins through the incorporation of various remnants of their culture and heritage into their literary compositions in an effort to attenuate their nostalgic feelings and to reflect the heterogeneity of the Arabic culture. Within this framework, numerous Arab writers infuse their diasporic literature with the essence of Arab cuisine and culinary motifs. For these writers, food is indelibly intertwined with the national psyche (Mannur 4); it transcends its mere gastronomic and nourishing functions to serve as a catalyst for recollecting and reviving ethnic memories and legacies. The strategic deployment of culinary production as a means of communication facilitates recognition and understanding of different facets and histories of nations, effectively exemplifying the intermingling characteristic of diasporic experiences. Furthermore, culinary discourse constructs a point of ethnic identification and reunion, thereby preserving racial identity and countering the perils of cultural erasure and globalization (Hall 237).

The current study demonstrates how Abu-Jaber, in her second novel, *Crescent* (2003), endeavours to illuminate the complexities of place and identity in the context of diaspora. It substantially contends that diaspora serves as a transformative force, unsettling the established notions of both space and identity of immigrants and individuals in exile. Moreover, it posits that culinary practices, employed as a cultural motive imbued with nostalgia, serve not only as a tether linking the immigrant characters to their homelands and memories, but also facilitate a process of negotiating a new space of resistance. Within this space, those characters are able to reinvigorate their cultural affinities and restore their identities within the multicultural American society.

Diana Abu-Jaber (1960-) is a contemporary Jordanian-American writer and a professor at Portland State University. As an author, her literary endeavors often draw from her personal experiences for she has lived in both Jordan and the United States and formed an intimate

understanding of both societies. Her works are best renowned for her engaging with multifaceted themes surrounding Arab and Arab-American cultural identity, family, memory, and displacement while featuring Arab culinary productions. Abu-Jaber has written notable works, such as her first memoir *The Language of Baklava* (2005) that is followed years later by her culinary memoir *Life without a Recipe* (2016). Additionally, she has published several novels including *Arabian Jazz* (1993), *Crescent* (2003), *Origin* (2007), *Birds of Paradise* (2011), *Silverworld* (2020), and *Fencing with the King* (2022). Her literary prowess extends beyond novels and memoires, as she has also published numerous essays and short stories both in literary magazines and electronically including "Blackberries" (2016). Abu-Jaber is honored with the Oregon Book award for Literary Fiction and has received several awards, notably the 2012 Arab-American National Book Award.

The title of Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* metaphorically alludes to a lunar moon, signifying new beginnings in life. The novel portrays the trajectories of Arabs in diaspora, notably the start of a multidimensional love story of the Iraqi-American chef Sirine, with the Arabic literature professor, Hanif, from Iraqi origin. The story takes place in the Arab-American community in Los Angeles, often in the confines of the Lebanese restaurant of Um-Nadia where immigrants share the hardships they encounter in the foreign land and express their yearning emotions for their homes. Throughout the novel, multiple characters recount their past memories, and engage in introspection regarding their identities and origins amidst a multi-cultural society. Abu-Jaber fuses the narrative with an evocative portrayal of Arabic cuisine, including its distinctive culinary practices, stories, and myths of the Arab culture to accentuate the Arabic essence permeating her literary work.

The impetus behind embarking on this thesis project with the chosen corpus is rooted in the significance attributed to the novel within the contemporary Arab-American literary canon, for it adeptly captures the nuanced and complex transitional concerns of the Arab

diaspora. The decision to pursue this research is largely propelled by a personal investment to explore the experiences of immigrants and individuals living in exile, with a special focus on the perspectives presented by Arab writers such as Abu-Jaber. Furthermore, it is driven by the aspiration to approach the selected literary work from a fresh and innovative standpoint, in order to unravel new interpretations by employing geocritical theories to the literary text. By doing so, this study seeks to make a valuable contribution to the body of knowledge as a whole and to contribute to the understanding and appreciation of intricate layers of meaning embedded within the selected text.

Owing to the heightened scholarly interest in the incorporation of food within literary productions, an array of researches have been conducted on Abu-Jaber's chosen fictional productions since their initial publication. A number of scholars and critics have extensively delved into the selected novel from diverse perspectives, offering varied interpretations and insightful analyses.

In "Making Homes in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" (2019), Hasnul Insani Djohar explores the notion of home within the Arab-American society employing the postcolonial theory. The critic asserts that various immigrants in America, including Arabs and Hispanics, strive to compensate for their sense of displacement by establishing Nadia's Café as their symbolic Home in America, where "every different identity and ethnicity is welcomed and accepted" (5). She further explores the fusion of the American celebration of Thanksgiving with Arabic cuisine in "An Arabic Thanksgiving" (Abu-Jaber 216), to negotiate the immigrants' sense of belonging within the American society. In contrast, the present study diverges from this examination of Abu-Jaber's novel by focusing on the significance of food as a means of reconnecting with one's original cultural identity, rather than adapting to their American identity.

Ishak Berrebbah, in "The Power of Recipes: Culinary Practice as a Strategy to Deconstruct Arab-American Identity in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" (2020), adopts a socio-cultural conceptual framework based on perspectives Homi Bhabha, Brinda Mehta, Dallen Timothy, and Stuart Hall to analyze the literary work. Berrebbah argues that Abu-Jaber employs food as a tool to "shape the characters' identities and affect their diasporic experience" (116). Moreover, he delves into the significant impact of food as a "human connector" in cross-cultural communications. The critic further examines the novelist's use of Arab culinary traditions to alleviate the characters' sense of estrangement and displacement while being in a foreign setting. Berrebbah also highlights Abu-Jaber's portrayal of the hybridity of her protagonist, Sirine, by blending Arab cuisine with American traditional celebrations. Finally, the scholar demonstrates the role of culinary traditions in attaching individuals to their personal heritage and memory. Nevertheless, this study goes deeper to explore how the writer utilizes the Arab culinary traditions to amplify the characters' feelings of nostalgia, and as a tool to create a new space where their past and present intertwine to reassert their ethnic identities.

In another article, "The Mosaics of National Identity in the Arab American Diaspora: Exploring Long-Distance Nationalism in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" (2021), Berrebbah examines the components of nationalism as expressed from afar-long distance nationalism. He draws on a socio-conceptual framework that is based on the perspectives of Carol Fadda-Conrey, Nina Glick Shiller, Gabriella Elgenius, and Tololyan Khachig. He argues that Abu-Jaber portrays her characters' Arab national identities through their engagement with and discussion of the political concerns of the Middle East. The critic also discusses "The projection of Arab national identity by resisting and correcting the negative stereotypes of Arabs" (198), as a manifestation of a long-distance nationalism, that asserts a claim to Arab identity across borders. Furthermore, he explores the use of the Arabic language, the practice of Islamic religion, and memory as identity markers that denote the belonging to the Arab nation.

However, although the critic has succeeded in analyzing the markers of the national identity in the novel, the focus of this study is the culinary element, and its role in facilitating the process of resisting the cultural erasure in a multi-cultural society.

Khaled M. S. Masood's "Universal Pro-Human Message Expressed in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" (2021) examines the challenges and concerns faced by immigrants and exiles that have been coerced into leaving their homelands. The scholar also explores the cross-cultural communication facilitated through Sirine's Arab dishes. Masood contends that "Sirine uses food as a medium of connection with the help of which a bridge is created to connect people from diverse ethnic societies" (8). The critic identifies food as a "bridge" between various characters from different ethnic communities and cultures. Contrary to his argument, this thesis explores how Abu-Jaber employs Arab dishes as a medium of ensuring the continuity of the characters' ethnic identities.

In addition to the previous scholars, Nawel Meriem Ouhiba, in "The Flavour of Homeland in Diaspora: Food as a Marker of Self-identification in Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" (2022), offers a reminiscent view to Berrebbah (2020) regarding Abu-Jaber's use of food in her work. She explores the significant role of Sirine's food in helping the immigrants dealing with their displacement and "soften[ing] the feeling of loss of their homelands" (8). Ouhiba then interprets the Arab dishes as a "compass" to recreate memories and unveil hidden stories of those in diaspora. Furthermore, the critic claims that Abu-Jaber uses the culinary tradition to offer her characters a ground to discuss diasporic displacement and life directions. Finally, she argues that the novelist implements food as a metaphor for love that brings the two main characters closer together. The scholar provides different interpretations for the use of the Arab culinary tradition in the novel; nevertheless, there are still other interesting and relevant interpretations to be approached. Thus, this study examines a similar subject, yet from a geocritical perspective by employing new theories in the analysis of the novel.

The aforementioned studies and reviews examining Abu-Jaber's novel, *Crescent*, provide valuable insight into the diverse connotations of the use of the Arab cuisine within the text. According to the previous critics, the interpretation of Arab cuisine includes its role as a means to negotiate American belonging, a shaping tool to identities in diaspora, a human connector, a compass to memory, heritage and hidden stories, a ground to discuss and alleviate estrangement and displacement, a marker of hybridity, and a metaphor of love.

Depending on this review of literature, the use of culinary elements in Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* offers an ample scope for further discussion. The previous studies and criticism, however, have explored its role as a connector to the characters' ethnic and cultural identity and homelands. However, this research aims to elucidate the significance of the Arab cuisine in heightening the sense of nostalgia. In addition, it aims to highlight its role in ensuring the historical continuity of their identity within a multi-cultural society, achieved through the creation of imaginary homelands that emerge within the "Thirdspace".

This study draws upon a number of theories, concepts, articles, and books to undertake an analysis of Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*. Notably, it relies on the conception of "diaspora" in the light of Robin Cohen's (2010) modernist perspective, as well as the theoretical framework of "deterritorialization-reterritorialization" co-founded by the French philosopher Gilles Deleuze (1925-1995) and the French psychoanalyst and political activist Félix Guattari (1930-1992) in their seminal work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983). Grounded in a post-structuralist approach, this critical theory offers insights into various aspects of human existence, such as the social relations and physical spaces defined as territories. The process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization encompasses the transformative movement, wherein "the immanent unity gives way to a transcendent unity of an altogether different nature" (146). In this process, the established norms of territories are dismantled and decoded, subsequently generating new alternative dimensions and unparalleled standardizations. Deterritorialization

and reterritorialization are concurrent and can be mutually intertwined, representing two complementary facets of the same process that engenders the emergence of new territorialities.

In addition to the poststructuralist Deleuzoguattarian geophilosophy, this research mainly draws on the theoretical tenets put forward by Edward W. Soja (1940-2015), an American political geographer and urbanist, in his book entitled *Thirdspace: Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996). Soja presents a new understanding of the notion of space; he reconceptualizes a trialectic dominant theory where spatiality, historicality and sociality are important imaginative configurations of space for human uses in socio-cultural studies. He introduces "Firstspace" to denote the tangible, concrete, and mappable spatial form, while "Secondspace" refers to the cognitive representation of spatiality within the realm of human imagination (10). The amalgamation of those two spatial forms give rise to what Soja terms "Thirdspace," a conceptual space that is simultaneously real-and-imagined. Within this new spatial form, "all histories and geographies, all times and places are immanently presented and represented," fostering a discourse of empowerment and resistance (311). Consequently, the creation of "Thirdspace" serves as an intersection and interaction point, where geography and humanities converge.

The aforementioned theoretical frameworks are employed in the critical analysis of Abu-Jaber's novel. The analysis aims to examine how characters are deterritorialized from their homes and identities in the context of diaspora, and how they refuse the cultural erasure within a multi-cultural context by deconstructing the norms and mediating "an-Other" spatial dimension to ensure the continuum of their cultural lore and historical heritage.

This thesis is arranged into an introduction, two chapters and a conclusion. The first chapter is an analytical chapter entitled "Diaspora, Deterritorialization, and Assimilation". It is divided into two sections. The first section, entitled "Diaspora: A Look through My Window", explores the origin of the term "diaspora" and highlights its characteristics in order to provide

a base to discuss the novel on the light of this term. The second section is entitled "Deterritorialization: A Fragmented Space and Identity". It is organized into two sub-sections; the first sub-section mainly explores the impact of the transitional movement across geographical boundaries on the perception of space. The second sub-section delves into the impact of the spatial deterritorialization on the cultural identity and the self-identification.

The second chapter is an analytical chapter entitled "Towards Reterritorialization and Resistance: Pathways to the 'Thirdspace'". It is arranged into two sections. The first section entitled "Food, Nostalgia, and Memory", focuses on the deconstruction of the concept of food in the novel and the different discourses entangled within the heteroglossic culinary discourse. The second section is entitled "Real-and-Imagined: A New Space of Resistance". It demonstrates the creation of the new space through the inclusion of food, which aids the characters in celebrating their quest for identity and connecting with their roots. The two chapters of this thesis respectively explain and depend on Deleuze and Guattari's theory as well as Soja's theory. In addition, supplementary theoretical frameworks are also referenced in instances where deemed necessary in the chapters of this thesis.

Ultimately, the conclusion serves as a comprehensive synthesis of the study's key findings, effectively addressing the main objectives of the thesis. It not only showcases Abu-Jaber's artistic prowess by bestowing her characters in *Crescent* with the means to forge a new spatial realm of resistance, where they reconnect with their cultural heritage, lost homelands, and reterritorialize their identities. Rather, it also offers valuable insights for future research, emphasizing the potential for alternative interpretations of the novel and inviting further exploration of its nuanced layers.

Chapter One

Displacement and Identity: Exploring the Impact of Diaspora and Deterritorialization

The first chapter of this thesis is devoted to the introduction of the concept of "diaspora" in the light of Robin Cohen and William Safran's framework, in addition to the analysis of Abu-Jaber's *Crescent* in the light of the post-structuralist geophilosophy set forth by Deleuze and Guattari. It emphasizes, in this regard, the intricacies of deterritorialization and their impact on the characters' relations to space and identity throughout their diasporic experience.

This chapter is, thus, divided into two sections. The first section introduces the essence of the term "diaspora" in the modern world relying on the theoretical conception set forth by Cohen and Safran. It emphasizes the multifaceted aspects of diaspora and its related experiences to facilitate the understanding of the novel and a base for the following analysis to rely on. The second section purposefully unravels the profound force of deterritorialization within the diasporic context, in the light of the deterritorialization-reterritorialization theory co-presented by Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. It ultimately aims to examine the physical displacement as a means that deterritorializes the spatial perseption and relations in the context of diaspora. Moreover, it scrutinizes the fragmented sense identity and self-recognition, and demonstrates the complexities related to the negotiation of cultural identities amidst the dynamics of the diasporic movement.

1. Diaspora: A Look through My Window

Diaspora is a global phenomenon that holds a pervasive influence, exerting a profound impact on the lives of numerous individuals while concurrently effectuating substantial transformations in various facets of their existence. In a systematic fashion, its indelible imprint on writers and scholars becomes conspicuously manifested within their literary oeuvres.

Thereby, the comprehension of the intricacies of the concept of "diaspora" is necessary to discern the authors' thoughts and mindsets conveyed through their creative expressions.

The nature of the term "diaspora" reveals its complexity as a subject to temporal and scholarly variations. Nonetheless, comprehending the essence of this term necessitates a profound grasp of the concept of "Homeland". The notion of the latter refers to an intangible construct, delicately evoking an individual's native or ancestral land, reverberating as the locus of their origin, identity, and cultural heritage. Etymologically, the term "diaspora" finds its roots in the Greek amalgamation of the prefix "dia" and the verb "speriein," signifying a profound act of dispersal, propagation, and diffusion (Baumann 20). Furthermore, its inaugural usage emerged within the theological realm, specifically ascribed to the diaspora of Jews from Israel during the eighth century BCE. Over time, the term has organically broadened its purview, transcending its initial association and embracing diverse populations, thus encapsulating migratory patterns and exilic narratives that parallel the Jewish archetype (Safran 83). Within this contextual framework, Martin Baumann (2010) posits that the term "diaspora" has assumed a distinct connotation since the 1960s, signifying the presence of a national, cultural, or religious collective residing in a foreign territory as a consequence of escalating migratory patterns and the surge of global mobility (22).

In the modern world, scholars, such as Safran and Cohen, endeavor to unravel a discernible pattern to the utilization of this concept, which has become a broad umbrella encompassing diverse groups. In this regard, they perceive the impetus behind people's dispersion from their original homeland to various parts of the world as the fundamental underpinning for elucidating various characteristics that define diasporic populations. As a result, they delineate between a compelling diaspora, characterized by the forced displacement stemming from catastrophic occurrences, such as famine, enslavement, mass upheavals, conflicts, wars, political upheavals, and despotic rule. Moreover, they comprise a voluntary

diaspora that signifies the deliberate movement of a homogeneous collective to a foreign territorial domain. Accordingly, the concept of diaspora has come to encompass a wide range of classifications, including expatriates, expellees, political refugees, alien residents, immigrants, and ethnic and racial minorities (Safran 83).

Furthermore, building upon the foundation previously acknowledged, a myriad of distinctive attributes are ascribed to characterize the diasporic populations. According to the conceptual framework expounded by Robin Cohen in *Global Diasporas: An Introduction* (2010), which builds upon the pillars established by William Safran (1991), diaspora pertains to a marginalized subset of individuals, who have disseminated themselves across unfamiliar geographical territories, while preserving an idealized collective memory to their ancestral homeland (5-6). They uphold visionary aspirations and mythical narratives that are closely tied to their historical legacy, tribulations, geographical bearings, and noteworthy accomplishments (ibid).

Consequently, the veneration of the native land evokes sentiments of wistfulness and an enduring yearning for a return to the ancestral homeland; yet, the realization of such aspirations is often thwarted by the harsh realities of political and economic circumstances (Ulloa 25). Nonetheless, it remains a poignant "myth of return," serving to fortify ethnic consciousness and foster solidarity within diasporic communities (Safran 91). Additionally, Cohen asserts that this marginalized minority often grapples with a complex relationship with the host societies, wherein they harbor the belief that full acceptance is elusive. Moreover, he argues that the diasporic collective strive to maintain and rekindle ethno-cultural connections to their land of origin while living in foreign countries and simultaneously share a collective sense of empathy and mutual responsibility (Cohen 15). The aforementioned attributes propagate a profound essence of dislocation, an ardent pursuit for self-identity, a palpable sense

of isolation and loneliness, as well as poignant melancholy to cast a pervasive shadow over the lived experiences of diasporic communities (Roychowdhury 169).

Abu-Jaber's origins trace back to a diasporic heritage, for she is born in the United States to an American mother and an immigrant father from Jordan. The author's upbringing embodies the blending of cultures and the cross-pollination of influences that often characterizes the diaspora experience. This fusion of heritages provides her with a rich tapestry of experiences to draw upon in her writing, enabling her to reflect the complexities of navigating multiple cultural and geographical spaces, as well as the profound impact of displacement and hybridity on identity and creative expression. In this sense, Abu-Jaber, in her novel, *Crescent*, adeptly captures the complexities, tensions, and reconciliations that arise from straddling disparate worlds, offering rich diasporic narratives that resonate deeply with the shared diasporic experience.

Through her evocative prose in *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber acknowledges the dichotomy inherent in the dispersal, which is elucidated through various characters and their distinct experiences. The author portrays the forced aspect of diaspora through the protagonist Hanif Al Ayad. Hanif, or Han, is a university professor from Iraq, who has been compelled to leave his homeland and loved ones behind, to seek solace in the embrace of England shortly after the ascension of Saddam Hussein to power (109). Moreover, she demonstrates the compelling diaspora through a cohort of Arabs, who have intentionally chosen to reside outside their homelands, drawn by the allure of America. For instance, Sirine's uncle, driven by his longing for adventure and exploration, elects to embark on a journey to the United States, seeking the excitement of new experiences and the wonders of sightseeing (333). Similarly, Aziz Abdo, a poet of profound acclaim, receives an invitation to lecture at a prestigious university, exemplifying the voluntary nature of his diasporic journey.

However, whilst the impetus prompting the diasporic journeys may exhibit variances, the profound ramifications of losing one's home of origin reverberate deeply within the lives of these individuals. Such displacement disrupts their foundational experiences and profoundly complicates their adjustment to unfamiliar environments, as they grapple with the disconnection from the fabric of their former stability. Moreover, while they aspire to assimilate into the host society and adopt its norms, their pursuit is often fraught with challenges, for an enduring sense of yearning and attachment to their native lands persists. Throughout their transformative odyssey, individuals in diaspora valiantly endeavor to safeguard their cultural heritage, imbued with an intrinsic impulse to preserve their distinct identity even as they negotiate the intricate dynamics of acculturation.

2. Deterritorialization: A Fragmented Space and Identity

2.1. Deterritorialization of Space and Home

In her literary work *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber portrays the manner in which the transnational movement of her characters from their native lands to new and unfamiliar territories engenders a profound reconfiguration of the conceptual constructs of space and home. Through her narrative, the novelist elucidates how these characters' connection to specific places and their sense of belonging undergo a complex process of deterritorialization, precipitated by their traversal of both geographical and cultural boundaries. In doing so, Abu-Jaber not only sheds light on the complexities inherent in the diasporic experience but also unravels the diverse array of experiences and challenges confronted by these individuals as they navigate the intricate dynamics of displacement.

Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari have jointly developed a geo-philosophical framework that has a significant impact on post-structuralist thought. In their collaborative work *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1983), they introduce the concept of "deterritorialization" as a means to challenge and surpass the fixed, stable norms and to

decentralize the power and totality of the Oedipus (xvii). Deterritorialization, therefore, refers to the process by which existing structures and territories are disconnected, transformed, and destabilized from their pre-defined origins. Adrian Parr (2005) concludes that "to deterritorialize is to free up the fixed relations that contain a body all the while exposing it to new organizations" (69). Thus, deterritorialization necessitates the dismantling of rigid constraints and attachments to established territories, enabling encounters with unconventional environments. However, Deleuze and Guattari also caution that the shifts of deterritorialization can result in reterritorialization, wherein new forms of stratification, configurations, and control may emerge, attempting to capture and reestablish stability —an occurrence that signifies a form of "relative deterritorialization" (Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus* 54).

Drawing upon the theoretical underpinnings of Deleuze and Guattari, Abu-Jaber explores the multifaceted realms in which diaspora assumes a deterritorializing essence. By unsettling the stability of a particular community from their established homeland, diaspora leads individuals to venture into uncharted territories that transcend the constraints of their native cultural context. Within the narrative of *Crescent,* Abu-Jaber asserts that "In the past few years tens of thousands of people have left Iraq – many of them are professionals, trying to escape the terrible economic and political situation" (278). The quote illustrates a significant manifestation of deterritorialization within the context of diaspora. The departure of a substantial number of individuals from Iraq represents a profound dislocation from their native homeland, leading to a significant shift in their spatial and cultural context, which epitomizes the disruptive dynamics of deterritorialization. Additionally, the quote sheds light on the interplay between the deterritorialization of the homeland and the potential reterritorialization of the diasporic community. The individuals who leave Iraq may seek to establish new communities and networks in their host countries, in attempts to recreate a sense of belonging and stability in the face of displacement.

In the context of diaspora, deterritorialization assumes a transformative character, encompassing not only a fundamental disruption of the individual's direct connection to their homelands but also exposing them to new possibilities and alternative spatial paradigms. In this sense, Abu-Jaber exposes her Arab characters to the American landscape, precisely Los Angles, a space that starkly differs from their own in nearly every aspect. Within the chapters of the novel, Hanif, Serine's uncle, and various other Arab individuals subtly allude to their unfamiliarity with their surroundings by juxtaposing minute details from their past lives "there" with the present reality of being "here". Characters astutely contrast the obscured night sky in America, where the radiance of artificial lights obstructs the celestial brilliance, with the awe-inspiring spectacle they encounter in Baghdad, where the moon and stars radiate a crystalline clarity (64). This juxtaposition of celestial experiences serves to emphasis the characters' peculiar circumstances, wherein even seemingly mundane observations captivate their attention with an exigency that transcends their ordinary.

Additionally, Hanif purposefully acknowledges his fragmented spatial awareness of this geographic perplexity and his inability to orient himself within the unfamiliar space. He candidly remarks, "I really don't get the geography of this town, it seems like things keep swimming around me. I think I know where something is, then it's gone" (65). Han's persistent quest to familiarize himself with the geographical contours of Los Angeles elucidates his profound estrangement from his present territory, and unveils his exposure to a new realm. The characters' immersion into unfamiliar environments, coupled with the enduring interplay between their past and current realities, as well as their relentless battle with spatial orientation, all bear witness to their profound displacement. These intricate dynamics serve to shed light on the complexities of relative deterritorialization that is followed by the emergence of novel subjectivities in the reterritorializaion process. Those characters are uprooted from their familiar and easily navigable land of origin to be thrusted into unfamiliar spatial realms that

demand a reconstruction of their previous spatial understanding and relationships within the context of diaspora.

Following the same line of thought, the process of spatial deterritorialization exerts a transformative influence on the diaspora community, resulting in an absolute departure and disconnection from their familiar cultural behavioral patterns. In this account, Abu-Jaber highlights the confrontation of the Arab characters with an unconventional mode of communication, notably exemplified through Han's conversation with Sirine. He explains:

> In Iraq, everyone tells jokes and fables. It is too difficult to say anything directly. [. . .] In America you say 'secret code,' but in Iraq, that's just the way things are. Everyone's sort of folded up and layered, just a bit more complicated. Here it's all right out there, right on the surfaces. Everyone's telling you exactly how they feel all the time and what they're thinking. Trying to pin everything down. (36)

The provided excerpt aptly underscores Han's estrangement towards the divergent language usage between Iraq and America, where direct expression is favored in the latter, while the former relies more on humor and layered meanings. Moreover, it sheds the light on his deterritorialization, as he is destabilized and uprooted from his familiar cultural patterns and his stable territoriality, when he is confronted with new cultural environment.

Furthermore, deterritorialization is regarded as "the pure movement evident in changes between particular events" and "the very dynamism of change, situated between heterogeneous terms and tending towards no particular goal or endstate" (Stagoll 26). In the context of diaspora, the act of leaving the homeland is imbued with the aspiration of finding and founding a better life. Immigrants often hold the belief that once they reach the host land, "nothing bad could ever happen again" (Abu-Jaber 262). Nevertheless, the act of migration often

marginalizes them within the host society, despite their central position in their country of origin (Kaygisiz 26). They become decentralized, alienated, and rendered passive in the socio-cultural dynamics of the host culture. Abu-Jaber captures the pervasive sense of alienation and marginalization experienced by Arabs within their host society, with a particular emphasis on the challenges faced by university students. *Crescent* unveils a heartbreaking truth, where students yearn to establish connections with Americans to facilitate their reterritorialization; however, they encounter the harsh reality that the American counterparts often lack "the time or the space in their lives for the sort of friendships that the Arab students craved" (10). Consequently, the spatial deterritorialization experienced by the Arab characters is further compounded by the difficulties they face in establishing new connections within the host society. This leads to a sense of alienation and marginalization accompanied with a struggle to form new social territoriality where they fail to be recognized and stabilized within the unfamiliar space, further highlighting the complexities inherent in the diasporic experiences.

In conclusion, Abu-Jaber, within the narratives of *Crescent*, offers an exploration of the deterritorialization experienced by her characters as they navigate the transitional movement from their native lands to new unfamiliar territories, where they are confronted with the realities of the diasporic mobility. Through her narratives, the author reveals the complexities inherent in the diasporic experience, unveiling the multifaceted processes of spatial dislocationand cultural reconfiguration that occur when individuals traverse geographical and cultural boundaries.

2.2. Deterritorialization of Identity

The phenomenon of human mobility engenders a multifaceted disruption of the direct connection of individuals to their homelands, subsequently leading to the deterritorialization of their identity as they are exposed to new spatial configurations. In *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber demonstrates the intricate ways in which people navigate unfamiliar environments and grapple

with the challenges of establishing new lives in foreign lands. Moreover, she illuminates their fragmented and deterritorialized sense of self and identification, which ultimately goes through a state of reconstruction.

Identity serves as the "signifier of the self brought on by fluid affiliations based on culture, religion, ethnicity, affinity for a nation, experience, and preferences" (Agha 17). Those factors contribute to the formation of one's identity, which is not inherent but socially constructed. It is shaped through complex interactions among millions of people who share common characteristics, such as language, beliefs, and preferences. When the members of diaspora arrive in a foreign land, they experience a sense of displacement and disconnection from their homeland and community. This physical separation results in the absence of a stable foundation and a direct contact with familiar society, which disturbs the stability of their identity. In this account, Caren Kaplan (1987) recapitulates the Deleuzoguattarian concept demonstrating that that in the realm of post-modernity, "deterritorialization is one term for the displacement of identities, persons, and meanings" (188). According to Kaplan, this term not only pertains to the geographical displacement of individuals and communities but also extends its reach to the displacement of identities and meanings, in addition, it highlights how they are constantly being challenged, redefined, and transformed within contemporary societies.

Abu-Jaber captures such instances of deterritorialization within the diaspora community, where members encounter a palpable sense of fragmentation and distinction from their national identity. Within the chapters of the novel, Sirine's inquiry regarding the influence of Han's origins on his self-identification elicits his response that he essentially defines himself by "an absence" (151). He explains, "Leaving my country is like part of my body was torn away," and that attempting to redefine himself by it is like "trying to describe something that I'm not, that's no longer here" (152). Han's response conveys the emotional turmoil and disconnection he experiences upon leaving his homeland. Furthermore, it demonstrates that his

national identity, which is an integral part of his sense of self-identification, undergoes a significant deterritorialization due to his diasporic experience and the absence of his nation. Accordingly, he becomes unable to assert his identity as Iraqi, and that his attempts becomes futile due to the upheavals of diaspora.

Homi K. Bhabha (2008) contends that the questions of identification and identity are tied with individuals' perception of their roles through the "production of an 'image' of identity and the transformation of the subject in assuming that image" (xxix). In this view, the image of an identity is determined by the society of the individual, which in turn shapes his behaviors and standards. Thus, the mobility of the members of diaspora distorts this "image" of identification; it loses its fixed reference points and becomes unstable when confronted with new social dynamics. In this context, Abu-Jaber offers an insightful perspective on the fragmented sense of identity under the influence of American hegemony. Within the novel, Hanif asserts, "The question in the contemporary era is, what does it mean to call oneself an 'Egyptian writer' or even a 'Middle Eastern writer' anymore? […] the media is saturated with the imagery of the West. Is it even possible -or desirable- to have an identity apart from this?" (88). This excerpt unveils that the complexities of the modern world, i.e. mobility, immigration and displacement, have challenged the stability and the fixed reference points of the "image" of identification. Additionally, it highlights the fragmented sense of identity that emerges under the influence of the dominant American society.

The fragmentation and instability of identity experienced by diasporic individuals create a compelling drive for them to seek new forms of territoriality in order to restore a sense of stability. In their pursuit, certain individuals submit to the forces of deculturation, leaving minimal space for the expression and celebration of their Arab identity. Within this process, the cultural practices, deeply ingrained in the heritage of diasporic communities, are systematically silenced, altered, and sometimes even forgotten, leading to dissolution of their

cultural identities into an intangible realm. Kaplan's insights (1987) highlight that the radical "distanciation between signifier and signified" reveals a process of deterritorialization (188). Consequently, the identities of those individuals undergo an absolute deterritorialization from the established notions of cultural grounding, which is characterized by the irreversibility of the dismantling process, rendering any attempts of reterritorialization impossible (Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus* 55).

Abu-Jaber portrays how certain characters undergo an absolute deterritorialization from their ethnic identity and engage in the ever-evolving process through which they form new identities and affiliations that transcend the confines of their conventional geographic and cultural boundaries. In *Crescent,* Suha, a character of Arab descent, embarks on a process of deterritorialization, distancing herself from her cultural heritage. This is evident in her resolute expression of disinterest in remaining informed about the affairs of her ancestral country, as she vocalizes her desire to be an "American like everyone else" (160). Suha's assertion underscores her willingness to redefine herself beyond the confines of her ancestral roots and home territory, favoring the adoption of a more homogenous identity within the dominant American context instead of reterritorializing her ethnic identity in diaspora.

Moreover, the notion of absolute deterritorialization from the ethnic Arabic identity and the process of creating new identities is evident in the novel through the portrayal of the second-generation diaspora, who conform to the American social norm and distance themselves from their own heritage. It is illustrated in the scene where "a number of . . . women shout, 'English, English'" (160) after one of the attendees spoke in Arabic. The incident underscores the women's inability to understand anything said in Arabic and reflects their disconnection from their linguistic heritage, which is substituted by the host's language in the diasporic context. Another example is depicted when Han's Sudanese roommate "rolled up" his prayer rug with a compass to find Mecca, only to repurpose the compass for his camping endeavors with his

American friends (62). Those characters' adoption of alternative identities and their creation of new affiliations that conform to the host's societal and cultural norms reflect their absolute deterritorialization from their original identities and cultural legacy.

Nevertheless, while certain individuals succumb to the impact of deculturation and undergo a complete deterritorialization of their cultural identities to achieve full integration within the host society, others adopt a more nuanced approach. These individuals acquire the essential elements necessary to recreate their selves in the new territory, such as language. Nevertheless, their departure from their places of origin remains an unresolved matter as they tenaciously cling to their cultural heritage, evincing a profound longing to rekindle and reterritorialize their connection with their ancestral legacy. Abu-Jaber effectively portrays this category of diaspora individuals, who remained committed to their roots and could not accept their new settlement.

In the novel, one such character, Han, exemplifies this ambivalence towards his adopted home. Han expresses his sentiment that "there wasn't anything for him here in America" (276), suggesting his inability to find a true sense of belonging in the host land. Furthermore, his "furnitureless room" (113), serves as a metaphorical representation of his inability to establish a genuine connection and acknowledge America as his home. Similarly, Sirine expresses a deep yearning for a sense of home beyond her current residence. She articulates, "I guess I'm always looking for my home . . . even though I live here, I have this feeling that my real home is somewhere else somehow" (108). Her words reveal her internal struggle as she grapples with the dichotomy between her physical presence in America and her emotional attachment to her cultural heritage. In this sense, the characters' profound attachment to their origins emerges as an instrumental force that partially safeguards them from the absolute deterritorialized of their ethnic identity. Moreover, this steadfast connection to their roots functions as a pivotal mechanism for the reconstruction and re-establishment of their lost territorial footing as it

fosters a sense of belonging, and imbues their lives with significant elements that facilitate the reterritorialization of their identities across borders.

Through the exploration of the deterritorialized and fragmented identities within the context of diaspora, Abu-Jaber reveals the complex experiences of individuals navigating new cultural and geographical spaces. Deterritorialization introduces a disruptive element by severing the direct linkages to the native land and societal origins, consequently giving rise to a process of identity deterritorialization. Consequently, individuals struggle with fragmented senses of self-identification and belonging in the foreign lands. In response, some individuals opt for an absolute deterritorialization from their cultural identities and adopt new affiliations in order to integrate within the dominant host society. Conversely, some others refuse the absolute deterritorialization by maintaining strong attachments to their cultural heritage and lost homes in the confines of the host land.

In conclusion, this chapter presents a modernist perspective on the concept of diaspora, primarily through the lens of Cohen's framework. It illuminates the nature and distinctive characteristics of the diasporic experience, and refers to the author's diasporic heritage that enables her to vividly portray their encounters. Moreover, the chapter explores how diaspora exerts a deterritorializing force, disrupting the stability of the diasporic community and severing its ties with the homeland and home society, while exposing them to new spatial and social configurations.

Furthermore, this chapter examines how the deterritorialization of home and spatial paradigms systematically influences the sense of self and ethnic identities of the diasporic individuals, resulting in their fragmentation due to the influence of American culture. Moreover, it demonstrates how the diasporic individuals in their pursuit to re-establish their territoriality and the stability of their identity, certain diasporic characters, such as Suha, opt

for absolute deterritorialization from their cultural identities, breaking free from tradition and legacy. In contrast, characters like Han and Sirine resist the hegemonic forces and tenaciously hold onto their origins, endeavoring to reterritorialize their cultural identities within the host society. Subsequently, the forthcoming chapter will delve into the diverse strategies employed by these characters in their endeavor to resist cultural erasure and to reterritorialize their cultural identities within the host society.

Chapter Two

Reterritorialization and Resistance: Pathways to the "Thirdspace"

This chapter undertakes a rigorous examination of Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*, employing a dual perspective to elucidate the different strategies employed by some characters in an attempt to resist the cultural erasure and re-establish the stability of their cultural identity. Firstly, it focuses on the reterritorialization of the culinary discourse and its catalytic role in engendering discourses of nostalgia and memory that enables the revival of bygone experiences and emotions amidst their diasporic settlement. Moreover, the chapter endeavours to unravel the intricate spatial dynamics that unfold within the narrative, delving into the profound significance of these spaces in creating a conceptual "Thirdspace" of resistance, cultural preservation, and reterritorialization of identity within the host country of America.

Therefore, this chapter unfolds into two distinct sections, each dedicated to unravelling a unique facet of the analysis. The first section serves as a gateway, providing the foundation for comprehending the discourses employed within the novel. It draws substantially on Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization-reterritorialization theory, as well as Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of "heteroglossia" in the analysis of the culinary discourse. Additionally, it heavily engages with the scholarly contributions of esteemed thinkers, such as Svetlana Boym and Marianne Hirsch among others. Those influential voices provide essential frameworks for the analysis of the influence of discourses nostalgia, and memory mainly on the two protagonists, Sirine and Hanif. Moreover, the second section of this chapter delves into the theoretical framework of Edward Soja's concept of "Thirdspace," which serves as a critical lens for examining the epistemologies inherent in both "Firstspace" and "Secondspace." By analyzing the distinct characteristics and functions of these spatial dimensions, this section both elucidates their respective roles within the narrative of *Crescent* and uncovers the spatial dynamics between the real and imagined and the transformative potential of the "Thirdspace"

as a site of resistance, social de/reconstruction, and identity reterritorialization for both Sirine and Hanif among other characters.

1. Food, Nostalgia, and Memory

Within the novel, Abu-Jaber engages in a process of deterritorialization and reterritorialization to address the culinary elements in a heteroglossic discourse. Through this approach, the author transcends the boundaries of conventional denotations and references commonly associated with food and foodways. Instead, she ventures into the realm of subjective experiences, intertwined with the notion of identity, personal and cultural significance, delving into the layers that underlie the culinary discourse to facilitate the reterritorialization of the cultural identity of some of her diaspora characters. Through this exploration, the author reveals the multi-dimensional nature of gastronomy, unearthing its diverse associations and implications with the feelings of nostalgia and memory.

Deleuze and Guattari, in *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1987), assert that the concept of reterritorialization, accompanying the relative deterritorialization process, serves to illuminate the instances of assigning new roles, meanings, functions, and occupations to an already deterritorialized element that "has lost" its representative function and becomes abstract (174). It demonstrates the instances when territoriality is reestablished in creative alternative function that differs from its original territory (298). Within this approach, Abu-Jaber's representation of food and gastronomy undergoes a transformative process involving both deterritorialization and reterritorialization. Food represents a profound anthropological phenomenon that is indispensable to the perpetuation and flourishing of human life, for it encompasses a diverse array of ingestible substances that serve to nourish the corporeal frame and confer sensory gratification. By deterritorializing those fixed notions associated with food, Abu-Jaber deviates from the conventional biological connotation of ingestion and digestion allowing the occurrence of the reterritorialization process, wherein the

author assigns an alternative heteroglossic role to the alimentary elements in the novel, drawing on Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of "heteroglossia." The latter denotes the co-existence of different kinds of forms, signs, and discourses within a discourse (Bakhtin 60-61). Within this discourse, Abu-Jaber intertwines the culinary elements with the cultural and cognitive milieus to reveal the diverse perspectives and experiences encompassing food, memory, and nostalgia in addition to their personal and cultural relevance in restoring links with the deterritorialized cultural identities within the context of diaspora.

Nostalgia assumes a pivotal role in Abu-Jaber's exploration of the heteroglossic culinary discourse. Drawing on Svetlana Boym's perspective (2001), nostalgia encompasses the emotional "longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed" (7); it represents the individuals' yearning for a bygone era or a place that holds a personal significance and reflects a complex interplay between memory and imagination. Moreover, Harvey A. Kaplan (1987) posits that nostalgic memories preserve something of the self of early childhood (482), serving as a bridge between the past and present. In the narratives of *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber embeds the discourse of nostalgia within the heteroglossic culinary discourse to explore the emotions of longing for the past that emerges through the characters' engagement with the Levantine cuisine. The interaction of the displaced characters with the cooking ways of their traditional dishes serves as a conduit that ushers them to cherished moments and gatherings from their upbringing. This is exemplified in the scene when Sirine and Hanif, the protagonists of the novel, are preparing Baklava together in the restaurant's kitchen. Han declares that this process "reminds him" of his family and kitchen back home, where his mother, sister, and aunt would share stories while preparing the food (50). Han further expresses, "I miss everything, Sirine. Absolutely everything" (51), confessing the emotions associated with this recollection. This incident illuminates the nostalgic associations that food motives evoke within the characters, as they revive the unique family gatherings.

Furthermore, the sensory experiences of smells and tastes of food conjure the characters' nostalgic emotions. In this account, John Allen (2012) contends that culinary practices are intimately connected with memories and emotions, as certain smells and the physiological processes involved connect the olfactory centers of the brain with the emotion-regulating amygdala and the memory-forming hippocampus (127). Within the episodes of the novel, Sirine's cooking of the "dishes of her childhood" and the wafting "sour-tart smell of pickled grape leaves in the air" transport her back to her parent's tiny kitchen, where she has shared the most beautiful memories with her parents before their passing (Abu-Jaber 40). Thus, the gastronomical practices and their associated memories accentuate the bitter-sweetness of nostalgia, as they simultaneously summon their cherished positive moments and emphasize their bitterness for being unable to relive those earliest familial experiences.

In the reterritorialization of the culinary element, dietary customs are viewed as a powerful social language that communicates cultural traditions and inherited race, class, and ethnic identity (Vasvári 58). In this account, Abu-Jaber infuses nostalgia into the culinary experiences depicted in the novel, where they serve as a symbol of the diaspora community's lost home, ancestral roots, culture, and identity that have been eroded upon their movement from their homelands. As the narrative unfolds, Sirine, the chef in Um-Nadia's restaurant, guided by her belief that "food should taste like where it came from" (59), uses the most authentic ingredients and cooking techniques, effectively creating "something like a home" in the host country (73), where food tastes like "the old-time Arabs' cooking" (181). Thereby, Arab men frequently visit the restaurant from far away and are attached to Sirine's food for its authentic familiar taste (73). The latter conveys the characters' yearning for the taste of their traditional dishes, by extension, for their culture, ethnic heritage, and identity. Moreover, the commitment to maintain the authenticity of the culinary tradition serves as a form of cultural

preservation, allowing diaspora population to revive their ethnic legacies through the familiar and authentic tastes.

Abu-Jaber's reterritorializing approach of the culinary narrative is used strategically to form a discourse of nostalgia; a discourse that systematically generates a discourse of memory for nostalgia inherently involves remembering (Batcho 362). In Abu-Jaber's narrative, the discourse of nostalgia takes on a "restorative" nature, characterized by an endeavor to reconstruct the lost home across historical boundaries (Boym 13). This restorative nature surpasses a simple longing for the past, to encompass a deep yearning to relive it in its original form. Thus, to reconcile this profound desire and longing, the author forms a discourse of memory that intricately weaves together with the multiple voices and perspectives of food discourse.

In their recent publication, Marianne Hirsch and Leo Spitzer (2023) put forth the argument that "memory is always, fundamentally, in the present. We do not recall the past, but we create the past we need in the present" (107). According to their perspective, the act of remembering does not involve a passive recollection of the past; rather, individuals actively engage in the creation of the past that is required within their present context. Upon this premise, Abu-Jaber's discourse of memory, which is heavily engaged with dietary practices, does not solely emphasize the retrieval of past experiences. However, it importantly capitalizes on memory as a means of reconstructing the lost homes, culture, and identities in addition to mitigating the present feelings of nostalgia.

In *Crescent,* the engagement with ethnic culinary practices offers a window through which the characters remember their past. When making baklava, Sirine is "surprised by the memories that start to come to her," as she is transported back to the times when she prepares it with her mother and she is reminded of the "silly things" her mother used to tell her (49).

Thereby, Sirine is reminded of the feelings of "hope and devotion" that her mother associated with dicing walnuts and preparing baklava (49). By recalling those past memories and their associated familiarity, characters like Sirine are able to forge renewed connections with their personal histories. Furthermore, the process enables the predominance of positive emotions, effectively alleviating the weight of nostalgia that may otherwise be experienced.

Moreover, Suvir Kaul (2023) posits that memories acquire the capacity to "recreate past events" and to "generate a sense of collective, politicized identity in the present" (308). The latter implies the transformative potential of memories in evoking sensory details, emotions, and events from the past, in addition to their power in shaping and influencing the sense of self and belonging, and the construction of collective identities with political significance. In this context, within the narrative of *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber astutely employs the evocative potential of food to enable her characters to articulate their nostalgic emotions and revive, uncover, and preserve their cultural heritage and traditions through the mutual sharing of their memories and past experiences. In the confines of the Lebanese restaurant, Hanif and Aziz engage in an exchange, offering glimpses into their shared memories and experiences in Iraq. With a sweet twist in their tones, they recount their memories of "the French Council salons" where "all sorts of art societies" gather to discuss their arts in secret because of Saddam (Abu-Jaber 96). Han vividly recalls his bicycle rides past those salons, and his curiosity compelling him to peer inside (ibid). Moreover, the recollections unveil the vibrant atmospheres of the country, where people frequently visited each other's homes, provided help, and shared communal meals (97). This exchange of the past not only substitutes the nostalgic memories with positive ones. Moreover, it also reminds those characters of their origin and revives their sense of belonging to Iraqi society, uncovers an imagined space that converses the intellectual environment and reflects the culture, societal norms, behaviors as well as the values inherent in their lost homeland.

In conclusion, the afore-conducted analysis demonstrates that Abu-Jaber, within the narratives of *Crescent*, employs a reterritorializing approach to the portrayal of culinary aspects, which allows for an exploration of its heteroglossic nature, prioritizing their symbolic and semiotic meanings over their alimentary significance. By transcending the boundaries of conventional denotations and references commonly associated with food, the author unveils the intricate dynamics encompassing food, nostalgia, and memory. Moreover, by harnessing the evocative potential of food, Abu-Jaber empowers Sirine and Hanif to articulate their emotions in a discourse of nostalgia that systematically generates a discourse of memory, which simultaneously reconstructs the lost home, restores cultural heritage, and mitigates the present feelings of longing to the diaspora homeland. Ultimately, *Crescent* serves as a testament to the profound interconnections between food, memory, and culture, highlighting the role of the de/reterritorialized culinary practices as powerful means of evoking emotions and memories within the context of diaspora.

2. Real-and-Imagined: A New Space of Resistance

Within the narratives of *Crescent*, Abu-Jaber resorts to amalgamation between real and imagined spaces, to give rise to a distinct special realm, which manifest a "Thirdspace" in Edward Soja's conception. The author assumes the role of a cartographer, charting an intellectual space that serves as a counteractive measure against the overpowering forces of the dominant culture encountered by her Arab characters upon their movement from their homeland. Within this radical space, the author effectively empowers the deterritorialized cultural identities of her characters, granting them the means to reclaim their agency, influence, and inherent authenticity. Consequently, they engage in the process of reterritorialization, wherein their cultural identity is reaffirmed and their heritage is reinstated within an alternative geographical context.

In *Thirdspace: Journey to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (1996), Edward Soja draws upon the influential ideas presented by Henri Lefebvre in *The Production of Space* (1991), and draw a similar name to Bhabha's concept of "third space" (1994) in his theoretical framework of the "Thirdspace". The latter represents a radical departure from traditional modes of spatial thinking and human geography, while the former originates from the field of postcolonial studies and cultural theory (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*). In his work, Soja defies the dualistic frameworks that rigidly separate the real from the imaginary in the interpretation and significance attributed to space and spatiality. Instead, he ventures into a re-imagined realm of spatial epistemologies to unveil "an-Other form of spatial awareness" (11). Soja establishes the foundation of this "Thirdspace" upon two distinct perspectives: a "Firstspace" perspective, which encompasses the tangible, physical, and mappable spatial environment (75), and a "Secondspace" perspective that represents the purely imagined cognitive representation of spatiality (79). It is through the dynamic interplay between these perspectives that a fully lived and radically open space emerges, one that is simultaneously real-and-imagined, where "all histories and geographies, all times and places are immanently presented and represented" (311). Consequently, the emergence of "Thirdspace" signifies an unparalleled opportunity for the exploration of endless worlds, while also presenting significant challenges at the intersection and interaction of geographies and humanities.

Soja's theory of "Thirdspace" can be understood in connection to Deleuze and Guattari's concept of deterritorialization/reterritorialization through the lens of spatial production and transformation. The "Thirdspace" theory posits that the spatial dimensions are not solely physical but also social and mental; it challenges and disturbs the traditional binary notions of space to present an alternative spatial form that is radically open and opened radically to explore endless opportunities (Soja 72). Similarly, the deleuzoguattarian concept delves into the process by which existing structures and territories are disconnected,

transformed, and destabilized from their original nature (Deleuze, *A Thousand Plateaus* 54). The latter denotes a process of deterritorialization that can be accompanied by a process of reterritorialization, wherein new forms of stratification, configurations, and control may emerge, attempting to capture and reestablish stability (ibid). Accordingly, Soja's theory encompasses the deleuzoguattarian notions as it deterritorializes the "Firstspace" and "Socondspace" perspectives to reterritorialize them in a "Thirdspace" dimension.

In Soja's perspective, the epistemologies associated with the "Firstspace" encompass Lefebvre's concept of "perceived space," delineating the objective-materialist domain of human presence on the surface of the earth (Soja 75). It pertains to the constructed surroundings that shape our "action spaces" within households, buildings, neighborhoods, villages, cities, and other spaces (ibid). This particular spatial manifestation prioritizes the accurate description of surface appearances and the absolute and relative locations of things and activities within the tangible and cartographically chartable geographies of our life-world (ibid). Relying on this conceptual framework, Abu-Jaber meticulously elucidates the palpable material milieu enveloping the characters with an acute sense of detail and precision.

In *Crescent*, the description of the physical landscape is evident in the portrayal of Sirine's uncle house. It is located in "Los Angeles," and its precise location is expounded upon with references to notable buildings and places, such as Nadia's Café, which is "two miles away of the house and a mile and a half from her uncle's office on campus" (Abu-Jaber 14). The narrative extends along a path that stretches down Westwood Avenue, across big Wilshire illustrating the location of the house with reference to its tangible surroundings. Moreover, the author paints a vivid picture of Nadia's Café, which is residence transformed into a culinary haven, she presents; "Nadia's Café is set in an old converted house with three main rooms; the small front dining area crowded with too many tables and a row of swivel seats along a chrome-lined counter; behind the counter, where there's a silver-hooded grill ad a workstation with a

counter to chop at and a window over the sink. . .” (Abu-Jaber 48). The excerpt highlights Abu-Jaber’s immersive description of the “action space” of the Café by presenting a detailed illustration of its spatial arrangement. Additionally, the author describes neighborhoods where the characters reside, as well as the natural territories that surround them (166). Thereby, portraying the surface appearances and the spatial surroundings that encompass the characters’ mappable milieu enables Abu-Jaber to skillfully incorporate Soja’s notion of “Firstspace” within her narrative.

To solidify her role as the cartographer of the “Thirdspace”, Abu-Jaber interweaves the culinary discourse that serves as an evocative discourse of nostalgia and memories. Within the latter, the author not only constructs vivid pictures of the Arabs’ culture and their traditional foodways, but also unveils their transformative role and importance in mapping an imagined geography of the lost home. To Rick Allen (1997), “No memory is without a spatial essence. To remember a time is to remember a place” (6). As remembering has a spatial dimension, Abu Jaber resorts to dietary customs as a mnemonic device, enabling the remembrance and reconstruction of the people, events, and territories from the past and the associated cultural practices. In this manner, the depiction of gastronomical elements functions as conduits for mapping the bygone spaces of home, ethereal geographies that conjure vivid impressions of the forsaken customs and territories. Within the episodes of the novel, those culinary practices and nostalgia act as a key that “summon” the characters back to their old countries, to their true identity (Abu-Jaber 195). The latter invokes a figurative “Secondspace” drawing on Soja’s framework. Within his conceptual realm, “Secondspace” is a primary space for utopian thoughts (Soja 78). It is entirely subjective, an ideational space that is produced through the discursive devised spatial representations that originate from imagined geographies and extend into the empirical world (Soja 79).

Consequently, the narrative of *Crescent* encapsulates the essence of the real-and-imagined as Abu-Jaber continuously merges and interweaves the present physicality of the characters with the ethereal geographies of their lost home from past, which are residing solely within their memories (177). This seamless blending of the tangible and intangible, real and imagined spaces, alongside the dynamic interplay between space and spatiality, coalesces to form a fully lived and radically open space in the narrative. Within this literary realm, the declarations made by Han serve as a vivid exemplification of this lived space. Han states, "for a moment, I forgot where I was. I forgot that this is America. I was on the banks on the Tigris. I could see the sun through my eyelids. My sister was about to call me in to eat. It's like the light broke into me and brought it all back and then I had to return to this place" (Abu-Jaber 177). Moreover, he confesses, "I'm beginning to feel it and see it. Every time I turn a corner lately, I seem to turn onto Saadoun Street or the Jumhurriya Bridge. Every person I talk to turns into the vegetable seller or my grade school teacher" (Abu-Jaber 178). These statements further evince the fusion of the tangible and intangible realms, offering glimpses into the muted boundaries that connect the real and imagined territories.

Nevertheless, in Soja's theorization (1996), the "Thirdspace" is not the simple pragmatic synthesis of real-and-imagined; rather, it is the "deconstruction and heuristic reconstitution of the Firstspace-Secondspace duality" (3). It is a conceptual space that offers "an opening point" that allows the navigation of all the complexities of the modern and post-modern world (311). This conceptual orientation represents the hot margin of struggle; where new social possibilities arise, challenging the power dynamics and serving as a site of empowerment and resistance (ibid). Within the "Thirdspace" the triatectics of historicality, sociality and spatiality are interrelated and interdependent, offering a unique opportunity to transform and re-negotiate ideologies, power, and domination within societies, it is a reterritorialized space where "issues of race, class and gender can be addressed" (ibid). It

becomes a counter-hegemonic space of social struggle where marginalized groups assert their agency, resist oppressive and re-negotiate power relations (68).

In the light of this conceptual framework, Abu-Jaber deterritorializes the "Firstspace" characterized by the domination of American cultural norms and the "Secondspace" encompassing the imagined lost culture, heritage, and identities of diaspora community. The author aims to reterritorialize a "Thirdspace" to navigate the boundless nature of "place and identity" (Abu-Jaber 87). Accordingly, this reconstructed space becomes a powerful tool for challenging and transforming the existing power structures by foregrounding the marginalized imagined culture. The deconstruction of the characters' physical reality, which is shaped by the mainstream American hegemonic ideologies, allows Abu-Jaber to expose the limitations of this space that reinforces social hierarchies while marginalizing alternative perspectives. Additionally, the "Secondspace" serves as a representation of silenced, marginalized and undervalued cultures and identities, for the imagined is less valued since it is "unseen" and "immeasurable" (R. Allen 8).

Through the reterritorialization of a "Thirdspace," Abu-Jaber seeks to navigate the limitless dimensions of place and identity, transcending the restraints imposed by the dominant "Firstspace" and the neglected "Secondspace." This newly conceptualized space assumes significance as it provides a platform for marginalized cultures to challenge prevailing discourses, norms, and power dynamics. The narratives of the novel illustrate a clear depiction of this radical space, thus, by refocusing the attention on the marginalized diaspora community, Sirine, the Iraqi descendent, acknowledges her "little interest in her father's home country" (Abu-Jaber 52) and her limited knowledge about her own heritage. Moreover, Abu-Jaber grants the opportunity for diaspora community to reclaim their voice and agency by popularizing their culture. The latter is exemplified through the narratives where Arabs incorporate Arabic language into their discourse providing English translations as a means to promote their native

language. In this account, Han employs endearing Arabic terms such as “ya elbi, ya hayati, ya wardi. . .” (Abu-Jaber 130) to express his love for Sirine, taking the time to elucidate their meanings to her, explaining that “Elbi means ‘my heart,’ hayati means ‘my life,’ ya wardi, ‘my flower,’. . .” (ibid). These linguistic exchanges serve as powerful instruments for cultural representation, transmission, and preservation. Moreover, they manifest the characters’ active engagement with their ethnic heritage, foreshadowing the reterritorialization of their cultural identities.

Following the same line of thought, at the time when the holy month of Ramadan is celebrated, Han explains, “the idea behind the fast of Ramadan is to remind everyone of the poor and the less fortunate, a time of charity, compassion, abstinence, and forgiveness” (Abu-Jaber 234). The aforementioned examples elucidate how the “Thirdspace” enables the cultural revival and transmission of the dislocated marginal society, and acts as a means of resisting the oppressive system of the dominant hegemony by popularizing the Arabic language and the Islamic religious beliefs. Moreover, it serves as a key of restoring the links with ancestral legacies and dismantling the territorial boundaries that have constrained their ethnic identities. By mapping this “Thirdspace,” the author enables the cultural revival of marginalized diaspora communities. It not only challenges the dominant power system but also reinforces their sense of belonging and cultural pride. It becomes a key of resisting the change and the erasure of the diasporas’ histories and reterritorializing their ethnic identity by reestablishing its stability and connections with their cultural origin, while simultaneously reclaiming their agency in shaping their own socio-cultural narratives that breaks the confines imposed by the dominant hegemonic order.

In summary, Abu-Jaber’s novel highlights the complex dynamics of diaspora experiences, wherein characters like Sirine and Hanif grapple with a disconnection from their heritage. However, by transcending the duality of real-and-imagined in spatial thinking, the

author acts as a cartographer of a counter-hegemonic space to borrow Antonio Gramsci's term. The latter is a radical transformation of the duality, a "Thirdspace" that opens new social possibilities where the author refocuses attention on the marginalized diaspora community, serving as a space of resistance and cultural revival. This space not only restores links with ancestral legacies but acts as a key for reclaiming agency and identity reterritorialization within the dislocated society and ensures the continuum of the diaspora community's culture and legacy.

In summary, this chapter demonstrates how the author deterritorializes and reterritorializes the culinary aspect to explore its heteroglossic nature, which is interwoven with a discourse of nostalgia. It illuminates that through this exploration, the author delves into the restorative essence of nostalgia, which is infused within the culinary discourse, as a means to resurrect the lost culture and homeland of Han and Sirine within their new settlement. This revival occurs through the recollection and preservation of their bygone experiences within a discourse of memory.

Additionally, this chapter highlights how the author the author fuses the tangible spatiality of Los Angeles with the imaginary homelands of her diasporic characters, which is achieved through the reterritorialization of the heteroglossic culinary discourse. Furthermore, it demonstrates that his amalgamation subsequently gives rise to a "Thirdspace" where the boundaries between present and past, real and imagined spatialities blur, creating a radically open and transformative space.

Finally, this chapter elucidates that within this "Thirdspace", the author allows the empowerment of the marginalized imagined culture and homeland, providing a space of agency within the prevailing dominance of American culture. Consequently, the latter enables her characters to promote their culture within the host society, leading to a reconnection with their

home culture, reterritorialization of their ethnic identities, and ensures the continuation of their Arab heritage and legacies.

General Conclusion

This thesis has undertaken a comprehensive examination of the complexities inherent in the diaspora as portrayed in Diana Abu-Jaber's, *Crescent* (2003). The research delves into the diaspora phenomenon, recognizing it as a potent catalyst for a transformative change that disrupts the established paradigms of spatial arrangements and connections. Consequently, this transformative process instigates a profound sense of deterritorialization, disturbing the individuals' perceptions of their selves and disconnects them from their cultural identities. Moreover, the study posits that culinary practices, employed as a cultural motif steeped in nostalgia, do not only act as a link that connects immigrant characters to their lost homelands and cherished memories but also serve to facilitate the re-imagination of the homeland and the negotiation of a "Thirdspace" of resistance. It is within this new spatial construction that the characters under study find the means to reterritorialize their cultural affinities and identities within the multicultural American society.

The first chapter of this study has initiated an exploration of the concept of "diaspora", establishing a foundational understanding of the novel and accentuating Abu-Jaber's intimate connection to the diasporic community that enables her to vividly depict the difficulties and complexities facing them when residing in foreign lands. Additionally, the chapter has illuminated the deterritorializing process inherent in the diaspora experience, which destabilizes the settled existence and the fundamental bonds of the diasporic community to their designated homeland ad home communities, thereby exposing them to new unfamiliar spatial paradigms. Moreover, it has scrutinized the consequential fragmentation and distinction from the cultural identity and the shattered sense of belonging and identification in the exposition to new societal and cultural norms. It has delineated that those experiences subsequently lead to either an absolute deterritorialization or an aspiration to reterritorialize the cultural identity across geographical boundaries.

In the second chapter, this thesis has examined Abu-Jaber's purposeful integration of culinary elements in her novel. It has analyzed the author's deterritorialization-reterritorialization strategy, which reveals a heteroglossic culinary discourse that effectively mitigates the characters' pervasive sense nostalgia. Additionally, it had explored the strategic interplay between food and nostalgia, highlighting their role in fostering a discourse of memory where lost homes are imaginatively reconstructed and cultural ties are restored. Moreover, this chapter has brought to light the author's function as a cartographer, deftly navigating a conceptual space that amalgamates the tangible and concrete spatiality of Los Angeles with the intricate cognitive representation of lost homes, primarily through the strategic reterritorialization of culinary nostalgia and memories. Furthermore, it has demonstrated that Abu-Jaber deconstructs and subsequently reconstructs the prevailing dualistic epistemologies of space creating a "Thirdspace" that serves as a site of both resistance and cultural revival. The chapter has further eliminated that this conceptual space empowers the marginalized diaspora community, reterritorializes their identities, and reclaims their agency within the larger American community. Finally, it has concluded that Abu-Jaber, by reconceptualizing this "Thirdspace," effectively counters cultural erasure and engenders a powerful revival that firmly establishes the diaspora community as active agents in their own narratives.

This thesis project has attempted to approach Abu-Jaber's literary endeavor, *Crescent*, from an innovative standpoint through the utilization of geophilosophical and geocritical theories. By doing so, this study has attempted to offer a considerable addition to the broader body of knowledge and to contribute to the understanding and appreciation of the intricate layers of meaning and utterances embedded within the selected text notably, the culinary element, nostalgia and memory. Nonetheless, the novel presents additional intriguing aspects that require further exploration and application of new theories and approaches to deepen the comprehension of the text.

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Résumé

Cette thèse met en lumière les ramifications et les implications de la diaspora pour les personnes dispersées, en particulier en ce qui concerne les questions de spatialité et d'identité telles qu'elles sont décrites dans *Crescent* (2003) de Diana Abu-Jaber. Cette étude s'appuie sur la conception de la « diaspora » de Robin Cohen, ainsi que sur les concepts de « déterritorialisation » et de « réterritorialisation » cofondés par Gilles Deleuze et Félix Guattari. Elle expose les défis auxquels la communauté de la diaspora est confrontée lors de sa dislocation, en perturbant sa perception spatiale et son identité au sein d'une société d'accueil inconnue. En outre, l'étude actuelle analyse la manière dont les membres de la diaspora résistent à l'effacement culturel et à l'influence des puissances hégémoniques en utilisant des éléments culinaires, la nostalgie et la mémoire pour renouer avec leur tradition perdue. En plus, cette recherche explore la manière dont l'auteur reconstruit un «Troisième-espace» radical de résistance au sein du récit pour contrer l'effacement culturel et réaffirmer les identités culturelles de ses personnages. L'analyse s'appuie sur les concepts de nostalgie, de mémoire, de déterritorialisation et de reterritorialisation, ainsi que sur la conception théorique du «Troisième-espace» d'Edward Soja. L'étude conclut que certains personnages subissent une déterritorialisation absolue de leur identité culturelle, tandis que d'autres la reterritorialisent dans les territoires américains étrangers en utilisant stratégiquement les éléments culinaires dans un discours hétéroglossique qui inclut la nostalgie et la mémoire. Ce processus facilite la création d'un «Troisième-espace» de résistance qui permet aux individus de la diaspora de réterritorialiser leurs identités ethniques, de récupérer leur pouvoir, de préserver leur culture et d'assurer le continuité de leur origine et de leur héritage dans les limites du territoire américain.

Mots-clés: Diaspora, Déterritorialisation-Réterritorialisation, Identité, Eléments Culinaires, Nostalgie, Troisième-Espace.

ملخص

تسعى هذه الأطروحة إلى تسليط الضوء على تداعيات الشتات وانعكاساته على الأفراد المهجرين، لا سيما فيما يتعلق بقضايا المكان والهوية كما تم تصويرها في رواية الهلال (2003) لديانا أبو جابر. بالاعتماد على مفهوم روبن كوهين عن "الشتات"، بالإضافة إلى المفاهيم المشتركة لجيلز دولوز وفيليكس غواتاري خاصة مفهومي اللاتوطينية وإعادة التموطن، تستكشف هذه الدراسة التحديات التي يواجهها مجتمع الشتات عند تنقلهم فيما يتعلق بتصورهم المكاني ومسألة الهوية في مجتمع مضيف غير مألوف. علاوة على ذلك، توضح الدراسة الحالية الطرق المتعددة التي يقاوم بها الأفراد في الشتات المحو الثقافي وتأثير القوى المهيمنة من خلال توظيف عناصر الطهي والحنين والذاكرة لإعادة الاتصال بتقاليدهم المفقودة. تكشف هذه الدراسة أيضا عن كيفية قيام المؤلفة بتكوين "فضاء ثالث" جذري للمقاومة داخل سرد الرواية في محاولة لمواجهة المحو الثقافي وإعادة تأكيد الهويات القومية شخصياتها. يعتمد هذا التحليل على مفهوم الحنين إلى الماضي ومفهوم الذاكرة، بالإضافة إلى المفاهيم المشتركة لدولوز وغواتاري للاتوطينية وإعادة التموطن ونظرية إدوارد سوجا لـ"الفضاء الثالث". توصلت هذه الأطروحة أن بعض الشخصيات تخضع لعملية لاتوطينية مطلقة عن هويتها الثقافية، بينما تسعى شخصيات أخرى إلى إعادة توطين هذه الهويات داخل الأراضي الأمريكية الأجنبية من خلال التوظيف الاستراتيجي لعناصر الطهي والحنين والذاكرة. تسهل هذه العملية إنشاء "فضاء ثالث" للمقاومة، الذي بدوره يمكّن أفراد الشتات من إعادة توطين هوياتهم العرقية واستعادة وكالتهم والحفاظ على ثقافتهم وضمان استمرارية أصلهم وإرثهم داخل حدود الأراضي الأمريكية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الشتات، اللاتوطينية وإعادة التموطن، الهوية، عناصر الطهي، الحنين، الفضاء الثالث.