Hacettepe University Graduate School of Social Sciences
Department of Communication Sciences
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INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION IN THE THIRD SPACE: IN-BETWEENNESS AND HYBRIDITY IN MIGRANT WOMEN WRITERS' TRANSNATIONAL FICTIONS

Özlem ATAR

PhD Dissertation

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ACCEPTANCE AND APPROVAL

YAYIMLAMA VE FİKRİ MÜLKİYET HAKLARI BEYANI

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o Enstitü / Fakülte yönetim kurulu kararı ile tezimin erişime açılması mezuniyet tarihimden itibaren 2 yıl ertelenmiştir. [1]

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o Tezimle ilgili gizlilik kararı verilmiştir. [3]

01/06/2022

Özlem ATAR

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[1] *"Lisansüstü Tezlerin Elektronik Ortamda Toplanması, Düzenlenmesi ve Erişime Açılmasına İlişkin Yönerge"*

(1) *Madde 6. 1. Lisansüstü tezle ilgili patent başvurusu yapılması veya patent alma sürecinin devam etmesi durumunda, tez **danışmanının** önerisi ve **enstitü anabilim dalının** uygun görüşü üzerine **enstitü** veya **fakülte yönetim kurulu** iki yıl süre ile tezin erişime açılmasının ertelenmesine karar verebilir.*

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(3) *Madde 7. 1. Ulusal çıkarları veya güvenliği ilgilendiren, emniyet, istihbarat, savunma ve güvenlik, sağlık vb. konulara ilişkin lisansüstü tezlerle ilgili gizlilik kararı, **tezin yapıldığı kurum** tarafından verilir *. Kurum ve kuruluşlarla yapılan işbirliği protokolü çerçevesinde hazırlanan lisansüstü tezlere ilişkin gizlilik kararı ise, **ilgili kurum ve kuruluşun önerisi** ile **enstitü** veya **fakültenin** uygun görüşü üzerine **üniversite yönetim kurulu** tarafından verilir. Gizlilik kararı verilen tezler Yükseköğretim Kuruluna bildirilir.*
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ETİK BEYAN

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01/06/2022

Özlem ATAR

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The cave of making can be a dark and desperate place. From time to time, the darkness is dispelled by flashes that dazzle the obscurity. These sudden impulses are too bright to illuminate an idea or light up a thought; they make the night more impenetrable, the cave more unbearable. And yet, the memory of light lingers on, and leads you further into a darkness that slowly reveals its own geography of insight and ignorance. Then voices begin calling to you from beyond the cave—voices of instruction and encouragement, half inscripted and half intuited, half heard and half imagined. (Bhabha, 2009, p. ix)

The 'cave' of creating this doctoral dissertation was dark, too. My teachers and friends called to me from the mouth of cavernous reading sessions of my own making. Their cheers and instructions have sustained me. To begin with, I would like to say a heartfelt "thank you" to my supervisor Associate Professor Dr. Gülsüm DEPELİ SEVİNÇ for her endless patience and invaluable support. I could not hope for a more careful reader and listener. She has coaxed my dissertation into being.

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ABSTRACT

ATAR, Özlem. *Intercultural Communication in the Third Space: In-Betweenness and Hybridity in Migrant Women's Transnational Fictions*, PhD Dissertation, Ankara, 2022.

This study underscores the transformative impact of migration and considers transnational fiction by im/migrant women writers as a source for Intercultural Communication research. Chapter 1 opens with the notion of "transnationalism" in migration research and distinguishes between transnational writing and cognate terms with reference to American literary studies. In addition to transcending national boundaries as finished products, transnational works take, as their main theme, various forms of border-crossing, intercultural contact, and cross fertilization. They feature linguistic hybridity to signal cultural hybridity and in-betweenness. In its more general sense, hybridity involves mixing and blending. However, if one emphasizes the process, which involves negotiating world views and values across cultural boundary lines, hybridity becomes a more elusive concept. Intercultural encounters occur in power networks, and the accompanying hybridization challenges participants differentially. I insist that Intercultural Communication inquiry on culture and identity, two key terms in the field, turn to literary texts and consider how they represent hybridity and in-betweenness. Chapter 2 proposes a tool kit to read transnational fictions from the perspective of Intercultural Communication. Chapter 3 analyzes *Saffron Dreams* by Shaila Abdullah and *The Night Counter* by Alia Yunis. Chapter 4 explores hybridity and in-betweenanes in *Across a Hundred Mountains* by Reyna Grande and *Return to Sender* by Julia Alvarez. Chapter 5 juxtaposes the findings and considers the ways in which Intercultural Communication can use transnational fiction as a rich source for intercultural communication research. I propose Literary Intercultural Communication as a new research area within Intercultural Communication inquiry.

Keywords

literary intercultural communication, transnational literature, im/migrant experience, in-betweenness, hybridity, the Third Space, women`s writing

ÖZET

ATAR, Özlem. *Üçüncü Alanda Kültürlerarası İletişim: Göçmen Kadın Yazarların Ulusötesi Kurmaca Yazınında Aradalık ve Melezlik*, Doktora Tezi, Ankara, 2022

Bu çalışma, ulusötesi yazın örneklerini kültürlerarası iletişimin bir kaynağı olarak incelemeyi amaçlamaktadır. Çalışmada göçün dönüştürücü etkileri vurgulanıp Amerika Birleşik Devletleri`ne (ABD) göçen kadınları konu alan dört ulusötesi yazın örneği irdelenmiştir. Ulusötesilik, aradalık, melezlik, ve Üçüncü Alan çalışmanın temel kavramlarını oluşturmaktadır. Birinci bölümde öncelikle göç literatüründe ele alındığı şekliyle ulusötesi kavramı üzerine odaklanılmış, ulusötesi kavramının ABD bağlamında edebiyat çalışmalarındaki seyri serimlenmistir. Daha sonra, ulusötesi yazın kavramı, ilişkili kavramlarla birlikte değerlendirilerek ulusötesi edebiyat kavramını onlardan ayıran anlatı teknikleri ve temalar belirlenmistir. İkinci bölümde Kültürlerarası İletişim alanında nitel araştırma yöntemleri üzerine literatür taranmış, ulusötesi yazın örneklerini alanın penceresinden okumaya olanak sağlayacak bir sorular kiti geliştirilmiştir. Üçüncü bölümde, Shaila Abdullah`in *Saffron Dreams* romanıyla Alia Yunis`in *The Night Counter* romanı birlikte okunmuş, bu iki eserin 11 Eylül 2001`'den sonra Arap ve Müslüman karşıtı tuttumlara göçmen kadın kahramanların melez kimliklerini vurgulayarak cevap verdikleri ortaya çıkarılmıştır. Dördöncü bölümde Meksika'dan ABD`ye kayıtdışı göçü konu alan iki örnek olarak Reyna Grande`nin *Across a Hundred Mountains* ve Julia Alvarez`in *Return to Sender* romanları irdelenmiştir. Beşinci bölümde analizdeki bulgulardan hareketle araştırmanın üçüncü ve dördüncü soruları cevaplanmış, ulusötesi edebiyat örneklerinin Kültürlerarası İletişim çalışmalarında nasıl kullanışlı olabileceği düşünülmüştür. Son bölümde, araştırmanın bulguları bir kez daha kısaca gözden geçirilmiş, çalışmanın amacı doğrultusunda yöneltilen soruları belirlenen temel kavramlar ve geliştirilen metin inceleme yöntemi doğrultusunda ne derece yerine getirdiği değerlendirilmiştir. Çalışmanın özgünlüğü, edebi kurmaca eserleri Kültürlerarası İletişim`in penceresinden okumayı sağlayacak bir sorular kiti geliştirip ulusötesi yazın ile Kültürlerarası İletişim alanlarını kesiştirmesinde yatmaktadır.

Anahtar Sözcükler

kültürlerarası iletişim, ulusötesi edebiyat, göçmen deneyimi, aradalık, melezlik, Üçüncü Alan, kadın yazını

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INTRODUCTION

Your place in the world is solid

my place in the world moves

…

my place drifts

between Here and There

West and East

sometimes gets lodged

In-Between

"After a reading by Khaled Mattawa" (Halaby, 2012, pp. 77-78)

This dissertation considers hybridity and in-betweenness in four fictional narratives by im/migrant women. Published in the United States after September 11, 2001, the four tales of cultural hybridity and in-betweenness feature diverse geographical and sociological topographies transgressing the confines of the United States. In addition, the writers` persistent reliance on the vocabularies of distinct languages other than English both renders these texts linguistically rich tales and marks their characters` culturally hybrid identities. Their im/migrant characters confront the myths of homogeneity and boundedness by foregrounding gendered experiences of transnationality and in-betweeness. Borrowed expressions from their native tongues occupy the textual surfaces of the narratives. The texts have a pivotal objective: the authors and their central female characters invite the assumed audience, Anglophone readers in the United States, to participate in intercultural dialogue. They engage in cultural translation as a necessary step for a gradual shift in societal attitudes towards the categorical alien as opposed to the citizen or the perceived foreign. The texts center around the nation's others in terms of race, ethnicity, religion and immigration status and feature moments of imagined intercultural contact. As such, the novels are potent sources of Intercultural Communication (IC) inquiry.

I aim to make a considerable contribution to IC by bringing the study of transnational literary texts that focus on migration to the purview of IC research. Given its connections with multiple disciplines, IC research relies on paradigms varying from positivist to interpretive, critical, and constructivist approaches. Depending on their research paradigm, IC scholars draw on a multitude of methods ranging from questionnaires, surveys, interviews, discourse completion

tasks, ethnography, and corpus analyses. As a text-based analysis method, critical discourse analysis, for instance, probes political speeches, asylum interrogations, and so on to critique the relations of power and ideology in society (Fairclough, 2013; Van Dijk, 2013; Wodak, 2008; Wodak & Meyer, 2016). Such text-oriented investigations may reveal the shifts in discourse in social and political arenas, as well as the ways in which these switches are enacted in particular contexts and employed to instill new ways of being (O`Regan & Betzel, 2016). Constituting a specific historical moment that is relevant to my dissertation, the 9/11 terrorist attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon have radically changed attitudes to im/migration and im/migrants. The rhetoric around counterterrorism has discursively conflated im/migration with terrorism, leading to stringent immigration and border management policies as well as repressive monitoring and governance of im/migrant communities in the United States. A typical critical discourse analysis project focuses on the processes of Othering, i.e., the processes in which the foreign is imagined as alien to 'us' and our 'normal' (Adrian Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2021). Comprehensive analyses of written narratives from the perspective of IC are still scarce, but it is possible to observe an uptick in attention to publicly available cultural texts.

Nevertheless, fictional literary narratives have not been extensively used in IC research so far. In this study, I adopt literary texts written by and about those deemed to be the Other in the post-9/11 United States. I reveal how the racialized Other or the foreign talks back to assert their positioning as the culturally hybrid in-between character. An effective means of exploring issues of intercultural communication might be conducting analyses of literary texts. This insight comes from Condon (1986), whose co-authored 1975 textbook, *An Introduction to Intercultural Communication*, offered a significant contribution to the field. Given that this prominent IC researcher endorsed the use of literary fictions as legitimate sources of analyses, one would expect a sustained focus on literary texts as viable sources of and about intercultural communication. Nonetheless, few IC scholars focus on literary texts (Neumann, 2020). This is because conventional IC research situates itself within social sciences and relies on methods from psychology, sociology, and anthropology to predict or interpret the nature of intercultural encounters between members of different cultural groups. Many IC researchers often imagine themselves as engaging in 'objective' social science research through surveys and questionnaires. For humanities, in contrast, "the illusion" of objectivity and neutrality is irrelevant (Condon, 1986, p. 155). It is for this reason that IC inquiry has marginalized literary texts.

My study is important because it aims to overcome the schism between social sciences and humanities. A sustained focus on literary texts may enhance IC research in various ways. Literature may represent intercultural encounters as a major theme. It may also portray conflictual intercultural relationships and interactants` identity negotiation processes. At the same time, literary texts engage in intercultural communication with the assumed reader by detailing their fictional characters` unique experiences in certain contexts and, in some cases, by explicitly appealing to readers` sense of compassion, tolerance, and justice. Furthermore, as Bhabha (2004) notes, through the act of cultural translation, literatures of intercultural encounter go beyond representation; they also (re)produce cultural difference. It is for this reason that IC needs to offer more capacious space to fictional representations.

Literary texts are adopted for instruction in educational institutions with the goal of catalyzing intercultural understanding and tolerance. In keeping with this practice, the study of literary texts with an IC lens needs to go beyond tokenistic mentioning in key IC textbooks in the field (e.g., Piller, 2017). This is to say that IC research needs to be "literized" (Ikas & Wagner, 2009) and migrant authors` transnational cultural products need to be brought under academic scrutiny to reveal their manifold potential as intercultural mediators, bridge builders, and the contestants of exclusionary accounts of national identity and history that hanker for some imagined national unity free from migration and the mingling of peoples and values to form hybrid new cultures. Carefully crafted transnational novels are attentive to transborder social and political contexts and, as such, should be adopted by IC investigators for closer scrutiny.

There is a major benefit to placing fiction about hybridity and in-betweenness of female transnational migrants at the center of IC research. Analyzing literary migration narratives affords us a glimpse into the minute details of the migrant`s experience. Though social scientific research on migration is abundant and diversified, it hardly depicts what it may be like to be an im/migrant (King, Connell, & White, 2003). Literary accounts, in contrast, offer meaningful insights into the state-sanctioned and clandestine border crossing experience and other attendant issues. To quote King, Connell, and White:

> Literary accounts focus in a very direct and penetrating way on issues such as place perception, landscape symbolism, senses of displacement and transformation, communities lost and created anew, exploitation, nostalgia, attitudes towards return, family relationships, self-denial and self-discovery, and many more. Such insights are often infinitely more subtle and meaningful than studies of migrants which base themselves on cold statistics or on the depersonalized, aggregate responses to questionnaire surveys. (King et al., 2003, p. x)

Literary narratives represent the experience of fictional migrants through the individual author`s eyes. Also, migration narratives may include texts written by the migrants themselves recounting their own journey. This 'non-academic' literature may offer impressive insights into the process of migration and post-migration experience.

I refer to the narratives in my corpus as transnational novels. Until recently, the notion of "transnational literature" lacked a clear definition, but as I detail in Chapter 1 several literary analysts have conceptualized the term in relation to world literature, postcolonial literature, minor literature, and diasporic writing. Seyhan (2001) provided specifications of transnational literature in her study of Turkish-German writers in Germany and Chicano/a writers in the United States. For Seyhan, transnational literature concerns literary texts by those who have crossed national and linguistic borders, who write in second or third languages, and who address issues facing deterritorialized cultures. Transnational fictions, as she put it, "are the voices of transplanted and translated subjects" (Seyhan, 2001, p. 9). As a result, translation attains a special status in these fictions.

Walkowitz (2006) was less interested in the biography of the writer in classifying transnational writing than in the transnational circulation of books through the combined efforts of writers, translators, anthologists, and publishers. She wrote: "literary classification might depend more on a book's future than on a writer's past. What has happened to the writer is less important (…) than what happens in the writing and in the reading, though the biography of the writer may influence the way that books are written and received" (Walkowitz, 2006, p. 534). In Walkowitz`s sense, then, transnational literature describes books that travel across national and linguistic borders.

Adopting a "navigational approach" to reading literature that attends to the temporal and spatial shifts, Clingman (2009) specified a series of features for transnational literature. In Clingman`s view, transnational literary works may be written by "writers who have *travelled*, often more than once across national boundaries" (p. 7, emphasis in original). At the same time, he noted that "transnational fiction is written by, and directed towards, migrant and multi-lingual communities, who exist in multiple and in-between spaces" (p. 8). However, this is a misleading categorization because though the literary authors themselves may be im/migrants, they cannot always control who reads their works. Their cultural texts may be read by im/migrant or non-im/migrant audiences. Clingman further suggested that transnational fiction was "a migrant and

migrating literature" and added that transnational fiction encompasses "works that travel, no matter the provenance or trajectories of their authors" (p. 9). In sum, Clingman`s characterization brings transnational literature too close to other, albeit kin, literary categories, from which I distinguish transnational literature in Chapter 1.

The most substantive theorizing on transnational writing was developed by American literary scholar Paul Jay in two volumes. Jay (2010) focused on the transnational forces at work in the creation of such works. Jay (2021) conceptualized transnational literature in two different ways. One conception focuses on the comprehension that storytelling has always been mobile; therefore, transnationality in the sense that ideas and stories have always transcended national borders is an inherent quality of literary texts. Such conceptualization emphasizes the transnationality of literary texts in terms of both production and circulation but resembles transnational literature to world literature, a category from which I distinguish transnational literature in Chapter 1. Following Jay`s most recent theorization, I take transnational writing as a distinct kind of literature that has emerged at a specific historical moment. Transnational fiction and research on transnational writing have boomed since the 1990s. The texts comprising the body of transnational literature a share a set of recognizable subject matters and literary devices (Jay, 2021). As Jay shrewdly observes, transnational texts emerge from, and offer a commentary on, transborder interdependencies.

Considering this brief overview of scholarly literature about transnational writing and relying on key texts such as Seyhan (2001) and Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (2013), and Jay (2021), I deploy the notion of "transnational novel" to define the works of fiction in my corpus. These samples of transnational literature have several key features in common: first, they are works written by authors who have experienced migration. Narratives of transnational mobility may not necessarily be linked to the experience of colonialism, postcolonialism or neocolonialism. Secondly, these works are composed in a language, often English or another widely spoken code, that is not the writer's mother tongue. In Bakhtinian terms, the texts are written in an "alien" language (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 430). Production in an alien language may call to mind minor literature, but, as I elaborate on in Chapter 1, transnational writing is different from minor literature. Third, transnational literature feature cross-cultural subject matters. For instance, themes of literal and figurative crossing of national and linguistic borders, intercultural encounter and clash including the concerns about alienation and othering processes, ambivalent attitudes about home and host societies, sharpened attention to language shifts and translation are some definitive themes of transnational literature. The novels in my corpus underscore the

connection between transborder migration and a host of other intersecting factors including gender, sexuality, and religiosity. These transnational texts reflect the voices of the transplanted and are spaces of self-translation (Seyhan, 2001). Naturally, national borders, languages and literary canons cannot bind stories that originate from border crossings.

An im/migrant writer who writes in a language they learned later in life and possibly due to their own migration experience creates from the in-between linguistic and cultural space they occupy. The surface of their text will appeal English, or whatever code in which they produce, but its interior texture will inevitably include threads from her mother tongue, thus adding a foreign feel to the story. Moreover, if the transnational author chooses to portray "transmigrants" in their fictions, their narratives are likely to act out im/migrant in-betweenness and hybridity (Schiller, Basch, & Blanc, 1995). Drawing upon Bhabha (2004), I define im/migrant writers' bilingual and bicultural writing as their third space. The Third Space enables manifestation of multiple identities and poses a challenge to the understanding of a homogeneous culture and society. The Third Space of enunciation facilitates the emergence of transnational fictions.

As referenced in the title, the key concept in my dissertation is "hybridity." The notion of "hybridity" is used to describe processes of interracial contact (Gilroy, 1993; McClintock, 2013; Young, 2005); colonization and decolonization (Bhabha, 2004), globalizing processes (Canclini, 2005; Pieterse, 2019); travel and border crossing (Clifford, 1997), artistic and literary fusions born from a borderland consciousness (Anzaldúa, 1987; Gómez-Peña, 2005); and transcultural literatures (Dagnino, 2015). I discuss hybridity in relation to adjacent terms and consider its theoretical underpinnings and implications for the definitions of nation and national culture in Chapter 1; however, a brief explanation is due here. In my project, I use hybridization to talk about "sociocultural processes in which discrete structures or practices, previously existing in separate form, are combined to generate new structures, objects, and practices" (Canclini, 2005, p. xxiv). Hybridity signals both the threat of 'contamination' of supposedly pure and authentic forms and is celebrated for its transgressive power. In my analysis, hybridity indexes the linguistic heterogeneity and cultural in-betweenness of the migrant characters represented in the primary texts. Discrete hybrid forms emerge from the spaces of intercultural encounter. Nonetheless, these new forms are not inferior to the two forms that transform each other and bring about the new form.

The term "linguistic hybridity" refers to blending, mixing, and combining elements of two distinct languages in one literary text. My definition of linguistic hybridity is informed by Bakhtin's consideration of the novel as a hybrid form. Bakhtin (2008) defined hybridity as "a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance" (p. 358). The term signifies "an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor" (p. 358). Bakhtin regarded mixing of two, and potentially more, languages within the boundaries of one utterance in the novel "conscious" or "intentional" hybridity but also acknowledged the role which unintentional hybridization plays in the evolution of new languages. He wrote:

> an intentional and conscious hybrid is not a mixture of two impersonal language consciousness (…) but rather a mixture of two individualized language consciousnesses (…) and two language-intentions as well: the individual, representing authorial consciousness and will, on the one hand, and the individualized linguistic consciousness and will of the character represented, on the other. (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 359)

While Bakhtin's notion of hybridity does not discuss the integration of different 'national' languages in a primarily English text, his discussion of distinct social languages appearing in one utterance implies the representation of different socio-economic classes in the novel. To reiterate, in Bakhtin`s formulation, hybridization is the mixing of two or more different "linguistic consciousnesses, often widely separated in time and social space" within a single utterance (p. 429). Bakhtin examined novelists' use of an "alien" language to draw attention to their conscious efforts to represent different social classes. I deploy this Bakhtinian notion of linguistic hybridity to refer to the coexistence of at least two distinct 'national' languages in one text: Spanish and English, Urdu and English, or Arabic and English. When considering novels by migrant authors who write in their second language and about transmigrants, the hybridization processes become multilayered: there is the bilingual author who draws on her dual linguistic repertoires and the migrant character who asserts her bilingual and bicultural identity through her dual language use. When considering the cultural hybridity and in-betweenness of the female migrant author and her female migrant character, I adapt Bakhtin`s linguistic term. Accordingly, I postulate that:

> The (…) hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented (...) but is also double-languaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, (…) two socio-linguistic consciousnesses, two epochs (...) that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance (....) It is the collision between differing points of view on the world that are embedded in these forms (...) [make] such unconscious hybrids (…) profoundly productive historically: they are pregnant with potential for new world views, with new 'internal forms' for perceiving the world in words. (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 360)

Bhabha (2003) adopted this Bakhtinian term to discuss the culturally hybrid postcolonial subject. In his theorization, the hybrid is an androgynous subject. In contrast, in this study, the hybrid is a woman who may or may not originate from a postcolonial country but who is deemed as the Other of the nation in the United States.

In literary criticism, the notion of "hybridity" is often associated with the postcolonial critic Bhabha, but it began its journey as a biological term, first used to describe the outcome of a crossing of a distinct plant or animal species (Young, 2005). Mixing remains the central element in hybridization processes. The mixing of differently racialized social groups provoked anxiety in the context of colonialism. Racial 'contamination' met reactive impulses, from launching administrative strategies to prevent the emergence of racially hybrid individuals to schemes designed to promote interracial encounters to encourage assimilation of the colonized. Anderson (2006) cites efforts at 'hispanicizing' the Indigenous populations in the Americas. The anxieties of globalization resulted in the production of volumes on hybridity in the 1990s.

Following Bhabha (2003, 2004), Garcia Canclini (2005), and other scholars of hybridity, whose intellectual perspectives I map in Chapter 1, if we accept that the processes of cultural hybridity bring about something new and different, we also need to think about the site where this newness emerges: the Third Space. The term was discussed by Lefebvre (1991) and is related to what Soja (2009, p. 56) calls "thirding-as-Othering." According to Bhabha (2003, 2004), the Third Space is the site where hybridity emerges in the struggle for cultural difference as opposed to diversity. However, despite its name, the Third Space in Bhabha's theory is not a space or place in the traditional geographic sense. It is more of a site in time, which indicates the colonial encounter. Young (2009) resembled it to:

> a shifting caravan site, a place where people come unobserved and where they go without a trace, the place which determines their lives for the moment they pitch their tents there, a place which is not a space because it is the sight of an event, gone in a moment of time. (Young, 2009, pp. 81-82)

Young's invoking of "a shifting caravan site" allows us to see that Bhabha talks about a metaphor when he uses the term. The Third Space denotes an instance of production in time— the very moment of speech or writing. For Bhabha (2004) and Young (2009), the Third Space is the site of enunciation, the very instance of articulation. In Young`s words, the Third Space is the moment where the culturally hybrid subject's thoughts "fall into language" (2009, p. 82). This falling into language is in no way the kind of falling that the Turkish idiom, "dile düşmek" connotes: "being gossiped about." In the context of migrant women`s literary writing, it

resembles the notion which Irzık and Parla (2011) invoke in their edited volume. It denotes the moment when women become the subject of language, culture, and history through their writing. The Third Space, then, is the site where migrant women authors speak through their literary fiction. In linguistic terms, it is the act in which an individual "fuses langue and parole in the momentary event when he or she opens his or her mouth" and thus gains agency (Young, 2009, p. 88). The notion of Third Space is a metaphor to consider gendered articulations of cultural hybridity.

I analyze four novels published in the first decade of the twenty-first century. I consider Shaila Abdullah's *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b) together with Alia Yunis's *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009). Exploring the tragedy of September 11 from the perspective of a Muslim widow, *Saffron Dreams* treats immigrant identity at its intersection with race, gender, and religion. The book strongly challenges the image of the silenced Muslim woman and the veil as the prime symbol of religious and patriarchal subjugation of women`s body. *The Night Counter* features on an elderly immigrant woman, whose ancestral home in Lebanon haunts her in post-9/11 Los Angeles. Fatima cannot decide to which descendant she should leave her beloved house, an imaginary home both the senile matriarch and the reader discover was destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War. Yunis intricately weaves Fatima's personal American story and her descendants' survival strategies after September 11 against the backdrop of larger political events in the United States and the Middle East.

Reyna Grande`s debut novel *Across a Hundred Mountains* (2006) chronicles a female migrant`s journey into the United States and back to her hometown in Mexico years later. The novel features Juana García, a fourteen-year-old girl who leaves her home in Mexico in search of her father. The narrative illustrates the challenges of migration from Mexico to the United States by focusing on the hardship those left behind face, the dangers involved in crossing the US-Mexico border clandestinely, and the migrant's splintered sense of belonging. I juxtapose Grande's semi-autobiographical work with Julia Alvarez's *Return to Sender* (2009b). The novel is about undocumented Mexican migrants working on a dairy farm in the United States. The migrant woman in this young adult book has an absent presence throughout the novel. The woman's teenage daughter reveals that her mother has been kept by her smugglers. The reader can only partially discover the woman's ordeal from the eldest daughter's letters and diary entries. These two novels represent the corporeality of irregular migration and urge readers to pay attention to the female subject's agency as she navigates the dangerous US-Mexico border.

As stated above, this study scrutinizes a body of transnational texts written by migrant women. I devised a set of criteria to both delimit the field and to reach a researchable number of samples.

First, I adopted books written by women because I wanted to bring women authors' voices to the foreground in my analysis. Chowaniec (2015) asked the question that I am grappling with in this dissertation: "why focus on women's writing?" Some may interpret the omission of texts by male authors as a shortcoming. In their view, focusing one's attention on narratives written by women can only point to a lack of scientific neutrality and diminished objectivity. After all, the researcher reveals her partiality at the onset by her choice of corpus. I have encountered quizzical looks since I announced that I would be looking at women's writing on hybridity and in-betweenness resulting from transnational migration. Critics demand justification for why a serious academic study on hybridity and in-betweenness in transnational writing should explore fictions composed by women only. To the contrary, such criticism neglects to consider the simple reality that the focus on a body of texts by male authors often passes as normal. Frank (2008), for example, omitted women authors' voices from his corpus in *Migration and Literature* whereas Moslund (2010) included only one narrative by a female author as opposed to two by male writers in *Migration Literature and Hybridity: The Different Speeds of Transcultural Change*. Similarly, there was no concern for analyzing an equal number of literary products written by female and male authors in *After the Fall: American Literature Since 9/11* (2011). In addition, the contributors to *Literature, Migration and the 'War on Terror'* (Tolan, Morton, Valassopoulos, & Spencer, 2013) disregarded "male/female equity" in their corpus of literary narratives that respond to the conflation of transnational migration with threats to American national security in post-9/11 novels (M. Eagleton, 2011, p. 110). My insistence on female authored fictions serves as a correction for this discursive elision.

Clearly, there is a gap between women's literary productions and the interpretive studies on their texts. The dearth of literary analyses that incorporate narratives by women authors may give the false impression that women do not write about major sociopolitical issues such as transborder migration and the militarization of international borders. This is far from the truth. Women address social issues in their fictions and yet fewer of their literary texts are adopted for scholarly analyses. As Rodríguez and Szurmuk (2015) rightly lamented, "The number of women-authored texts is phenomenal; women's contributions, outstanding; their performance, excellent. It is hard to believe that they [are] washed off, postponed, demeaned, debased, ignored, bypassed. This erasure reveals deafness, blindness, and fear" (p. 3). There is clearly a mismatch between women's literary production and the volume of analyses that focus on their

creative texts. Through my choice of texts by female writers, I amplify women authors' voices about transnational migration. I am encouraged by Showalter when she declares, "[W]e must seek the repressed messages of women (...) before we can locate the feminine not-said, (…) by probing the fissures of the female text" (Showalter, 2012, p. 32). It is thus in such a light that this study adopts texts by women authors.

Second, my choice of the four texts by female authors is also related to the relationship between writing and gender. While the question of whether there is a women's tradition in writing remains vexing, some scholars refer to a "female tradition" in writing (e.g., M. Eagleton, 2011; Showalter, 2012). My adoption of women's writing implies my belief that, however diverse, women constitute a group whose gendered life experiences affect their writing. One striking characteristic of fictions written by women is their frequent recourse to quasi-autobiographical structure, featuring their central character's confessional female voice in letters, diary entries, memoirs, and testimonio (Seyhan, 2001). As opposed to stress on success and glory in men's autobiographical writing, for instance, women's texts reflects fragmentation (Berktay, 1993; Heilbrun, 1988; Jelinek, 2004). Among the primary texts, this confessional and fragmented narration is apparent in *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009), *Saffron Dreams* (Yunis, 2009), and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b). The central character in *Across a Hundred Mountains* comments on her fragmented identity and sense of home. It may be argued that readers encounter the most autobiographical confessions in fictive texts written by women authors: fiction "does not establish a literal relationship between the author, the narrator, and the protagonist or have a truth claim" (Adak, 2011, pp. 162, my translation). Therefore, fiction may effortlessly incorporate sometimes thinly veiled autobiographical elements. Moreover, women authors have been ardent representers of the familial sphere, relationships, and home though they also contest the traditional notions of home and homeland (Chatterjee, 2021; Strehle, 2008). It is possible to deduce that women`s writing prioritizes certain forms and subject matters thanks to their gendered ways of seeing and articulating.

The third criterion concerned the authors` relation to migration. An increasing number of female fiction writers are poised to tell the stories of their own or other women's migrations. I have included works whose writers have personally experienced migration and the dis-ease it caused at a certain time in their own lives. I propose that women who have had such experience will respond to migration in a different manner from those who have never been displaced. For the authors in this dissertation, the experience of migration is personal. Like her female protagonist, Abdullah migrated to the United States through her marriage (Faraj, 2015). It is possible to trace

the link between the autobiographical elements and the protagonist's journey to the United States as a married woman. Both Grande and Alvarez experienced migration as children: like her main character, Grande as a clandestine border crosser (Grande, 2012, 2018), and Alvarez a political refugee (Alvarez, 1998; Coonrod Martínez, 2007; Harrison & Hipchen, 2013; K. L. Johnson, 2005; Sirias, 2001). Having lived in the United States, Lebanon, Greece, and now in the United Arab Emirates, Yunis is a "nomad" academic and writer (Braidotti, 1994; Yunis, 2013). Just like Scheherazade, the female co-protagonist in her post-9/11 novel, Yunis is a transnational storyteller.

Fourth, I included novels that center around im/migrant women's experiences and struggles because fictions about women`s mobility shed light into the transformative impacts of migration on these women as gendered subjects. Women experience migration differently from their male counterparts. For many women, migratory journeys take place within the institution of marriage. In many societies, marriage entails women's move to their husband's house. Cross-border migration is another layer of women`s gendered journeys. This is also true for the two women in my corpus. Upon entering married life, the women in Yunis's and Abdullah`s novels leave their family homes and homelands behind. Though both are trailing spouses to their compatriots, their circumstances of migration differ greatly due to their social class, knowledge about the United States, and proficiency in English prior to migration. For this reason, whereas I place these two women in the same category based on their gender identity, I am cognizant of the unique consequences of their social class and language skills for their lives in the United States.

The women in Grande`s and Alvarez` novels experience migration as gendered agents, too. As Boyd (2021) eloquently points out in a review article on global migration trends, gender is deeply embedded in determining who migrates, how transborder journeys take place, and what consequences stem from the migration of men and women independently or as family units. Gender relations and roles impact and are impacted by migration processes at three distinct stages of migrations: the pre-migration stage, the journey across state borders, and the experiences of migrants in the receiving country (Antman, 2018; Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Fleury, 2016). Alvarez`s (2009b) and Grande`s (2006) novels attests to the fact that women experience migration differently than men by thematizing gender-based sexual violence involved in irregular migration across the US-Mexico border. As such, they flesh out the social scientific research findings about gendered vulnerabilities involved in clandestine border crossing (see De León, 2015). These transnational fictions about irregular migration supplement social science research findings on women`s migration experience.

A distinction between the terms "immigrant" and "migrant" is due here. The term "immigrant" implies "the standpoint of the migrant-receiving nation-state" and refers to "outsiders coming in, presumably to stay" (Nicholas De Genova, 2002, p. 421). In the US context, the term "immigrant" may be a "euphemism for 'not from this place', or for 'one who belongs somewhere else'" and deployed as a "political tool" for racializing certain groups. Bearing its negative connotations in mind, I adopt the term "immigrant" to refer to the characters throughout Chapter 3 as I explore the hybridity and in-betweenness of the Muslim women who immigrated to the United States. In Chapter 4, I introduce the concept of "migrant" to denote the characters' circular pattern of movement between Mexico and the United States. In addition, I deploy the descriptors "irregular," "clandestine," and "undocumented" to define migrants whose transborder movement and entrance into the United States is not sanctioned by the state. I avoid deploying punitive and discriminatory descriptors such as "illegal," "extra-legal," and "unauthorized" except in places where I refer to legislation that uses these terms or quote specific occurrences in the primary texts (R. Brown, 2013; Chomsky, 2014). Accordingly, I define the adult members of the Cruz family and Mari in *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b) as undocumented migrants.

Fifth, I adopted books composed in the writers' second language. This way, I aim to trace the authors` recourse to self-translation and positioning in the liminal space with respect to the languages upon whose vocabularies they draw. A Turkish proverb reminds us that three migrations amount to a fire. Migrations result in the loss of homes, personal belongings, and memorabilia; long term transborder journeys also transform the migrant`s sense of belonging to certain places and communities and established relationships. As Seyhan (2001) observed, once "the smoke clears," we are left with "charred pieces of identification, shards of language, burned tongues, and cultural fragments" (p. 7). That is, once the destructive fire dies down, "the phoenix of a transnational, bi- and multilingual literature" arises (Seyhan, 2001, p. 7). When the smoke dissipates and calmness replaces the fire, the migrant turns to stories to recuperate losses incurred in the fire/migration. Some of the best literary works are written by writers functioning in a language that is not their mother tongue. The short story collection *Mutterzunge* by the Turkish-born Emine Sevgi Özdamar was written in German, which the author learned as an adult guestworker in Germany. Likewise, Abdullah, Alvarez, Grande, and Yunis write in a language that is not their mother tongue. Through their novels, they portray female protagonists' stories of hybridity and in-betweenness. The experience of migration may be trenchant for actual migrants, but from the perspective of the four creative migrant writers whose works I analyze, migration is the condition for and expression of a hybrid plurality that originates from

the voluntary or mandatory encounter and interlacing of at least two distinct 'national' languages. Conceptualized as such, migration is in no way a negative notion; it connotes a richness that is born from a burning experience. The writers' identification with the two cultures they bridge intersects with their other identity positions and manifests itself in their hybrid language. Their texts map spaces which disturb politico-spatial and linguistic boundaries.

Sixth, I restricted my corpus to include texts published after the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This way, I hope to investigate how the writers and the characters negotiate their hybrid identities and defy restrictive labeling and discourses in the post-9/11 context, thereby confounding the trajectories of nation, 'national' culture, and 'national' language. Most extant research on women's post-9/11 transnational migration narratives takes the authors` ethnic identity and/or religion as their basis of determining the primary texts. Heredia (2009), for instance, drew attention to the role female Latin American authors play as historical commentators. The female authors in her study, the author suggests, occupy the "specific liminal and mediating positions as cultural and historical ambassadors with a dual vision of Latin American and US American cultures in contact and in conflict with each other" (p. 4). In a similar vein, Socolovsky (2013) examined the work of six US-based Latina writers.

Other researchers have based their text selection on the authors' religion and ethnic identity. Sorgun (2011) took the authors' religion as the basis of her choice of the primary texts in their doctoral dissertation and investigated how female authors responded to conversations about and by Muslim women. The researcher concluded that, by creating strong liberal Muslim women characters and highlighting variety in their interpretations of Islam and the veil, the four authors they chose as representative Muslim immigrant writers in the United States defied the image of the oppressed, invisible, and voiceless Muslim woman. Similarly, Maloul (2014) investigated fictions of contemporary Arab British and Arab American women writers who write in English in their doctoral dissertation. They were particularly interested in exploring how these writers constructed both political Islam and the religion as a private faith; how they portrayed Palestinian Muslim masculinities; and how they responded to the 9/11 terrorist attacks and the ensuing 'War on Terror.' They argued that the works they adopted offered some of the most astute reactions to the events of 9/11 and their repercussions. Both Sorgun and Maloul underlined how the authors emphasized the diversity of Arab and Muslim communities.

My dissertation moves away from this ethnicity and/or religion-based selection of the primary texts. In this respect, it is closer to Gomaa's (2016) *The Non-National in Contemporary American Literature: Ethnic Women Writers and Problematic Belongings*. But I take issue with the researcher's choice of the label "ethnic women" to refer to non-white authors only. The researcher argues that the notion of Americanness is constructed nationally within the United States' geographic space as well as transnationally outside that space. She asserts that the transnational perception of the US nation-space and Americanness makes ambivalent positioning possible, which she calls "non-national." She argues that the non-national subject does not merely occupy a liminal space between home-country and host-country, but rather, reconfigures the implications of the foreign and the domestic, as well as home and abroad, within that interstitial space.

In addition to interacting with these recent monographs on women's transnational writing, my project calls for a wide range of references to the histories of transnational encounters depicted in the primary sources. Each analysis chapter draws on research in local histories and provides the context for the literary narratives under investigation. Nonetheless, because the four exemplary novels have arisen within the national borders of the United States, it is crucial to briefly consider the US context in relation to migration. This succinct overview gains importance when I analyze the selected books in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4.

It is possible to anchor the primary texts in my corpus in two pivotal moments in recent US border and immigration management practices: the post-Gatekeeper period and the post-9/11 era. These two historical moments need to be conceptualized as intermingled continua of increasingly intricate militarization strategies in US border policy (Andreas, 2009; Dunn, 2009; Nagengast, 1998). The United States erected the first border wall through Operation Gatekeeper, which launched an enhanced boundary enforcement strategy in October 1994 to decrease unauthorized migrant crossings across the US–Mexico boundary into southern California (Nevins, 2002, 2008, 2010). Immigration and terrorism has been conflated through the rhetoric of 'the War on Terror' in the wake of 9/11 (Chavez, 2013a; Rivera, 2014).The introduction of the Homeland Security Act in 2002 set into motion the emergence of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), which governs both border control and immigration. According to De Genova (2007, 2019), the ascendancy of military strategies for border management has turned the United States into "the Homeland Security State" while making irregular migrants more vulnerable to abuse. The consequences of this border militarization have been devastating for those who cross the border irregularly (S. N. Chambers,

Boyce, Launius, & Dinsmore, 2019; Jones, 2016; Rubio-Goldsmith, McCormick, Martinez, & Duarte, 2006). Grande (2006) and Alvarez (2009b) address the repercussions of these shifts in border management.

The epochal significance of September 11 needs to be underlined in thinking about America's characterization of its national identity as well as its construction of its friends and enemies before commenting on how literature responds to it. On September 20, 2001, President George W. Bush addressed the US Congress and the nation, declaring the creation of the Office of Homeland Security. Resembling the nation to a wounded body, Bush promised revenge. He opened his speech by defining "friends" and "enemies" of the nation. The polarizing logic, epitomized by Bush's oft-quoted slogan: "Either you are with us, or you are with the terrorists" delivered at the launch of his anti-terrorism campaign denies the middle ground, the gray space, explored in this dissertation (Bush, 2001). Bush's address to Americans predicted the random abuse Arab and/or Muslim communities would have to put up with in the aftermath of 9/11:

> I ask you to uphold the values of America and remember why so many have come here. We are in a fight for our principles, and our first responsibility is to live by them. No one should be singled out for unfair treatment or unkind words because of their ethnic background or religious faith (Bush, 2001).

His call for upholding American values and principles without specifying those American values and principles exuded confusion. It was also an early sign of the ensuing ambiguity against the nation's racialized in-betweeners: citizens and alien residents of Arab and Muslim origins as well as anyone who looked Arab or Muslim. Addressing Muslims and Arabs, Bush said: "We respect your faith (….) The enemy of America is not our many Muslim friends; it is not our many Arab friends." Thus, Muslims and Arabs in the United States were interpellated as "friends" of the nation, not quite its members. That is, the post-9/11 American patriotism politely pushed away Muslims and Arabs from membership in the nation. Additionally, in Bush`s regard, 'the War on Terrorism' was "civilization's fight" and the advocates of "progress and pluralism, tolerance and freedom" would fight against the terrorists.

Efforts to locate terrorists "here at home" meant strengthening the intelligence capabilities in racialized communities (Bush, 2001). While the wounds from September 11 were still fresh, The USA Patriot Act of 2001 was enacted with the expressed goal of ensuring national security. The first Homeland Security office was established in Dearborn, Michigan: popularly dubbed the Arab American capital in North America (Baker & Shryock, 2009). Alongside this, Detroit

in the same state became the home for the largest counterterrorism investigations in US history (Abraham, Hovel, & Shryock, 2011; Howell & Shryock, 2011; Shryock, Abraham, & Hovel, 2011). This is to say that following the terrorist attacks of September 11, Arab and Muslim communities in the United States were put under siege (Cainkar, 2002, 2009; Cainkar & Maira, 2005). Further, the notion of "homeland" entered the official national discourse with the introduction of The Homeland Security Act of 2002, thus strengthening the link between immigration control and terrorism. Kaplan (2003) observed: "Homeland (…) conveys a sense of native origins, of birthplace and birthright. It appeals to common bloodlines, ancient history, notions of racial and ethnic homogeneity" (p. 86). The shift in the official discourse indicates a fundamental change in the self-representation of the American national identity from a nation of immigrants to a putatively homogeneous entity. The frequent repetition of "the Union" in the former President's address to the nation characterized this renewed sense of the nation (Bush, 2001). President Bush's speech set a precedent in imagining American society as an organic whole and rhetorically erased individuals who may have one foot in "the Union" and the other elsewhere. The assumed homogeneity of the empire would not tolerate hybrid and in-between residents.

As a result, since the cataclysmic events of 9/11, racialized communities with transnational ties to other countries have found themselves to be 'alien' citizens vulnerable to constant surveillance. The term "alien citizen" refers to "an American citizen by virtue of her birth in the United States but her citizenship is suspect, if not denied, on account of her racialized identity and immigrant heritage" (Ngai, 2007, p. 2521). It should be noted that this category of alienage applies only to the people of non-European ancestry, including 'unassimilable' Chinese, 'enemy-race' Japanese, 'illegal alien' Mexican, and now 'terrorist' Middle Eastern, Arab, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants.

In essence, the vengeful and repressive legislation introduced in the aftermath of 9/11 infringes on the human rights of Arab and other Muslim Americans. The discourse on national security has turned into a racist practice that criminalizes Arabs and Muslims and surveils their transnational ties and loyalties (Bayoumi, 2015; Howell & Jamal, 2009; Howell & Shryock, 2011; Jamal & Naber, 2008; Naber, 2006, 2008, 2012; Salaita, 2006; Shryock et al., 2011; Shryock & Lin, 2009). Stigmatization, surveillance, and in some cases actual incarceration of men ensued. It is in this sociopolitical context that Abdullah's and Yunis's novels emerged. And they are critical interventions in the post-September 11 era, one dominated by national security paranoia against Arab Americans and Muslims. Yunis mocks the anti-Arab surveillance and

second-generation Arab Americans' futile attempts at assimilation. In comparison, Abdullah's novel provides readers with a detailed picture of the ways in which a Muslim immigrant woman experienced ostracism and harassment in the aftermath of 9/11. The two novels show what 'the War on Terror' looks like from the vantage point of female Arab and Pakistani Americans.

At first, it might appear counterintuitive to pay attention to migrant Mexicans in the same study that examines narratives about immigrant Muslim women. I admit that these are two very disparate groups. However, there is ample research on the conflation of migrant workers, most of whom come from Mexico and enter the country clandestinely, and Muslim communities (Chávez, 2012; Chavez, 2013a; Rivera, 2014). What unites these otherwise incongruous categories are the prejudices and stereotypes that have been used to malign their entire im/migrant communities. Through the dual processes of racialization and securitization, Latina/os and Muslims are constructed as the "Brown Threat" in the post-9/11 American imagination (Rivera, 2014). Mainstream representations of Latinos and Muslims in the United States shape not only how the US government and media constructs them as "Brown Threats," it also affects the ways in which citizens interpret these minority groups as foreign. The terrorist attacks of 9/11 served as a rationale for the widespread surveillance of both Latino/a and Muslim communities. The terrorist attacks were not only "the raison d'etre for the massive fortification of the surveillance state," but they also turned the objective of preventing terrorist activity into "a larger and more extensive application of surveillance and control systems of migrants" (Ono, 2012, p. 25). For this reason, this critical IC study looks at prose narratives about members of these two distinct groups albeit these members remain fictional characters.

The following questions guide my investigation:

1. How may transnational fiction by im/migrant women, four examples of which this study analyzes, serve as a resource to descriptively trace the im/migrant experience?
2. What kind of topographic, sociopolitical, and linguistic maps do the data gathered from the analysis offer?
3. How can we re-read the notions of nation, culture, border, and agency critically?
4. Considering the findings, in what ways can this case study "critically" support IC inquiry and open itself a space in the field?

As detailed in Chapter 2, I draw on various methodology textbooks to determine my areas of analysis. Kellner (1998) advises that researchers assume a multi-perspectival approach to investigate cultural artifacts. In his model, the first step entails interrogating specific cultural texts' production processes, the second step conducting textual analysis and critique of the artifacts, and the third step studying audience reception and the uses of cultural products. Similarly, Lehtonen (2000) sketches a tripartite model of analysis of cultural texts. Adopting a three-pronged model, as advocated by Kellner and Lehtonen, demands exploring the poetics of the texts, engaging in the hermeneutics of their contexts, and conducting an ethnography of their readers. However, such an aspiration raises feasibility concerns. For this reason, I focus on the texts and the context from which they emerged. I have developed a tool kit by drawing on various critical literary analysis methodologies (Guerin, Labor, Morgan, Reesman, & Willingham, 2005) and in conversation with key texts in both postcolonial literary studies (Spivak, 2012) and feminist literary criticisms (M. Eagleton, 2011; Jacobus, 1986; Showalter, 2012) to approach the texts. First, I identify the migrant character in each text. Next, I document the transnational geographic spaces the novels portray. After that, I determine the trans/national sociopolitical spaces the novels present. Then, I focus on the hybrid linguistic space in the novels. Finally, I assess the connection between the characters and the authors. Gender plays a key role in my study and permeates all levels of my analysis, even though I dedicate a different section in my analyses and discussion chapters to further elaborate on gender`s entanglements with nation, migration, and narration.

Chapter 1: "Theoretical Framework: Deliberations on the Key Terms" establishes the conceptual framework for a reading of transnational fiction by migrant women authors from the perspective of IC. First, I dwell on the transgressive force in the modifier "transnational" by situating it in migration studies. I define transnational literature in relation to a host of cognate terms: world literature, diasporic writing, postcolonial literature, minor literature, ethnic literature and migration literature. Second, I elaborate on the notion of "hybridity" and "in-betweenness" by reviewing key theoretical sources. Third, I consider the role gender plays in narration and migration. I close this section with a brief discussion of how IC may benefit from sustained investigation into hybridity in literary texts.

Chapter 2: "Methodology: Literizing Intercultural Communication Research Through a Focus on Transnational Fiction by Women" considers my methodological approach. Close readings of the four texts informed by the theoretical concepts I discuss in Chapter 1 comprise my primary analysis method. However, before moving on to a discussion of the areas to which I turn my

attention, I offer an overview of different paradigms and methods in IC research. My goals are to reveal where methodological gaps are and to discuss in what ways my intervention can contribute to the field. Interpretive textual analyses in IC studies emphasize building a connection between texts and their contexts rather than conducting a heavily text-centered examination. For this reason, while textual analysis remains the starting point in my research, I seek to link the four literary texts to their sociopolitical domains. Additionally, I enrich my discussion of the primary texts by drawing on secondary sources.

Chapter 3: "Hybridity and In-betweenness in *Saffron Dreams* and *The Night Counter*" juxtaposes *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b) and *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009). These two books lend themselves to be read together since they both feature Muslim women whose migration to the United States was determined by their marriage. In addition, the two texts emerged as a response to the discrimination that Arab, Muslim, and South Asian immigrants have faced in the United States after 9/11. They both portray first generation immigrant women with ties to their home countries. Their recourse to their mother tongue helps disrupt the boundaries of the nation as a homogeneous group of people. Their stories underscore the fact that the American nation involves a hybrid mélange of individuals who have emotional as well as financial ties to other countries. The main characters in these two novels are in-between characters that use hybrid languages to reflect their bicultural identities. The protagonists assert their cultural in-betweenness through their allegiance to multiple geographies and languages. Their gender intersects with their transnational religious and ethnic identities. In both novels, the women outlive their husbands. In Abdullah's fiction, the female protagonist transforms after her husband's passing on 9/11 and interrogates in-betweenness from the perspective of a Muslim immigrant woman. In Yunis's rendering of women's transnational migration, the female protagonist's taking root in the United States is symbolized by a fig tree, which eventually produces fruit in its new home.

Chapter 4: "Hybridity and In-betweenness in *Across a Hundred Mountains* and *Return to Sender*" scrutinizes *Across a Hundred Mountains* (Grande, 2006) and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b). The two narratives portray migration to the United States from its southern neighbor in ways that are not sanctioned by the state. I argue that migrants create hybrid identities for themselves through their movement across the physical US-Mexico border. Their double visions are observable in their bilingual language use. By focusing on the corporeality of migration, indexing migrant cartographies, bilingual language use and cultural hybridity, this chapter problematizes the myth that the United States is a homogeneous Union. It regards

migration as a ubiquitous human action. The linguistic hybridity that results from this contiguous cross-border interaction is a necessary outcome. Furthermore, it defends that the migrant character is an in-between person who straddles their home and host countries in their language use. Their memories transcend divisive state borders and trace transnational migrant maps. I conclude that the two works of fiction portray migration as a complex social process in which transborder geographical locations and migrants' experiences gain new meanings in their relation to migrant and non-migrant others.

Chapter 5: "Performances of Hybridity in the Third Space and Literary Intercultural Communication" has two objectives. First, it juxtaposes the four novels in terms of their representation of hybridity and in-betweenness as strategies of engaging with the nation/empire. I draw on my findings in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 to evaluate notions of nation, culture, border, and agency as they are represented in the four texts. Secondly, it considers the ways in which transnational novels may be used as rich sources of IC research.

The Conclusion chapter highlights key findings from the two analysis chapters. It answers the question of whether exemplary transactional fictions written by female authors about im/migrant women may serve as viable sources for the IC discipline.

CHAPTER 1: DELIBERATIONS ON THE KEY TERMS

1.1. INTRODUCTION

This chapter turns to the key concepts that inform my analyses in Chapters 3 and 4. The discussion opens with a genealogy of the term "transnational" in relation to "transnation" and "transnationalism" and surveys literature on the transnational turn in American literary studies. The first section ends with a discussion of the defining characteristics of transnational writing in relation to other competing labels. I argue that a transnational lens to read fiction by im/migrant authors may compensate for the limitations of other cognate metrics. References to geographical locations and sociopolitical incidents that engage, yet go beyond, the nation-state and linguistic hybridity remain two central aspects of transnational writing. Transnationality is most powerfully established and portrayed through explicit references to the extra-national places, sociopolitical incidents, and themes. But I am specifically interested in how im/migrant characters` and/or narrators` transnationality is established through hybrid language use. Therefore, in the second section, I address hybridity in transnational writing. Bakhtinian notion of linguistic hybridity and postcolonial theories of cultural hybridity inform my discussion. I also find Klinger`s discussion of linguistic hybridity, which I explain below, useful. I argue that im/migrant authors deploy various strategies of linguistic hybridity to represent cultural hybridity and in-betweenness. Thus, they seek to explode the exclusionary logic of a homogeneous nation. I turn to the link between gender and narration, as well as gender and mobility, to close this chapter.

1.2. IDENTIFYING THE TRANSNATIONAL IN LITERATURE

The descriptor "transnational" is often invoked to refer to the "sustained linkages and ongoing exchanges among non-state actors based across national borders" (Vertovec, 2009, p. 3). Long distance affiliations and networks established by individuals sharing the same interests and/or sense of belonging to the same religious communities across national borders precede the emergence of the nation-state, whose borders inform the very definition of transnationalism.

The earliest use of the term "transnational" dates to Randolph Bourne's 1916 essay "Trans-national America" where the author strived to quell public anxiety over hyphenated Americans` expression of loyalty to their country of origin during World War I. Bourne advocated for

accommodating the country`s "alien population" such as "the unpopular and dreaded German-American" citizens not by turning to the melting pot ideology, which aspires that immigrants severe ties with the old country (Maddern, 2013), but through native-born Americans` readjustment of their standards of what constitutes Americanness. For Bourne, the United States was destined to be a federation of cultures. He argued:

> America is coming to be, not a nationality but a trans-nationality, a weaving back and forth, with other lands, of many threads of all sizes and colors. Any movement which attempts to thwart this weaving or to dye the fabric any one color, or disentangle the thread of the strands, is false to this cosmopolitan vision. (Bourne, 1916, p. 96)

In Bourne's thinking, the modifier "trans-national" described foreign-born Americans and their descendants. In essence, Bourne problematized the use of the hyphen to refer to Americans whose ancestry lied in a country other than England only. Moreover, he endorsed cosmopolitanism, where diverse elements do not form a homogeneous entity, but "inextricably" mingle; different groups "do not fuse" but live in mutual toleration. Bourne proposed a "dual spiritual citizenship" closer to the contemporary understandings of transnational citizenship. For Bourne, foreign-born groups, including the migratory aliens that made up the unskilled labor force in the United States, were "no longer masses of aliens, waiting to be 'assimilated,' waiting to be melted down into the indistinguishable dough of Anglo-Saxonism." Rather, they constituted "threads of living and potent cultures, blindly striving to weave themselves into a novel international nation." Therefore, he advised that, as a "trans-nationality" comprising many nations, the United States stop the "crusade against its hyphenates."

Though Bourne`s editorial provides glimpses into its implications, parsing the adjective "transnational" is necessary to understand its affordances. According to *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*, the prefix "trans" means "on" or "to the far side of something" and is often used synonymously with "across" as in the phrase "trans-Siberian railway." It also denotes the relationship between two things and replaces "inter" as in "trans-racial child adoption." Moreover, the prefix indicates a change that comes through experience as in "transformation." The term "transnational" derives its meaning from the prefix, which also means "through, over, (...) beyond, outside of, from one place, person, thing or state to another" (Jay, 2021, p. 9). The adjective form implies extending or an aspiration to go beyond national boundaries (Gomaa, 2016; Jay, 2021, p. 9; Seyhan, 2001). As such, the term "transnational" inevitably engages with "nation" even if it aims to transgress its boundaries. Adopting a transnational perspective is transgressive in the sense that it underscores inter-connectivity between actors and phenomena

located on different sides of nation-state borders, while resisting the logic of purity and homogeneity associated with nation and nation-state.

The discussion of the transnational raises questions about the notion of "transnation." Appadurai (1996) observed that, because it houses crucial portions of 'exported' populations from elsewhere, the United States is home to delocalized ethnic and religious transnations, who retain ideological, affective, and so forth links to other places (pp. 172, 177). Indeed, for Appadurai, the United States is "a federation of diasporas" and Americanness emerges from the "cross-hatching of diasporic communities" amid anxieties of tribalism (p. 173). Similar to Bourne, Appadurai argued that the United States has always been a transnation when he declared that the country was not "a closed space for the melting pot to work its magic, but (...) another switching point" where divergent forms of affiliation play out and identities are negotiated (p. 171). Nevertheless, while discussing the notion of transnation in relation to America`s "uneasy" engagement with its racialized communities, Appadurai did not offer a definition. Rather, they contended that various forms of transnation would herald a postnational imaginary, which modulates through encounters with other transnational spaces. Ashcroft (2010) coined "transnation" as a comprehensive term to denote "the fluid, migrating *outside* of the state that begins *within* the nation" (p. 73, emphasis in original). In this formulation, this "fluid" disrupts the center versus periphery binary because it "extends beyond the geographical, political, administrative and even imaginative boundaries of the state, both within and beyond the boundaries of the nation." It may be concluded, then, that transnation engages with nation even when it extends beyond the nation-state.

The term "transnationalism" is both a social phenomenon and a multilocal research program. As a social phenomenon, transnationalism denotes "the processes by which immigrants forge and sustain multi-stranded social relations that link together their societies of origin and settlement" (Basch, Glick Schiller, & Szanton Blanc, 1994, p. 8). The im/migrant populations who build social fields that bridge their home and host countries are sometimes referred to as "transnationals" or "transmigrants." Glick-Schiller, Basch, and Blanc-Szanton (1992) maintained that while some migrants identify more with one society than the other(s), most forge transnational identities with links to more than one country: "Transmigrants take actions, make decisions, and feel concerns, and develop identities within social networks that connect them to two or more societies simultaneously" (1992, pp. 1-2). To Glick-Schiller et al, the power of transnationalism lies in the ability of transmigrants to take advantage of their simultaneous positioning in several social locations. However, as Basch, Glick-Schiller, and

Szanton Blanc note, im/migrants do not typically call themselves transnationals or transmigrants (Basch et al., 1994, p. 8). It appears that prose fiction such as Salman Rushdie`s *Satanic Verses,* with its attention to fictive migrants` in-between identities, preceded scholarly discussions of transnationalism in migration research and other social sciences.

The adoption of transnationalism in migration studies as a research framework in the early 1990s anticipated its steady rise and spread into other fields. By the mid-1990s, transnationalism had consolidated its status as an analytical framework in several fields across social sciences and humanities (Cano, 2005; Kearney, 1995). The 1994 Wenner-Gren Foundation Conference brought together pioneering investigators of transnational studies, planting the seeds of a multidisciplinary research area. According to the organizers, most of the participants agreed on the embeddedness of the transnational in the local and aimed to investigate transnational processes and their implications, rather than focus on transnationalism as a concept (Blanc, Basch, & Glick-Schiller, 1995, p. 683). The event also initiated the contentious debate whether transnational flows render nation-states obsolete (Appadurai, 1996) or work in the opposite direction and extend their influence into im/migrant pockets in other countries (Faist & Özveren, 2016). Moreover, it brought about concerns about its detrimental impacts (Miyoshi, 1996; Spivak, 2009). In 1999, *Ethnic and Racial Studies* dedicated a special issue to transnationalism, discussing it from theoretical and methodological aspects (Portes, 1999; Portes, Guarnizo, & Landolt, 1999; Vertovec, 1999). The time was ripe for a comprehensive overview of the variegated definitions and uses to which the term was put in the new millennium.

Disentangling different manifestations of transnationalism, Vertovec (2009) identified six distinct conceptual premises, which merit closer scrutiny here by drawing on relevant other sources. First, transnationalism as "social morphology" encompasses social formations that span borders. According to Tölölyan (1991, p. 5), ethnic diasporas, or what he called "the exemplary communities of the transnational moment," must be the central focus of any endeavor to investigate forms and dynamics of transnationalism. Second, according to Vertovec (2009), transnationalism as "a type of consciousness" pertains to individuals' awareness of decentered attachments, of feeling here and there at the same time. Other critics note the prevalence of "diaspora consciousness" marked by dual identifications among immigrants (Schiller et al., 1992). Also, this notion of being here and there is connected to the condition Clifford (1994, p. 322) called "the empowering paradox of diaspora," which indicates "solidarity and connection there" while "dwelling here." The experience of multilocality intensifies the yearning to connect

with others who share similar roots and routes, but it may also enable the development of new "malleable" subjectivities (Dagnino, 2015; Faist & Özveren, 2016; Vertovec, 2009, p. 6) and a transnational imaginary (Appadurai, 1996). Third, transnationalism as "a mode of cultural reproduction" in Vertovec`s categorization stands for the processes of cultural interpenetration and blending. Memes shared across social media constitute the most conspicuous hybrid cultural form. Literary works I label transnational writing also showcase transborder cultural encounters and map novel cultural cartographies. Furthermore, these cultural products are tools for mediated transnationalism for their audience, as opposed to direct im/migrant transnationalism (Cohen, 2008), also called "minor transnationalism" (Lionnet & Shih, 2005). Vertovec`s fourth category, transnationalism as "an avenue of capital" comprises transnational corporations as the primary actors of transnational practices, but also embraces other minor members of the transnational capitalist class, who transfer remittances to their places of origin, and grassroots transnational entrepreneurs participating in circles of transborder trade (Vertovec, 2009). It needs to be noted that transnationalism as a channel of financing and investment cannot easily be separated from other 'types' of transnationalism because financial activities initiated by transnational entrepreneurs may be accompanied by political, social, and cultural pursuits (Portes, 1999). Fifth, transnationalism as "a site of political engagement" invokes international non-governmental organizations, including those concerned with human rights, environmental issues, and projects undertaken by ethnic diasporas. Appadurai (1996, p. 196) wrote that among transnational communities, new patriotisms do not necessarily constitute "the extensions of nationalist and counter-nationalist debates", although "prosthetic nationalism and politics" informed by nostalgia may motivate interest in the politics of homelands. Participation in transnational political activities bears the potential to empower im/migrants because it equips them with a sense of purpose. The last component in Vertovec`s division, Transnationalism as "(re)construction of 'place' or locality" refers to the creation of "transnational social spaces" which link actors in more than one country and denotes rather dense, durable, and abstract sets of ties (Faist, 2015; Faist & Bilecen, 2019; Faist & Özveren, 2016). As this brief overview shows, transnationalism has multiple meanings.

Sociologists, such as Levitt (2001), have emphasized the transnational impetus by focusing on immigrant pockets in the United States, offering explanations of how migrants participate in the social, political, economic, and cultural lives of their homelands and host societies via inexpensive transport and communication technology. According to Levitt, "the transnational village" functions as a spatial proximity enabled through a material infrastructure of cheap communications and transport technology. Such translocal existence has implications for the

nation-state on both ends of the border, because the nation-state stretches beyond its traditional geographical boundaries and is penetrated by other nation-states. Focusing attention on the national territory of the United States of America is no longer synonymous with the interests of US citizens. The migrant`s culture from the homeland is transposed onto US soil and imagery.

1.3. THE TRANSNATIONAL TURN IN AMERICAN LITERARY STUDIES

Since the 1990s, the transnational turn has swept American literary studies in sync with the tidal wave across social sciences, humanities, and interdisciplinary programs (Friedman, 2011, p. 2; Jay, 2010; Walkowitz, 2006). However, projects that investigate the transnational turn in American studies are far from uniform. Scholars stress cross-border fertilizations through comparative analyses of literatures originating from different Americas—i.e., Latin America, the Caribbean, North America—by highlighting the transhemispheric (Adams, 2009; Breinig, 2016; Levander & Levine, 2008; Nischik, 2014), transatlantic (Gilroy, 1993), and transpacific (P. Giles, 2019) zones of cultural encounters and cross-pollination (see e.g., Fluck, 2011; Pease, 2011, 2015). Others both emphasize cultural and literary interactions between the United States and other countries, and internationalize American studies (P. Giles, 2002; Tunc & Gürsel, 2012). Conducted outside the United States, this project investigates fiction that draws attention to connections between the United States and the countries the primary sources feature.

The transnational turn in American literary studies nourished on multiple sources. Although there are different genealogies, critics note the rise of critical theory in the 1970s and its embrace of transnationalism as a transformative force (Fluck, Pease, & Rowe, 2011; Goyal, 2017a; Jay, 2010; Pease, 2011). In addition, they cite the resistance to the Vietnam War as the origin for transnational American studies (Pease, 2011, p. 4). Offering one of the most comprehensive accounts of the transnational turn in American cultural and literary studies, Jay (2010) highlights ethnic studies, feminist, Native American, and gay/queer scholars` contention that the imagery of ideal America masked the historical reality of genocide against indigenous peoples, slavery, Chinese exclusion, Japanese internment and the ongoing economic and political marginalization of Chicano/as and Latino/as, women`s partial access to privileges, the persecution of lesbians and gays, and the oppression of religious minorities. In Jay`s view, the protests in the 1960s and 1970s brought together disparate social justice movements demanding political and civil rights.

Moreover, according to Giles (2019), the tension at the turn of the twenty-first century between American Studies departments whose intellectual curricula were based on the country's self-defining mythologies—e.g., the open frontier, Tocquevillian notions of democracy,—"and a theoretical momentum that was seeking to place such formulations within a broader, more interrogatory framework" brought about transnational American studies. The latter has since "sought to introduce a quizzical, reflexive dimension into the definition of this area studies field, rather than simply taking the assumptions of national conditions for granted" (p. 31). Kaplan (1993) identified a pattern of denial across the disciplines in American universities, specifically pointing to the lack of consideration of American culture, empire, and imperialism in the United States (cf. Shu and Pease 2015, p. 20). Adopting a critical method of analysis, this new research program sought to reveal how the national literatures and cultures are in constant flux and renegotiation. Moreover, academic focus on transnationalism was not limited to the contemporary world. Researchers such as Giles (P. Giles, 2002) Dimock (2006) reconceptualized the past, illuminating transnational and cross-cultural borrowings and interactions previously occluded in the rubric of national paradigm.

While Pease (2015) maintained that transnational American studies emerged out of "the transnational/diaspora complex" mediated between scholars' transnational and diasporic modes of knowledge production, Jay (2010) saw its roots in the political movements of the early 1960s outside the academy, in addition to the accompanying theoretical developments within universities. Jay argued that multipartite social justice movements played a transformative role in the demographics of American universities. This led to major shifts in the choice of texts to be studied and the issues to be addressed so much so that it led to the wholesale transformation of curriculum in literature departments. As for the shifts inside the academy, Jay pointed to the inclusion of formerly marginalized texts by women and minority authors for academic scrutiny. In his view, Jacques Derrida's textual play, coupled with Michel Foucault's new historicist framework, paved the way for more political and historical forms of literary criticism. Concomitantly, narrow attention to the formal, aesthetic, and linguistic characteristics of literary texts became complicated by increasing attention to the ways in which they portray and reflect on experiences determined by gender, class, race, sexual orientation, and movement across national borders.

It also needs to be noted that transnationalism in US literary studies took a detour through postcolonial critique. The emergence of postcolonial studies in the United States coincided with the adoption of literary texts that had been considered marginal, thereby providing a framework for analyzing texts from a transnational perspective and challenging Eurocentric models of comparative analysis. From the late 1960s onward, scholars worked for broader representation of their communities in American Studies, often by contending that their heritages exceeded the narrow physical boundaries of the United States. Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/ La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987) had a considerable impact on future works that turned to contact zones where different societies confronted each other's values. For instance, José Saldívar's Border *Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (1997) and Walter Mignolo's Coloniality*, Subaltern Knowledges, and Border Thinking* (2000) were largely influenced by Anzaldúa's monograph. First published in 1992, Pratt's *Imperial Eyes* (2008) was another seminal work on the theoretical and methodological construction of transnationalism in literary and cultural analysis, although the author preferred the notion of "transculturation" coined by Cuban sociologist Fernando Ortiz in the 1940s. Likewise, Gruerz (2002) and Brickhouse (2004) revealed how literature of the United States overlapped with the writings of Central and South America. This emphasis on the north–south axis sutured the United States with Latin American countries.

Along with the emphasis on interactions and borrowings in the Americas, Gilroy's (1993) *The Black Atlantic*, one of the earliest works on transatlantic cultural influences, and Appadurai's (1996) *Modernity at Large* ushered in other studies on transnational flows between the east and west. For example, about a decade after Gilroy conceptualized "The Black Atlantic" to talk about transatlantic cultural influence and hybridization, Giles (2002) adopted a transnational lens to show how canonical American authors' nationalist agendas became possible thanks to the constant negotiation with British culture and literature. These studies showed that transnationalism as an analytical method allows one to reveal "the circumference of national formations, exploding any notions of purity" (P. Giles, 2002, p. 17). Giles argued that transnationalism is at the center of a juncture where "American culture intersects with, modulates, and is in turn modulated by cultural practices in other parts of the world" (P. Giles, 2002, p. 19).

As Giles (2019, p. 32) eloquently pointed out, one distinctive feature of transnationalism in American studies is its insistence on revealing associations between national and cultural narratives and the material infrastructures enabling and sustaining them. Rather than just understanding literary narratives in formal terms, transnationalism also illuminates the production and reception of cultural goods across a broader international axis. Transnational methodology acknowledges reciprocities, of ways in which different cultural formations mutually impact each other through variegated cycles of exchange. In this sense, it carries a different ideological slant from postcolonialism, where the emphasis is more on where cultures are aligned on a dominant or subordinate political axis (p. 34). The circuitous imaginative dimensions of transnational exchange, in other words, often elude the more straightforward mechanisms of political coercion depicted in postcolonial literatures (p. 35). The transnational model probes the ways in which US national identity has always been fractured.

Interest in transnationalism as a methodology has continued to increase since the turn of the millennium. In 2004, Shelly Fisher Fishkin, president of the American Studies Association at the time, devoted her presidential address to undertaking an exhaustive survey of what she called the transnational turn in American studies. She predicted that transnational American studies would pay more attention to the historical roots of multidirectional flows of people, ideas, and products, as well as the social, political, linguistic, cultural, and economic impacts generated in the process. She reminded the participants that the crossroads might not necessarily be located inside the geographical and political boundaries of the United States, urging researchers to highlight the contingent and constructed nature of boundaries (Fishkin, 2005, p. 22). Fishkin's call for greater attention to transnational links encouraged the founding of new journals such as *Comparative American Studies* and the *Journal of Transnational American Studies* and facilitated new comprehensive research into "imagined transnationalism" in arts and literature (Concannon, Lomeli, & Priewe, 2009; Kanellos, 2009). In short, the first decade of the twenty-first century witnessed voluminous investigations on transnationality, which I review elsewhere in the dissertation.

Research in transnational literature has continued to increase in the second decade of the twenty-first century. Many more academic studies have turned to the question of transnational forces at work in the production of not only contemporary works, but also that those previously considered the urtexts of American national culture and identity. This shift brought about a wholesale remapping of the locations where literary works took shape and the geographies they imagined (Tunc & Gürsel, 2012). *The Cambridge Companion to Transnational American*

Literature (Goyal, 2017b) is a welcome publication with articles expanding on the roots of literary transnationalism, in addition to offering provocative sample analyses of transnational literary work.

Although many scholars have embraced transnationalism as an enriching, revitalizing research experience, critics have been wary of such jubilant adoption of transnational frames. Fluck (2011, p. 371), for instance, cautioned against "narrative of transnational rejuvenation" that "comes uncomfortably too close to a neoliberal celebration of free flow." Therefore, it is important to remember that transnationalism has its underbelly.

1.4. TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURE AND COMPETING RUBRICS

It is necessary to disentangle the notion of "transnational literature" from other competing categories. Seyhan (2001) situated transnational literature "outside" the nation and contended that "narratives that originate at border crossings cannot be bound by national borders, languages, and literary and critical traditions" (p. 4). Transnational texts represent linkages between disparate places. Often bilingual, these works tackle the processes of forming new hybrid cultural identities in new geographies. Inhabiting the interstices of different national histories, territories, and languages, they reconfigure the referential realm through imaginative plots, which emerge as novel venues and forms of intercultural dialogue. This new body of literature does not neatly fit into the national literature paradigm: the texts are written by and are about subjects who exist "outside" the nation. Deploying a language that is not their first language, transnational authors defy and explode the "fortified borders" of national languages that demarcate the nation`s territory (p. 9). Drawing on Appadurai`s use of "the transnational" to consider postnational formations, Seyhan understands transnational literature as "writing that operates outside the national canon, addresses issues facing deterritorialized cultures, and speaks for those (…) 'paranational' communities and alliances" (Seyhan, 2001, p. 10). Transnational communities inhabit the national space, but they are linguistically and culturally distanced from the dominant groups in society. They may also be estranged from their home countries. Transnational literature is composed by those who occupy the in-between of national languages and cultures. Following Seyhan, I use "transnational writing" to refer to "texts conceived in and operative between two or more languages and cultural heritages" (p. 9). The authors and texts in this study speak with differing 'accents' indicative of varying geographical and historical origins, transnational allegiances and transitions. The most distinctive quality of these texts is that they are written in a language that is not the writer`s mother tongue.

Transnational texts are characteristically bi- or multilingual. Crucially, the subversive energy of writing by transnational authors lies in the fact that the authors appropriate a language that is not their own.

Transnational writing connotes, yet differs from, ethnic literature. For the purposes of this dissertation, ethnicity is defined as "belonging and being perceived by others as belonging to an ethnic group" (Sollors, 1989, p. xiii). Ethnic groups are imagined as stable distinct units, but they are continually (re)interpreted and (re)invented through discourse. A specific form of discourse, literature is a crucial productive force behind the creation of myths and traits imagined as authentic characteristics of different ethnicities. Following Sollors, I understand that ethnicity is a socially or culturally constructed category with real life implications. Its invention is determined by specific historical conditions and corresponds to nation-building enterprises (Seyhan, 2001, p. 10; Sollors, 1989, p. xv). Someone`s ethnicity references their linguistic, cultural, religious, and/or racial origins, and, in this understanding, each human being belongs to an ethnic group (Clements, 2011). However, the descriptor "ethnic" is often deployed as a euphemism for people with a different background than the majority. In addition, ethnic literature continues to be used euphemistically to identify texts written by non-white or racialized authors. Therefore, whereas the term "ethnic writing" may technically be correct to speak of the texts under analysis, I avoid it, because the term implies that the authors and their characters do not constitute a 'natural' component of the territory in which these texts have emerged.

The term transnational literature inevitably brings world literature to mind, but the two categories need to be distinguished. Coined by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe in 1827, the term "world literature" is much older than the rubric of transnational literature (Damrosch, 2003, 2014; Thomsen, 2008). World literature is understood to cover "all literary works circulating beyond their culture of origin, either in translation, or in their original language" (Damrosch, 2003, p. 4). In this "expansive" definition, the term encompasses any work that circulates beyond its home base and is similar to some formulations of transnational writing (e.g., Walkowitz, 2006). However, the difference becomes clear when one considers what world literature encompasses. Damrosch`s taxonomy of world literature includes three subcategories: classics such as *The Epic of Gilgamesh*, European masterpieces such as Goethe`s *Faust*, and contemporary texts that serve "windows to the world" (p. 16). One feature that separates it from transnational literature is its broad historical reach, which encompasses the classics in various cultures, the "masterpieces" originally written in German and French, to contemporary

postcolonial, and "multicultural" texts (Jay, 2021, p. 51). In contrast, transnational literature indicates a much narrower temporal span: it is "a particular type of literature emergent at an identifiable historical moment and dealing, collectively, with a set of issues and themes associated with decolonization, globalization, modernity, and technology" (Jay, 2021, p. 51). Another major divergence between the two is that, while world literature begins with the classics and proceeds to the peripheral "windows" of "foreign" worlds, transnational literature begins its adventure from the periphery.

Lastly, whilst the term "world literature" recalls the 'best' of national narratives by authors who may have never traveled abroad, transnational literature is often associated with authors who have firsthand experience of migration. Dagnino (2015) called these 'worldly' authors "transcultural" creators.[1] For her, transcultural writers "by choice or because of life circumstances, experience cultural dislocation, follow transnational life patterns, cultivate bilingual or plurilingual proficiency, physically immerse themselves in multiple cultures, and geographies, territories, expose themselves to diversity, and nurture plural, flexible identities" (p. 1). Dagnino identified seven "main" features that define transcultural writers and engender their literary products. Accordingly, transcultural authors:

> 1) [have] a flexible mental disposition and fluid, metamorphic sense of identity; 2) [believe] that the process of dislocation and rootlessness of one's own self can be an intriguing and insightful creative device (…) ; 3) [develop] new ways of belonging and [lack] imposed/fixed allegiances; 4) [have] a mindset similar to the one developed by their contemporary social counterparts—the "neonomads" [or] "global nomads" (…) ; 5) [express] a willingness to be "open" to and "transformed" by the experience of the Other, in this way acting as cultural mediators or intercultural ambassadors; 6) [have] knowledge of other languages (with accentuated forms of bilingualism, trilingualism, or even polyglossia) recognized as one of the main tools for an enriching and transforming transcultural experience; and 7) [go through] a transpatriation process, which can be either self-induced or utterly random, as aleatoric as their creative processes. (Dagnino, 2015, pp. 176, 183-184)

In addition, in her view, the processes of "transpatriation" or moving physically or imaginatively outside of one`s cultural circle and homeland led to the development of a transcultural lens. For Dagnino:

> Creative transpatriation (...) represents a psychological threshold, a membrane one has to walk through to access a transcultural dimension and thus become a "transpatriate" (...), that is a transcultural dispatriate. Divesting oneself of the primordial identity cornerstones of one's primary culture, ethnicity, and nationality is not an easily accomplished task (....) Particularly when associated

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[1] Dagnino`s (2015, p.2) use of the term "transculturation" to discuss "the process of mutual—even if asymmetrical—cultural influences and fusions" that inform transnational authors` literary outputs. The author takes a detour through Pratt (2008) to reinterpret the concept of "transculturation" minted by Cuban scholar Fernando Ortiz as a substitute for acculturation. Ortiz`s neologism signifies the processes of ongoing transmutations as opposed to one way adaptation the term acculturation implies.

> with the adjective "creative," however, transpatriation signals the assertion of the subject's (...)
> freedom from the ties of rooted cultural affiliations and national traditions. (Dagnino, 2015, p. 157)

Dagnino`s argument of "creative transpatriation" being the driving force behind successful transcultural writing resonates with Seyhan`s use of the "phoenix" metaphor to speak of literature by im/migrant authors who produce "outside" the nation. In Seyhan`s view and in Dagnino`s recent theorizing, migrant authors are born in a new language after reworking their loss of native language, fractured memory, traumatic feelings of nostalgia, displacement, and estrangement resulting from the experience of (im)migration. However, Dagnino invests too much power in the 'rehabilitative' power of transaptriation. In addition, while it may be argued that transnational journeys—especially those that involve long-term residence outside of one`s home country and away from one`s cultural community—and sustained dialogic encounters with the Other may lead one to reevaluate one`s allegiances to one`s nation and culture, such experience may not cause a complete break from one`s own roots. What transnational writers go through is less of a divestment, or freeing of oneself, from their home cultures, but more a revamping of one`s identity due to encountering different viewpoints, languages, and lifestyles. Moreover, one should not underestimate the negative changes and withdrawal transnational experience may lead to. Despite this caveat, the figure of transcultural author may help us distinguish transnational writing from world literature.

Although transnational writing and diasporic literature are sometimes used interchangeably, these two categories do not always neatly overlap. As mentioned earlier, diasporas are considered a special category of transnational formations. Therefore, it is not surprising that some transnational works are read under the rubric of diasporic writing. Nevertheless, there is a sharp distinction between the two categories. To understand the variation, it is worth looking at the central characteristics of diasporic subjects by referring to a few elementary texts (e.g., Cohen, 2008; Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996).[2] Safran (1991, pp. 83-84) provided several keywords to work with: dispersal because of a catastrophic incident, collective memory of that catalyzing event, and loyalty towards an ancestral homeland. Building on Safran`s foundational typology, Cohen (2008) suggested that the memory of a single traumatic incident that forced the dispersion unites the members of a diasporic group. Cohen also expanded the definition of diaspora by adding three subtypes: labor, trade, and imperial diasporas. A diversion from Safran`s categorizations was Cohen`s increased emphasis on

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[2] The notion of diaspora has seen a semantic expansion since the foundational texts were published in the 1990s (e.g., Clifford, 1994; Safran, 1991; Tölölyan, 1996). See Cohen and Fischer (2019), Quayson and Daswani (2013), Tölölyan (2019) on the concept; Ashcroft (2010) with respect to transnation; Bauböck and Faist (2010) and Brown (2013) in relation to transnationalism and Quayson (2013) in relation to postcolonialism.

diaspora subjects` solidarity with co-ethnic groups in countries other than an imagined and real homeland. As a result, this departure from Safran`s initial formulation meant that the notion of diaspora could be deployed "to describe transnational bonds of co-responsibility" (Cohen, 2008, pp. 7-8).

Still, the key distinction between diaspora and transnationalism is that diaspora speaks of collective identity, while transnationalism underscores individuals` cross border mobility. Relatedly, transnationalism focuses on flows and counterflows of not only people, but also ideas and things, while diaspora connotes the difficulty or impossibility of a return. Moreover, while diasporas may be conceived as a subset of transnational communities, not all transnational communities constitute diasporas (G. W. Brown, 2013; Faist, 2010). In addition, for a diaspora to result from the scattering of a given community, there should be a time-depth of dispersal and resettlement in other locales (Quayson & Daswani, 2013). Furthermore, whilst diasporas are often co-ethnic or co-religious communities with shared cultural identifications, transnational communities may converge on a common goal, such as gay rights to marriage.

The divergence between the notions of diasporic and transnational communities also informs the literature about these formations. Diasporic narratives keep the memory of the catastrophic event that caused the dispersal alive by continuously reminding diasporic subjects of the great historical injustice they endured as a group. Diasporic writers act as the chroniclers of their displaced communities because they are concerned that those stories will go unrecorded unless they intervene. Diasporic literature records what history wishes to forget in a "where-we-came-from" format (Quayson & Daswani, 2013, p. 154). Diasporic communities are committed to not only the maintenance and restoration of the homeland, but also to its creation for posterity. Therefore, diasporic texts "represent a conscious effort to transmit a linguistic and cultural heritage" through narrative (Seyhan, 2001, p. 12). Moreover, the key feature of diasporic texts lies in their obsession with a home elsewhere. The genealogical accounting accompanies a yearning for a real or imaginary homeland. Among the texts analyzed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, only one female protagonist (Fatima in *The Night Counter*) expresses a longing for a home she left behind. In addition, neither of the texts under analysis alludes to a collective consciousness, an emblematic feature of diasporic writing, so they cannot be examined under the diasporic rubric.

In *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature*, Deleuze and Guattari (1986) advanced a conceptual framework to approach cultural texts they called "minor literature" by referring to Franz Kafka`s use of "small literatures" in his diaries (Seyhan, 2001, p. 163). For Deleuze and Guattari, the term "minor literature" indicated the use of a "major" language by a writer positioned outside this major language, a member of a minority group or a marginal enclave. To Deleuze and Guattari, Kafka's oeuvre was "a continuous allegory of the linguistic and cultural estrangement of a Czech Jewish writer in Prague writing in German" (Seyhan, 2001, p. 23). Written in a self-reflexive mode, his works created "a textual island" in German, where the rules of the language were estranged from itself (p. 23). Embodied by Kafka, 'minor' authors inhabit the exteriority of the dominant culture, and their works estrange the national language from its geographical and cultural environment. Although the major characteristic of minor literature is the deterritorialization of a high status language at the hands of a 'minor' or marginal author, the linkage between the individual and the political and literature`s function as "a collective assemblage of enunciation" constitute its two other features (Deleuze & Guattari, 1986, p. 18). For Deleuze and Guattari, minor literature denotes "the revolutionary conditions for every literature within the heart of what is called great (or established) literature" (p. 18). Though Deleuze and Guattari`s model may serve as a blueprint for reading the texts under analysis for their deterritorializing language use, the rubric of minor literature remains insufficient in dealing with migration, which takes a central stage in the primary texts.

Lastly, there have been suggestions to place the literature originating from the United States in postcolonial writing due to the United States` current position as an empire and its expansionist operations beyond its territorial boundaries (e.g., Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2002; Jay, 2021; J. Sharpe, 2005). A key characteristic of postcolonial literature is its foregrounding of the tension between the marginalized other and the imperial power. As such, it aligns well with transnational writing. Thus, a framework that aims to understand fictional transnationality should navigate through postcolonial literary criticism. It is important to acknowledge postcolonial writing as a "predecessor, guide and companion" of US-based transnational literature (Goyal, 2017b). Indeed, transnational literature has arisen through a "rerouting" of the postcolonial condition (Wilson, Sandru, & Welsh, 2010). Still, whereas they share topical and stylistic concerns, transnational literature differs from postcolonial literature: transnational writers and their texts do not necessarily engage with the colonizers. Relatedly, the modifier "postnational" is sometimes used interchangeably with "transnational" but the former alludes to a historical approach and pivots towards a new era. The latter, a spatial metaphor, connotes literature rooted outside a single national literary system (Thomsen, 2008, p. 148). To reiterate,

transnational literature is identified with intensified cross-cultural encounter and borrowing. It shows the ways in which national identity has always been a fractured imagery. As will be explored below, postcolonial critique of national identity as "split" aligns well with the double impulse of transnationalism, which implies allegiance to at least two centers of gravity simultaneously (Bhabha, 2004, p. 28). Therefore, it is vital to regard the postcolonial critique as a progenitor of transnationalism in literature.

To summarize, transnational literature has several key features which separate it from other cognate categories. Firstly, transnational writing refers to narratives composed by people who have firsthand experience of international migration. Secondly, transnational literature has cross-cultural themes such as intercultural encounter. The migrating subject`s ambivalence towards their countries of origin and destination, cultural clash they experience, and the feeling of loss are some definitive themes of transnational literature. Thirdly, transnational texts are often written in a language that is not the writer's native language. As such, transnational texts reflect the voices of the transplanted (both the authors and their protagonists') and act out linguistic and cultural self-translation. The notion of "appropriation" denotes the process in which transnational authors adopt English as a representational tool to signify their own and their im/migrant characters` different cultural experiences and identities. Like postcolonial authors, transnational writers navigate the gap between the worlds they and their characters inhabit and the one occupying the center. They adopt English as the medium of their expression and expose it to the transformative impacts of their mother tongues. In their bilingual discourses, selected words from their mother tongues are embedded in the English text. In other words, they insert the foreign, or the Other`s language and culture, in the English text. Untranslated words and phrases serve an important function in inscribing linguistic and cultural difference that cannot be rendered in English, in addition to indicating the cross-cultural character of the linguistic medium (Ashcroft et al., 2002, p. 52). Two key principles regarding language in postcolonial writing may also apply to transnational writing. First, language and identity are interdependent, so the language the author and her characters use has implications for their identity. Second, the use of a foreign language or non-standard English signifies political and cultural identification.

A transnational author`s use of English estranges the language from its territory. Allusion to a culturally specific phenomenon or theme by using a foreign word or phrase installs a linguistic and cultural distance. Ashcroft et al (2002) underlined that the maintenance of this linguistic and cultural space was of profound importance to literature`s ethnographic function. However, the

danger in ethnographic reading of transnational or transcultural texts lies in taking them as the sole cultural reality of the Other. One must remember that the portrayed culture is a product of a particular ethnographic encounter, and the text creates the reality of the Other while describing it. Although we may be tempted to read a transnational text as an ethnographic work, and there may be certain benefits to it in intercultural communication training, the reader needs to remember that the literary text at hand is not the site of a shared cultural experience. Her gaze turned to (at least) two directions, a transnational writer, functions like an interpreter of the cultures in which their feet stand. They make editorial interventions in explanatory phrases and glossing, i.e., parenthetic translations of individual words (Ashcroft et al., 2002, pp. 60-61). However, their explanatory interpretation should not be considered the sole reality of their native culture. The culture they describe in the text is a product of a particular encounter from the perspective of one writer and their character. Moreover, the culture they represent in their fiction is not stable; it is being negotiated and remolded through their narrative.

Adopting English and rendering the 'foreign' palpable through it, an im/migrant writer inserts the strange, the other, the marginal into circulation. Also, she creates from the in-between cultural and linguistic space s/he occupies. Drawing upon Bhabha (1994), I define bilingual writing of im/migrant writers as their third space. The Third Space enables multiple identifications, thereby posing a challenge to the understandings of homogeneous culture and society crystallized in nation-state historicity. The third space of enunciation facilitates the emergence of transnational fictions. The exemplary women's transnational fictions feature agency through writing that is linguistically hybrid.

1.5. LINGUISTIC HYBRIDITY IN TRANSNATIONAL WRITING

Learning to work with the contradictory languages *lived*, and languages *learned*, has the potential for a remarkable critical and creative impulse (Bhabha, 2004, pp. x, emphasis in original). Thus said Bhabha in his preface to the Routledge edition of *The Location of Culture*. He was reflecting on the dilemma with which he personally grappled as a migrant living and performing in various languages, but this comment may resonate with any of the four authors whose works I analyze in this project. His detour through the social geographies created by the British colonial enterprise and the current American neocolonial system introduced him to other "vernacular cosmopolitans," who moved between cultural traditions and fashioned hybrid life forms and arts (p. xiii). I deploy the term "hybrid" here to discuss innovative "transcultural" forms that originate within spatial and temporal contact zones (Ashcroft et al., 2013, p. 135). As

explained in the Introduction, the hybrid started its journey as a biological term and owes its notoriety to the racial theory of mixing in the nineteenth century (Young, 2005, pp. 5-11). In European colonizers` view, the biological hybrid generated by interracial encounter and miscegenation signified the 'impure' and 'inferior' quality of the mixed Other, as opposed to the 'pure' and 'superior' European self (Goldberg, 2005; Young, 2005). Nonetheless, the hybrid has long shifted its meaning to denote mixed cultural forms as it travelled through time and across disciplines (Yazdiha, 2010). Furthermore, though mostly associated with Bhabha (1990, 2003, 2004, 2009), hybridity has been applied to a wide variety of cultural phenomena. To illustrate, Canclini's (2005) interpretation of hybridization in Tijuana, a border city connecting the United States and Mexico, is an empirical counterpoint to Bhabha's psychoanalytically oriented theorizing. Providing a comprehensive overview of different takes on hybridity and hybridization processes exceeds the scope of this chapter. Nonetheless, it is necessary to highlight that the term has a voluminous literature with some key texts devoted to 'varieties' (Papastergiadis, 2015; Pieterse, 2001; Werbner & Modood, 2015; Yazdiha, 2010) across different fields (Brah & Coombes, 2005) while others trace its genealogies (Papastergiadis, 2015; Young, 2005). Still others consider hybridity in relation to modernity and globalization (Canclini, 2005; Kraidy, 2005; Pieterse, 2019), diaspora (Kalra, Kuar, & Hutnyk, 2005) and migration literature (Moslund, 2010). One should not disregard calls for a re-evaluation of the notion as (i) a term that continues to inform the tensions between white people and people of color and (ii) a revised concept due to radical shifts in structures that frame the relationship between the colonizing and colonized groups as well as the changes within each group (Prabhu, 2007). This call motivates my analyses in the following chapters.

My primary interest in this project concerns linguistic hybridity as an indication of transnationality and cultural in-betweenness in im/migrant women`s post-9/11 writing. Bakhtinian hybridity denotes a linguistic phenomenon where even a single sentence may indicate a dual consciousness. In his model, hybridization:

> is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 358)

In the Bakhtinian model, there is a fundamental distinction between unconscious "organic" hybridity and its intentional artistic counterpart in the novel. Unintentional organic hybridization accounts for the evolution of all languages in deep time. Bakhtin regarded such indeliberate mixing of different languages within the boundaries of a single utterance crucial for

the emergence of new languages distinguished conscious hybrid in the novel from the historical organic fusing. Artistic linguistic hybrid is deliberate and contains two consciousnesses, the represented and the representing, in one utterance. He maintained: "an intentional hybrid language is precisely the [realization] of one language by another language, its illumination by another consciousness" (p. 359). Bakhtin argued that:

> an intentional and conscious hybrid is (…) a mixture of two *individualized* language-consciousness (…) and two language intentions as well: the individual, representing authorial consciousness and will, on the one hand, and the individualized linguistic consciousness and will of the character represented, on the other. (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 359)

Bakhtin was not so much interested in how the hybridity came about as he concerned himself with what the novelistic hybrid was. He forcefully argued that:

> The novelistic hybrid is not only double-voiced and double-accented ... but is a double-languaged; for in it there are not only (and not even so much) two individual consciousnesses, two voices, two accents, as there are [doublings of] two socio-linguistic consciousnesses, two epochs ... that come together and consciously fight it out on the territory of the utterance. (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 360)

With this definition, Bakhtin urged the literary critic to look beyond the surface of the text where they would find the novelistic intentional hybrid. Rather, he pointed at the direction of the collision where differing points of view would "fight it out" (p. 361). The intentional hybrid brings different social languages in contact with one another to illuminate one language by means of another (p. 361). In organic hybridity, the aspects that form the new mixture fuse into one another and reflect a unified world view; intentional hybridity exposes different points of view to one other in a conflictual structure which retains 'a certain elemental, organic energy and openendedness' (361). Bakhtin reckoned:

> as distinct from the opaque mixing of languages in living utterances that are spoken in a historically evolving language … the novelistic hybrid is *an artistically organized system for bringing different languages in contact with one another,* a system having as its goal the illumination of one language by means of another, the carving out of a living image of another. (Bakhtin, 2008, pp. 361, emphasis in original)

Nonetheless, it needs to be underlined that, in Bakhtin`s model, hybridization does not indicate the direct blending of two distinct languages within the boundaries of a single utterance. Bakhtin insists that "only one language is actually present in the utterance, but it is rendered in the light of another language" (Bakhtin, 2008, p. 262). In comparison, when I speak of linguistic hybridity in transnational texts, I suggest the actual inclusion of elements of two distinct languages (e.g., Spanish and English) as a sign for the migrant character`s transnationality as

well as acknowledging the multivoicedness of the text. The texts under analysis are twice double voiced: the im/migrant author draws on her two languages to compose the text; the female im/migrant character also relies on her dual languages to push herself into being.

Linguistic hybridity constitutes a crucial element of texts transcending national and cultural borders. The hybridity in question may concern interlingual translation from a source text to a target text, but in transnational texts composed in the author`s second language, it also denotes the processes of authorial self-translation (Klinger, 2015). There is no tangible source text in the exemplary transnational novels interpreted in this project. Conversely, we observe a creative act of mental translation. Both interlingual translation and its artistic cross-cultural counterpart aim to facilitate interaction with the intended audience. Moreover, the translation aims to overcome (and sometimes draw attention to) communication barriers stemming from linguistic and cultural distance. Cross-cultural translation in transnational writing implies interaction between the source and target cultures. The 'translated' bilingual text emerges from ingenious juxtapositions of not only two language systems but also world views. In transnational writing, the relation between source and target languages becomes a theme in the story world as well. Crucially, linguistic hybridity in the text reveals the author`s attitude towards the languages she relies on. Linguistic hybridity at stake is a deliberate attempt to underscore the narrator`s and/or the character`s foreignness and cultural in-betweenness. Moreover, hybrid language choice allows the author to build the narrator`s and/or character's identity and worldview. Linguistic hybridity represented in the text affects the reader`s appraisal of the character`s worldview as well as the depth and nature of her engagement. Therefore, it is critical to develop a framework to trace linguistic hybridity in transnational novels.

When confronted with the task of representing a foreign language and culture, transnational authors address the problem by making a choice from a spectrum of alternatives. Opting for assimilation means that the linguistic and cultural differences are concealed. In contrast, intentional nontranslation means that the writer wants to confront the reader with the limitations of their knowledge and language. In *Borderlands/La Frontera,* Anzaldúa (1987), for instance, left large chunks of the text untranslated to signal cultural distinctiveness and provoke her readers to engage actively with the hybrid borderlands culture. The texts analyzed in the following chapters, on the other hand, resort to various methods of linguistic hybridization that fall between the two extremes of the continuum.

Transnational authors often deploy sociolinguistic concepts of code-switching and code-mixing as methods of hybridization. Code-switching happens when a bi/multilingual speaker changes languages halfway through their conversation without changing the topic whereas code-mixing takes place when the speaker inserts words and expressions from one language into the grammatical structure of another because they find those foreign words and phrases more accurate and appropriate for the topic they are discussing. Conscious use of code-switching and code-mixing points to the untranslatability of certain expressions. It may also index the speaker`s conviction that certain feelings and themes are best communicated through the speaker`s naturally acquired mother tongue instead of the second language often learned in a formal school setting. Native speakers erroneously consider code-switching and code-mixing as signs of inadequate proficiency on the part of the nonnative speaker. In transnational novels, they are deployed as prime techniques of hybrid cultural identities and in-betweenness.

In foreign language teaching theory, such strategies are explained by the notion of "interlanguage," which characterizes the inventive linguistic system learners create by drawing on both their native tongue and the additional language they are learning (Selinker, 1972). In various forms of cross-cultural writing, including transnational fiction, interlanguage is deployed not as a mere linguistic aberration from the norm but as a paradigmatic strategy signifying cultural distinctiveness. Bi/polylingual speakers often switch or mix codes to express nuance in meaning. In addition, intentional code-switching signifies the speaker`s identity (e.g., Heller, 1992). To put it more bluntly, her code-switching and code-mixing strategies not only represent but also construct the speaker as a distinct agent.

For this reason, transnational authors favor code-mixing and code-switching as modes of bilingual enunciation. They elevate the Bakhtinian notion of intentional hybridity to a higher level. The authors analyzed in the following chapters also resort to these strategies of linguistic hybridization. They mark such hybridity through italicization or conceal it by allowing the two languages to flow into another. Their choice expresses a preference for deploying their and/or the characters` mother tongue to signify the cultural hybridity and in-betweenness. They often superimpose vocabulary from the migrant characters` first language onto English to both alienate and confront the reader to enter a communicative act with the fictive Other.

Considering the textual strategies of linguistic hybridization in postcolonial writing, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin (2002) made a distinction between "English" inherited from the British

empire and "englishes" postcolonial subjects used as "the site" innovative postcolonial literatures (p. 9). The former refers to the variant spoken at the imperial center while the latter indicates the varieties of English developed in the colonies. In the texts analyzed in this project, the reader encounters "hybrid englishes" (an interlanguage incorporating Arabic and Urdu into English in Chapter 3 as well as 'grafting' of Spanish into English in Chapter 4). The authors make conscious efforts to incorporate influences from languages at their disposal to articulate their own and their characters` perspectives, cultural identities, and allegiances. Their recourse to other languages highlights the authors` and their characters` dual heritage and bears implications for the representation of cultural hybridity and in-betweenness.

Klinger`s (2015) tripartite typology of linguistic hybridity may be useful in analyzing linguistic hybridity in transnational texts when deployed together with the textual strategies Ashcroft and colleagues (2002) identified to examine postcolonial literature. Linguistic hybridity underscores dual linguistic heritage in the construction of the prose text. As Klinger persuasively argues, in a transnational text, translation is both the tool and object of representation. Klinger distinguishes between "representational" and "nonrepresentational" hybridity by basing her model on Stenberg`s (1981)[3] narratological concepts of "translational mimesis" (i.e., the narrator`s translation of a character`s speech or thought act for the benefit of a narratee including the reader) and "represented self-translation" when a character or an embodied narrator performs the translation (Klinger, 2015, pp. 17-18). For Klinger, whereas "explicit attribution" is a diegetic strategy, the latter three strategies Sternberg discusses—selective reproduction, verbal transposition, and conceptual reflection—create text-level hybridity by juxtaposing or fusing the language as object (i.e., the author`s mother tongue) and the language as medium (i.e., English). In addition, conceptual reflection produces the effect of one language within another when the author deploys culturally relevant topics, attitudes, and forms of address as illustrated in the texts under examination. Conceptual reflection also includes the use of orality as demonstrated in Yunis`s choice of frame narrative and Alvarez`s recourse to *testimonio* associated with Latino/a cultural forms. Furthermore, selective reproduction, verbal transposition, and

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[3]Sternberg (1981) identified four strategies of translational mimesis. When an author deploys "explicit attribution" they make a direct statement about the language used in the story. "Selective reproduction" means the inclusion of scattered words and phrases in the represented foreign language. The inclusion of lexis from foreign languages is a common strategy of hybridization in transnational writing and all four authors use this strategy in their texts. "Verbal transposition" refers to the creation of hybrid forms by deliberately mixing the codes of the frame (inhabited by the author and their addressee) and the inset (inhabited by the fictive speaker and their addressee)" (Sternberg, 1981, p. 228). Clearly, Sternberg`s notions of "frame" and "inset" resemble Bakhtinian "representing" and "represented" languages although neither Sternberg nor Klinger acknowledges the relation. Sternberg uses the term "conceptual reflection" to discuss the strategy of retaining "the underlying socio-cultural norms, semantic mapping of reality, and distinctive referential range" of the represented language (e.g., Arabic in Yunis`s novel) in the representing language (i.e., English) (Sternberg, 1981, p. 230).

conceptual reflection can also be traced in a character`s or a narrator`s represented self-translation.

In Klinger`s model, if linguistic hybridity on the level of text is motivated by the narrative, it is possible to speak of representational hybridity. In this case, a fictional translator is present either as a character or an embodied narrator. Klinger further divides representational hybridity into two subcategories depending on whether there is self-translation as its object or another language and calls the former "symbolic hybridity" and the latter "iconic hybridity." Subsuming Sternberg`s terms of selective reproduction, verbal transposition, and conceptual reflection, Klinger`s notion of symbolic hybridity stems from translational mimesis and represents one language within another. Such hybridization occurs at the level of narration and functions as a medium. Iconic hybridity, in contrast, results from the self-translation performed by a character or an embodied narrator and signifies hybridity as an object. Furthermore, in Klinger`s view, the strategies of "cushioning," i.e., the strategy of tagging an English language explanation onto a foreign word and "contextualization," which allows the reader to infer the meaning from the immediate sentence or paragraph without recourse to literal translation are glossing strategies. They accompany hybridization techniques such as selective reproduction, but do not constitute methods of hybridization (Klinger, 2015, p. 34). In my view, they are important facilitators of intercultural communication between the characters and/or narrators and the assumed reader. Therefore, they need to be regarded as transnational authors` deliberate efforts to enhance intercultural understanding.

1.6. HYBRID CULTURAL IDENTITIES IN TRANSNATIONAL WRITING

Cultural commentators such as Bhabha (1990, 2003, 2004, 2015), Gilroy (1993), and Hall (2003, 2013) have deployed the concept of cultural hybridity to challenge the purist conceptions of culture. Their theories of cultural hybridity also critiqued the essentialist notions of ethnic, racial, and national identities. Both Gilroy (1993) and Hall (2013) regarded art capable of constituting new subjects and pointed at improvisation that goes into the emergence of new kinds of hybrid cultural identities (Hall, 2013, p. 402). In an astute maneuver, Bhabha (2004) reinterpreted Bakhtin`s (2008) intentional hybrid for its resistant energies against the essentialist and purist imageries of a dominant culture. For Bhabha, the "in-between spaces," where the articulation of cultural differences originates, must be the object of analysis (p. 2). He discerned that "the intersubjective and collective experiences of *nationness* … or cultural value are

negotiated" at these interstices of overlap and displacement (p. 2). He formulated his theory of what may be called 'performative' hybridization from the margins of nation as follows:

> Terms of cultural engagement, whether antagonistic or affiliative, are produced performatively. The representation of difference must not be hastily read as the reflection of *pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits set in the fixed tablet of tradition. The social articulation of difference, from the minority perspective, is a complex on-going negotiation that seeks to authorize cultural hybridities that emerge in moments of historical transformation. The 'right' to signify from the periphery of an authorized power and privilege does not depend on the persistence of tradition; it is resourced by the power of tradition to be reinscribed through the conditions of contingency and contradictoriness that attend upon the lives of those who are 'in the minority'. The recognition that tradition bestows is a partial form of identification. In restaging the past it introduces other, incommensurable cultural temporalities into the invention of tradition. This process estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 3)

There is a lot to unpack in the quote above. First, there is the focus on the performativity and agency involved in cultural hybridization. Second, this performativity relies on narratives of tradition to both refute "*pre-given* ethnic or cultural traits" and "originary" identities and to initiate a new hybridities. Third, the terms and conditions of intercultural engagement that motivates and witnesses the birth of this newness is not necessarily undisputed and harmonious. Bhabha resembled this space of engagement and negotiation to a stairwell:

> The stairwell as liminal space, in-between the designations of identity, becomes the process of symbolic interaction, the connective tissue that constructs the difference between upper and lower, black and white. The hither and thither of the stairwell, the temporal movement and passage that it allows, presents identities at either end of it from settling into primordial polarities. This interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy. (Bhabha, 2004, p. 5)

According to Bhabha, the metaphor of stairwell signifies "the enunciative boundaries of a range of dissonant and even dissident voices" of women and minority groups. He turns to Heidegger to make his point that the boundary is "the place from which *something* [distinct] *begins its presencing*" (pp. 1, 6, emphasis in original). It is no surprise that, similar to the transnational authors who self-identify as bridge persons (e.g., Grande in Chapter 4), Bhabha relied on the bridge metaphor: "the bridge escorts the lingering and hastening ways (.…) The bridge gathers as a *passage* that crosses" (p. 7). Thanks to the creative work that happens at the transnational bridge, the idea of homogenous national cultures undergoes major revisions. The transnational articulations that generate, and make visible, the hybridity of the "imagined communities" lie on the reverse side of the discourse of homogeneous communities

(Anderson, 2006). Contemporary transnational fiction written by im/migrant authors who inhabit the 'bridging' boundaries of Americanness create literary 'treatises' on a society divided as "us" versus "them" along religious and racial lines in the post-9/11 context. Bhabha`s challenging theory of cultural hybridity teaches us that the im/migrant`s double vision can produce 'national' cultures from their in-between perspectives. These "connective narratives" dramatize encounter and engender newness that is not part of the continuous flow of past into the present and future but as "insurgent act[s] of cultural translation" (p. 10). Rather, as Bhabha maintained, it is the expression of "pluralist" newness (pp. 8, 10). Transnational creative work does not merely call on the past as its socio-temporal context or aesthetic precedent. Rather, it renews the past and reconfigures it as "a contingent in-between space that innovates and interrupts the performance of the present" (p. 10). In this respect, it would not be too hasty an argument to write that the im/migrant writers whose creative works I analyze represent migrant acts of survival by employing mixed genres and linguistic codes. In doing so, they create hybrid cultural spaces that seek to affect US national and cultural memory. By creating im/migrant characters who engage with the nation as gendered and racialized subjects, they experiment with fictionalized agency. The texts are sites of political agency.

Bhabha`s provocative analysis of the relations between the colonizer and the colonized emphasize their interdependence. Bhabha insisted that all cultural forms and systems of cultural difference are constructed in the *in-between* space he called "the Third Space of enunciations" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 56). Accordingly, since cultural identity emerges in this ambivalent in-between space through translation and negotiation, the claim to a pure culture becomes unsustainable. The acknowledgement of this ambivalent space of cultural identity enables us to overcome viewing cultural diversity as exotic. Underlining "the productive capacities" of the Third Space, Bhabha conjectured that "a willingness to descend into that alien territory ... may open the way to conceptualizing an *inter*national culture, based not on exotism of multiculturalism or the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity" (Bhabha, 2004, p. 56). As Ashcroft, et al (2013) put it, for Bhabha, the in-between space shoulders "the burden and meaning of culture" (p. 136). Bhabha reinterpreted an historically 'dreaded' notion to forcefully argue for the mutual interpenetration of cultures in post/colonial systems. Bhabha's key contribution was to question the putatively pure identities of the colonizer and the colonized. His argument that the intercultural Third Space is where hybrid identities emerge points at the flexibly, dynamism, and malleability of identities. Moreover, it alludes to the agency and playfulness of the actors who occupy the space of in-betweenness and liminality. In his view, postcolonial subjects and migrants go through a

process that puts into question the sense of a fixed identity. What we observe is continuous hybridization in what Bhabha labelled "the Third Space of enunciation" (Bhabha, 2004, pp. 54-55). While this reconstruction of identity may be empowering, its transgressive character poses dangers for pure identities. Bhabha's notion of "the Third Space of enunciation" may be harnessed for uncovering alternative narratives of national and cultural identity in the post-9/11 context. The task at hand, then, is to turn our gaze at "the in-between the product" (the text) to capture the very processes and expressions of mixture, of the anti-pure, of Becoming hybrid, and of heterogeneity.

1.7. HYBRIDITY AND INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

The notion of Third Space foregrounded by Bhabha (2004) is illuminating when speaking of the characters hybridity in the novel. In Bhabha`s vision, intercultural communication takes place in the Third Space, where members of distinct social groups with divergent cultural traditions engage in a special form of negotiation and translation. Developed in the 1990s, the notion of the Third Space denotes an alternative positioning to the binary model favored in mainstream IC enquiry. The binary model assumes that an individual coming from one distinct culture interacts with an individual from another distinct culture as a representative of their culture. In this model, culture is often taken as national culture. Individuals engaging in intercultural communication are thought to embody certain cultural characteristics. The goal of IC training in this paradigm is to reduce misunderstanding stemming from cultural differences and prevent clashes. The binary model suggests that the Self, representative of one culture, meets the Other, the representative of a foreign culture, in the neutral intercultural playground. They meet as the guest and the host, the tourist and the local, and the foreign representative of a transnational corporation and their local counterpart. This binary model fails to account for transforming interactions between individuals who are in ongoing dialogic interaction.

Conversely, the notion of Third Space implies that interactants are neither 'pure' selves nor the completely 'alien' Other.[4] As explained in the previous chapters, the notion of Third Space refers to the spatio-temporal in-between space where communication takes place and the new hybrid identities are generated and presented in interaction. This middle ground, or "the liminal space" in Turner`s idiom, enables meaningful exchange and allows newness to emerge (Turner, 1991). In keeping with the constructionist and critical paradigms in IC enquiry, intercultural communication takes place in this in-between zone where the Self and the Other affect each

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[4] I am using the term "alien" in the legal sense as someone who is a member of another nation-state.

other through interaction. Communication acts are embedded in the context and informed by often uneven power relation between interactants. Interactants present active agency by initiating or participating in intercultural communication, but their intercultural communicative acts are restrained by power dynamics in the immediate micro and the surrounding macro contexts, a point enacted most vividly in *Return to Sender*. This temporal, spatial, and linguistic in-between zone is where polarity is softened (or at least there is an effort to soften) and hybridity —hybrid language and hybrid culture—is enacted, giving way to the emergence of newer expressions.

This notion of hybridity extrapolated here nourishes on Bakhtin`s discussion of linguistic hybridity in the novel but goes beyond the focus on language only (Bakhtin, 2008). It suggests that the imagined social field where communication takes place provides the frame in which the individual acts drawing on their multiple language and other resources, values, and dispositions while also rewriting those resources through interactions. In this respect, the notion of hybridity aligns well with the notion of Third Space because the latter posits that an individual embodies not so-called stable culture, which is understood as a national, ethnic, or religious so forth group, but a perpetually recreated notion of positioning. The Third Space may best be characterized as a space of ambivalence and contiguous jockeying for domination. The Third Space is not much of a physical space or place; it is the position from which an individual speaks. For instance, it is the metaphorical or figurative location of cultural mediators, who function as interpreters and translators. It must be noted that the notion of Third Space may imply a degree objectivity. However, this is not the point. The inhabitants of the Third Space speak from certain positions. Also labelled the intercultural speaker, actors of the Third Space enter this intermediary position from specific angles (Byram, 2008). The Third Space is a sphere of enunciation where new hybrid identities emerge through ongoing negotiation and reciprocal impact (Ikas & Wagner, 2009). In this project, the Third Space has two meanings. First, it denotes the temporal, spatial, and linguistic moment or point from which the immigrant characters speak. Second, it marks the temporal, spatial, and linguistic moment from which the transnational authors write.

1.8. GENDERED REPRESENTATIONS OF WOMEN`S MOBILITY

Gender pertains to this study in two respects. The first concerns gender and writing and asks whether it is possible to trace a gendered articulation in literary texts. Broadly speaking, it investigates women`s relationship to writing and representation through literature. "Woman

must write her self: must write about women and bring women to writing (…) woman must put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—by her own movement" (Cixous, 1976, p. 875). Such is the career trajectory Cixous invited women authors to pursue. Women must be active agents of life and literature. Likewise, "[s]peaking both for and as a woman (rather than 'like' a woman): this is the problem of women`s writing" declared Jacobus (1986, p. 32). That is, Cixous and Jacobus summoned women to write about their feelings, thoughts, and experience as embodied creators. These pioneering mothers' calls encouraged many women to think about the importance of gendered representations. Regarding the intricate link between gender and genre dovetails attention to how women experience the world and express their perceptions.

The second half of the twentieth century saw a vigorous debate centered on whether women writers can appropriate and transform language and literature for liberatory ends. Some expressed doubt over a distinct women's language; others felt hopeful about women's literary modes of resistance. Stevenson (1979), for instance, is "not convinced that women need a specifically female language to describe female experience" (p. 174). She admits that the experiences of characters in a female authored text may be the experiences of its female author because the said author lives and comprehends life as a woman. Still, she declines the idea that there might be distinct woman`s language. She argues: "even if we agree that women have a less aggressive, more instinctive, more 'creative' nature than men (…) language is difficult to divide into sexes" (Stevenson, 1979, p. 174). In Stevenson`s view, a competent writer`s imagination and expression need to be "bisexual or trans-sexual" (p. 174). Moers (1976, p. xvi), on the other hand, praised the pioneering literary women for finding unique strategies to speak to women`s experience and speak "for us all." Moreover, many feminists also pointed to the simultaneity of oppression and resistance by analyzing how hegemonic discourse both limits textual resistance and provides the ground for "rupture, critique, and transformation" (C. Kaplan, 1990). It appears that women`s writing self-consciously challenges the barriers involved in appropriating and transforming linguistic and generic codes.

A survey of the founding texts in feminist literary criticism (e.g., Ellmann, 1968; Moers, 1976; Showalter, 1977; Spacks, 1976) reveals that the early foremothers sought to delineate the features of a female tradition and register the connections among the body of work authored by women. Ellmann (1968) did not distinguish between male and female authors. Rather, she identified masculine and feminine modes of writing, associating the former with authority and self-confidence, the latter with hesitation. In Ellman`s view, masculine voice is not necessarily

the privilege of the male writer; nor is the feminine voice reserved for women. Still, she concluded that successful women writers, avoided "sentiment as stigmatic" and "skirted" the authority "with deliberate rashness" (p. 166). Sydney Janet Kaplan (1975 ctd in Kolodny, 1980) examined women`s endeavor to reflect "feminine consciousness" as a stylistic and rhetorical device. Likewise, Spacks (1976) spoke of "the female imagination" and concluded that "for readily discernable historical reasons, women have characteristically concerned themselves with matters more or less peripheral to male concerns, or at least slightly skewed from them" (p. 7). Spacks was convinced that there was an inevitable difference between men and women writers concerning their subject matters and literary emphases. In her view, women`s writing exuded uncertainty and denial. Whereas Showalter (1977) expressed discomfort with the notion of the female imagination by saying: "The theory of a female sensibility revealing itself in an imagery and form specific to women always runs dangerously close to reiterating the familiar stereotypes" (p. 12). Even if she mentioned women`s "aptitude" for creating fiction, Showalter (1977, p. 4) worried that Spacks`s notion of female imagination suggests "permanence, a deep, basic, and inevitable difference between male and female ways of perceiving the world" (p. 12). Whilst Spacks declared "the mind has a sex, minds *learn* their sex" (p. 5, italics in original), Showalter underscored the ongoing relation between women writers and the larger society. In her view, women authors` texts comprised "a subculture within the framework of larger society" (p. 11). Showalter was not interested in recuperating "an innate sexual attitude" in writing by women (p. 12). She agreed with Moers (1976) that women authors read other women`s works and it is possible to observe affinities and influences. Still, for Showalter, marking the third phase of women novelists` career, "female literature" "purposely (…) concerns itself with the articulation of women`s experience" (Showalter, 1977, p. 4). This is to say that what matters is the portrayal of women`s experience from a woman`s eye. Building on Moers and Showalter`s skillful mapping of the female literary tradition in the nineteenth century, Gilbert and Gubar (2000) undertook a scrutiny of the anxiety of authorship among female writers on both sides of the Atlantic and drew readers` attention to the transnational "continuity of female imaginative" that crosses national borders (xxxi). In their view, literature by women exhibited a "striking coherence" of recurring themes and strategies, which they interpreted as the "female impulse to struggle free from social and literary confinement through strategic definitions of self, art, and society" (p. xii). Gilbert and Gubar `s *The Madwoman in the Attic* instigated a number of scholarly work with its attentiveness to formal and thematic concerns of women`s writing (Heilbrun, 1988; N. K. Miller, 1986; Yaeger, 1988). Miller (1986), for instance, addressed the question of women`s authorial identity and concluded that "[t]aking into account the specifics of

the 'historical, political, and figurative body of the woman writer' can lead to different conclusions and possibilities" (qtd. Eagleton, 2011, p. 268).

Kolodny (1980, p. 6) conceded that women writers needed to reappropriate and invert literary conventions because they entered literary tradition later than their male counterparts. She was convinced that female authors would have to "wrestle with" the language to mold it into one adequate to their meet their needs. Therefore, she articulated three propositions: (1) literary history is a fiction that women need to alter by literary criticism attentive to women`s literary productions; (2) reading a text is in essence engaging with paradigms, so the meaning we glean from the text we interpret is necessarily determined by our assumptions and predispositions; (3) the literary critic must be aware of her "inherent biases and assumptions" which shape her aesthetic responses (p. 14). Kolodny`s argument suggests that not only women`s writing is gendered but also the reader-critic`s interpretation functions within gendered parameters. Moreover, both the writer and the critic need to be attentive to the role gender plays.

Whereas it might be a formidable task to purse a project that seeks a straightforward correspondence between gender and genre, the two interrelate (M. Eagleton, 1989). Afterall, Woolf (1977) explained pioneering women writers` genre preference in terms of material factors: she noted women choose the novel as their literary outlet because the novel allowed them to write between the domestic chores even when they lacked a room of their own. Furthermore, Woolf attributed the novel`s popularity among female authors to its malleability. For her, the genre was "young enough to be soft in their hands" (Woolf, 1977, p. 84). Further, Eagleton (2011, p. 135) acknowledged how letters, diaries, and journals served as precursors to the then young genre. Brant (2000) stressed the generic variety among women writers` prose. In her view, "so-called 'private' genres like letters are often highly social and engage with the public-sphere subjects like travel and politics in ways which go beyond the formation of gendered subject" (ctd. Eagleton, 2011, p. 168). In addition, turning her attention to women`s travel writing, Pratt (2008) observed that women`s narrative strategies differed significantly from those of their male counterparts. Specifically, women`s use of "explanatory but non-technical" script did not align with male travelogs` accounts (p. 158). Moreover, their rejection of sentimental language was at odds with what was considered middle-class femininity.

Still, the discussion on writing and sexual difference seems inconsequential when pushed too far. Biological viewpoints about the 'intrinsic' female experience common to all women are

challenged. Eagleton (2011, p. 267) notes that Moers's method of textual analysis (i.e., searching for distinctive imagery, tones, or stylistic devices) was crucial in uncovering a female tradition, exploring the interconnections between women writers, and crafting feminist methodology such as "gynocriticism" proposed by Showalter. However, she joins Jacobus (1986), who cautioned against claiming a uniformity in women's writing. Eagleton contends:

> the differences between women writers always seem to outnumber the similarities; moreover, there is no way of knowing whether any common factors are due to the writers' sex, their shared class or racial background, the demands of the literary form they employ, or any one of a dozen or more other factors. (M. Eagleton, 2011, p. 277)

The hypothesis that there is an innate feminine style or genre is now met with skepticism. Insisting on inherent difference of women's writing like Spacks (1976) did may lead one to dance with biological determinism (M. Eagleton, 2011, p. 267). Moreover, privileging gender at the expense of other differences among women authors may bring about ahistorical and apolitical articulations. Therefore, it is important to look at the intersection of gender with other determinants. Still, imaginative writing may not always be "gender ambiguous" as Lovell (ctd in M. Eagleton, 2011, p. 90) emphatically argued, but Jacobus's playful remark on "the textuality of sex" reminds us that gender difference is produced by discourse and may feature in discourse (Jacobus, 1986, p. 109). This is to say that gender is not the privileged lens anymore, but it still holds a crucial place in my analysis in combination with a host of other designations such as race, nationality, religion. My analysis does not elide the distinctions among women from various backgrounds. It advances on the premise that women`s lived experience informs their subject matters and the motifs they deploy to articulate what they have seen and lived.

While the attention to the link between gender and writing considers whether there are subject matters, literary tropes, literary genres, motifs, and narrative strategies women authors favor and pursue effectively, the gender and migration prong concerns how gender intersects with mobility. To my knowledge the first substantive study attentive to the specificities of women`s transborder mobility and its implications for post-migration experience was conducted in the late 1970s (Youssef, Buvinivic, & Kudat, 1979). Since the mid-1980s, there has been increased recognition, specifically among women migration scholars, of the need to provide a gendered account of migratory processes. Morokvasic`s (1984) introductory article in the special issue of *International Migration Review,* a flagship venue in the field, drew attention to women`s invisibility in migration research despite their intense participation in migration processes. Since then, many have challenged the implicit or explicit presumption that the *homo migrans* is a

young and independent male (Harzig, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo & Cranford, 2006; P. Sharpe, 2001). In addition, when another special issue of *International Migration Review* was published in 2006, researchers sought to overcome the male/female binary in their definitions of gender and offered a multidisciplinary account of the link between gender and migration (Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansan IV, & Pessar, 2006). I acknowledge gender fluidity, but this study concerns representations of women`s mobility. Therefore, my review prioritizes studies that focus on the intersections of gender and mobility for female migrants. Whether they are movers or stayers, women are no longer invisible in migration research. Indeed, many researchers are attentive the ways in which gender roles and relations within micro/familial and macro/societal contexts inform migration decisions and processes (Antman, 2018; Pedraza, 1991); others consider gender-specific impacts of immigration policies, border militarization, and post-migration life (Harzig, 2001; Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003, 2011, 2013; Zavella & Segura, 2007). All these studies advance with the slogan that migration is a gendered journey.

The preliminary sex-aggregated data collected by the United Nations established that women constituted 47% of all migrants (Zlotnik, 2003); currently, this proportion stand just under half of total migrants and fluctuates depending on migrants` age and the regions of mobility (Boyd, 2021). Moreover, though much research has been gender-blind until into the 1980s, carefully conducted research on women`s mobility has proliferated such as Donato and Gabaccia`s (2015) analysis, Donato, Gabaccia, Holdaway, Manalansa IV, and Pessar`s collaborative evaluation (2006), and review articles (Antman, 2018; Fleury, 2016; Herrera, 2013) established that women have always been active subjects of migration even though their experiences were rendered invisible for a long time. In addition, research on women`s migration has bifurcated into numerous new directions (Hondagneu-Sotelo, 2003, 2011, 2013). Nonetheless, as Boyd (2021) astutely observes, despite these positive changes and the more pronounced ways of incorporating gender in migration research, social science data on women`s migration remains blunt and dull. The aggregated research data cannot capture the specificities of individual stories. Also, most social science research oversimplifies distinctions among women with respect to life cycle among other factors. In addition, much research focuses on documented mobility, overshadowing how women irregular migrants enter systems of illicit border crossing. Female irregular border crossers are more vulnerable to trafficking, violence, and sexual exploitation (Antman, 2018; Boyd, 2021; De León, 2015; Valencia, 2017). Most research about undocumented migrant women focuses on obstacles along the routes and frames arrival at the destination in terms of success. However, crossing the border does not mark the end of the gendered hardship. Undocumented migrant women experience a plurality of oppressions not

only due to their gender, class, age, religion, and cultural background and so on, but also due to their lack of legal status in the destination country (Bissonnette, 2020). In addition, gender-based assaults and exploitation during transit leave physical and emotional scars that impact these women's post-migration lives and relationships with their family members. Alvarez`s (2009b) and Grande`s (2006) novels feature women whose clandestine border crossing transforms these women and their relationships with their family members in profound ways.

Gender is deeply implicated in determining who migrates, how transborder journeys take place, and what consequences stem from the migration of men and women independently or as family units (Boyd, 2021; Boyd & Grieco, 2003; Pedraza, 1991). In addition, much research has confirmed that gender relations and roles impact the migration processes at three distinct stages of migration: the pre-migration stage, the actual journey across state borders, and the experiences of migrants in the receiving country (Boyd & Grieco, 2003). Even non-migrant women are affected by the migration of their relatives (Antman, 2018).

Gender informs mobility decisions, processes, and outcomes for everyone. New questions and concerns emerge when one inflects migration theories with gender analysis (Benhabib & Resnik, 2009). One way gender intersects with women`s migration is through marriage. Though more women migrate independently these days, associational mobility remains popular. Marriage migration (i.e., migration within or because of marriage) continues to be a common and socially acceptable practice. Social science research illuminates the intersection of migration and marriage by also looking at various forms of transnational marriage including mercenary marriages and picture brides. Their literary representations help readers gain insights into unique stories. Women in *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b) and *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009) move the United States as dependent spouses to their compatriots. The young, educated immigrant woman in *Saffron Dreams* joins the public life in the host country in different ways than the illiterate matriarch whose immigration through marriage to an elderly compatriot determines her everyday experience of the United States from the confined space of her kitchen.

Gender intersects with mobility even more impactfully in the context of irregular migration. The two primary texts in this project focus on im/mobility across the US-Mexico border, notorious for violence. Therefore, my overview below prioritizes research from this region. Irregular migrants improvise new modes of masculinity and femininity as they travel north on the

migrant trail in Mexico. Corrupt officials, abusive fellow travelers, smugglers, and bandits exploit migrants during their clandestine journey across Mexico and the US-Mexico border (De León, 2015). However, migrants do not passively accept violence. As ethnographic studies reveal, migrants devise gender performances to arrive safely at their destination (Staudt, Payan, & Kruszewski, 2009; Valencia, 2017). In the transient social field of the transnational migration route through Mexico and across the US-Mexico border, migrant narratives of the journey prove to be "survival plays" that re-imagine gender (Brigden, 2018). Some migrants deploy their sexuality as "cash machines" to facilitate their clandestine transit across Mexico and sometimes to evade other forms of violence (Martínez, 2013). It is impossible to estimate the issues women and girls face in transit to reach safer lands, better paid jobs, and unite with family. In addition, social science research sheds partial light into the circumstances of irregular migration across the infamous border. Complementing the sterile reports by social sciences, literary texts allow insights into women`s irregular mobility. Among the primary texts, *Across a Hundred Mountains* (Grande, 2006) and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b) problematize gendered clandestine mobility.

To reiterate the central concern in this section, when I insist on the interconnections between gender and writing, my concern is not whether there is a feminine characteristic to the four texts to be analyzed in the following chapters. Rather, my aim is to underscore what the four women authors and their female characters see and how they register their observations. Also, I take gender as one prism among a multitude of intersecting factors and ask the following specific questions: How does gender relate to the female character`s mobility and narration of that mobility? What does it mean to be an im/migrant woman according to a specific text? What subject matters do the characters and/or narrators address in their tales and in what authority? The literary works in my corpus imagine gendered journeys to the United States and prioritize certain themes over others when they create hybrid in-between characters. For this reason, gender informs this study.

CHAPTER 2: LITERAZING INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATON RESEARCH THROUGH A FOCUS ON TRANSNATIONAL FICTION BY WOMEN

2.1. INTRODUCTION

Chapter 2 presents a tool kit to analyze transnational fiction from the perspective of Intercultural Communication (IC). The field is principally concerned with the ways in which individuals from diverse cultural spheres interact and negotiate their perceived and actual differences through interaction. IC also investigates the impacts intercultural encounters have on interactants` identification with different groups, their adoption of attitudes and behaviors, and the macro effects of perceived and actual differences on group relations (Hua, 2016, p. 3). As discussed in Introduction, traditional IC downplays the affordances of literary texts. Indeed, there is a wide chasm between literary studies and IC inquiry. The former investigates literary texts without considering their potentials in promoting intercultural understanding. The latter aims to boost intercultural understanding without necessarily considering the affordances of literary texts. Few studies explore the important role literature may play in bolstering intercultural understanding (e.g., Neumann, 2020; Schiewer, 2020). This is surprising given that much of social life is mediated by written texts of one variety or another, and literature provides abundant material to affect intercultural communication.

From a methodological perspective, research on the relationship between literature and IC may take two major streams. The first line of research may explore the pedagogical value of literary texts (Golcalves, 2012). Indeed, few scholarly projects have considered the use of fiction to reduce intercultural "friction" and prejudice (Fox, 2003; D. R. Johnson, Huffman, & Jasper, 2014; D. R. Johnson, Jasper, Griffin, & Huffman, 2013). The second stream of research might focus on exemplary narrative fictions as a phenomenon of intercultural communication and analyze those literary texts to reveal how they represent intercultural contact and communication, as well as identification processes and cultural references (e.g., Neumann, 2020). More substantive IC work needs to be conducted in both areas.

On the one hand, deploying transnational literary texts as tools for teaching intercultural understanding requires attention to the interaction between the reader and the texts. The reader must pay attention to thematic concerns and languages the texts feature. Deploying literary narratives as pedagogical tools and conducting scholarly inquiry will involve using carefully curated texts and extracts to sensitize students to the miscommunication that may arise during interaction with members of another culture. On the other hand, investigating literary texts as compelling sites of intercultural encounters mediated through imagined hybrid cultures dovetails different research methods. Evaluating transnational texts as sites of intercultural encounter, cultural hybridity and in-betweenness requires the reader-critic be attentive to poetic strategies and transcultural aesthetics that go into the processes of literary transnational world-making processes. Writing by im/migrant authors and about the processes of transborder movement is particularly fitting as data sources. Im/migrant authors inadvertently or intentionally bring together numerous literary traditions that cross the literal and metaphoric borders they themselves and their characters cross. Investigating transnational texts as sites of intercultural contact will reveal the ways in which the authors address issues arising from harmonious or conflictual encounters. Such analyses will also index exchange and interdependency. In addition, the investigator will notice sociopolitical power hierarchies that inform imagined intercultural encounters as well as the agency strategies the characters deploy through their actions and language use. After all, the referential dimension of fiction underscores its implicated worldliness (Neumann, 2020, p. 139). Therefore, more IC scholars need to pay attention to the specificities of narrative fiction.

In this project, I adopt the second research trajectory and examine four transnational novels as sites of intercultural encounter, which anticipates linguistic hybridity and cultural in-betweenness. In the rest of this chapter, I first present an overview of various research paradigms in IC inquiry. Then, I articulate my methodological perspective. After that, I propose a tool kit to investigate transnational texts from the IC perspective. The section on my background, and its implications, closes the methodology chapter.

2.2. QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGIES IN IC RESEARCH

I adopt a pragmatic approach to distinguish qualitative research designs from quantitative research models: qualitative research deploys "*words* as **data**" whereas quantitative design "uses *numbers* as data and analyzes them using statistical techniques" (Braun & Clarke, 2013, pp. 3-4, emphasis in original). Braun and Clarke (2013) identify several "fundamentals" of

qualitative research design in addition to its interest in meaning rather than numbers: qualitative research yields multiple answers for a research puzzle that the researcher deems crucial, pays attention to the context, is always buttressed by ontological and epistemological assumptions investigators hold, can be experimental and critical in its nature, tends to work inductively to generate a theory, is adaptive, may draw on multiple kinds of source, values the researcher`s subjectivity and reflexivity, and requires "thinking qualitatively" and producing rich data through thick descriptions. Likewise, Meriam and Tisdell quote Van Maanen (1979) describing qualitative research as "an umbrella term covering an array of interpretive techniques which seek to describe, decode, translate, and otherwise come to terms with meaning, not the frequency, of certain more or less naturally occurring phenomena in the social world" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 15). Suffice to say that qualitative research aims to understand how individuals interpret their experience and aspires to do this from the participants` perspective rather than that of the researchers. Investigators arrive at conclusions through rich descriptions and inductive reasoning. Nevertheless, with its focus on natural settings and actual people, this definition elides the fictive people and their worlds—a point I address in this project.

Given its diverse disciplinary background, IC research draws on multiple theoretical perspectives. Therefore, it is crucial to identify key research paradigms in IC inquiry before making explicit the approach espoused in this study. A paradigm is defined as "a general philosophical orientation about the world and the nature of research a researcher brings to study" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018, p. 44). Qualitative research handbooks employ varying phrases to discuss different epistemological perspectives. I deploy the notions of "underpinning" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007), "framework" and "paradigm" (Braun & Clarke, 2013), "worldview" and "philosophical assumptions" (Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Creswell & Poth, 2018) interchangeably.

Acknowledging the multidisciplinary background of the IC field, Hua (2016) identified five complementary paradigms that power IC research. Those following the functionalist or post/positivist paradigm[5] aim to determine the causal effects specific cultures exert on their members` communicative actions (Hua, 2016, pp. 6-7; Martin et al., 2012). Roots in social psychological research and often associated with psychologist Geert Hofstede and his colleagues, the post/positivist IC investigation compartmentalizes national cultures in relation to

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[5] Martin and Nakayama (2010) preferred the descriptor "postpositivist" in their taxonomy; Martin, Nakayama, and Carbaugh (2012) used "functionalist/postpositivist."

cultural values and dimensions via the classification schemes researchers propose. The themes post/positivist investigators explore include cross-cultural adaptation (Kim, 2017), communication accommodation (Gallois, Ogay, & Giles, 2005; H. Giles & Ogay, 2007), identity negotiation and face concerns (Ting-Toomey, 2005; Toomey, Dorjee, & Ting-Toomey, 2013), anxiety/uncertainty management (Gudykunst, 2005), and expressive differences among people from different countries (Matsumoto, Yoo, & Fontaine, 2008). Brinson and Stohl's (2012) analysis of media framing on attitudes toward Muslims, civil liberties, and counterterrorism policies in the US context is an example of experimental design whereas Hanasono, Chen, and Wilson's (2014) study of perceived discrimination, social support, and coping strategies among racial minority university students is an example of survey research. Though they have been criticized for their essentialist definitions of culture as stable and rigid national/geographical frames, the classification metrics the post/positivist IC researchers have devised continue to be used in intercultural business management training.

Research projects that follow the interpretive paradigm aim to interpret culture and cultural incidents through the contexts in which they exist (Hua, 2016). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz, the well-known proponent of the interpretive paradigm, understood culture as "webs of significance" individuals "spun" for themselves and objected to analyzing culture as "an experimental science in search of law" (Geertz, 2017). Instead, he advocated for understanding cultural phenomena through "thick description" of ethnographic writing. Interpretive IC scholars agree that communicative actions and culture are co-constitutive (Martin et al., 2012, p. 23), and their job is not to determine the causal link between communicative acts and the culture that informs those acts but to interpret communicative acts as components of culture (Hua, 2016). Furthermore, Geertz (2017) resembled conducting an ethnographic study of culture to reading fiction: much like the literary critic, the ethnographer tries to decipher "the structures of signification" which are "superimposed upon or knotted into one another, [and] which are at once strange, irregular, and inexplicit" (Geertz, 2017 "Thick description"). The ethnographer needs to elicit meaning from this 'foreign' text. Original ethnographic studies in the interpretive framework include works by Edward T. Hall, often considered the founder of the IC field.[6] Comparative studies of discursive practices in various cultures (Carbaugh, 2007, 2008), Ehrenreich`s (2015) study on the status of English in organizational contexts, and Witteborn`s

[6] Providing an account of the historical development of the IC scholarship is beyond the scope of this chapter. See Martin, Nakayama, and Carbaugh (2012), Leeds-Hurwitz (2010, 2014), and Baldwin (2017) for different origin stories for IC research. Leeds-Hurwitz, for example, challenged the widely accepted assumption that Hall initiated the IC scholarship. She argued that Margaret Mead`s and others` national character research in the 1930s and 1940s had profound impact on Hall`s writings. See also Starosta (2014) and Weaver (2014) for personal retrospective accounts.

(2007) analysis of Arab women`s views of cultural identity prior to and following the 9/11 attacks constitute important IC research in the interpretive paradigm.

The critical paradigm in IC emerged as a response to the shortcomings of the post/positivist paradigm, and some research in interpretive paradigm dominating the field in the 1980s and 1990s (Halualani, Mendoza, & Drzewiecka, 2009; Martin et al., 2012; Nakayama & Halualani, 2010).[7] Critical IC scholars have since struggled to break free from the "social scientific mold" (Baldwin, 2017, p. 26). Drawing on Halualani and Nakayama`s foundational volume, central assumptions in the critical IC paradigm may be summarized as follows: (1) culture is an ideological power struggle; (2) therefore, understanding culture and cultural differences can only be achieved by paying due consideration to macro contexts in which differences are assigned, signified, reified, elided, and/or glossed over; (3) communication is not just a process of encoding and decoding meaning through a neutral circulation circuit, but the practices of articulating and intertwining situated meanings (cf. Hall, 2005); and (4) the notions of interculturality and intraculturality are spatial metaphors to investigate the linkages between culture, identity and power (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010, pp. 6-9). Different identity positions including race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion and socioeconomic class inform communication acts differently. Pioneering studies in the critical perspective include those on cultural identity and politics of belonging (e.g., Drzewiecka, 2002; Mendoza, 2006; Mendoza et al., 2014). In alignment with developments in race studies, cultural studies, feminist scholarship, and postcolonial criticism, critical IC inquiry conceives of culture as part of macro social, historical, and political practice. It contributes to and is impacted by power relations and ideological struggle. Accordingly, while interpreting intercultural contact, critical IC scholars consider sociopolitical, economic, and linguistic power differences between interactants.

Similarly, the constructivist paradigm refers to a school of thought competing with the post/positivist paradigm, in that it regards the person as actively engaged in the creation of their

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[7] In their genealogy, Halualani et al (2009) discussed four "junctures" that paved the way for the critical paradigm. First, there were calls for/by critical IC scholars to pay attention to historical specificity and contextual grounding of communicative acts. Second, critical IC researchers objected to the equation of culture with nation (e.g., Moon, 1996, 2010; Ono, 2010). They insisted that the notion of culture be broadened to include race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, social class, and other identifications that affect and are affected by interaction (e.g., Mendoza, Halualani, & Drzewiecka, 2014, p. 38; Moon, 2010). Third, founding critical IC scholars redefined culture as a site of struggle (Halualani, Drzewiecka, & Mendoza, 2003, qtd in Halualani & Nakayama, 2010, p. 6). Critical IC investigators contend that intercultural communication is not a neutral interpersonal encounter or transaction between individuals of equal standing and that research needs to consider the ways in which larger structures of power impact intercultural communication (Halualani & Nakayama, 2010, p. 3). Situating each instance of intercultural encounter in the macro context and being attentive to power relations between the interactants strengthen investigations into the processes of cultural encounter, conflict, and hybridity (Martin et al., 2012, p. 28).

own world (Angouri, 2016; Adrian Holliday, 2016; Hua, 2016). Whereas the critical paradigm discussed above underscores the effects macro structure exerts on intercultural communication, the constructivist paradigm focuses on the idiosyncratic nature of meaning making. Silverman (2014) deployed the term constructionism instead of constructivism. Observing the distinction between the two terms, Hua (2016) the former in a more inclusive manner. He noted that whilst constructionism draws attention to individuals` cognitive processes, constructivism also acknowledges the impact of discourse and interaction in building a speaker`s cultural, ethnic, and other group memberships. Research in the constructivist paradigm aims to understand how participants in intercultural encounters make aspects of their identities—their cultural and ethnic identities in particular—relevant or irrelevant through interactional resources (Zhu, 2015, 2018). IC researchers invoking the constructivist paradigm believe that the relevance of identities is contingent on the participants' orientation. Hua (2016) wrote:

> In 'doing' cultural memberships, participants employ a range of interactional work. They can, on the one hand, ascribe or cast cultural memberships to others, and, on the other hand, accept, avow, display, ignore, reject, or disavow cultural memberships assigned by others. They can also claim or appropriate memberships of groups to which they do not normally belong. (Hua, 2016, p. 13)

Finally, a newcomer to the IC scholarship, the realist framework demands a 'realist' consideration of the relationship between structure and agency. Realists acknowledge the agency of individuals but give much weight to the constraints that limit individuals` behavior (Holmes, Marra, & Vine, 2011). Hua (2016) explained that:

> The focus of the realist paradigm is, therefore, very much on explanation, rather than seeking to describe and predict using cause-and-effect logic (as in the positivist paradigm), to interpret culture in its entirety (as in the interpretative paradigm), to transform (as in the critical paradigm), or to foreground subjective nature of social behavior (as in the constructivist paradigm). (Hua, 2016, p. 15)

Although I traced various paradigms informing IC research by primarily relying on the taxonomy offered by Hua (2016)[8] the boundaries between different approaches are not as sharp. In the interpretive constructivist approach developed by Holliday (2018), for instance, constructivism combines with interpretive and critical approaches to form a single model that foregrounds the agency of the person. Moreover, it is possible to speak of paradigmatic "bridging" (Mendoza, 2005), "trans-paradigmatic" methodologies (Martin & Nakayama, 2010),

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[8] Martin and Nakayama (2010) identified four paradigms of culture and communication research, i.e., functionalist, interpretive, critical humanist, and critical structuralist whereas Oetzel, Pant, and Rao (2016) distinguished among social scientific, interpretive, and critical paradigms.

and a convergence between interpretive and critical paradigms (Martin et al., 2012, p. 24). For instance, as Holliday, Hyde, and Kullman (2021) indexed, some interpretive and critical methods converge when they deploy cultural texts to investigate the issues of othering. Nonetheless, as Holliday (2016, p. 23) observed, there remains a rift between the social scientific paradigm which regards "cultures as solid, fixed, separate geographical blocks which confine the behavior of the people who live within them" and the various permutations of the postmodern paradigm, which posits that cultures are a socially constructed, ideologically charged, and spatiotemporally fluid entities.

Furthermore, a closer look at various paradigmatic taxonomies in IC shows that postcolonial scholarship has impacted critical IC research in profound ways. Martin and Nakayama (2010), for instance, acknowledge that postcolonial scholarship spearheaded by Said's *Orientalism* has contributed to their formulation of a critical IC research agenda.[9] In addition, its encounter with postcolonial theory has pushed the IC scholarship to revise its assumptions of culture as homogeneous and stable in nature. Postcolonial theories of culture (e.g., Bhabha, 1990; Bhabha, 2003, 2004), for instance, forced IC researchers to acknowledge the malleability of identities and revise assumptions of strict and unchangeable boundaries between different cultures.

It is possible to observe several major effects of the "dialogue on the edges" between postcolonial theory and IC scholarship (Collier, Hegde, Lee, Nakayama, & Yep, 2002). To begin with, as Nakayama underscores in conversation with Collier, Hegde, and Lee, taking a postcolonial turn in IC corresponded to the efforts to be more sensitive to the unwitting functions of IC, including the unspoken whiteness of the field (Collier et al., 2002; Nakayama & Martin, 2007, p. 223). Furthermore, it stretched the horizon of knowledge creation praxis by expanding the locus of research on intercultural phenomena taking place outside a select number of regions and opening the path for non-western ways of knowing, which is markedly

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[9] Whereas few IC scholars made references to postcolonial theory prior to the millennium, a special issue of *Communication Theory* marks the beginning of serious a consideration of the relationship between postcolonial theory and IC field. With their article dedicated to "charting the terrain" between the two fields, Shome and Hegde (2002) is credited for initiating what may be labelled as postcolonial intercultural communication by discussing the relevance of postcolonial studies to communication scholarship (Schwartz-DuPre, 2017). According to Shome (2010, p. 150) postcolonial communication studies "insists on the importance of recognizing the connections between cultural power and larger geopolitical relations and international histories as they come to inform unequal power relations between different cultural groups and identities, and their practices and imaginations." It is not difficult to notice the affinities between what Shome calls "postcolonial communication studies" and critical IC paradigm: they are both attentive to power imbalances between dominant and marginal cultures; attempt to situate local inequities in intercultural encounters in global contexts; and strive to understand the ways in which global intimacies that inform intercultural contact are located within depths of transnational histories and geopolitics, which impact the nature of communication and dialogue between divergent cultural groups.

invisible in accounts of foundational IC scholarship (e.g., Asante, Miike, & Yin, 2014). Secondly, insights from postcolonial scholarship encouraged self-reflexivity in critical IC research and practice. At its best, postcolonial scholarship, initiated by postcolonial scholars of literature, engages in exhaustive investigations of the ways in which colonial histories affected the understanding of the self and the other. IC scholars who draw on postcolonial frameworks to understand identity, culture, and communication in the colonial, postcolonial and neocolonial settings are attentive to the role they and the IC field play in relation to the research subjects and contexts (Collier et al., 2002; Kalscheuer, 2014). Hence, more IC researchers are concerning themselves with finding ways to address power imbalance in knowledge production. One manifestation of this impact is attending to the researchers' own positionality as knowledge generators (e.g., Calafell, 2020). In summary, supported by postcolonialism`s insistence on answerability, the critical IC paradigm necessitates the researcher to acknowledge their positionality, whether marginalized and privileged, and to discuss potential implications for findings.

Thirdly, postcolonial theory advanced by comparative literature scholars helped to textualize and 'literize' IC scholarship (e.g., Ikas & Wagner, 2009; Neumann, 2020). Traditional IC inquiry continues to focus on face-to-face interpersonal communication and pays little attention to sociopolitical circumstances in which face-to-face communication occurs. An interdisciplinary approach that combines insights from postcolonial theory and IC research, on the other hand, promises to overcome this shortcoming. With its focus on macro structures, the critical IC paradigm encourages text-based methodologies (e.g., Ikas, 2009; Neumann, 2020; Thurlow, 2010), Furthermore, it is now possible to see intercultural communication fiction sections in public libraries where shelves are filled with writing by im/migrant authors, texts originating from other countries, and texts by and about marginalized groups within a given national context. Time is ripe for literary IC research that relies upon the dialogue between postcolonial criticism and interpretive and critical IC theories.

2.3. ARTICULATING THE PARADIGM THAT GOVERNS THIS PROJECT

I rely on interpretive, critical, and constructionist paradigms to analyze the interculturality in the four exemplary transnational texts. Holliday`s (2016) "grammar of culture" model, which integrates interpretive and critical orientations to study cultural identities has been instrumental in formulating my own approach, which cuts across diverse fields including transnational literature, IC inquiry, and postcolonial scholarship to name a few. This multi-paradigmatic

borrowing aids in describing how individuals negotiate and enact identifications in communication. As explained above, the critical perspective calls attention to a variety of structural forces that permeate intercultural communication. Furthermore, whereas an interpretive IC investigator is interested in explaining what is happening, a critical IC scholar is interested in why it is happening. Moreover, the constructionist paradigm underscores individuals` agency and creativity. To say it differently, interpretive, critical and constructivist IC scholars insist that cultural identities are constituted and maintained through communication, but they diverge on the emphasis they place on the impact the context plays on the actor`s agency. These paradigms complement one other: each framework offers an incomplete yet vital interpretation of how meanings are negotiated through communication and representation processes and what contextual and structural forces impact these processes.

This project investigates fictional characters` hybrid cultural identities and in-betweenness by drawing on these different research traditions. The characters engage in conversations with other characters in the texts and the readers as im/migrant women in the post-9/11 context. The context and the actors` positionalities have implications for the nature and outcomes of their communication acts. Moreover, their occupation of transborder geographical and sociopolitical space as well as hybrid language use takes on a special meaning in positioning them as culturally hybrid and in-between identities. The two analysis chapters include thick descriptions of what the characters do as well as my observations about the macro structures that inform and constrain their agency. It is worth reiterating that these fictional characters speak as women and their gender identities undergird their performances of other positionalities.

2.4. SOURCES OF DATA AND ETHICAL CONCERNS

As explained in the Introduction, this study scrutinizes a body of four transnational texts written by first generation im/migrant women who produce in English. Unlike social scientific IC inquiries where researchers use snowball sampling, this qualitative project requires "purposeful sampling" (Creswell & Poth, 2018) and limiting the number of the primary texts. Determining the texts in my corpus entailed surveying a sizeable number of fictions. My initial strategy was to read numerous fictions I could find on migration and identity, especially those written by and about women. The reader may refer to the Introduction to review the set of criteria I deployed to both delimit the field and reach a researchable number of samples.

The novels are *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b), *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009), *Across a Hundred Mountains* (Grande, 2006), and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b). Though two of the texts are written in the first-person diary and letter format, the literary works are pre-existing public data sources (Braun & Clarke, 2013) or cultural artifacts. Secondary data items or "auxiliary documents" comprise non-fiction texts about the context, prior scholarly analyses of the primary texts and other writing and speech by the authors (Altheide & Schneider, 2017). I drew on remedial material to familiarize myself with the authors` overt and covert choices. In addition, reading nonfiction by the authors allowed me to trace life events that seeped into their fiction. In this respect, reading Grande`s two memoirs and Alvarez`s non-fictional texts and watching interviews the four authors gave on immigration and writing were necessary to complement my analysis. The purpose of including public records of the authors` reading sessions in the analysis as supplementary material is to underscore the situatedness of their fictions. Working with pre-existing textual data allowed me to sidestep ethical concerns because the data collection and generation processes did not involve interaction with human participants.

My choice of the novel as the data source to explore the im/migrants` hybridity and in-betweenness can be attributed to the specificities of the genre. The novel is heterogeneous in terms of form and content. It is a capacious hybrid genre: it encompasses numerous forms and social discourses. Hence, it is capable of recording significant varied sociocultural incidents of its time. As Yaeger (1988) reminds us, despite their misleading unity and linearity on page, novels are marked with "caesuras, holes, pauses [and] shifts" (p. 185). The novel is a scene for heteroglossia, or the multivocal discourse, and allows for a dialectical interaction between differing styles, points of views, and languages. One finds Bakhtin`s notion of linguistic hybridity in the novel, which signifies both the author`s stance and point of view and those of an individual character. As Jameson (1983) put it, the novel is "a field of force" where conflicting social formations wrestle (p. 98). Jameson invites the researcher to analyze a text as an "utterance" (p. 80) indicative of permanent struggle between the various coexisting modes of production. To illustrate, in *The Night Counter*, Fatima`s account of what Arab Americans experienced prior to and following the 9/11 duels with the narrator`s discerning account of what is really happening. Moreover, the data FBI agents gather by monitoring the Abdullahs` daily activities produce an asymmetrical narrative of the Arab Americans experience. The novel allows this multiplicity; therefore, it is an apt genre for analysis.

2.5. DATA COLLECTION AND ANALYSIS PROCEDURES

I benefited from various handbooks on qualitative research. To begin with, I found the advice Bogdan and Biklen (2007) offered to emergent researchers who use popular culture texts as a data source very useful: "Think small (.…) Pick a particular program, or a particular event, and work on it intensely rather than spreading yourself too thin" (p. 65). Bogdan and Biklen`s incisive advice was particularly useful to curb my tendency to read more secondary texts. In addition, I followed Meriam and Tisdell`s (2016) recommendation to adopt a system for coding and cataloging data from sources. Once I identified the four novels, I worked back and forth reading them several times, each time focusing on a different component including the central and secondary characters, the language each one uses, the representation of the sociopolitical events, and the concerns the characters and the narrators discuss. Preparing visual charts with information about the authors, the publication years, the characters, the languages, and the places referenced allowed me to trace the central points in each book.

Literary analysis entails close reading of the primary sources and systematically categorizing textual data. I tabulated references to certain places, times, events, languages, identity positions in relation to the characters and/or narrators and noted the contexts where in each book a certain comment or phrase emerged. I arranged my 'findings' as per page number or section in the book to make it easy for me to find it at the later stage. Because I had the electronic copies of the four novels in addition to hard copies, I used the comment features—highlight, bookmark, and underline—on my Kindle and other eBook readers. In this sense, the content analysis I engaged with was 'ethnographic' content analysis (Altheide & Schneider, 2017). It entailed careful 'observation' of the fictive life-worlds in the four novels and making note of every voice each book presented (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 175). The next step was the classification and interpretation of the data to make statements about the overt and covert discourse on linguistic and cultural hybridity in the books.

My approach to 'collecting' data from the four texts was far from linear. Data collection, data analysis, and the actual writing stage were almost simultaneous: each helped refine the other two stages. This approach was messy and laborious, but it was in keeping with the basic tenet of qualitative research, which is hardly a linear and step by step process. Rather, my analysis began with the first reading of each primary text: initial hunches and insights guided the subsequent phases of data collection, which in turn led to the refinement of the different parts of the thesis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 191). Some reading notes hastily scribbled on the margins, on

scrap paper, and in the continuously evolving annotation journals found their place in the final text. I would like to think of the four texts in my corpus as musical pieces constituting a mini concert to which I kept returning. Each time I was at the entrance of the concert hall, I was offered a different seat to listen to the songs played by the four women. Where I sat on a specific date (i.e., the temporal and spatial coordinates of my approach to the texts) influenced what I noticed and recorded; each iteration allowed me to probe beneath the surface. I revised, dropped, repurposed my former hunches as I interacted with the primary works and many secondary texts. The tool kit I present below assisted me in conducting a relatively systematic analysis.

Because the raw data I gathered from the four texts was very dense, I had to pursue a selection process figuratively called "winnowing" (Guest, MacQueen, & Namey, 2012). I turned to the research questions and the purpose statement before I created the tentative categories for the analysis. This process allowed me to focus on some of the data and disregard other segments. I did not use a special computer program to conduct qualitative content analysis. However, I created spreadsheets and maps to enable me to visualize the fictive migrants` journeys across time and space to register the hybridization of their identities. In addition, I practiced some photoshop skills to create simple maps charting the characters` journeys across national borders. My analysis proceeded from thick descriptions of evidence in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 to linking the findings to theoretical concepts in Chapter 5. Moving from description to more abstract discussion in Chapter 5 involved making inferences. My discussion in Chapter 5 is an experimental theorizing process that shifts "from the empirical trenches" to a more conceptual discussion of hybridity and in-betweenness in the four texts: it interweaves the overtly said with the subtle and sutures them with conceptual threads (Guest et al., 2012, p. 7; Miles, Huberman, & Saldana, 2014, p. 292). The thematic analysis adopted in this study aimed at identifying and describing both explicit and implicit arguments within the texts.

2.6. LITERARY IC INQUIRY: A PRELIMINARY TOOL KIT

A tool kit contains a set of tools. Ideally, this special set of tools are stored together and used for a particular purpose. Some of them may sit unused for a prolonged time, but their existence gives the owner a sense of security. A tool kit may also mean skills set needed to accomplish a particular task (Collins, n.d.). One hopes to have a versatile tool kit to draw on in times of need. I consulted multiple sources to develop the following tool kit to analyze transnational fictions from the IC perspective. Literary criticism handbooks (e.g., Bressler, 2011; Guerin et al., 2005)

and monographs on migration literature (e.g., Frank, 2008; Moslund, 2010) have been invaluable. Moslund`s advice that the researcher should examine the relations between the im/migrant and the "cultures" [sic] to which they migrate was eye-opening (Moslund, 2010, p. 23). Moslund conceptualized the researcher`s primary job as documenting the central character`s and/or the narrator`s "hybridizing and heterogenizing gaze" through close reading (p. 23). Such an analysis entails paying attention to the immediate setting of each literary work. The rural heartland represented in the three samples Moslund scrutinizes features "the last stronghold of a homogeneous national identity" (p. 23). Similarly, the rural setting in Alvarez`s novel for younger readers (see Chapter 4), for instance, has implications for the nature of intercultural contact. Moreover, Moslund reminds the researcher to trace the novels` deployment of "transcultural hybridity discourse," i.e., whether the authors employ explicit discourse of in-betweenness and cultural hybridity of their characters. This and other pieces of advice derived from multiple background readings was instrumental in composing the specific textual analysis questions listed below.

My method of textual analysis can best be explained by strategic close reading informed by an amalgamation of various critical approaches to literary and cultural criticism. First, though the analyses in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 do not take the class angle as a true Marxist analysis would do (T. Eagleton, 2002; Mulhern, 2013), my focus on im/migrant characters` social standing, i.e., the fact that I ask who the im/migrant is in these novels, has its early roots in insights gained from my readings of Marxist literary theory and criticism. As prominent Marxist literary critic Terry Eagleton argues, literary texts cannot be investigated as isolated entities but as part of dynamic and evolving historical processes, social relations, and struggles. Literary texts are constituted by "value-judgments" which are themselves historically adaptable and bear "close relation[s] to social ideologies" (T. Eagleton, 2008, p. 14). They present the conventions through which certain social groups exercise power over others. That is, my reading was attentive to the link between what is portrayed in the texts and the external world.

Secondly, my approach to textual analysis bears traces of new historicism, a reading practice which pays attention to the interrelationship between art and society (Greenblatt, 2013). The primary text takes the central stage in the analysis; however, the reader needs to have sufficient knowledge of the historical context from which it emerged. Being constructed entities, literary texts do not mirror the history of their times. Rather, they engage with the reality they reference (Bressler, 2011, p. 182). This is to say that the dominant worldview portrayed in each text is only one rendering among the myriad. This insight is instrumental because it prevents me from

making reckless assumptions that the authors` representations of the referential world in their novels are objective interpretations of the post-9/11 reality. Nor do my interpretations of those texts constitute the only valid interpretation. Enmeshed in sociopolitical discourses and contexts, each literary text is an instrument of power struggle. Bressler (2011, p. 187) is right when he declares that each literary text is a "culture in action." A reading strategy in affinity with new historicism is instrumental in understanding the workings of literature because it shapes and is shaped by the reality it imaginatively constructs and represents.

New historicism rejects the idea that a literary text is "an artifact with an existence of its own, independent of and not necessarily related to its author, its readers, and the historical time it depicts or the historical period which it was written" (Bressler, 2011, p. 185). Further, it refutes the claim that the reader-critic reveals the objective truth which the artifact under investigation presents by engaging in rigorous and systematic scrutiny. Cultural poetics/new historicism presumes that an author`s culture permeates their text (Bressler, 2011, p. 187). This assumption has two methodological implications: first, texts written by authors who tap into multiple languages and cultures in which they are enmeshed will unavoidably reflect on and feature elements of those cultures and their intersections as well as deploying conscious narrative strategies to portray hybridity and in-betweenness. In addition, the depth, quality, and scope of my interpretation of the texts are also inevitably informed by the cultural frames I draw on. As a result, my interpretation of the texts is inevitably unique. Informed by new historicism, my analysis not only reveals the social issues with which the authors, and the characters they have created, concern themselves but also acknowledges my own predisposition and assumptions in choosing the texts for analysis and conducting the investigation.

Third, various postcolonial approaches to textual analysis have been informative while I formed the analytical tool kit for interpreting the texts. The primary contribution of postcolonial theory has been its insistence that interpretation of cultural texts is inevitably subjective and political. Relatedly, postcolonial scholarship has encouraged me to reflect on my own roots as a researcher, how I developed into the person who I am now, what cultures I associate myself with, and how these linkages affect my approach to the texts. Furthermore, postcolonial literary criticism approaches cultural texts in their fullest context instead of dissecting them in isolation. Moreover, it examines the texts at hand critically by paying close attention to the texts` language. As I detailed in Chapter 1, I derived some categories of textual analysis from Ashcroft and colleagues` (2002) key text. In particular, the questions about linguistic hybridity, which

index migrants` cultural in-betweenness, derive from my readings of various foundational texts in postcolonial theory.

Fourth, my critical approach to literary texts as venues and tools of intercultural communication bears traces of reading strategies gleaned from often polyphonic methodologies of feminist literary criticism. As explained in Introduction, the inclusion of writing by female authors in my corpus was by no means coincidental. It was a political act in the sense that I wanted to bring to the fore writing by women authors. In addition, I selected texts that featured fictional im/migrant women. This strategic decision-making aimed at underscoring women`s concerns and perspectives. In addition, among a rich variety of feminist approaches to textual analysis, gynocriticism proposed by Showalter (2012) has been illuminating for me. Gynocriticism`s insistence that there is unique female consciousness based on female experience and that there is a female tradition waiting to be explored has inspired me to adopt fiction by women authors. Feminist literary criticism dedicates itself to recuperating the history of women literary production and to tracing the genres, themes, and motifs with which women authors engage. It pays attention to the structure and language of literature by women. As Showalter (2012) summarizes aptly, feminist literary criticism strives to discuss "the psychodynamics of female creativity; linguistics and the problem of a female language; the trajectory of the individual or collective female literary career; literary history; and, of course, studies of particular writers and works" (p. 25). Being inspired by the "female framework" proposed by Showalter (p. 28), I strive to explore women`s experience, feelings, and thoughts.

Below I list the areas of textual analysis I adopted when approaching the four books. The questions listed under each subsection are composed by drawing on the various handbooks (e.g., Bressler, 2011; Guerin et al., 2005; Wodak, 2008) and are meant to be guiding entry points to the texts rather than prescriptive rules.

2.6.1. Appraise the Im/migrant Character in the Text

Tending to be culturally, linguistically, and generically hybrid works, transnational literary texts are potent sights of intercultural encounters. Thematically, they concentrate on their protagonists` in-between world making. The first step to pinpoint the in-betweenness and cultural hybridity they portray is to identify the im/migrant in the text. Zooming in on the

opening scene as well as the novel`s closure may give hints to the novel`s main characters. When analyzing fictional texts from the IC perspective, the topic of research is not the formal features of the text, but the issues presented in the text and the way certain themes are considered by the characters and/or narrators. The following textual analysis questions are useful in identifying the im/migrant characters` processes of meaning-making:

- Whose voice do the texts portray?
- Are the im/migrant characters the protagonists or secondary characters?
- Whoa is "the Other" in the texts?
- How does 'the Other' view themselves in relation to the hegemonic group?
- Who do the im/migrant characters interact with?
- What is the nature of their interaction? What do they discuss? How?
- What is the nature of the relationship between the im/migrant characters and others?
- What intercultural attitudes and behaviors do the im/migrant characters embody?
- What is the power relationship between the im/migrant characters and the others?
- What is the attitude towards the im/migrant characters?
- How does the im/migrant characters give meaning to the world?
- How does the im/migrant`s gender inform their migration decision, transborder mobility, and post-migration processes?
- What statements about culture and identity do the characters and/or narrators make?
- How do the im/migrant characters see themselves and others?
- Do the texts indicate a change in attitudes and the im/migrant`s self-regard at the end?
- In what ways ethnic, racial, religious, and so on identities are thrust upon them?
- How do the im/migrant characters negotiate these identities?
- What intercultural encounters and conflict situations do the texts depict?
- How do the interactants, both the im/migrant and the citizen, act?
- What discourse do the im/migrant and citizen draw on?
- What significance do their communicative acts have on their assertions of their identities?

2.6.2. Build a Verbal Map of the Transnational Geographical Spaces

Contemporary literary narratives that center on migration and post-migration processes bear the imprints of intercultural encounter and exchange. Thematically, they portray journeys that

transcend the boundaries of one nation-state and the resultant deterritorialization for the im/migrant characters. Transnational geographic spaces they roam, inhabit, and recall have implications for the im/migrants` sense of self. Therefore, it is crucial to document the im/migrants` transnational geographical spaces. Tracing their transnational space necessitates answering the following methodological questions:

- What trans/national geographical spaces do the texts portray?
- What significance do these trans/national spaces have for the im/migrant?
- How do the im/migrant define the notions of "home" and "homeland"?
- Where do the im/migrant locate themselves in relation to the United States and the countries from which they originate?
- In what ways do the characters express belonging and non-belonging to those places?

2.6.3. Canvass the Sociopolitical Concerns and Incidents the Texts Portray

One of my goals is to reveal and document im/migrant characters` struggle against being defined as the Other in the post-9/11 context by underlining the moment indexed in the novels. Literary texts can be fully appraised by paying attention to the sociopolitical context from which they emerge. Capturing the sociopolitical incidents with which the im/migrant characters concern themselves necessitates answering the following questions:

- What sociopolitical events do the im/migrant characters concern themselves with?
- In what manner do the im/migrants characters engage with these sociopolitical events?
- How do contemporary transcultural issues and milieu operate together in the text?
- How do the im/migrant characters interpret their own migration in relation to the sociopolitical events they document?
- How does inclusion and exclusion operate in the texts?
- How do the texts represent 'us' and 'them' politics and polarization?
- How do the im/migrant reveal and aim to undo stereotypical notions about their groups or cultural others in general?
- What sociopolitical incidents and conflicts do the texts highlight?
- Who represents the status quo and the hegemonic culture?
- How does the im/migrant character deal with the status quo and hegemonic culture?
- What cultures and worldviews do the texts exhibit? How?
- What cultural aspects and worldviews do the texts de/value?

- What happens when different cultures encounter in the texts?

- How do gender, race, or social class function in the texts?

- What do the texts reveal about the sociopolitical and psychological operations of patriarchy in the im/migrants` home countries and the United States?

2.6.4. Document the Hybrid Linguistic Space the Texts Create

The relationship between identity and language use remains a central focus in IC scholarship. Many IC investigators recognize that identities are constructed in interactions. That is, individuals 'do' rather than 'have' identities (Angouri, 2016; Zhu, 2015). This study traces how fictional characters do their hybrid cultural identities through their hybrid language use. The following questions are useful in exploring the hybrid linguistic space of the texts:

- What languages do the texts present?

- In what ways is the 'foreign' Other`s language used in the texts?

- What role does linguistic and cultural translation play?

- What specific hybridization strategies do the texts deploy?

- Does the insertion of vocabulary from other languages enable or impede communication between the im/migrant characters and others?

- What effect does the introduction of vocabulary from other languages have on the Anglophone reader: does it engage or alienate the reader?

2.6.5. Evaluate the Im/migrant Authors` Literary Intervention

A focus on the authors aims to bring about a wider discussion on their role as intercultural mediators. The final step in the analysis aims to take a step back from the primary texts and to connect them to the referential world and the authors` politics with the following questions:

- Does the author identify as male, female or nonbinary?

- What do the primary texts say about the authors?

- What authorial biographic information is relevant?

- What secondary sources are there to supplement the analysis of the primary texts?

- How do the secondary texts connect to the primary texts?

2.7. REFLECTIONS ON MY ROLE AS A SITUATED RESEARCHER

In this project, there are three categories of the observer. First, there is the fictive observer (i.e., a character and/or a narrator) with their unique perspective on the fictional world they inhabit and/or recount. Secondly, there is the author as the interpreter of the referential world they present through their fiction. I explore these two observers` interpretations of the world in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 before interpreting my findings in Chapter 5. However, critical IC research necessitates that I, the investigator, acknowledge the ways in which my language skills, experiential knowledge of migration (or lack thereof), knowledge about the context, and even gender identification inevitably impact my interpretation (Altheide & Schneider, 2017; Creswell & Creswell, 2018; Silverman, 2014). Therefore, below I identify my personal background, including gender and immigration status, and ethical values, which may have a bearing on the project. As an emergent socially situated scholar adopting critical IC methodology, I offer some explanation regarding my personal background, education, and research experience. These factors inform my interpretative stance and limit my analysis because my past experiences orient me towards certain themes and reading strategies rather than others.

I am a cisgendered woman from Turkey. Currently, I live in Canada. I am knowledgeable about the basic tenets of Islam and Christianity, two religions portrayed in my corpus, but I do not identify with the characters and/or narrators in the novels in terms of faith. Nor do I feel affiliated with their creators in terms of religion even though I am perceived to be a Muslim because I am a Turkish citizen. Rather, I connect to the female characters and their authors through my experience of migration and as a woman. Nonetheless, it would be wrong to equate my experience of migration with that of the characters and/or the authors. I am in the privileged position of a legal temporary resident in Canada, a country often imagined to be less racist than its southern neighbor towards im/migrants. In this respect, my experience differs from that of Mari, the non-status migrants in the United States, as well as from that of Fatima and Arissa, two women who move to the Unites States as trailing partners to their compatriots. As well, my migration to Canada as a mature international student bears no resemblance to the instigating event that triggered Juana/Adelina set out at fourteen and without legal documents.

I speak English, the primary language in the four novels, as my second language. I have basic knowledge of Spanish, the language that two of the four primary texts feature. I do not speak Arabic or Urdu, the two languages presented in the other two novels. My educational background is in teaching English as an additional language, and I have taught in Turkish and

Canadian institutions. My interpretation of the primary texts and writing are informed by my fluency in English as a foreign language speaker and my limited knowledge of Spanish. I constantly address the anxieties involved in producing in translation. Latina or Mexican American readers` interpretations of the texts by Grande and Alvarez may be much different to my own. Likewise, researchers who share similar backgrounds to the Pakistani-American author and her Arab American counterpart may focus attention on different points in the books.

Even so, I aspire to be an adequate reader of these culturally different primary texts. For Spivak (2012), becoming an adequate reader demands an understanding of linguistic, cultural, gender, and class references as well as knowledge about a particular cultural forms featured in the novel she uses to help her elaborate on the parameters of vigilant reading. Spivak calls this style of reading "imagination-retrieval mode" (p. xv). The adequate reader, Spivak insists, must be "prepared to take the culturally different texts historically and/or politically" (p. 74). In essence, Spivak recommends reading "knowledgeably, carefully, critically, and self-consciously" (M. Eagleton, 2011, p. 269). She urges the reader-critic to consider the author`s relationship to the creative use of their native tongue, consult the author`s biography, and peruse the source texts that feed, and enable the creation of, the text under analysis. Most importantly, Spivak invites the reader-critic to be vigilant when seeking connections between the text and its background. Taking my cue from Spivak, I strive to conduct careful analyses of the four texts.

This project was interrupted for one year when I migrated to Canada in September 2018 and enrolled in a different graduate program. It was interrupted for the second time during the first year of the COVID-19 pandemic, which was marked by numerous lockdowns, inability to access physical libraries, and health repercussions of being in an enclosed space of my one-bedroom apartment, socially and physically distanced from family and friends.

Being enrolled in dual doctoral programs in Communication Sciences at Hacettepe University and Cultural Studies at Queen's University has been both a challenge and a blessing. Diverted attention has been the obvious hardship. On the positive side, being enrolled in two doctoral programs concurrently has allowed me to gain my footing in social scientific and cultural studies research traditions. Relatedly, over the years, my research interests have evolved to include more narratives about irregular migration and attendant issues including asylum processes, migrants` human rights, border violence, migrant detention, and deportation. Since I began this project in 2016, I have read hundreds of narratives of actual and imagined passages

while keeping literary accounts of transborder journeys to North America at the center. In addition, scholarly texts about the aesthetics and politics of literary and filmic regular and irregular migration narratives make up my core reading list. Though I do not cite many of those texts in this project, I acknowledge their impact on my understanding of the subject matter.

Thematic analyses call for intense involvement of the researcher. Evaluating a fictive im/migrant`s hybrid language, in-between cultural identity and the sociopolitical structure that has a bearing on their choices and moves, entails interacting empathetically with the text. The reader becomes a participant in the tale the narrator weaves. Although there are guiding principles to which I adhere while interpreting the texts in my corpus, it is impossible for anyone principled approach to encompass every facet of the texts under scrutiny. A reader`s response to any text and the principles they employ to interpret it are largely impacted by her past experiences. The reader-critic works with consciously and unconsciously constructed frameworks when approaching a text. What I notice in the text and uphold as worthy of analysis undergirds my own understanding of the world. I acknowledge the conscious and unconscious assumptions I entertain while still endeavoring to conduct a balanced, sound, and consistent appraisal of the texts at hand.

Many IC researchers exploit interviews and surveys to track identity repercussions of movement across borders. In contrast, I included literary texts as viable sources to follow fictional women's cross-border movement. In doing so, I took the risk of beginning a project which does not have access to many previous samples in terms of methodology. I tried to overcome methodological barriers by adapting available textual analysis methods ranging from postcolonial literary criticism, and cultural poetics/new historicism, and feminist literary criticism. In addition, few extant literary IC studies (e.g., Neumann, 2020; Schiewer, 2020) And yet, the tool kit I developed above is open to revision and improvement.

A few other limitations, which may be overcome by more scholarly investigations study, must be recognized. To begin with, my focus on the marginalized groups portrayed in the texts — Arab and Pakistani immigrant women in the aftermath of the catastrophic events of September 11 on the one hand, and the un/documented im/migrants of Mexican origin on the other—may give the impression that these are the only marginalized groups in the United States. On the contrary, there are other marginalized groups, and more research needs to be done about the literary representations of these other groups. Relatedly, reading fiction about the two groups

should not suggest that their concerns are the same. In addition, my interpretation of the four texts is inherently partial because it primarily focuses on the main characters.

CHAPTER 3: HYBRIDITY AND IN-BETWEENNESS IN *SAFFRON DREAMS* AND *THE NIGHT COUNTER*

3.1. INTRODUCTION

In this chapter, I juxtapose *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b)[10] and *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009).[11] These two books lend themselves to be read together since they both emerged as a reaction to discrimination that Arabs and Muslims have faced after 9/11. Both portray first generation immigrant women. The novels underscore the fact that American nation involves a hybrid mélange of individuals who have emotional as well as financial ties to other countries. The main characters are in-between characters that use hybrid languages to reflect their identities. The protagonists assert in-betweenness through their allegiance to multiple geographies. Their gender intersects with their religious and ethnic identities.

In *Saffron Dreams*, Arissa Illahi, a Pakistani-American artist and journalist, tells the story of her life as a child and a teenager in Karachi; her visit to New York, when she first meets her prospective husband in a public library; the couple`s migration to New York; their short-lived marriage; her grief over losing her husband when the twin towers were struck by Al Qaeda on 9/11; the challenges she faces as a single mother in raising a child with multiple disabilities; and her healing through painting and writing. Arissa portrays herself as the widow of "an innocent civilian and a hard-working citizen" (p. 85). Having a baby with "fetal growth retardation" (p. 64), the woman laments the absence of a "partner to share the burden with" (p. 66). The narrator spins the story of her life flitting back and forth between past and present, thus connecting the United States to Pakistan. Accosted by hostile people in public places and accused of being an accomplice to Al Qaeda on account of the veil she wears, Arissa decides to do away with the veil. The book opens with the scene in which she drops her veil. *Saffron Dreams* reads as if it is a genuine autobiography.[12] Its author prioritizes intimacy and grief in fashioning a woman`s

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[10] Shaila Abdullah was born and raised in the city of Karachi in Pakistan. She holds a bachelor`s degree in English literature. She also earned a diploma in graphic design. Abdullah immigrated to the United States in 1995 after she married her best friend's brother (Faraj, 2015).

[11] Alia Yunis was born in Chicago. She grew up in the Twin Cities in Minnesota and Beirut during the Lebanese Civil War. She graduated from high school in Athens, Greece. She completed her undergraduate and graduate degrees at the University of Minnesota and American University in Washington, DC. She has worked as a journalist and filmmaker in several countries. Currently, she teaches at Zayed University (Yunis, 2013).

[12] According to Faraj (2015), Abdullah based the plot on the tragic story of her Bangladeshi-American friend, Baraheen Ashrafi, who lost her husband in the attack on the World Trade Center only two days before she gave birth to her second child. *Children of 9/11*, a documentary directed by Janice Sutherland, features Ashrafi as herself.

perspective on what transpired on and after September 11. Arissa speaks her own truth to move her audience, female Anglophone readers. *Saffron Dreams* is a memorial to the victims of 9/11, a source of strength for the survivors, and may serve as a vehicle for understanding those who straddle the divide between the West and the East. Abdullah confronts the dissonant societal expectations in Pakistan and Islamophobia in the United States in this transnational fiction.

In *The Night Counter* by Alia Yunis, Fatima Abdullah, a slightly senile 85-year-old Lebanese American matriarch, recounts her life story to Scheherazade, who is nothing more than a figment of Fatima's own imagination. Fatima lives with her openly gay grandson Amir, an unemployed actor who can only manage to audition for trivial and stereotypical roles. He is a terror suspect by virtue of his Arab heritage; his house is under FBI surveillance, phone wiretapped, and e-mail intercepted. Amir's predicament provides a colorful backdrop to Fatima's nightly dialogues with Scheherazade. The novel opens with Scheherazade's 992nd visit to Fatima`s bedroom. The reader is told that, in total, Fatima has told Scheherazade 993 stories of the family house in Deir Zeitoon, Lebanon. Scheherazade aptly calls Fatima "*Ya seit el beit*, [the] lady of the house" (p. 29), yet she is not interested in stories belonging to a time and place Fatima left behind decades ago, when she was only seventeen. "*Wahayat deen el-nebi*, in the name of the prophet's religion," implores the ageless storyteller, eager to divulge more about Fatima's life in the United States, "you've had ten children and two husbands (…) something must have happened in the last sixty-eight years" (p. 29). Only nine days before her supposedly impending death, Fatima concedes to talk about her life in the United States, revealing the stories of her two husbands, ten children, numerous grandchildren, and their children. However, her stories are fragmented. Benefiting from her supernatural powers, Scheherazade visits Fatima's ex-husband, children, and grandchildren scattered across the United States. Doing so, she exposes the Abdullahs' transnational links to Arab countries like Lebanon, Iraq, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Syria, and the United Arab Emirates; China through Fatima`s third daughter Hala`s marriage and Mexico in her sixth daughter Soraya's case.

The Night Counter is a humorous commentary about the difficulties confronting members of an extended Arab American family in the post-September 11 United States. The book satirizes racial oppression through hyper surveillance of Arab American citizens by exploring the world around Fatima. Via her visits to members of Fatima's family dispersed in various locales in the United States, Scheherazade collects stories about Arab American experience in the aftermath of 9/11 attacks. The book arose from a political context where an anti-Arab, anti-Muslim, and anti-immigrant discourse reached its peak. The novel deals with the issues pertaining to post-

9/11 with frequent references to sociopolitical events of the twentieth century, during which the United States was in close contact with the Middle East and beyond.

Saffron Dreams has been the subject of numerous scholarly analyses. Sorgun (2011) investigated the novel together with other works of fiction by Muslim women and prasied Abdullah for contributing to the concerted Muslim women`s voice, opening up a room for themselves in the early twenty-first century American literary scene. Djohar (2013), on the other hand, analyzed the novel by using a post-colonial framework and stressed the writer's role as a cultural translator between the Orient and the Occident. Basing their research on Foucault's concepts of biopower and disciplinary gaze, Ahmad (2015) investigated power relations in the novel and argued that the book offers an illusion of freedom. Ashraf (2015) underlined Arissa's triumphant journey from pessimism to optimism. Faraj (2015) claimed that *Saffron Dreams* portrayed America as "a nation of lies" (p. 152). The problem with Faraj's reading is that the author has failed to regard Arissa as an immigrant stuck between the realities of the two countries where her loyalties lie. Their essentialist reading of Arissa's identity disregards her other side of attachment. Nonetheless, the female protagonist reconciles her Muslim identity with her American citizenship, also criticizing the restrictive attitudes in her two countries. Moreover, she condemns repressive practices in Pakistan and discrimination in the United States by foregrounding her gendered experience. Finally, in my previous work (Atar, 2021), I scrutinized the representation of masculinities in the novel.

One common weakness worth mentioning in the studies summarized above is that many are simplistic in their interpretation of Arissa's hybrid identity. They either focus only on her religion (Faraj, 2015; Sorgun, 2011) or they take an essentialist view of her identity and depict her as a Pakistani woman (Ashraf, 2015) "crumbling under the disciplinary gaze of white Americans" (Ahmad, 2015). They fail to acknowledge the agency presented by Arissa in her decision to uncover, move to another state, and write to heal. Furthermore, they do not make any reference to the strategies the author has deployed to push for change in the larger society, thus missing out an opportunity between the story and the context. These strategies, however, cannot be ignored.

The Night Counter has been taken up for numerous scholarly analyses as well. Vinson (2014) focused on Yunis's evocation of Scheherazade from *The One Thousand and One Nights*. The researcher contended that the performative dimension of gendered and racialized aspects of

identity in the book allows comedic re-evaluation of Arab American history. Vinson commended Yunis`s playful rebuttal of narratives that depict Arab women as submissive puppets at the hands of their vile husbands and other male relatives. She concluded that via Fatima's "comically syncretic" language (p. 57) and disarming humor, Yunis succeeded in rendering a potentially grim subject hilarious. I concur with Vinson that Yunis`s literary rendition offers an imaginative counter-evaluation of Arab American history and critique of colonialism. Bayeh (2015) examined the concept of home in the novel. She claimed that though it displays a central concern with the domestic, *The Night Counter*'s engagement with home deviates from typical representation of home-as-house or home-as-homeland. She argued that the book disregards the house and even literally destroys it. Bayeh acknowledged the main character's constant yearning for and obsession with the family house in rural Lebanon, yet, I think, she misinterpreted the novel's representation of home and concluded that home constituted an insignificant theme. The researcher put overdue stress on the mobility of home in complex relationships between place, displacement, and belonging. Gomaa (2016) studied the novel as an allegory of nation and underlined its depiction of loss, dispersal, and yearning for reconnecting. In Gomaa's view, its narrative form emulated from *The One Thousand and One Tales* enabled dismantling the monolithic depictions of Arab American experience. Other significant work on the novel include analyses of the novel`s representation of the Middle East (Atar, 2017), utilization Arab folk tradition (Hilal, 2020), varied Arab American masculinities (Atar, 2021; Bosch-Vilarrubias, 2016), and the intersection of aging and masculinity (Bosch-Vilarrubias, 2021).

Commentators praise Yunis's deployment of Scheherazade in her book. While Scheherazade's legacy provides Yunis with a literary tool to overcome the narrative obstacles and thus enables the reader to discover otherwise undisclosed secrets, we should remember that it is Fatima's story that we read in *The Night Counter* (Darraj, 2004). Unfortunately, the extant in-depth analyses invested much of their energy in Scheherazade, the listener, rather than Fatima, the speaker. Scheherazade's magical powers allows her to overcome physical barriers with relative ease and eavesdrop on Fatima's relatives without being detected. Nonetheless, her actions work to fill the gaps in Fatima's story. Therefore, I focus primarily on Fatima rather than Scheherazade in this study. Another gap in the available literature on *The Night Counter* is that none of the studies have paid attention to Fatima's language use. It is Fatima's hybrid and often comically incorrect language use that manifests her in-betweenness and cultural hybridity. Moreover, her recourse to Arabic to express emotions such as anger, shame, and pride allows

the reader to situate this cantankerous and intuitive matriarch, who has a way of discovering her children's secrets despite their efforts to reveal nothing but generic weather reports.

Although some of the analyses of *Saffron Dreams* and *The Night Counter* have helpfully alluded to their potential for intercultural dialogue, they have not fully investigated their potential for Intercultural Communication. It is important to track the issue of representation of immigrant women as in-between characters by paying attention to their movements across transnational spaces, their response to and criticism of sociopolitical events in both their adopted and home countries. Equally important is the characters` and the narrators' hybrid language use, which disrupts the imaginary of a homogeneous nation and complicates citizenship and belonging. Finally, the women authors' strategies to empower their female characters to assert in-betweenness and agency need to be uncovered by focusing on the themes they foreground.

3.2. FINDINGS

Migration to the United States and immigrant experience; criticism of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment, food and cooking, family, motherhood, and marriage, widowhood, romantic relationship, sexual identity constitute the common themes in the two novels. I have divided my findings into four categories. Though not exhaustive or set in stone, these four categories help me systemize my findings. The first category concerns the geographical spaces the two books cover. The second category delves into the sociohistorical spaces the immigrants occupy. This part is where the characters present their immigrant perspectives on sociopolitical issues and offer their evaluation of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism. The third part is devoted to the characters' hybrid language use representing their dual consciousness and belonging. The writers' frequent recourse to translation, code-switching, and meta linguistic explanations index their immigrant characters' cultural hybridity and in-betweenness. The characters oscillate between their two countries and cultures. Abdullah and Yunis resort to translation to inform the assumed reader about culturally specific language use and offer a social commentary. The central characters` racialized religious identities intersect with their gendered immigrant identities. Therefore, the last part of my analysis focuses on their gendered positionalities.

3.2.1. Saffron Dreams

3.2.1.1. Arissa`s Transnational Map in Saffron Dreams

Arissa`s transnational map spans Karachi, New York City, and Houston. In Karachi, Pakistan, Arissa assumes the mothering role to her younger sister and brother in their mother's emotional and physical absence. Arissa`s account of her Karachi years reveals the domestic reality of her parents' dysfunctional marriage and allows the reader to acquire a sense of class issues, political corruption, and the apparatus of arranged marriage in Pakistan.

Arissa is initially a tourist in New York. The woman notices "the silent acknowledgement in the eyes of New Yorkers" who, the woman feels, "declared [her] an outsider" (p. 37). After her marriage to Faizan in 1998, Arissa migrates to New York. She is a young, happily married immigrant until her husband perishes on 9/11. Before her husband's tragic death, she lives in Queens in the east of New York. The woman resembles this "multilingual ethnic neighborhood" to "a broth of many tastes" (p. 113). It is interesting to note that all the ethnic groups she mentions are non-white groups from Latin America and South Asia. Arissa also comments that walking among people from the Indian continent "lifted [their] spirits" (p. 113). After her husband's untimely death, Arissa sinks into despair and contemplates suicide (p. 75). Arissa endures belligerent looks and remarks as well as a violent physical attack on account of her head scarf. In short, following the 9/11, New York City becomes a hostile place from which Arissa wishes to escape. Though emotionally still attached to Pakistan, Arissa chooses to heal from her loss by forgetting (p. 111). Thus, she decides to move away from New York, the city she associates with Faizan and September 11.

In Houston, Texas, Arissa is a devoted mother and a journalist. She divides her time between catering for the needs of a severely disabled son and writing to create "a better image of (…) the South Asian community" by highlighting their accomplishments (p. 148). Her occupation provides a distraction and allays her concern over her son's future. Her motherhood is marked by her child's delayed accomplishments (p. 165). In addition to her roles as a mother and a professional journalist, she devotes herself to painting and completing a novel her late husband left unfinished. The reader witnesses the redemptive power of art in the healing process.

3.2.1.2. The Sociopolitical Context in Saffron Dreams

Saffron Dreams primarily responds to the impact the 9/11 attack on the World Trade Center had on Muslims in the United States. In Arissa`s words, "The world as we knew [crumbled] …, glass chunk by glass chunk, metal piece by metal piece, floor by floor" at "8:55 a.m." on September 11 (p. 51). For Arissa, "wretched terror" dismantles the "sheltered existence" the couple enjoyed in New York (p. 50). Arissa's belief that they led a "sheltered existence" proves to be a disillusionment. "We are sheltered no more," she concludes (p. 52). Arissa resembles the 9/11 attack to a hawk that steals "a tiny baby bird" and leaves "its mother chirp in terror" (p. 103). The author draws an analogy between a differentially disabled child and a community whose reputation is marred due to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. By creating a female protagonist and a nurturing mother-in-law to assist her, Abdullah entrusts the healing processes into women`s hands. While Arisa nurses the social wounds by actively working to undo the persistent portrayal of Muslims as terrorists, her mother-in-law shares the caregiving responsibility.

Abdullah (2009b) problematizes the media's representation of Islam and stigmatization of hijab. Arissa becomes the target of unwanted attention as her hijab is fetishized by the media as an object of terror. Arissa endures frowns in public places because of "judgment by association" (p. 85). She becomes a victim of hate crime. On the subway, she endures a teen's "spiteful glance" while she is running through the list of materials necessary for her husband's "*ghaibana namaza-e-janaza*" or "absentee funeral" (p. 81). At the station, she is subjected to verbal abuse and physical assault by a group of angry teenagers. Reportedly, she feels "more afraid to lose the veil than of being mugged" (p. 56) since she considers her veil as the separatting line between her life with her deceased husband and the one without him. She reveals that the headscarf is an object she "desperately wanted to lose" when she first migrated to the United States (p. 56) but was prevented by her husband. Arissa confides in the reader that "for generations, women in his household had worn the veil, although none of them seemed particularly devout (.…) no questions asked, no explanations needed" (p. 58). Arissa rationalizes Faizan`s insistence on the veil by drawing on a family tradition as opposed to a religious obligation, thereby distancing the object from religious doctrine. Even though the woman insists that they "should try to assimilate into the new culture as much as possible, not stand out" in the United States, losing the hijab after Faizan`s death proves an emotionally challenging prospect. Arissa interprets removing the veil as "losing a portion of" her marriage (p. 58).

Arissa criticizes hardliners on both sides. On the one hand, she denounces anti-veil commentators such as the British ex-foreign secretary Jack Straw, who expressed discomfort about women's "wearing full veil" (Straw, 2006). In the op-ed Abdullah invokes in *Saffron Dreams*, Straw underlines "the apparent incongruity between" his female client`s "entirely English accent" and UK-earned education and the fact that she is veiled. In his view, covering one's facial features is "bound to make better, positive relations between the two communities [Muslims and non-Muslims in the UK] more difficult" (n.p.). The related editorial provoked outrage among Muslim groups. Arissa doubts that the veil is a barrier for communication as Straw presumes. She feels irritated that media pundits talk about the veil to attain the limelight (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 114). Through Arissa`s female voice, Abdullah rejects what is called gendered Islamophobia. On the other hand, she disassociates from fundamentalist groups such as Al Qaeda. She doubts that the love for Islam means that one should hate other faiths. She insists that Islam is based on tolerance, peace, and bridge-building. She denies that it might be "a very well-kept secret that only a handful knew" (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 58). Arissa's response to unfriendly looks that accuse her of being an accomplice of the perpetrators of the attacks is to openly reject any links to the terrorists. She strives to make the reader comprehend that you cannot judge a religious group by the atrocities committed by some of its members. She invites readers to learn more about Islam and its followers. The following quote illustrates the woman`s rejection of guilt:

> [The attackers] were not my people, those few whose beliefs don't even reflect the religion they rely so heavily on to justify their cause. They wrecked people like me more than anyone, who come to this country to lead a freer, safer life, to live among a civilization unaware of the struggles of those who live in restrictive societies. (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 58).

Arissa stresses that the perpetrators of the terrorist attacks are a few misguided and brainwashed fanatics, who can hardly represent all Muslims in the United States and beyond. In addition, she insists that the attacks bruised Muslims:

> Unreined and unchecked, the radicals struck the four corners of the globe and left masses of innocent Muslims easy targets for others' hatred and venom. We were regarded as a race gone bad, mad. The people of our adopted land had lost faith in us, and we couldn't trust our own. The line between allies and enemies was growing thinner by the day. Watching our backs had become a habit. … We struggled to know ourselves only to lose ourselves in the interpretation of others, in the hyphenation of our world. (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 144)

When reporters pester Arissa with questions such as "Muslim harmed by Muslim, how do you react?" (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 116) or "Mrs. Illahi, being a Muslim, how does it feel to be attacked by your own people?" Arissa feels frustrated and counters the allegation by saying,

"They are not my people" (p. 115). Furthermore, aligning her assumed reader with herself, she strikes back at the reporter: "When you put all your potatoes in a sack, you should know they all have unique flavors. Some are rotten, some fresh. Just because they are clumped together doesn't make them all the same" (p. 116). Arissa also warns the reader against the danger inherent in the media's execution of Islam, which, she thinks, "broke the backs of bridges" (p. 145). Her account aims to repair or rebuild those bridges to facilitate intercultural understanding. In addition, she acknowledges the need for salvaging Muslims' tarnished reputation. Arissa complains about "the false" media representations and constant stereotyping. She expresses her helplessness as follows:

> I looked on as day after day the media tried, sentenced, and hung my faith. Day after day analysts (…) broke the backs of bridges, and erected barriers to sturdy too take down or overcome. Gaps widened, [and] our hearts divided (…) I witnessed the lynching of a religion and race again and again (....) Apart from the religion we strived to preserve came another necessity of the times: salvaging our reputation. What proof did I have of the innocence of the rest of us? (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 145)

These excerpts illustrate that Arissa vehemently rebuts anti-Muslim stereotyping. Moreover, she assumes a journalist's role when she recounts Arab and South Asian Muslim immigrants' futile attempts at passing by covering their religious identities. To illustrate, Arissa explains how many Arab and Asian immigrants` decorating their cars and shops with American flags were "signs of solidarity laced with the hope of evading discrimination" (pp. 57-58). Her ethnographic gaze also notes how their "desperate" displays of allegiance were insufficient. In her view, the 9/11 left Muslims confused, terror-struck, and timid:

> With every horn or commotion on the street, they jumped, then withdrew a little more within themselves, guilt-ridden with sins they did not commit. They walked faster when alone. Some women took down their hijabs, afraid of being targeted, and adopted a conservative but Western style of dressing. Men cut their beards. Many postponed plans to visit the country of their origin any time soon. [Some] … chose not to converse in their native language even among family members. A few close friends changed their names. Salim became Sam, Ali converted to Alan—in an attempt to hide identities. When asked their nationality, they offered evasive answers. (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 58)

All in all, Arissa`s observations of those who occupy precarious spaces at the margin of the American nation went about their everyday lives in the wake of 9/11 aims to expose the damage they sustained and instigate intercultural understanding with the nation's Muslim Other. It is interesting, however, how the protagonist distances from these Muslims by referring to them as "they" even though she is one of those who drop their veils.

3.2.1.3. Linguistic and Cultural Translation in Saffron Dreams

Arissa translates her home culture to facilitate intercultural communication. One area of cultural translation entails explaining how arranged marriage through matchmaking works. Arissa translates Pakistani marriage customs and wedding rituals by putting some distance between herself and the traditional Pakistani culture. The woman admits to having been "disgusted" by the "well-oiled vehicle of arranged marriage" when she was young (p. 19). She believes the practice gives parents "perfect control over their children's destinies" (p. 30). Her 'seen-the-other-side-of-the-border' eyes do not hesitate to criticize some of those rituals. She observes, for instance, that prior to her union with her husband, she was treated like "a rare exotic bird that needed to be kept safe in a dual-purpose effort—safe from harm and safe from fleeing. I was bound, unable to escape, led by rituals, my future stamped" (p. 39). She theorizes that "the sights and smells of a Pakistani wedding are what lend permanence to it." (p. 39). In her view, the "huge investment and involvement of all senses" including "the dainty sweet fragrance of the jasmine and the pungent scent of henna" ensures that marriages are long-lasting. Reflecting on her own marriage through matchmaking, she concedes that, despite becoming the topic of rumor for delaying marriage, she "had lived up to the expectations of the society" (p. 39). Arissa suggests that women in Pakistan abide by the tradition even when they wish to escape arranged marriage and some can delay marriage.

Arissa`s translation of Pakistani society calls for frequent linguistic translation, resulting in linguistic hybridity of the text. To illustrate, Arissa describes how "the *baraat*, or the groom`s entourage" (p. 39) arrives at the wedding venue singing and dancing. In addition, she explains how the bride sits on "separate stages called *seg*" (p. 40) by offering direct translations of Urdu words. She often deploys phrases like "X called Y" to render the Urdu language expressions legible to the Anglophone reader. The narrator feels the burden of cultural representation weighs on her when she reveals that a wedding gown is "called *sharara"* and the bride applies "*ubtan*, a paste" to her face for twenty days before her wedding in order to achieve "the coveted bridal glow" (p. 8). Moreover, the narrator strives to enhance the reader`s familiarity with the foreign when she explains "the day of my *mehndi*" is "the celebration of dance and festivities that precede the actual wedding day in a Muslim society" (p. 39). Occasionally, the author presents the English words in parentheses as in "mohra (jasmine)" or "genda (marigold) flowers" (p. 39). Linguistic hybridity functions as a bridge for easier reader engagement.

Arissa's mediations on her home culture are not limited to linguistic translations. In *Saffron Dreams*, linguistic hybridity is inseparable from cultural translation. Arissa, the autodiegetic narrator, deploys literal translation to make Islamic cultural elements concerning burial rituals and Pakistani traditions of marriage legible to her non-Muslim and/or non-Pakistani reader. To illustrate, Arissa translates her own words immediately after she uses the foreign expression as in "*ghaibana namaza-e-janaza*, an absentee funeral" (p. 81). Then, she explains that "absentee funeral" is "a funeral less a body." She also recounts the difficulties her Pakistani American family encountered in convincing the authorities to allow them to realize this uncommon ritual. In addition, she elaborates on Islamic burial practices by offering a description of "the green satin sheet in the coffin" and "the flowing Arabic script in gold thread" (p. 81). She interprets the foreign script as "We belong to Allah and to Allah we return," thereby familiarizing the non-Muslim reader with a Qur'anic verse said in acknowledgement of death (p. 81). In the second example, the reader does not read this reference in Arabic or Urdu. Rather, Arissa mediates the cultural interaction by presenting the verse in English and elaborating on its meaning.

Arissa often reflects on the differences that set apart the United States and Pakistan. She observes that "[w]hite, the bridal color in the West, is the color a widow is expected to wear in the East, the color the body is shrouded in before being buried in the earth" (p. 6). By invoking how white represents death and mourning in Pakistan, she points at a cultural divide between Asia and North America, thus indexing a potential area of cross-cultural miscommunication. Likewise, she explains how loss and grief are addressed in contrasting ways in Pakistan and the United States. Inviting her reader to an intimate conversation about her loss, she discloses how healing follows a different pattern in Pakistan than it does in North America. She says:

> Where I come from, healing begins with forgetting. (…) The concrete walls of women's hearts in the peninsular landmass of the Indian subcontinent seal off emotions, thereby achieving absolute sterility that can only lead to isolation. The dreaded word death scares my people; losses make them uncomfortable, nervous. They do the only thing they know to do: shy away and distance themselves. (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 111)

Finally, English is the dominant language in the text, but Arissa`s flexibility to speak Urdu and English depending on the context and situation, marks her linguistic in-betweenness. During a disagreement with her husband, Arissa switches to English as she does not want to address him "with the most familiar you word in Urdu that was reserved for either close loved ones or God" (p. 139). She distances herself from Pakistani culture by choosing English. Furthermore, her explanation of her language choice and elaboration of the fact that there are different expressions of address situates Arissa as both linguistic and cultural shapeshifter.

3.3.1.4. Gendered Migration and Narration

The main character's gender intersects critically with her religious identity in *Saffron Dreams*. Arissa is a pious Muslim woman, and contrary to common stereotype promulgated by the Western media, she is not a subservient, voiceless, or oppressed woman. Her prevention of their reverse migration is particularly illuminating. The topic of return to Pakistan proves a contentious topic in the family. Faizan is adamant that their reverse migration to Pakistan is "the right choice" because his elderly parents need caregiving (p. 106). Whereas he acts out his role as a responsible son, Faizan excludes Arissa from the decision-making process. Faizan`s attitude corresponds to the widespread view in Pakistan that even though men should take care of their wives` needs, they must prioritize parental care and family obligations (Aslam, 2012). When Faizan explains that he cannot "uproot" his elderly parents, Arissa contests his decision: "No, uprooting me is easier. (….) Not once but twice" (p. 106). The woman challenges her husband by asking "Do I not have a say in the matter? Or do you think you can fit your wife in any corner and in any space to your liking?" (p. 106). Arissa forestalls the move by saying, "You can decide whether you want to leave me and go back to Pakistan or stay here and be with me" (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 107). Arissa`s upbringing in an upper-class household with a progressive father, a medical specialist, needs to be underlined in her ability to exert power in decision making processes.

Arissa`s gendered experience of discrimination is interlaced with the headscarf, which marks her as an outsider. The woman feels that, after the attacks, the veil she has worn since the day she married to Faizan has become "a scarlet letter" (p. 100). In her view, it shouts, "Look at me; I follow the same religion as the one who harmed you" (p. 100). Clearly, Arissa`s hijab leads hostile onlookers to associate "the wearer (…) with (…) the attackers" (p. 101). To illustrate, a picnic at the Prospect Park, Brooklyn, turns into a scene of micro racial aggression when a ball misses the protagonist by inches. A woman approaches Arissa and her mother-in-law. When Arissa attempts to put the woman`s mind at ease, the stranger "glare[s]" and retorts: "I am sorry [it] missed you" (p. 104). The incident forces the two veiled women to withdraw. Arissa remembers that they "quietly picked up [their] belongings in [their] *in-between world*. The line between a *resident* and an *outcast* had grown very thin" (p. 104, emphasis added). By creating scenes that offer vivid descriptions of acrimonious encounters between the Muslim protagonist whose belonging to the nation is held suspect, Abdullah dramatizes "gendered Islamophobia" (Perry, 2014).

It is worth underlining Arissa's struggle to obtain a balance between being a practicing Muslim from Pakistan and the societal demand that she must prove that she is not an enemy to the nation. The statement, "We were homesick individuals in an adopted homeland. We couldn`t break free from our origin, and yet we wanted to soar. The tension in our hearts left us in mid-air" illustrates how she occupies the liminal space between Pakistan/Pakistani and the United States/American (p. 58). In the end, her desire to assimilate wins. "Assimilate and accept it all," resolves the woman (p. 100). She attributes her decision to reveal her hair to the collective impact of her husband`s death, the racist attack at the train station, and her desire to protect her son from being singled out. This choice marks her desire to belong in American society. Her compromise is linked to the realization that "Only this society can give [her] unborn child [her] *own* can`t" (p. 100, emphasis added). At this stage, Arissa`s loyalty lies with Pakistan, which she calls "my own" but she is appreciative of the opportunities American society offers. Even though she underlines belonging to Pakistan, her decision to forgo the veil can be explained as a conscious strategy of acculturation. Her decision also points to the spatiotemporal aspects of national belonging (Anthias, 2011). The immigrant prioritizes here, now and future over there and past. Arissa hopes that with her decision to unveil, her unborn child will experience "one less deviation from the norm" (p. 100). The United States hails the immigrant to obedient subjecthood.

Even strolling through The Cleft Ridge Span Bridge in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, New York, intertwines with the protagonist`s gender, traditions in Pakistan, and religion to signify her alienness. The woman remembers the day as follows: "We held our jackets close to us like our two worlds, walking like only veiled women do, protectively shielding our bodies from being touched—an instructive quality we had developed by living in a society at war with itself" (p. 101). The woman underlines the association of her outfit to her identity as a religious woman. The public park interacts with the strollers, guiding them to "shield" their bodies. The woman associates her experience at this Brooklyn Park with Pakistan when she explains that the particular manner in which they walk has its origins "in a society at war with itself" (p. 101). That is, the public park is a gendered place and interacts with the female protagonist`s sense of self as someone who navigates "two worlds" (p. 101). Furthermore, her upbringing in a Muslim society instructs "avoiding the gaze of the men nearby (...) in the presence of a watchful adult" (p. 101). Under the elderly woman`s watch, Arissa feels "reduced to a childlike state, forever faltering, full of simplistic follies, unable to make correct judgments" (p. 101). She wishes to declare independence. When she shares her decision to let go of her hijab, the older woman approves grudgingly by saying wearing the hijab "has always been a tradition in the family, but

the tradition also was to live back home. We have modified our lives, and we do what we can do for those to come" (p. 102). Arissa`s agency, the ability to act, entails receiving her mother-in-law`s approval.

Besides, Arissa`s decision to let go her hijab is also an expression of her gendered agency. Arissa acknowledges that the choice was a hard one: by removing it, she "negat[es]" her deceased husband`s wish. However, she believes "it was time to let go of that desire and nurture others" (p. 101). For her, removing the headscarf is the first step of "a quest to outrun [her] fate" (p. 5). Arissa describes the scene to her assumed reader as follows: "I slid the hijab from around my neck. (….) You can do anything you set your mind to, Alisa Illahi, a voice from the past whispered to me" (p. 5). The wind teases the woman by tearing the veil from her hand and then bringing it back to her face. Her choice of vocabulary to sketch the scene is telling. Reaching Pier 34 at Hudson River Park, she "swat[s] at the fleeting piece of [her] life" as if she is trying to kill an insect (p. 5). Then, she "let[s] it sail down toward the depths, its grave" (p. 6). As she leaves behind "an integral part of her life" (p. 100), she wonders who or what she is bidding farewell: "the age-old tradition" or her deceased husband (p. 6). Her wish to offer her son "an opportunity to mingle and fit in better" outweighs her desire to honor a deceased husband`s wish or a tradition originating in a country left behind. Contemplating on her decision to take off her veil, Arissa contends that "some decisions are never yours; your life's events choose them for you, and you merely obey, whether you agree or not" (p. 106). Surely, Arissa`s decision to unveil stems from her wish to cross the very thin line between a "resident" and an "outcast" for the sake of her son (p. 105). Arissa seems content with the new "bold" and "unabashed" woman "sans the veil" that she "retired within" (p. 109). In November 2001, the day she lets her veil go, Arissa finds herself at "an antiwar march" (p. 116) and reports her involvement as follows: "The war on terror wasn't mine to win or lose. I had lesser goals, my own mini wars to content with" (p. 116). After removing the veil, Arissa enacts membership to the nation`s public sphere but rejects the implication that she supports the official rhetoric of patriotism. She confesses that despite finding herself "in the front flank" of the protests she does not cherish the vengeful response the USA wrecked in the aftermath of 9/11. Rather, Arissa ensures that the reader grasps how 9/11 has wounded her.

Widowhood emerges as a sign of female indignity in *Saffron Dreams*. Though physically away from Pakistan, Arissa cannot escape from its disciplinary power (Ahmad, 2015). Following Faisan`s demise, she regards herself "dead by association, knowing that [she] belong[s] to a society where women lose more than half of themselves when they lose a mate and nearly all of

their worth" (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 184). Clearly, though Arissa lives in the national space of the United States, her reference point is Pakistan. She imagines "the tut-tut of sympathetic relatives" (p. 110). She imagines them whispering "Bechari" (poor) to one another (p. 110). Arissa despises the title because it renders her "a pitiful subject for everyone's scrutiny" (p. 110). Arissa hears their judging questions: "Can you imagine being a baywah and pregnant at the same time?" and expresses her unease in her new identity as follows:

> And that title again. Baywah, the Urdu word for a widow. It hit me like the cold slap of the snowy winter whenever I heard it. Widow. An echoing sound that loops around me forever. Even when I hold my hands to my ears to block it out, it sometimes still manages to reach my brain. Cursed. Broken by loss. Baywah! (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 111)

Refusing to be shunned, discriminated, and looked down on, Arissa emotionally connects with other widowed women. For instance, she recalls a news article about the introduction of new terms in then India-administered Jamni and Kashmir. She reports that the government banned the use of "baywah" because rights groups consider it disrespectful to the bereaved. The new directive recommends "wife of deceased" and "zouja marhoom" or "[the] respected wife of the deceased" if the widowed women are Muslim (p. 111). The protagonist is suspicious of these new labels, too. She reflects: "However you phrased or dignified it, it was still a stamp of loss permanently affixed on our hearts" (p. 111). Similarly, she registers and condemns the maltreatment, discrimination, and isolation widows in Nigeria face (Ezejiofor, 2011). She comments that "a bizarre ritual" metes out "some redemption" to widowed women by requiring them to "have intercourse with a member of the deceased husband`s family to banish the spirit of the departed" (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 111). Arissa finds widowhood humiliating, yet it is ambiguous whether she is critical of levirage marriage. Furthermore, Arissa`s acceptance by and friendship with a Vietnam martyr's wife brings about the eventual closure. Stretching the boundaries of imagination, the author implies that the society might heal from the wounds sustained on 9/11 when its members recognize its Muslims` loss. She suggests that Americans must unite in their grief just like Arissa and Anne Marie Beaumont, a secondary character in the novel, "unified" in their grief over having lost a spouse (p. 127). Abdullah`s textual maneuver brings the injury sustained in the Vietnam War on a similar level with that of 9/11.

Motherhood arises as another prominent theme in *Saffron Dreams*. Arissa tries to comprehend the nature of motherhood by comparing her own negligent mother with her "selfless" mother-in-law (p. 97). Her mother abandons her husband and children for another man while Arissa is a child, and she misses out on Arissa's wedding. Her mother-in-law, on the other hand, is a loyal

substitute for her biological mother. The woman silently and patiently sacrifices herself to her daughter-in-law's healing after 9/11. Her mother calls Arissa when she hears about Arissa's loss, yet she cannot overcome the emotional communication barrier built over time. Her mother is a stranger. In contrast, her mother-in-law helps Arissa to move smoothly from grief of her widowhood to a caring mother of a special child.

To sum up, in Arissa's pseudo autobiography, gender surfaces as a crucial facet of identity and intersects strongly with religious identity. Despite her sorrow and frequent lapses into despair, Arissa is a strong woman who proves to be an elaborate speaker particularly when she comments on her cultural in-betweenness. She both reflects on her Muslim American experience and confronts bias and stereotyping against Muslims from a woman's perspective. At the same time, she criticizes societal pressures widowhood brings in Pakistani society. Through Arissa's soulful testimonial, Abdullah invites the reader to consider how immigrant Muslim women balance ancient traditions they shuttle from their host countries and requirements of their immigrant lives in the United States.

3.2.2. The Night Counter

3.2.2.1. Transnational Arab American Space in The Night Counter

The way the Abdullahs have dispersed in the United States registers the second and third generation immigrants' efforts to blend in the mainstream American society. However, it is not only the American nation's space that pervades the book. Many of the characters maintain their transnational ties with the Middle East; in Soraya's case with Mexico whereas in Hala and her descendants` case with China and Brazil. More than any other place, Deir Zeitoon, a fictitious village in Lebanon, emerges as home for the senior first-generation immigrants: Fatima and her ex-husband Ibrahim. Readers are constantly reminded that Fatima must choose a child to inherit her house in Lebanon. Fatima tells Scheherazade 993 stories of the house in Deir Zeitoon. Contrary to what Bayeh (2015) claims, the omission of the particulars of the house in Deir Zeitoon does not suggest that home is an insignificant theme in the novel. It signifies an irretrievable past, idealized in Fatima's memory. It symbolizes the roots to which Fatima cannot return and marks Fatima`s diasporic transnationality. The memories of this rural home pulses through her present. The question of whom to bequeath it haunts Fatima before her "impending" death (Yunis, 2009, p. 3). *"Mashallah*, how have you managed to maintain it from here?"

Scheherazade ask[s], trying to sound interested in the house" in Lebanon. The destruction of the house during the Lebanese Civil War, a secret her second husband Ibrahim keeps from Fatima for years, highlights the disjuncture between Fatima's accounts of the house and its current state. The demolishing of the house suggests that there is nowhere for the elderly immigrant to return: she must stay in her adopted home.

Yunis employs symbolism in articulating Fatima's efforts to take roots in the United States. A fig tree that Fatima grows in Detroit by planting the seeds her mother gave when she left for the United States does not produce any fruit over sixty years. When she divorces Ibrahim, she uproots the fig tree from her garden in Detroit and plants it in Amir's front yard. The tree finally produces figs in "Los Angeles of Amir's" (p. 5). The fig tree symbolizes that the Abdullahs have taken roots in Los Angeles no matter how tenuous their citizenship status is perceived to be in the post-9/11 United States. The following extract reveals how Fatima's family has established itself in the United States:

> "Be careful, dyiri balik, don't break any of its branches," Fatima pleaded. "I brought that tree all the
> way from Lebanon."
> "Lebanon?"
> "Well, Detroit," Fatima clarified. "Ibrahim planted it in our backyard in Detroit with seeds from
> Mama. I had my oldest girl ship it from Detroit and replanted it here. (Yunis, 2009, p. 79)

The narrator notes that even though "Fatima had created her garden in Detroit with the seeds of her mother's garden in Lebanon," the woman "had had a harder time re-creating Lebanon in Detroit" (p. 79). In contrast, Amir re-creates Fatima`s "Detroit garden" in Los Angeles. Fatima acknowledges Amir`s and the plants` flourishing "in their natural environment in West Hollywood" but does not "permit that thought to take hold in her mind" (p. 80). Fatima hopes to leave her precious house in Deir Zeitoon to Amir on condition that Amir marries an Arab woman. In Fatima`s view, given that her daughters and son do not make easy heirs because they are not "responsible enough" for such an invaluable gift, Amir seems the most likely recipient (p. 6). In fact, neither her children nor her grandchildren share Fatima's passion about the house in Lebanon, "a world left behind long ago" (p. 33). Even her favorite grandson, who takes care of Fatima in her last days, does not put much value on the only precious material gift she offers. The following is an example of their many similar conversations:

> "When do you think you and Tiffany might go to Lebanon?" … "Get married first, though. No *aabe*,
> shame. You are the great-grandson of Hashem Riyad Mustapha Abdul Aziz, and you must live up to
> that."

"Tayta, I've never even been to Paris," replied Amir, who didn't think an ancestry of sheepherders, tobacco field workers, and matchmakers was all that great. "First, I'd like to see Europe. Then there's that yoga retreat in Costa Rica I've always dreamed of."
"What are you talking about?" Fatima asked.
"I'm just saying that there are a lot of other places on my vacation-land map I'd like to see, too, if I ever get a vacation," he said.
"Lebanon's no vacation, *ibni*," she said. "It's our home." (Yunis, 2009, pp. 203-204)

Arguably, being a first-generation immigrant, Fatima idealizes Lebanon. However, her grandson does not share her feelings towards a house in Lebanon. He protests by saying, "Jesus Christ, what would I do with a house in Lebanon?" (p. 9). This question infuriates Fatima, who shouts *"Shoo malik?* What's wrong with you?"* (p. 9). She cannot accept that Amir treats the house as "just any house in Lebanon" (p. 9). She responds, "It`s our house in Deir Zeitoon. The house where I was born, where my mother was born, where my grandmother did her best matchmaking, *Allah yerhamhum*" (p. 9). Fatima`s diasporic feelings of return are not met with enthusiasm: unlike his first-generation Arab American grandmother who lives on the hyphen, the third-generation Arab American lacks attachment to the ancestral home.

Detroit, the largest city in the midwestern state of Michigan, features as Fatima's home in United States. As a young trailing wife to an older Arab man and later a mother with ten children from two marriages, Fatima remains confined to the house and the chores involved in raising her children, and her grandson Amir. Detroit's streets do not occupy much space in Fatima's memory, yet the woman recalls its snow outside her living room window, which she describes as "gray with dirt and age" (p. 6). When she divorces Ibrahim after sixty years of marriage, she insists that Ibrahim take the house in Detroit since she believes that she owns "a perfectly good one in Lebanon" (p. 79). "Detroit's streets are not mine, but still it is the best city in America," says Fatima, thereby acknowledging her limited involvement with the city (p. 81). Dubbed the Arab capital of North America, Detroit is home to North American`s largest Arab population. Fatima registers this fact by looking at the city from her kitchen window.

The Night Counter portrays Los Angeles, California, as a place of excess and craze. Scheherazade first meets Fatima in a graveyard in Los Angeles, California. The elderly woman rationales her stay at Amir`s house as follows: "Then September 11 happened, and I didn't want Amir to be alone in such terrible times" (Yunis, 2009, p. 79). Fatima clicks into the city`s "Arab funeral circuit" and pays visits to grieving families once or twice a week (p. 26). Fatima interacts with other non-white residents in Los Angeles, including Mr. Kim, the Asian dry cleaner who writes Fatima`s funeral instructions (68).

Fatima recalls New York City as the immigrant welcoming zone of the United States. Located in New York Harbor, Ellis Island functioned as the busiest immigrant assessment base in the United States between 1892 and 1954. Once considered the country`s "front door to freedom" Ellis Island remains a potent symbol and reinforces the patriotic rhetoric that the United States of America is an immigrant nation (Behdad, 2005). Fascinated by its architecture, motorized vehicles, and popular fashion, the woman recounts her memory of the city as follows:

> When I arrived in New York with Marwan, it wasn't paved with gold, like Mama had heard it would be. But I had never seen buildings so tall, so tall that I thought they might have touched God when their tops disappeared into the clouds. (…) I kept covering my head, anticipating one to fall. (…) the streets were filled with hundreds of motorcars (…) and women wore funny hats, and so did the men, even Marwan, who said it was what gentlemen did. (Yunis, 2009, p. 81)

Fatima's New York City of the 1930s described above was home to extreme poverty, too. The destitute of Great Depression is recorded by references to breadlines and homeless delinquents` stealing of food. Fatima recalls people standing "in long lines for bread that was hard and thick, and shop clerks chased kids in rags for stealing apples" (p. 81). Fatima`s account sheds light into the Great Depression.

The Night Counter features many other locations both inside and outside the United States. These places include to New Castle, Pennsylvania, where Fatima`s second daughter Miriam, her son, and her church-going granddaughter, Brittney live; Minneapolis, Minnesota, where her third daughter Hala and her progeny live; Houston, Texas, Fatima`s forth daughter Randa's husband's law firm defends undocumented Latino workers` rights; Las Vegas in Nevada, where Fatima`s Harvard graduate son, Bassam, works as a taxi driver with many other highly educated immigrants of Arab heritage and New York City, where her youngest daughter, Lena, lives. In most places, the separation of the geographical space from its sociohistorical counterpart is artificial. Therefore, I include some of these places into my analysis of the sociohistorical space in the novel in the next section.

3.2.2.2. The Sociohistorical Space of The Night Counter

"It is better to pass a Mexican in that condition" (Amir in *The Night Counter*, p. 124)

The Night Counter indexes numerous transnational sociohistorical incidents including the opening of the artificial waterway in Egypt, the Suez Canal, in 1869 and the colonization of

lands formerly governed by the Ottoman Empire. The author successfully weaves national and international political events into the Abdullah clan`s family story. From the family tree given at the beginning of the book, the reader learns that Fatima gave birth to ten children in two marriages. Scheherazade flies around the United States visiting Fatima's ex-husband, Ibrahim, her eight remaining children and some of her grandchildren, allowing the reader a glimpse into the lives of first, second, third, and fourth generation Arab Americans throughout the country. To avoid racial labelling and discrimination, some of Fatima's children are involved in assimilative endeavor. Some Americanize their names or even resort to plastic surgery to look less Arab while others turn to Islam after 9/11 and disavow anything American including their children's Americanized names.

The book is replete with references to concerns about having an Arab or Muslim identity in the wake of the 9/11. Yunis successfully responds to such issues as surveillance of ordinary, law-abiding Arab American citizens, Lebanese Civil War, 'War on Terror' discourse, colonialism, repressive post 9/11 legislation, and even immigrant rights in general. The interaction between Scheherazade and Fatima; the conversations between the two opportunistic FBI agents; the anti-war activists' chants; the small talk among observant Muslim Americans; Palestinian refugees' claims for their old homes unveil some of the challenges Arabs and Arab Americans wrestle with in the United States and abroad. The personal are inextricably interwoven with the sociopolitical in *The Night Counter*. To illustrate, Fatima's second husband arrives in the United States just before the introduction of the Immigration Act of 1924, which stipulated new quotas restricting "the influx" of "particularly 'yellow people' as Arabs often were classified then" (Yunis, 2009, p. 17). Likewise, Fatima`s own immigration occurs during the Great Depression.

Moreover, when Fatima narrates her first husband`s story, she invites the reader to acknowledge Arab Americans` involvement in labor unions. Arab immigrants` contribution to fairer work conditions is underscored when Fatima comments that "it was because of men like Marwan that GM and Mr. Ford had to give the workers fair money and good treatment" (p. 82). We also learn that Marwan died of a heart attack at thirty-nine while "he was putting a door on one of Mr. Ford's new model Tudors" (p. 85), one of the United States' ten iconic cars. Their labor contributions are dismissed by a white racist neighbor who believes the Abdullahs belong to "the garlic eater land" where they are likely to return (p. 85). In the final analysis, Fatima insists that Arab Americans made crucial contributions to American economy, but they could not escape becoming the target of racist slurs.

Another sociopolitical incident is indexed when the Abdullahs face racism during their only vacation. On the way back from visiting relatives in Florida, the family takes a break in a roadside establishment in Georgia. They are denied the bathrooms designated for white people, which infuriates Ibrahim. Furthermore, when a client calls the girls "mulatto," an offensive word for a mixed-race person, the stranger`s use of this derogatory term for his third daughter enrages Ibrahim. He yanks the man's hand off her shouting, "You don't touch my kids" (p. 197). Fatima laments that she "didn't know what color [her] children were and why [her] husband had turned such an awful red and purple. (.…) He said he'd rather they were unhappy at home than dead outside" (Yunis, 2009, p. 197). The quote invokes race-based segregation of public bathrooms in addition to underlining Ibrahim`s fear for the safety of his daughters.

The weaving of the family's destiny into the nation's history does not end with just one idiosyncratic example. *The Night Counter* underscores heterogeneity in Arab American community. Keeping in mind that every member of Fatima's extended family has their individual story, below I summarize some members` circumstances.

Laila, 69, is Fatima`s only child with her first husband, Marwan. Fatima boasts that Laila is married to "an Arab boy" from Egypt (p. 87). Unlike her siblings, who have fled their parents' home in Dearborn as soon as they could, Laila remains in the same state, making Detroit, the largest city in the midwestern state of Michigan, her home. For her elderly mother, Laila is "normal" (p. 87). However, thanks to Scheherazade's visit, the reader learns that Laila's life is much different from what her mother assumes. Laila is struggling with breast cancer and frustrated with her husband's allegiance to Islam after 9/11. Laila believes that her husband's adherence to Islam will put her sons in jeopardy. Her fear is validated when the FBI agents who spy on the family define him as "the religious nutcase husband" (p. 136). Frustrated with her own condition and her husband's newfound religiosity, Laila takes revenge from her husband and his Arab Muslim friends by feeding them pork the day Scheherazade visits the family.

In Yunis`s rendition, breast cancer is a metaphor for the 'War on Terror' waged in the Middle East. Laila`s diagnosis of her breast cancer coincides with the day the United States invaded Iraq on March 20, 2003 (p. 94). What's more, when her husband suggests that she have a reconstructive surgery, Laila associates the reconstructive surgery with the rebuilding of Iraq and refuses to undergo such an invasive operation just as she ignores donation calls to help

rebuild Iraq. The following excerpt illustrates Laila's attitude towards the invasion of Iraq by the United States:

> Many of her neighbors had kids in the military, and Laila felt sad for them every day, but she did not agree with the destruction of Iraq, and so she could not bring herself to give to its reconstruction. This was also how she had responded to the loss of her breasts. (Yunis, 2009, p. 92)

The surgery will not bring Laila`s health back. Nor can the "reconstruction" the American construction company for which Rock, Fatima's grandson by Miriam, works bring back thousands of civilians who lost their lives during the invasion. References to the invasion helps to button up the Abdullahs` history in the United States with the nation's neocolonial adventures outside its borders. Moreover, it shows how the policies introduced in the wake of 9/11 ostracized Islam and its adherents, Arabs taking more than their share of the burden.

Through Laila`s story, Yunis also critiques the newfound religiosity among members of the Arab American community in Dearborn. The narrator points out that around the same time Laila was diagnosed with her cancer, her husband, Ghazi, discovered Islam. The narrator is unsympathetic when they point out that the man "goes to mosque five times a day," abstains from alcohol, "donates all the money he used to spend on his fancy gym membership to the new mosque," and forces his sons to join him in the mosque (p. 92). The narrator also observes that until her diagnosis Laila and her husband were "the kind of Muslims who fulfilled their duties by giving to the poor and not eating pork. They knew when the Muslim holidays were only when Ghazi's mother called from Cairo to say *Eid Mubarak*" (p. 92). Through Laila's story, readers are informed about the profiling of Muslim Americans as probable terrorist sympathizers.[13] In addition, they learn more about the Arab American community in post-9/11 Dearborn and Detroit through Laila's discerning eyes. When the woman goes to Dearborn to buy what Fatima calls "real food" (p. 92), Laila waits in a line with covered women, thinking that "when she was a girl, it was very rare to see a head scarf let alone an *abaya*, in Dearborn" and that "[t]he Arabs of her childhood had been blenders" (p. 93). The implication is that following the 9/11 attacks, more Muslims in Dearborn, home to the largest Muslim population in the United States, found solace in religion, but not all members of the Muslim community are comfortable with this newfound religiosity. Ironically, Laila turns to God, unbeknownst to her husband, to ease her fear about his three sons and cancer. Laia`s religiosity is eclectic: "Ave

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[13] According to an initiative called "Mapping the FBI: Uncovering Abusive Surveillance and Racial Profiling," the Federal Bureau of Investigation, the prominent law enforcement agency in the US mapped "American communities around the country based on crude stereotypes about the crimes they might commit." Yunis comments on racial profiling of Arab Americans by citing the American Civil Liberties Union.

Maria," a Christian prayer addressing Virgin Mary and "Amazing Grace," the Christian hymn popular in the United States, soothe the woman equally as her nightly conversations with God.

Fatima`s second child, Miriam, was born when Pearl Harbor, a US naval base near Honolulu, Hawaii, was targeted by the Japanese on December 7, 1941 (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 266). Her story also provides the ground for an evaluation of the Vietnam War from the perspective of an Arab American widow. Miriam lives in New Castle, Pennsylvania. Her marriage to Joseph Yusef (Joe), a Lebanese emigrant from Fatima's beloved valley, was arranged by Ibrahim. To everyone in New Castle, Miriam is a "martyr's widow" (p. 238). Miriam maintains "Joe's heroic image" (p. 245) by preparing *kibbe*, her "signature dish," for his "annual memorials" (p. 247). The New Castle Widows' Relief Fund, the narrator reveals sarcastically, was launched by Miriam in an altruistic effort that forever reminds the community of her tragedy (p. 256). Despite her public efforts to a make Joe a hero to the community, Miriam loathes her late husband because he gambled all his money before he became "one of the last American soldiers to die" in Vietnam and left her with a "tremendous amount of debt" (p. 239). Following his dispatch in Vietnam, Miriam gives birth to a son, who she names Rock after her favorite American actor. She is attracted to her Jewish American boss at the bakery she has been working for twenty-nine years but refuses to acknowledge her fondness for the man (p. 247). Arguably, Miriam's personal story is seamlessly interlaced with a major sociohistorical event in American history: it not only attests to Arab Americans` participation in the United States` futile nation-building adventures outside of its borders but also alludes to the far-reaching economic consequences of the Vietnam War. By creating a comical war hero (Joe) who invests the family`s meager income in a swampland in Florida, Yunis implies the United States wasted the nation`s resources in Vietnamese wetlands. The author seems to endorse Rock`s view of Miriam as "a closet martyr" for the sacrifices she made (p. 240). The book suggests that whereas the public may mistakenly continue to commemorate the male draftees and their heroism, wives such as Miriam are real heroes.

Miriam and Rock`s story also foregrounds the uninvited hypervisibility Arab Americans gained following 9/11. The narrator observes that the terrorist attacks placed the Yusefs, "New Castle`s only Muslim family" (p. 252) at the center of unwelcome public attention:

> Until 9/11, they had been known mostly as a military family. However, for a few weeks after that day, people who had never invited Miriam and Rock over before asked them to Sunday dinner and other neighbors came over with cakes to show that President Bush was right: Arab Americans and Muslim

Americans were Americans period. *That very support made them aware that they were no longer just Americans*. (Yunis, 2009, p. 252, emphasis added)

Following the attacks, President George W. Bush visited the Islamic Center in Washington D.C. and said Muslims should be treated with respect. Even though President`s remarks aimed to forestall anti-Arab and anti-Muslim backlash, it also marked a divide between "we" 'proper' Americans and "you" suspect citizens. Through Miriam and Rock`s story, Yunis documents how Arab Americans became citizens aliens in the aftermath of the attacks. In addition, Miriam and her son`s story sheds light into religiosity and interfaith relationship in New Castle. To illustrate, Rock`s birthday brings together "the regular old Catholics and Muslims and Jew" (p. 251). In addition, for Rock, his ex-wife and daughter`s Christianity is "a New Castle thing" though its origins lie in his grandparents` land. Moreover, Yunis underscores the possibility of an interfaith relationship between Miriam and Walt Smith, a Jew, by suggesting that their union is approved of by the Abdullahs.

Fatima's third child, Hala, is a gynecologist in Minneapolis, Minnesota and has three children, two of whom are also doctors. She lives with her wayward daughter, Brenda, and her teenager granddaughter, Asha 'Decimal' Jackson. Hala's story enables the writer to comment on tension among Arab and Chinese immigrants and condemn racism among people of color. In Fatima`s words, Hala was born during "a time of heroes and rationing" (p. 234). Her birthdate coincides with the date of President Roosevelt's 1942 Executive Order 8875, which limited consumption. The reader learns from Decimal's letter and Fatima's nightly conversations with Scheherazade that Hala married to her Chinese American ex-husband against her parents' will (p. 234). The narrator notes that Hala's marriage to her Chinese American colleague was unsuccessful on account of the two families' unfavorable attitude. It is crucial to note that interracial marriage was forbidden in many US states until 1967. The parents` opposition to Hala and Dr. Wang`s marriage and their eventual elopement register race-based restrictions on marriage. Ibrahim and Fatima disapprove of Hala`s choice of partner. Hala`s Chinese American in-laws discriminate her as "the white girl" (p. 234). The couple divorce in the end. Still, Hala keeps close relations with her ex-husband, who never forgives their daughter Brenda for dropping out of school due to an unwanted teenage pregnancy at seventeen, a fruit of her affair with a black American. Yunis imagines Hala`s marriage to her colleague of Chinese heritage to comment on first generation immigrants` uncompromising attitude toward interethnic marriage. She further complicates the issue of racial hybridity by recounting Brenda and Decimal`s stories.

The fourth daughter Randa's story ridicules Arab Americans assimilation efforts. Randa is a suburban wife in Houston, Texas. She Americanizes her name as Randy on the same day she christens her Palestinian American husband as Bud. According to Fatima, this Texan housewife has struggled to erase her family's ethnicity so intensely that her life has turned into "a web of lies" (p. 152). Fatima recalls that as a teenager, Randa defied her father and "demanded that [Ibrahim] be more of an American father" and "make his children typical" (p. 194). Fatima remembers how Randa made all her younger siblings call their parents Mom and Dad instead of Mama and Baba (p. 194). As a teenager, Randa disapproves of her parents' indulging in habits that make them look more Arab than American. For instance, she trades their *argileh* with cigarettes (p. 195). Randa and her husband move away from Detroit, which Randa associates with Arab Americans. The narrator observes that Randa was happy to go "away from Om Kalthoum [the iconic Egyptian/Arab singer from the 1920s to the 1970s] on staticky speakers, the talk of tangled global conspiracies, and the odor of frying falafel" (p. 161) and jokes: "With Bud, Randy had built a life doing all the right things for maximum public viewing" (p. 161). It is not difficult to read the implicit criticism leveled at the likes of Randa in the narrator's humorous comments when they quip, "Hell, if she didn't think she'd get caught, she would have tried to join the Daughters of the American Revolution" (p. 161).[14] For Randa, Fatima`s beloved home in Lebanon is no more than a "damn house in the mountains" and yet another reminder that they are Arabs (p. 188). Her latest act of denial involves signing up to assist the FBI with interviewing "the Arab-American community in Houston" (p. 348) only to realize that by offering to work for the FBI, she risks letting their neighbors discover that they are Arabs, which is, she interprets, "worse than offering to be patriotic" (p. 350). Randa`s story recalls how state organs such as the FBI both targeted and enlisted members of Arab American community in its national security endeavors.

Randa feels "glad that Bud [is] almost pale, not dark like Laila's and Nadia's husbands; [doesn't] have an accent; and [has] a last name that could pass as anything, even Jewish" (p. 161). She goes even further in denying her Arab heritage and undergoes an aesthetic surgery to remove the bump on her nose, a stereotypically Arab feature she has inherited from Fatima. She eliminates all risks of being "mistaken for Arab or Jewish in Texas" (p. 161). In addition, Randa gives her daughters "solid American names" (p. 162) and ensures that the Middle East remains irrelevant to them. She names her youngest daughter after Dina Merrill, the pretty heiress to the Post cereal and E.F. Hutton fortunes and does not discover until years later that Dina is a far

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[14] The Daughters of American Revolutions (DAR) is a non-profit organization that supports patriotism. Membership is based on lineage (www.dar.org).

more common name in the Middle East. Randa's personal effort to erase her Arab heritage is evident in the following extract:

> When's the last time you heard someone say what kind of name is that—oh, Palestinian—oh, yeah, that's what I need, a Palestinian lawyer? (...) A lawyer descended from people who lost their land and haven't been able to win their legal right to return. Oh, yeah, that's the kind of lawyer everyone wants. If anyone asks where you're from, just say our house is in the River Oaks area. (Yunis, 2009, p. 162)

Through Scheherazade's viewpoint, Yunis also critiques Fatima`s blind spot. When the older woman complains about Randa`s neocolonial style house in Houston by saying "like the British and French colonization hadn`t destroyed the Arabs" the narrator adds: "The pilgrims at Plymouth Rock, no matter how proud she was of Laila`s Thanksgiving, didn't figure into Fatima`s definition of colonial" (p. 193). With this comment, Yunis invites readers to reckon with a central theme in the national history of the United States. Even though the main character does not register, Scheherazade reminds the reader of the American settler colonialism, which meant the near extermination of Indigenous peoples.

Fatima is proud to announce that Randa's two older daughters are married to "wealthy American boys—whiter than new Detroit snow" (p. 180), and her youngest daughter, Dina, a law school student at the University of California Los Angeles. Fatima`s praise of registers Arab Americans` upward mobility and preference for whiteness. Being rather "oblivious" as her two boyfriends put it (pp. 157, 186), Dina proves to be the least likely anti-Iraq war march demonstrator in Houston (p. 160) and volunteer at Shatila, one of the sixteen refugee camps for displaced Palestinians in Lebanon. This naïve Texan finds herself in the Middle East due to her infatuation with a Palestinian American student called Jamal Masri rather than her keen interest in politics. To her credit, before she flies to Lebanon, Dina reads *A History of the Arab Peoples* by Albert Habib Hourani, the renown British Lebanese historian. It also needs to be remarked that Fatima sends the book for Dina`s twentieth birthday, this taking it upon herself to teach the younger generations of Arab American their history. Through Dina`s story, Yunis registers the Israeli invasion of Lebanon. Paradoxically, Dina visits Dier Zeitoon and informs the Abdullahs that the village was destroyed during the Lebanese Civil War.

Fatima's fifth daughter is based in Washington D.C., the US capital. Her story registers left-wing activism among Arab Americans and elite transnational activism. Nadia is the only daughter to speak Arabic and to have lived in Lebanon. Elias, her husband, is a visiting scholar

in the Emirate of Sharjah and daughter lives in Dubai (p. 56). Her son, Zade, co-owns Scheherazade's Diwan Café. Zade endorses "the revival of Arab culture" post-9/11 (p. 54). His vision of Arab culture is incompatible with that of his university professor parents, who have raised him to "disdain the majority of his clientele: the Arab elite's children, rich through business or family name, shallower, his father once remarked, than the plates of the hummus the café served" (p. 43). Zade borrows money from his twin sister's Qatari husband while his partner borrows money from her brother who runs "a booming engineering business in Saudi Arabia" (p. 50) to launch a dating website called "International Dateline" (p. 61). Their database, which initially serves single Muslims residing in Washington D.C., expands to include Lebanese and Syrian Armenians and merges with other dating sites to offer services in the Middle East, the Americas, and Europe.

Nadia is in an interfaith marriage. When Scheherazade observes that "Elias is a Christian name" (p. 39), Fatima defends herself by saying "So you wish to reprimand me on how I let my daughter marry a Christian, just like the women in the Arab Ladies Society did in Detroit. Both the Christian and Muslim ladies accused me of being a lenient mother" (p. 39). Nadia's story also lays the groundwork for criticism of the United States' involvement in conflicts ravaging the Middle East. Fatima recalls the day Nadia graduated from high school as "the second day of the Six-Day War" and comments that "many of the Arab parents in the audience were crying. Grief, sorrow, humiliation, anger, worry, fear—none are the right word alone to describe the parents" (p. 73). Nadia's decision to join the Peace Corps on a mission to Algeria connects left leaning Muslim and Christian Arab Americans to the Algerian War of Independence. Further, the elderly matriarch`s tale of her daughter`s graduation registers the humiliation the 1967 Arab Israeli War caused to the Arab coalition and the ensuing displacement of Palestinians. Nadia's tale portrays Arab American intellectuals` critique of US complicity in the Israeli occupation of Palestine and other imperialist interventions in the Middle East and North Africa. It also references Arab American activists` involvement in the American Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s and anti-Vietnam War protests in the 1970s (p. 72). Her participation in an anti-Vietnam War rally makes Nadia a "commie" in their white neighbor`s view (p. 72). Zade, Nadia`s son, observes that the 9/11 terrorist attacks left Nadia and her husband "decidedly grayer and sadder" (p. 54). Nadia`s story helps represent Arabs as highly educated and wealthy members of American society with financial and familial ties to the old country and other places.

To further stress the heterogeneity of Arab Americans in the United States, Yunis even imagines a vagabond daughter. Previously married to a Beiruti whom she knew since they were children

and by whom she was cheated, Soraya is one of the first Americans to give birth to a child in the 1970s with the help of a sperm bank, which is considered "unlikely for an Arab family" (Zaarour, 2010). Unable to comprehend the idea of assisted reproduction, Fatima describes her grandson as "an immaculate conception" (p. 149) and "a miracle grandchild" (p. 150). Soraya works as a fortune teller in circuses and festivals. Her last feat lands her in Tijuana, Mexico. Soraya is the opposite of Fatima: he has no loyalty to a home, let alone the house in Lebanon. In fact, as Fatima observes, the very idea of home repels Soraya, who makes fun of her mother's longing for and "grandiose talk" of Lebanon (p. 130). Soraya`s character parodies the good Arab girl stereotype.

Bassam, 43, is Fatima's only surviving son after a tornado claims Laith and Riyad in 1974, when the most violent tornado outbreak happened in North America. Bassam is described as a "boy genius" on account of his mathematical talent (p. 302). Following his twin brothers` demise, Bassam finds "the quiet (…) of his parents` home (…) unbearable" and turns to alcohol and substance abuse. The addictive personality of Bassam manifests itself in his multiple unsuccessful marriages, previous alcoholism and cocaine addiction and current gambling. He runs away from his parents` home but yearns for a home and family. Fatima describes her as a "drunk in Las Vegas" (p. 302). He oscillates between a "functioning" and "nonfunctioning" drunk until the 9/11 attacks force him to stay sober (p. 308). Bassam admits that "it [is] too (…) dangerous to be both drunk and Arab in America" (p. 307). He experiences what Naber (2012) terms an "internment of the psyche" (pp. 39-40). Following 9/11, Bassam navigates in the anti-Arab milieu delicately. Despite holding undergraduate and graduate degrees from University of Michigan and Harvard, he works as a taxi driver (p. 308). Bassam`s name tag on the limo company`s uniform reads Sam "like half the fucking [sic] Arabs in America" (p. 306). The comment draws readers` attention to Arabs` choice of this Anglicized names in the wake of 9/11. Reflecting Bassam`s point of view, the narrator observes that "[t]he Samihs, the Samers, the Wissams, the Osama (…) almost all became Sams in America," thereby ridiculing Arab American and other Middle Eastern men`s assumption of this appellation. The alias, itself a symbol of patriotic emotion and a common national personification of the federal government, hails Arab American men of a certain age to become anonymous Americans. In addition, Bassam's chapter provides the opportunity to poke fun at the images of Arab women as belly dancers and Arab men as ill-mannered, wealthy sheikhs.

Fatima's youngest child, Lena, 39, is a journalist. Lena`s business trip to Las Vegas allows the author to reflect on topics such as the proper age of marriage for Arab girls. Bassam commits

himself to find his baby sister a husband. "So is your sister married?" asks a colleague, upon which the narrator comments: "the first question asked of a *bint* Arab" or Arab daughter (p. 319). The men vow to find Lena a "nice Arab guy" or "a good Muslim" (p. 319). Bassam encourages another colleague to flirt with the woman. Lena, unaware that her older brother is setting her up with one of his colleagues, is pleased that the man places her accent to New York rather than Detroit (p. 370).

Fatima's great granddaughter Aisha 'Decimal' Jackson, 17, enters the story as a pregnant teenager. Decimal lives with her mother Brenda, 34, and her maternal grandmother, Hala. Her mother is a compulsive shoplifter. Decimal describes her parents as "middle class kids of upwardly mobile minorities who became huge disappointments to their parents" (p. 210). Decimal's father, Tyrone, avoids "falling into the cliché of unwed African-American teenage dad" by marrying Brenda (p. 210). Through Decimal's letter to Fatima, the reader gets a glimpse of the writer's outlook on immigration and interracial mixing. Decimal writes: "if you hadn't come here, Gran would have never met Dr. Wang, and Brenda wouldn't have ever been born and met Tyrone, and then I wouldn't have ever been born. So thanks for coming to America" (p. 218). Moreover, hybridity in its biological sense appears most clearly in Decimal's case. She is a mixed-race person with Arab, Chinese, and Black ancestry and may "pass for Latino" (p. 219). Decimal`s perspective reveals that the girl is aware of race-based hate crime: "the good thing about not looking Black, Chinese, or Arab is that I've never been a victim of a hate crime" (p. 219). But she becomes the target of anti-Mexican slur when black kids call her "a wetback" and a white person taunts her by calling her "a Spic" (p. 219), an offensive word for a Spanish-speaking person from Central or South America. At the same, she acknowledges the opportunities linked to affirmative action policy and guidelines in American Universities, which aim to redress past and present forms of discrimination by selectively recruiting certain disadvantaged groups. She writes: "I bet I could have marked Latino on all those college applications. It would require three less pen checks than marking Asian, Caucasian, African-American, and Other on college applications." The girl points at the absurdity of categorization based one parental lineage. She foregrounds lived experience when she comments:

> But marking Latino would be a lie. Then again I love tacos, but I don't know how to eat with chopsticks, ... and I'm allergic to something in falafel. I used to think I would look weird ice fishing, but once someone thought I was Eskimo." (Yunis, 2009, pp. 219-220)

Decimal`s account is rich in terms of references to race and racism in the United States. First, it attests to interracial relationship between Decimal`s grandparents Hala and Dr. Wang and her parents` interracial marriage. Decimal is witty when she points out that her boyfriend is an Arab immigrant from Brazil (p. 224) and her baby will have more Arab genes then herself. Fatima`s subsequent acceptance of Decimal, who she initially calls "terrible letter girl" (p. 237) suggests that the author invites Arab Americans to reckon with their own hybridity and mixing with other racial minority groups. The letter proves that Decimal is a storyteller. Yunis`s portrayal of Decimal as the younger generation storyteller with ties to China, the Middle East, Africa, and South America foregrounds the author`s insistence on transnational links.

Through Fatima`s tale of her children and grandchildren`s stories, Yunis glides over American history of the last two hundred years from an immigrant's perspective. Her progeny`s tales support Fatima`s attacks on the false representation of Islam and Muslims as fundamentalists supporting militant jihadists. By making Fatima talk, Yunis places an assault on the mainstream media which demonizes Arab American and Muslim citizens. After watching yet another program featuring terrorists Fatima blurts, "*Zaka,* giving alms, is one of the true pillars of Islam. You don't hear CNN talking about that" (p. 23). She is convinced that "everything on CNN is a lie. The whole thing was a setup, (…) giving the United States an excuse to occupy Iraq" and reports that it was the shared opinion of her funeral circle (p. 23). In the final analysis, it may be argued that Fatima does not have much control over her children's and grandchildren`s stories; however, the elderly matriarch herself embraces her Arab and Muslim identity. She obsesses over her house in Lebanon; her allegiance to the United States and patriotism reveals itself in her consumption habits. For Fatima, the younger generation`s driving Japanese cars means that they show no loyalty for their grandparents (p. 86). In short, Fatima is of both Lebanon and the United States.

3.2.2.3. Hybrid Linguistic Space in The Night Counter

When Fatima moves to the United States, English is an alien tongue: "I had no English," says Fatima recalling the difficulty in communicating with her first husband, Marwan, because "he barely spoke Arabic anymore" and "his Arabic was so hard to understand" (p. 33). On her arrival in the United States, Fatima is literally voiceless, and has her husband write down the answer when an officer at Ellis Island immigration station asks her age. She learns the language through baseball games she watches when her husband is away at work and through her neighbors' quarrels. In fact, the first sentence she learns is "I'm going to kill you," since she

frequently hears her neighbor's husband yell at his wife (p. 121). Through her friendship to Millie, her white American neighbor, English becomes Fatima`s language of communication.

The language mistakes Fatima makes points to her foreignness. She refers to the Great Depression as "the depressing times" (pp. 82, 84). The wise yet illiterate matriarch also has difficulty in articulating phonetically difficult words. For instance, she says "Massotwoshits" (p. 145), "Tiajumama" (p. 148), "desert" (p. 181), and "Many Happy Police" (p. 204) when she wishes to say "Massachusetts," "Tijuana," "dessert," and "Minneapolis" respectively. Her mispronunciation makes her stand out as an immigrant. In addition, the false friends she uses deem her utterances ridiculous. She talks about "love-making business" when she means online matchmaking website (p. 75). The narrator observes, "Seventy years in this country and it was amazing what words she didn't know" (p. 75). Her peculiar English accentuates her foreignness.

Fatima`s foreignness becomes a liability while raising her children. When the school principal informs her about Bassam`s cocaine addiction, she misunderstands the reference to cocaine and retorts, "How could he use Coke? (…) Coke is on the Arab boycott list of companies doing business with Israel. Shame, *aabe* (.…) Pepsi is okay. I am not raising Zionists" (p. 312). This example not only points to misunderstanding due to Fatima's lack of linguistic proficiency, but it also points to the tight linkage between the personal and larger sociopolitical events. The narrator comments, "That was how far Bassam and his choice of drugs had stepped away from his parents' immigrant bubble" (p. 283). The remark indicates the insurmountable generational gap: her son`s illicit drug use escapes the first-generation immigrant.

The author deploys linguistic translation as a tool for cultural and linguistic border-crossing. Yunis makes her protagonist and the narrator use both the English and the Arabic versions of culturally specific words throughout the book. Most of these expressions are used by Fatima. Her hybrid language attests to her in-betweenness. It also attunes the Anglophone reader to intercultural dialogue through linguistic and cultural translation. The following excerpt explicates my point about language and cultural mediation:

> Fatima was no *hamara*, no stupid donkey. That was how she came to understand that she, Fatima Abdul Aziz Abdullah, would die in Los Angeles, California, USA. (…) This woman, Scheherazade, of whom *rawis*—bards in villages from Iran to India—had spun tales since the time of Caliph Rashid Al-Harun, was herself the greatest storyteller of all time. (Yunis, 2009, p. 14)

The 'alien' language in Yunis`s novel ensures a momentary ebb of the dominant language of the text. Just as the sea flows away from the shore, so does English recede from the immigrant`s speech for a split second only to return with glosses. This brief juncture opens English, the de facto national language in the United States, to the influence of another language. The metaphorical flow illustrated in the quote above is cushioned by literal translation before closing in and wrapping the foreign. At the same time, cushioning of a cultural reference to "rawis" or "bards in villages reciter of poetry and tales" invites the reader to expansive transborder oral culture from which this post-9/11 narrative of Arab American experience originates.

Often considered an implicit reference to another work of literature, a person, or an incident, allusion relies on and appeals to the reader`s common knowledge and experience with the writer (Cuddon, 2013, p. 25). An allusion enriches the work by association. *The Night Counter*`s structural allusion to *One Thousand and Nights* may be disorienting for the reader who is not familiar with the frame story, which takes multiple digressions before the narrative becomes a meaningful whole. Nevertheless, the winding plotline of the frame story deepens the novel`s formal hybridity, thus indexing the centrality of the transnationality of narratives. Furthermore, it bestows a degree of orality to the written genre. *The Night Counter* advances a theory of hybridity which registers the mingling of the stories. Supplemented with Scheherazade`s intervening observations, Fatima`s nightly accounts speak of this mixing of narratives to form a heterogenous Arab America. The novel fights against aphasia, a language disorder resulting from memory loss, that refuses to acknowledge the Arab American participation in American life for over a century. To borrow from Behdad (2005), *The Night Counter* reminds this "forgetful nation" of its entanglement with other lands and their cultures while consolidating its own cultural identity.

3.2.2.4. Gendered Space of The Night Counter: Focus on Women

The Night Counter`s central main character is a strong immigrant. Fatima manages to create a second home in her adopted country even after she loses her first husband when she is pregnant for her first child and two sons to a natural disaster. Unlike her two husbands, Fatima is a survivor. Fatima`s first husband passes away at thirty-nine. Her second husband, Ibrahim, remains a rootless immigrant commuting to the Detroit Metropolitan Airport twice a week and waiting for KLM Flight 6470 until he dies in transit. He seeks solace in watching "Arabs from Lebanon and Jordan" and hearing "the sound of his childhood dinners in their hyperbolic greetings" and "smells of his mother's evening gatherings in the heavy perfume of the overly

made-up grandmothers and in the sweat of the young men" (pp. 19-20). Unlike her late husbands, Fatima manages to build a garden in the United States. In a sense, she recreates Lebanon in Detroit and Los Angeles, the two places she has lived in the United States.

The Night Counter presents a heterogeneous view on women's sexuality. Fatima holds conservative opinions of marriage, extramarital sexual encounter, and pregnancy. Fatima is offended by Decimal's teenage pregnancy and is embarrassed that her youngest daughter is single at thirty-nine. She admits that Lena`s being single causes her "too much pain to talk about" (p. 213). Unlike her mother, Soraya is more liberal about having sex out of wedlock. Likewise, Brenda, Hala's daughter, is often involved in promiscuous sexual behavior while Dina, Randa's younger daughter, keeps her virginity.

The *Night Counter* presents several mothers arranged on continuum ranging from self-sacrificing and overprotective ones to almost non-existent and irresponsible ones. According to Fatima, her mother sacrificed her life for Fatima`s happiness. Fatima, too, protects her daughters from harm and keeps their secrets from their father. Laila, her eldest daughter dreads the prospect of her sons being detained on account of their newfound religiosity. She prays:

> God, as my sons turn to you, protect them from the dangers their love for you could bring them. Also God, I don't want anyone or anything—not the Red Crescent, not the CIA, not you—no one but a marriageable woman to take away my sons away from me. I hope you understand it. (Yunis, 2009, p. 115)

Laila`s prayer registers her fear of losing her sons and points at the extratextual reality of detention of persons of Arab heritage. Miriam's motherhood borders on obsession. Rock's "spatial and mathematical adeptness" (p. 241) earns him a partial scholarship to study engineering at Penn State, yet he cannot pursue it due to his mother's "oppressive love" (p. 242). Nevertheless, his mother cannot object to Rock's joining the military as she does not wish to look "like an antiwar war hero's wife" (p. 241). Miriam suppresses her emotions when Rock is recruited as civilian construction worker in Iraq. Moreover, In *The Night Counter*`s story world Arab American mothers are run their children`s business (Nadia), and pay their mortgage (Soraya), serve as their gynecologist when their daughter and granddaughter give birth (Hala). *The Night Counter* repositions immigrant Arab womanhood grounded in history and family.

3.3. DISCUSSION: FROM WORD TO THE WORLD

This section functions as brief prelude to the discussion in Chapter 5 and connects *Saffron Dreams* and *The Night Counter* to their immediate contexts. In an open letter to President Barack Hussein Obama, Abdullah (2009a) both congratulated the President for taking "remarkable steps to address the global tension between US and the Muslim world" and criticized him for not allowing sufficient space for Muslim Americans in his administration. She reminded her addressee that Muslim Americans "came from distant lands to settle here in search of better lives, where their children could be freer and lead their lives without fear." Like her author surrogate protagonist, Abdullah chose a sentimental language to win the president`s sympathy, telling him about her childhood in Karachi. She compared "the sound of gunshot" there to "a much safer Austin, Texas, where it is so quiet that often fireworks on fourth of July startle" her daughter. She added that they "cherish the safety" and "the opportunities that this land gives." She praised "the remarkable ways in which this country comes together always after a tragedy—more united, more coherent, and more accepting." Abdullah emphasized that she was a member of "the silent majority who lead great American lives." In her view, the non-newsworthy silent majority are "law-abiding citizens of this land and have whole-heartedly adopted the laws of this land." They pay "taxes regularly and participate in the celebrations of this land just as [they] hold dear the culture of the land [they] left behind." Moreover, they "raise wholesome children—multilingual and multicultural with pluralistic hearts" and establish intercultural "bridges with other communities" by having "a diverse circle of friends." The author underlined her cultural hybridity when she wrote they follow "the traditions of the land" and "take the best of both worlds" to shape their present and future. Her concluding remarks read "At least, we try" before asserting that Muslim Americans "are for this country because for many, many years we have been loyal citizens of this land." It is impossible determine whether the former president has read the letter. That is not the point, either. What`s crucial is that by posting this letter to CNN and then releasing it on her personal blog, Abdullah took upon herself the mission of representing 'good' Muslim Americans, who she calls "the silent majority." She also performs her culturally hybrid self.

Likewise, in a blogpost dated September 11, 2021, Yunis (2021) explained how she involuntarily "acquired a voice as a Muslim writer." An acquaintance calls her at 6:15 a.m. on 9/11. "[Her] people," informs the man on the phone "flew into the World Trade Center" as if cracking a bad joke. Another person, an Irish neighbour, covers the door to her apartment with an American flag explaining "So if anyone comes looking for your people, they'll know you're

one of the good ones." Yunis describes the man and the question of her own perceived membership to the nation as follows:

> He was Irish, like from Ireland. He did not speak like an American because he was not American. I was. But at that moment, I knew that, despite his Irish brogue, he was more American than I could ever be. (Yunis, 2021).

Clearly the exchange between Yunis and her Iris neighbor attests to a situation in which many Arab and Muslim Americans found themselves in the wake of the attacks. Even those born in the United States found their membership suspect in the wake of 9/11 on account of their perceived association with the hijackers. Reportedly, this is when Yunis decided to write on "[her] people's" behalf with a determination to prove that the categories of Muslim and Arab are not a one catch-all. *The Night Counter* tells an Arab American story to dismantle the "paradigms of terrorism and oppression of women" (Yunis, 2021). Yunis debunks the stereotypical Hollywood images of Arab men as "brute murderers, sleazy rapists, religious fanatics, oil-rich dimwits, and abusers of women" in her humorous rendition (Shaheen, 2003, p. 172). She also writes an alternative version of US history. Yunis reinvents Arab American experience in a post-9/11 era amid fierce anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment.

One only needs to remember a few sordid stories and images from the Guantánamo Bay to also recall the National Security Entry-Exit Registration System (NSEERS) or INS Special Registration, which targeted males from a select group of mostly Muslim countries to register their whereabouts.[15] Bayoumi (2011) reports how the attack and the ensuing disciplinary policies sent shockwaves through Arab and Muslim communities across the country. In his account, every Arab person he is acquainted with in New York "had either been visited or knew someone who had been visited by the FBI" (n.p.). *The Night Counter* skillfully parodies this intimidation. By allowing a first-generation Arab American immigrant to tell her extensive family`s story and by employing immortal Scheherazade to bear witness to the lives of Fatima's progeny, Yunis diversifies Arab American experience. Her literary intervention questions the dominant clichéd representations of Arabs by the entertainment industry. Yunis's depiction of the variegated paths of life of a single Arab American clan constitutes an act of resistance. Interrelated tales the narrator relates from the individual perspective of each character following Scheherazade's daily visits to Fatima Abdullah's relatives across the United States and the Middle East point to Arab American diversity. The novel undermines homogenizing narratives that depict all Arab men as terrorists and all Arab women as oppressed bodies lacking

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[15] The program was suspended in 2016.

subjectivity. Yunis`s novel gives a lie to the clash of civilizations thesis by foregrounding strategic hybridization of the characters populating the story world of *The Night Counter*.

Yunis`s and Abdullah`s novels need to be read in relation to the cultural texts produced by the loose network of Arab and Muslim American women who vigorously countered vitriolic media representations by providing positive literary representations of Arab/Muslims in their post-9/11 fictions.[16] Laila Lalami, the author of a witty 12-step guide to stereotype Muslims is one of these vocal literary voices. Other authors include Alicia Erian with her novel, *Towelhead* (2005); Frances Noble, the author of *The New Belly Dancer of the Galaxy* (2007); novelist and poet Laila Halaby with her novels *West of the Jordan* (2003) and *Once in a Promised Land* (2008), and poetry book *My Name on His Tongue* (2012); Susan Muaddi Darraj with *The Inheritance of Exile: Stories from South Philly* (2007) and *A Curious Land: Stories from Home* (2015); Diana Abu-Jaber, with novels *Crescent* (2003), *Origin* (2007), and *Birds of Paradise* (2011); and Randa Jarrar, the author of *A Map of Home* (2008) to name a few. Burgeoning field of "Muslim fiction" has seen titles such as Mohya Kahf`s *The Girl in Tangerine Scarf* (2006), featuring an immigrant female protagonist in the 1970s Indiana; Sahar Alam`s debut *The Groom to Have Been* (2008), featuring an Indian Muslim in New York in the wake of 9/11; Maryam Sullivan`s *The Size of Mustard Seed* (2009), about a young Muslim woman in Massachusetts. Though this list is not exhaustive, it shows that women authors have produced remarkable volumes of fiction in the first decade of the twentieth century. Writing in the feminist Arab American tradition, Yunis joins this sisterhood of authors with *The Night Counter*. Likewise, Abdullah carves a niche for herself as a spokesperson of Muslim Americans of Pakistani origin. A survey of literature reveals that Abdullah`s fiction aligns well with Nafisa Hajj`s *The Writing on My Forehead* (2010) and *The Sweetness of Tears* (2011).

These fictions also have their non-fiction companions. Anthologies such as *Living Islam Out Loud: American Muslim Women Speak* (2005), edited by Saleemah Abdul-Ghafur feature women`s voice. Likewise, *I Speak for Myself: American Women on Being Muslim* (2011), edited by Maria M Ebrahimji and Zahra T Suratwala, feature 40 American women under the age of 40 sharing their experiences as Muslim women in the United States. The women are united

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[16] Oftentimes, these woman authors are in conversation with their male contemporaries, too. I chose to focus on women`s writing because celebrity male authors` books are taken up for scholarly analysis elsewhere and more women novelists have flooded the market with their words. Two less appraised works worth mentioning are Kamran Pasha`s *The Mother of Believers* (2009) and Ayaf Akhtar`s *American Darvish* (2012). In addition, Akhtar`s *Homeland Elegies* (2020) is a noteworthy account that connects a heartland town in the United States to Central Europe and Afghanistan. Akhtar is also the writer and co-producer of popular 9/11 drama *Sleeper Cell*. In addition, Sajidah Ali`s *Saints and Misfits* (2017) features a female Muslim teenager.

by faith and citizenship but aim to communicate their distinct voices. In comparison, its sequel, *All-American: 45 American Men on Being Muslim Paperback* (2012), edited by Wajahat Ali and Zahra T Suratwala, portray the heterogeneity among Muslim American men. Besides, while they are worthy of critical acclaim, titles such as *Love, InshAllah: The Secret love Lives of American Muslim Women* (Maznavi & Mattu, 2012) inadvertently invoke the Orientalist fantasies.

The so-called "terrorist decade" has also witnessed scholarly research. In addition to those I cite throughout the thesis, critical sources include *How does it feel to be a problem?: Being young and Arab in America* (Bayoumi, 2008); Arab Detroit 9/11: Life in the Terror Decade (Abraham et al., 2011); *Arab America: Gender, cultural politics, and activism* (Naber, 2012); and *This Muslim American life: Dispatches from the war on terror* (Bayoumi, 2015). Though the initial fervor appears to have been subsided, research on Muslims in the United States continue. Muna Ali`s *Young Muslim America: Faith, Community, and Belonging* addresses the alleged identity crisis among Muslim youth—"the offspring of converts and the immigrants"—through field work in urban spaces and various locales in Arizona and Chicago as well as the imperative to generate and represent a distinctly American Muslim culture (Ali, 2018, p. 5). *The Night Counter* and *Saffron Dreams* may best be understood against the backdrop of other ethnographic writing.

In this chapter, I analyzed *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009) and *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b) with respect their transnational literary geographies, the central characters` engagement with sociopolitical incidents, and linguistic hybridity. Moreover, I traced the protagonists` gendered concerns and accounts. In the last section, I contextualized the novels by referencing other works that take issue with the repercussions of September 11. Novelist and writing teacher Anne Lamott (1995, p. 38) insightfully pointed out that "writing can be a pretty desperate endeavor" because it concerns "our deepest needs: our need to be visible, to be heard, (…) to make sense of our of lives, [and to] belong." For Yunis (2009) and Abdullah (2009b) literature is a tool to perform belonging to the United States. Assimilation requires giving up on the old ways as Abdullah`s author surrogate, Arissa, endorses; challenging the vision of nation that ostracizes Arab and Muslim Americans entails claiming distinctly Arab American history as Yunis does.

CHAPTER 4: HYBRIDITY AND IN-BETWEENNESS IN *ACROSS A HUNDRED MOUNTAINS* AND *RETURN TO SENDER*

4.1. INTRODUCTION

Building on the discussion in the previous chapter, which interrogated hybridity and in-betweenness from the perspective of Muslim immigrant women and revealed how Abdullah (2009b) and Yunis (2009) opposed the widespread vilification of Arab and Muslim communities in post-9/11 American society, this chapter explores the hybridity and in-betweenness of migrant characters from Mexico. Migrants forge hybrid identities thanks to their movement across the US-Mexico border. Their double visions are observable in their bilingual narratives. This chapter problematizes the myth that nations are homogeneous units whose members descend from some primordial ancestors who lived in isolation from other linguistic communities and ethnic groups. It regards migration as a ubiquitous human action. Linguistic hybridity and cultural in-betweenness resulting from contiguous cross-border interaction is a necessary outcome. Furthermore, it defends that the migrant character is an in-between person who straddles their home and host countries. Their memories transcend state borders and trace transnational migrant maps. Their bilingual language use indexes their hybridity. To provide evidence to these claims, this chapter interrogates two narratives that portray migration to the United States from its southern neighbor in ways that are not sanctioned by the state.[17] I conclude that the two works of fiction portray migration as a complex social process in which transborder geographical locations and migrants` experiences gain new meanings in their relation to migrant and non-migrant others.

As discussed in Introduction, the United States-Mexico border is scene to increasingly intricate militarization strategies. Border militarization has intensified since the mid-1990s (Andreas, 2009; Dunn, 2009; Nagengast, 1998; Nevins, 2008, 2010). The United States erected the first

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[17] The term "immigrant" implies "the standpoint of the migrant-receiving nation-state" and refers to "outsiders coming in, presumably to stay" (Nicholas De Genova, 2002, p. 421). Departing from this term, which I deployed throughout Chapter 3, I introduce the concept of "migrant" here to denote the characters` circular pattern of movement between Mexico and the United States. In addition, I deploy descriptors such as "irregular," "clandestine," and "undocumented" to define migrants whose entrance into the United States is not sanctioned by the state. I avoid deploying punitive and discriminatory descriptors such as "illegal," "extra-legal," and "unauthorized" except in places where I refer to legislation that uses these terms or quote specific occurrences in the primary texts. Accordingly, I define the adult members of the Cruzes and Mari in *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009) as "undocumented migrants." See Brown (2013) and Chomsky (2014) for critical evaluation of these concepts. In addition, there is a growing awareness that the term "illegal alien" denigrates undocumented immigrants by branding humans as 'illegals' as opposed to focusing on their actions. See Ngai (2014) for an elaborate discussion of the emergence of the term "illegal alien" in association with prohibition and smuggling along the Mexico-US border.

border wall in the mid-1990s, pushing irregular migrants to remote areas (Nevins, 2010), but border policing intensified within the post-September 11 security environment (Andreas, 2009; T. Miller, 2014, 2019a, 2019b; T. A. Miller, 2005). Since September 11, border enforcement has become extremely stringent. Undocumented migration is conflated with terrorism through the rhetoric of war on terror (Chavez, 2013a, 2013b). The introduction of the Homeland Security Act in 2002 set into motion the emergence of the US Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), a paramilitary force governing border control and immigration. In addition, the ascendancy of military strategies for border management has turned the United States into "the Homeland Security State" (Nicholas De Genova, 2007). Tactics of border management include pushing irregular migration along the US-Mexico border to dangerous desert areas and employment of large numbers of Border Patrol agents and surveillance devices (De León, 2015; Jones, 2016). Human consequences of the border militarization have been devastating: the funnel effect of the aggressive Prevention through Deterrence border strategy tasks elements of the nature with making border deaths invisible (S. N. Chambers et al., 2019; De León, 2015; Doty, 2011; Jones, 2016; Rubio-Goldsmith et al., 2006). Moreover, once physically inside the border, migrants face arrest and expulsion. In fact, the border follows migrants away from the actual physical border to the interior with the constant threat of removal. Addressing Latino/a and Mexican migration to the United States, Ono (2012) observes how the objective of monitoring terrorist activities has meant the implementation of substantive surveillance of migrants not only at the border regions but also in the interior of the country. Migrant deportation creates a spectacle that enacts a scene of migrant illegality and exclusion to create vulnerable communities whose labor is abused in shadow economies (Nicholas De Genova, 2002; Nicholas De Genova, 2004; Nicholas De Genova, 2013; Nicholas De Genova & Peutz, 2010). The spectacle of illegality renders undocumented residents prime targets for abuse, detainable and deportable.

This chapter explores two works of fiction whose Latina authors seek to achieve different goals.18 Across a Hundred Mountains (Grande, 2006) gives much weight to the Mexican side of the transborder movement and brings insights into the factors that impel people to take the dangerous northbound journey. The central migrant figure passes as a US citizen at the border, thus enjoying the benefits her status bestows on her. In contrast, Return to Sender (Alvarez, 2009b) focuses on the events that take place in the United States before the central migrant

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[18] I use the term "Latina author" to refer to writers who have roots in Spanish-speaking countries and self-identify as women. See Kafka (2000, pp. ix-x) *"Stradling la gringa": Gatekeeping in Literature by Contemporary Latina Women* for an elaborate treatment of the term in relation to the notion of "Chicana author." Chicano/a refers to people of Mexican ancestry living in the United States (Lomelí, Oliva, & Emmanouilidou, 2019, p. 1). Grande identifies as a Chicana author.

character is deported to Mexico. Grande`s protagonist undergoes a transformation through her border crossing experience. In contrast, transformation is not unidirectional in Alvarez`s fiction for young readers. The migrant character engages in intercultural communication acts that transform all parties involved.

Across a Hundred Mountains (Grande, 2006) features Juana García, a fourteen-year-old girl who leaves her home in Mexico in search of her father. Juana meets Adelina Vasquez, a US citizen sex worker, in a Tijuana jail. The two women become inseparable when Adelina`s pimp murders Adelina. The novel comprises brief chapters entitled either "Juana" or "Adelina." The two characters are revealed to be the same person toward the end of the novel. The sections about Juana as a child in an unnamed town in Mexico, a teen sex worker in search of her father in Tijuana, and an adult social worker in Los Angeles alternate throughout the book. Descriptive passages by the omniscient narrator intermingle with dialogue. As Brown (2013) accurately identifies, the alternating narrative style generates fluidity between the two personas. Moreover, the disruption of chronological time underscores the stages of the migrant`s multiple transformations. The novel illustrates the challenges of migration from Mexico to the United States by focusing on the hardship those left behind face, the dangers involved in crossing the border, and the migrant`s splintered sense of belonging. Though the novel`s stereotypical characterization and intensely melodramatic plotting may be off-putting, its detailing of the desperation that forces people to leave their families behind deserves appreciation. The novel is noteworthy in its ability to present a woman`s perspective of irregular migration, its dual plotting, and non-chronological narrative style.

Return to Sender (Alvarez, 2009b) is a story about two families in Vermont. The Paquettes own a dairy farm and hire the Cruzes, an undocumented family from Chiapas, Mexico, when Mr. Paquette suffers severe injury. The story is told in two voices. The omniscient narrator focuses on the farmer`s younger son: Tyler. Mari, the Mexican family`s eldest daughter, tells her version of the events via letters and diary entries over the course of twelve months. The Cruzes are a mixed status family: the adults and Mari lack legal status while her two younger sisters are US citizens. Lacking legal status in the United States has consequences for the family: the Cruzes live in constant fear of deportation and are unable to report to the police that Mrs. Cruz is missing. The story was built for the express purpose of criticizing American immigration policy. Alvarez (2009b, p. 286) argues that Operation Return to Sender, an immigration sweep launched in 2006, caused the arrest and removal of adult immigrants without criminal records even though the expressed purpose of the bill was to intercept and remove immigrants with

criminal records. The novel`s mission is to educate its young audiences, Anglophone US citizens, about the forces that push Mexican farmers to leave their land, the dangers of irregular border crossing, and the difficulties migrant workers face in the United Studies.

A sizeable number of literary critics have turned their attention to the narratives that address migration from Mexico to the United States. For purposes of brevity, I trace this scholarly endeavor's origins to José David Saldívar`s *Border Matters: Remapping American Cultural Studies* (1997). Saldívar posits borders as a space of liminality. He argues that border is more than a transitional space between nations and states of being. It has its own mode of existence. As well, he theorizes migrants` liminality as a permanent social reality characterized by "intercultural and transnational experiences" (pp. 104-107). As Delgadillo (2011) observes in her review of early twenty-first century fictions, though migration remains a key theme in Latino/a/x fictions, the way in which it is represented differs tremendously. Fictions of the twentieth century addressed the migrants` adjustment to their new surroundings, their social exclusion and financial exploitation in the United States. In contrast, the literature of the twenty-first century addresses fatal border crossing attempts, violence at the hands of the smugglers and the separation of families due to deportations.

Two recent manuscripts serve as comprehensive resources. Marking the introduction of Operation Gatekeeper, a border security measure launched in 1994, as a turning point, *Telling the Story of Mexican Migration: Chronicle, Literature, and Film from the Post-Gatekeeper Period* (R. Brown, 2013) and *Documenting the Undocumented: Latino/a Narratives and Social Justice in the Era of Operation Gatekeeper* (Caminero-Santangelo, 2016) investigate the literary representations of the undocumented migration in the late twentieth century and the early twenty first century. Brown concludes that the literary and filmic texts under investigation regard migration as a heroic quest for personal growth, community renewal, In addition, they grant discursive visibility to the figure of undocumented migrant as an active agent of change in contrast to its mass media representation as the feared and unwanted collective Other. Caminero-Santangelo notes that narratives penned by Chicano/as after the 1990s are replete with the trauma of border crossing and threat of losing a loved one to deportation. Below, I direct my attention to scholarly writing that indexes the primary texts in this chapter.

Grande`s debut novel has been the focus of much scholarly interest. Ruf (2009) revealed how the novel represents the feminization of undocumented migration from Mexico. Okparanta

(2010) investigated Grande's presentation of home and family from a the perspective of feminist studies and concluded that the novel reintroduces the male figure to Chicana literature by making his absence pronounced. The researcher also reflects on Grande`s characterization of women and interprets Lupe`s madness as an act of "quiet resistance" to patriarchy (p. 2). de Veritch Woodside (2012) analyzed *Across a Hundred Mountains* with regard to the effects of transnational migration on Mexican women. The author suggested that Grande depicts the presence of Border Patrol agents at the US-Mexico borderlands in a positive light (p. 84). While this may be an overstatement, she accurately points to the fact that Grande glosses over the circumstances of Juana/Adelina`s upward mobility and career advancement in the United States, which happens thanks to her adoption by a retired Latino teacher. Grande presents the reader with a transformed Juana seventeen years after she traveled north but never details how this transformation happened. Grande`s construction of the narrative suggests that metamorphosis took place in the border town of Tijuana. Brown (2013) treated the book as a coming-of-age tale and investigated how the social process of irregular Mexican migration is represented in Grande`s debut novel. The researcher applauds Juana`s skills in navigating through "the heterotopic spaces of migration" (p. 84). Lozano-Alonso (2015) investigated the metaphor of space in Grande`s work by drawing on Edward Soya`s definition of interstitial space. The researcher underscored the role different interstitial places play, such as a Tijuana prison, where Juana stays as an inmate for a crime she did not commit, and a hotel room that functions as a brothel. As we learn from Henri Lefebvre and Edward Soya, in architecture interstitial places allow merging of two distinct places. In literature, interstitial places, such as the border town of Tijuana, allow characters to forge new identities for themselves. Juana reinvents herself as an English-speaking Latina there. Caminero-Santangelo (2016) considered *Across a Hundred Mountains* to reveal how Grande`s literary representation of border crossing serves a testimonio function regarding collective trauma. In an interesting analysis of the role of prostitution in Grande`s novel, González (2016) made an analogy between the protagonist`s voluntary engagement in sex work and the immigrant author`s writing in her second language.

Alvarez`s *Return to Sender* has received academic analyses as well though some lack depth. Stewart (2012) suggested that educators adopt *Return to Sender* in their literacy curriculum, because the narrative depicts a habitat in which many immigrant adolescents would find themselves. She points out the narrative`s success in presenting the Latina protagonist`s lived experience and argues that exposure to this novel would benefit immigrant female learners, because the narrative mirrors their culture, race, and migration experiences (pp. 17, 21). I concur with the researcher that the Latina character is relatable, and reading her perspective will

empower undocumented immigrant readers. Likewise, analyzing *Return to Sender* in comparison to ten other young adult narratives in English, Cummins (2013) posited that the depiction of young migrant character from Mexico advocates for "empathetic outreach" endorsed in Gloria Anzaldua's borderlands thinking. Furthermore, the researcher commends Alvarez`s technique of presenting the first-person perspective of the migrant protagonist. Similarly, Martínez (2013) noted how Alvarez`s young characters forge friendships based on cross-cultural dialogue and thus transcend racial, gender, geographic, linguistic, and cultural barriers. Socolovsky (2015) highlighted epistolary resistance and transnational citizenship in Mari`s letter writing. Taking a slightly different approach from the others and calling upon Kwame Anthony Appiah`s notion of "partial cosmopolitanism" Caminero-Santengalo (2016) argued that Alvarez`s *Return to Sender* establishes an ethics of solidarity across difference. The researcher recognizes Mari`s lack of status in the United States as a problem which requires an ethical response across national-origin lines. The author asserts that the novel deploys "an ethic of cosmopolitanism, rather than the narrower ethic of filiation/affiliation, in order to suggest obligation *across* lines of citizenship and national origin" (p. 125, emphasis in original). Whereas Brochin and Medina (2017) proposed *Return to Sender* as a critical text in transnational children`s literature, Fernández García (2017) revealed how the two central adolescents overcome their identity crises and dilemmas of belonging by adopting an ethics of world citizenship.

My analysis of the two novels expands the discussions in the scholarly investigations I briefly reviewed above. However, it differs from them in various aspects. I conduct a multifaceted investigation that traces geographical, sociopolitical, and linguistic spaces the novels encompass. Previous studies fail to acknowledge the role Juana`s acquisition of English plays in her transformation and gaining a hybrid identity in Grande`s novel. Likewise, extant research into Alvarez`s novel does not sufficiently address the role bilingualism plays. I reveal how fluency in English empowers the migrant figures. Further, my multilayered analysis entails that I devote a section to the gendered nature of irregular transborder movement. Finally, I interpret my findings by revealing the connections between the migrant characters and their creators. I draw on Grande`s and Alvarez`s nonfictional writing and interviews to strengthen my analysis. This practice allows me to interpret the immigrant authors` politics in creating texts that seek and model constructive intercultural dialogue. Turning my attention to the female migrant figures in these novels enables me to reinterpret the notions of "nation", "culture", "border", and "agency" in the post-9/11 US context.

4.2. FINDINGS

Across a Hundred Mountains (Grande, 2006) and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b) vary in terms of their target audience. The former is a novel for adult readers, while the latter is for younger readers. I have divided my analysis into several sections. First, I direct my attention to the geographical spaces the two novels encompass. The second part delves into the sociopolitical spaces migrant characters occupy. In this part, I explain the migrant protagonists` experiences by referring to the larger sociopolitical issues. I argue that while Grande shies away from openly engaging with or criticizing the immigration policies in the United States, Alvarez takes a direct approach. I devote the third part to analyzing the hybrid language use in the two novels. I highlight the authors` distinctive narrative choices to represent their migrant Latina characters` linguistic transformation that accompanies or results from transborder migration. In the fourth part, I elaborate on the gendered experiences of the female migrants. In the final section, I extend my discussion from the migrant characters to the immigrant authors.

4.2.1. Across a Hundred Mountains

4.2.1.1. The Migrant`s Transnational Space

Across a Hundred Mountains illustrates the in-betweenness of the female migrant by featuring her in two locales: Mexico and the United States. Most of the events transpire in a nameless town in the state of Guerrero, Mexico (Grande, 2006, p. 105). The town is located on a ferocious river that separates the migrant character`s poverty-stricken home base, modelled on the author`s birthplace, from the wealthy north (Grande, 2012). One calamity befalls the Garcías after another. Rain is a relentless adversary. Joining forces with the river, it multiplies the impact poverty has had on the family. The narrator details a particular day, which sets off a chain of catastrophic events as follows:

> Juana`s body trembled as she lowered her legs into the cold water. The water reached to her waist. She guided herself by the flame of the candle her mother held and made her way to the table, pushing plastic cups, clothes, pieces of cardboard, soggy tortillas, flowers, and candlesticks out of the way. She glanced in the direction where the altar should have been, but all she saw was water. (Grande, 2006, p. 7)

Lupe/Amá, the main character`s mother, leaves the shack to look for her husband, Miguel/Apá, entrusting Anita, her baby daughter, to Juana, the central character. When Lupe and Miguel return, Juana is asleep, and her baby sister is missing. Don Elías, the owner of the mortuary,

provides materials and services for the funeral (pp. 33-35). Miguel/Apá decides to go to the United States to cover the expenses incurred by Anita`s funeral. He also aspires to lift his family out of poverty. During a beautiful Sunday outing, Miguel gazes at "tiny colorful houses in the distance" (2006, p. 19) and dreams about owning a flood and leak-free house with utilities: "See those little lights flickering on? They have electricity there, running water, and gas" (p. 20). Pointing at the houses made of brick and concrete, he declares his migrant`s dream: "One day we will live in a house like that" (p. 21). His wife responds: "Si, viejo algún día, but we must not think about that right now" trying to dissuade him from leaving (p. 21). Grande suggests that men`s aspiration to migrate north leads to women`s abandonment.

It is crucial to remember, at this stage, that the other side of the river represents the United States, popularly called *El Otro Lado* (the Other Side). It is the promised land of riches. Miguel`s friend kindles dreams of relative wealth in Miguel through his letter. In addition, Miguel García is a *campesino*, a farm laborer with limited land ownership (p. 28). As he confides in his adolescent daughter, "working as a campesino, earning a few pesos a day isn`t enough" to sustain his family (ibid). He leaves the day after the protagonist turns twelve.[19] Two years later, Juana sets out her own migrant journey.

Though not eventless, the migrant trail through Mexico remains obscure. Cuernavaca, the capital of Mexico's Morelos state, and Mexico City emerge as transit points on the migrant trail. The young Latina navigates the route with the help of other Mexicans who claim knowledge of the path to the United States (R. Brown, 2013). For instance, Doña Martina provides Juana with a map of Mexico and traces the route that the girl needs to follow to reach the US-Mexico border (p. 141). Moreover, Don Tomás, a seasoned migrant, maps the trail for the young migrant as follows:

> First, you catch the train to Cuernavaca and then take the bus to Mexico City (….) Then you transfer to another bus that will take you all the way to Tijuana. In about two days you'll get to the border. Then you need to find a coyote, and one way or another he'll take you to the other side. (Grande, 2006, p. 113)

These sterile descriptions of the migrant trail through Mexico contrast Juana`s lived experience. The girl loses her identity documents when she misses the bus during a bathroom break. But she

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[19] Migrants` dream of finding employment in the north and lifting their family out of poverty is a well-thematized topic. See Grande`s memoir to gain a deeper insight into this issue. As for filmic representations see, for instance, *Norteado/Northless* (2009), directed by Rigoberto Perezcano, about the frustrated attempts by Andrés García, a 20-something man from Oaxaca, Mexico to ensure himself, his wife, and their two children a better life.

accumulates information and acquires survival skills from other migrants along the trail. Juana takes notice of the border talk among other irregular migrants: "Is El Otro Lado far away, Papi?" asks a little girl to her father, who explains that they need to cross "like thieves" for lack of valid documents (p. 143). Juana`s consultation with experienced travelers about the path to follow points to the discourse of migrant networks and community-based nature of irregular migration.

Tijuana, the largest city in Baja California, Mexico, emerges as a crucial site of personal transformation in *Across a Hundred Mountains*. Bordering San Diego, its American counterpart, Tijuana is a major migration hub and a contact zone in northwest Mexico. Illicit activities abound and opportunities arise in this border city (Canclini, 2005). On her first night in Tijuana, the police mistake Juana for a robber. Juana bonds with Adelina, a US-citizen sex worker in prison, and they move in together after serving time in detention. Juana engages in sex work to gain access to information about her father`s clandestine border crossing. At the same time, Tijuana is a space of linguistic contact. Juana`s first encounter with English takes place in a hotel room, which doubles as a brothel: "Yeah, gotta work," declares Adelina and adds, "Necesito ir a chambear. You know what? I`m going to teach you to speak English" (p. 176). As the quote proves, code-switching is an integral feature of life in this border town. It is a linguistic contact zone where Spanish and English mix and blend.

Im/mobility across the US-Mexico border comprises a major theme in *Across a Hundred Mountains,* which opens with the scene where Juana/Adelina reaches her father`s makeshift grave "in the middle of the border" (Grande, 2006, p. 16). The woman removes the rocks that hide her father one by one (p. 3). When she sees the remains of her father's hand clutching a rosary that she had given him as a parting gift, the woman bursts with anger (p. 4). "Your father was bitten by a snake. The coyote probably left him here thinking la migra would find him. Look, here they come now,'" explains the old coyote. The narrator notes: "But they were nineteen years too late to save her father" (p. 4).

Another primary setting in the novel is Los Angeles, California. The city becomes Juana/Adelina`s home when she is almost sixteen (p. 21). In a twist of luck that can only happen in fairy tales, Juana/Adelina meets a homeless named Carlos, who sends the young woman to a sheltered place to spend the night. Don Ernesto, a retired teacher and the owner of the hostel, adopts the young woman (p. 29). This way, Juana/Adelina finds a new home and a surrogate

father in Los Angeles. As de Veritch Woodside (2012) accurately points out, Grande glosses over Juana/Adelina`s experiences in the United States and the details of her upward social mobility, which comes through learning English and receiving proper education. The reader meets a transformed Juana seventeen years after she traveled north but never discovers how this transformation happened. Instead, Grande suggests that the Latina migrant`s metamorphosis took place in the border town of Tijuana through language learning and gaining access to information about the border. Moreover, Juana`s acquisition of Adelina`s citizenship documents allows her to cross the border effortlessly, go to college, and pursue a career as a social worker, but the author does not elaborate how these life-changing events happened. By morphing into Adelina, Juana forges a hybrid identity that both encompasses her life before leaving her village and experiences on the migrant trail.

Furthermore, in stark contrast to Alvarez`s novel for younger readers, Grande`s story does not dwell on encounters between its Latina protagonist and US citizens who have Anglophone names. When she is in Tijuana, Euro-descendant Americans do not have a lasting impact on Juana though the city bustles with American tourists. Neither does Juana affect them in any meaningful way during her sojourn there. Juana`s encounter with others is limited to Latina/o characters. Adelina is a Chicana: a US citizen of Mexican origin. Adelina's boyfriend has a Latino name, too. This Latina/o-centric narrative continues when the woman crosses the border using her friend`s identification documents and 'proving' her belonging to the north of by speaking English to the agents at the port of entry. The female protagonist dates a Latino doctor named Sebastian Luna. His relatives` names and the food they make indicate that they are of Mexican descent. Juana/Adelina contacts Latina/os except for Laura, the "battered woman" at the shelter, whose racial background remains indeterminate (p. 63) and Diana Parker, who Juana/Adelina brings to the shelter and feels a deep connection to due to their shared guilt of causing the death of a loved one. Grande imagines a segregated Latina/o life in the United States, thus limiting the opportunities for intercultural encounters.

The main character visits numerous locations in California including San Diego, San Clemente, San Luis Obisco, and Santa Barbara in search of her father. Juana/Adelina interviews an undocumented man called Miguel García in Watsonville, a city in Santa Cruz County. Whereas the man shares her missing father`s name, he is just another Mexican who has lost his memory of family and home/Mexico and started a new family in the United States. Though he yearns to reunite with his Mexican family, he cannot do so. Juana/Adelina`s description of the man`s loss of Mexican identity is a telling comment on undocumented farm workers` existence in

California. Since the mid-1990s, the US-Mexico border has become less porous and more fatal; migrant workers cannot continue their cyclical movements anymore. As a result, they create a semblance of family life with other undocumented migrants and continue living tenuous lives in the shadows (Chavez, 2013b). Grande incorporates this fact into her fiction to remind readers of migrants who have become 'lost' to their Mexican families due to prohibitive border policy and immigration enforcement in the United States.

San Bernardino, a city located in Southern California, is another migrant space. It is intriguing, though, that Grande depicts this place solely as a Latina/o city as well. On a weekend visit with Sebastian`s mother, Juana/Adelina meets Sebastian`s aunts Carla, Norma, Leticia, and Gloria (p. 197). Grande depicts in detail the stereotypically feminine space of the kitchen, where the Luna women make tamales, a traditional Mesoamerican dish often considered a symbol of Mexican cuisine, and question Juana/Adelina about her job and family.

4.2.1.2. Portrayal of the Sociopolitical Context

Across a Hundred Mountains contains minimal overt references to the era. The references to the train station in the main character`s hometown and Miguel`s death at the border suggests that the novel is set in the post-Gatekeeper period, which falls between the Mexican economic crisis of 1994 and the global economic crisis of 2008 (R. Brown, 2013; Caminero-Santangelo, 2016; Nevins, 2010). Likewise, Grande presents Juana`s crossing of the US-Mexico border under a false identity as a survival story without elaborating on the sociopolitical forces that shape the circumstances of her quest. Instead, she grants readers with an intimate glimpse on the economic hardship that pushes her father to migrate to the north, further bringing about the central character`s mother`s destitution, recourse to murder, and eventual madness. Grande inverts the traditional narrative of male Mexican migrant`s quest for the American Dream: unlike many who move north in search of better lives, Juana does not travel to the United States in search of economic opportunity. She sets out to bring her missing father home. In this respect, fourteen-year-old Juana`s epic journey anticipates nineteen-year-old Nayeli in Luis Alberta Urrea`s *Into the Beautiful North* (2010), another novel of Mexican migration north for young readers.

In an exceptional scene where Juana/Adelina meets an undocumented farm worker in Watsonville, California, the reader is presented with the angst undocumented migrants feel

when they encounter a stranger who resembles a US immigration agent. The narrator observes their unease as follows: "The woman stared at Adelina and Detective Gonzales. Adelina sensed her fear of strangers. She knew people who worked there in the fields were always afraid of being surprised by la migra" (p. 164). This account of Juana/Adelina`s encounter with the female undocumented farm worker indexes the sociohistorical milieu, beset by workplace raids and summary deportation of undocumented Mexicans. However, Grande hesitates to further comment on the contemporary political atmosphere that shapes undocumented Mexicans` life in the United States. As a result, the scene can only be interpreted by consulting secondary sources. Since the mid-1990s, circular and seasonal migration of working-age males left its place to the long-term settlement of undocumented families with Mexican and US citizen children (Chomsky, 2014). Moreover, intensified deportation after September 11 made both migrant families` and their US citizen children`s lives tenuous. As Chomsky (2014) asserts, undocumented immigrants lead a "veneer of ordinary life undergirded by permanent uncertainty" (p. 107). Grande points to undocumented Mexican migrants` liminal existence in the United States without referencing the policies that deny these people dignified lives.

4.2.1.3. Hybrid Language, In-Between Identity

In *Across a Hundred Mountains*, Grande inserts Spanish in the English text without utilizing italics to signal code-switching. Instead, she either provides translation (e.g., just like "un ladrón, a thief", p. 6), or assumes that the reader will interpret meaning from the context as in "Tu padre no llega" (p. 6). This technique makes the reader feel that conversations mostly take place in Spanish. As well, the author`s conscious strategy of 'silent' language shift indicates a flow in her thinking that compasses both idioms.

Grande draws on her experiences as a child and various unfortunate incidents that befall her family to construct this tale of migration (Grande, 2012). She reworks various key scenes in the novel with strands from important Mexican folklore and literary tradition. In doing so, she both engages in self-translation and cultural translation. Grande (2006) explains her choice of writing in English as follows:

> Although Spanish is my native language, … I don`t know the language the way I know English. I left Mexico when I was in the third grade, so that is the level of Spanish I have. Once I started to learn English, I began to read a lot of books in English to speed up my learning of the language. English became my primary language. (Grande, 2006, p. 264)

As the quote proves, the Chicana author asserts her bilingual and bicultural identity through her writing.

The ability to express herself in English empowers the migrant character in the novel. Two scenes are illuminating. In one, Juana uses her fragmentary English to push back Gerardo`s (Adelina`s boyfriend and pimp) sexual advance. When he says, "Calm down, chiquita. ... I wanna be your friend," Juana draws on her limited linguistic repertoire: "I no need you for friend" (p. 188). Clearly, Juana has transformed through language and occupies that linguistic in-between space. She tries to defend herself with her newly acquired language skills. Her new language is instrumental, yet insufficient, in her attempt at protecting her bodily integrity and preventing the man`s sexual assault. In a remarkable scene, we watch Juana standing before a mirror and roleplaying a conversation that will guarantee her passing as a US citizen at the port of entry: "'What's your name?' she asked herself in English, knowing that was the first question immigration agents would ask. 'My name's Adelina. Adelina Vasquez'" (pp. 223-4). Assuming Adelina's identity allows Juana to cross the international line and continue her quest of bringing her father home. However, this passing would never have been possible without the linguistic transformation she has undergone. Learning English facilitates Juana`s border crossing. Sadly, many critics have downplayed this crucial moment of metamorphosis, which allows the protagonist to achieve a sense of duality and double consciousness. Juana`s newly acquired language functions as a metonym for a US passport. Her ability to speak English helps her claim and verify her belonging to the United States of America.

Grande deploys Spanish words without glossing them in context. To illustrate, the heterodiegetic narrator explains that Juana`s father was "a *campesino*" without explaining that the term means landless farmer. Also, the narrator refuses to translate terms that are taken as symbols of Mexican heritage and cultural identity. One such word is *rebozo*. The term refers to a woman`s garment, like a shawl, often worn in rural areas. Another example is *tamales*, a corn-based Mesoamerican dish. Other times, the narrator offers literal translation as in "*ladrón*, a thief" (Grande, 2006, p. 5). In chapters on Adelina, the readers encounter frequent code-mixing. "Come, come *mujeres*," says one of the characters, thereby indexing the speaker`s and her interlocutors` Mexican origin (Grande, 2006, p. 197). The same person jokes: "You four *brujas* clean up the kitchen" (Grande, 2006, p. 198). Grande`s reticence in supplying English translation can be attributed to her desire to present her characters as culturally hybrid subjects. Juana/Adelina speaks Spanglish, a hybrid contact language spoken in the United States. The speaker switches back and forth between English and Spanish, thus linguistically living her

hybrid self. Vocabulary from Spanish is blended in the English grammar structure: "Good afternoon, *joven*" and "*Mi`jo*, it`s getting chilly" (Grande, 2006, p. 228). In addition, Grande challenges her readers to comprehend the foreign word in "When the *judiciales* realized she was serious" (p. 230) when she elides offering translation. In summary. Grande confronts the reader to get out of their comfort zone.

4.2.1.4. Gendered Crossing and Intercultural Encounter

Across a Hundred Mountains presents a distinctly female perspective on migration from Mexico to the United States. Grande (2006) explains that this is because the characters are "a little bit of myself—my experiences, emotions, fears" (p. 264). For the women who are left behind, their husbands` migration to the United States means abandonment and embarrassment. When Miguel goes north to pay for the cost of Anita`s burial, and weeks pass with no correspondence, everyone in town assumes that Miguel has abandoned his wife and daughter. Town folks` whispers follow them when Juana and her mother pass by homes and stores.

> The women said things to each other, being careful to put a hand over their mouths as if to muffle words. "Honest or not, once they find themselves in El Otro Lado, surrounded by all those golden-haired gringas, a man cannot help himself!" (Grande, 2006, p. 48).

As evident in the quote above, their husbands` migration to the United States turns women into objects of ridicule and abuse. "Poor Doña Lupe" women sneer to show that they have little compassion for the wife left behind (p. 48). In their eyes, Lupe has become "abandoned" and "forgotten" (p. 59). Amá`s character also represents how women whose husbands have traveled north become vulnerable to predatory men in the community. Only two days after Apá leaves, Don Elías, the man who provides for Anita`s funeral, begins to bother Amá. At first, he visits the shack with the pretense that he is asking for the news of Apá`s journey north (pp. 42-43). Don Elías demands that Lupe pay the debt by becoming his mistress, or he has her detained. He intimidates townspeople as well, so they refuse to give Lupe a job. As a result, Lupe succumbs to Don Elías, both to pay off debt incurred from Anita`s funeral and provide food for her adolescent daughter. Townspeople do not fail to show their contempt: "There goes Don Elías`s puta" they say as they ostracize the woman as a prostitute (p. 78). At another tragic turn of events, Don Elías claims Lupe`s baby boy, Miguel Garcia Jr., as his own and takes him away. Lupe murders the man and is locked away in prison (p. 140). Grande comments on harmful impact migration`s on children left behind, too. Her peers taunt Juana at school, which leads to her dropping out. "Your father abandoned you," they jeer (p. 48). One mocks: "Hey Juana,… I

heard your father has forgotten you and your mother… He probably already found himself a gringa" (p. 69). Juana becomes the collateral damage of her father`s involuntary journey north. The ripple adverse effects of the economic relationship between the United States and Mexico may not be as dramatic as Grande imagines; however, the novel`s thematization of the problems for those left behind recalls social scientific (McCarty, 2008) and filmic representations such as *Los Que Quedan/Those Who Remain (Rulfo & Hagerman, 2008).*

Moreover, Grande presents the intricacies of irregular migration for her young female protagonist. Having lost one parent to migration and the other to alcoholism, madness, and crime, Juana departs at fourteen in search of her father. In *Across a Hundred Mountains*, Grande imagines female prostitution as another consequence of migration. Women rely on their body to overcome dire situations. Not only the woman left behind, but also the one who sets on a journey north, recourse to sexuality as a survival strategy. Being abandoned by her husband and unable to secure a job impels Lupe to become the town creditor`s mistress. When she resolves to engage in sex work, Grande`s young female protagonist reasons: "Her mother had done what needed to be done. Juana would have to do the same" (Grande, 2006, p. 179). Just like Lupe who traded her body to repay the family debt, Juana barters her body for information about the borderlands and the circumstances of her father`s crossing the border. Furthermore, Juana`s claiming of her deceased roommate`s identity documents can be interpreted as another survival strategy. The young woman follows "borderlands ethics" by doing Juana "what needed to be done" (Grande, 2006, p. 267; Ramirez, 2010). In other words, Juana`s border crossing under a false identity cannot be interpreted without paying attention to the context. The change from Juana to Adelina involves her acquiring the late friend's birth certificate and the presentation of herself in English.

Adult Juana/Adelina`s sense of "home" has changed through migration. An old coyote in Tijuana promises the woman that he will take her to father`s grave on the border so that she can return home. "Go home?" the narrator asks, hinting at Juana/Adelina`s mixed feelings of home (p. 16). Preceding her journey to the United States, a small shack in an impoverished part of her birthplace was the only home Juana knew. However, her transborder migration to Los Angeles has splintered her sense of belonging. Another scene provides further evidence to Juana`s loss of a sense of unconditional belonging to Mexico. On the bus from Mexico to her birthplace, Juana/Adelina falters when another passenger (he turns out to be her younger brother) observes the woman is not Mexican: "You aren`t from here, right?" Not knowing what to say, Juana/Adelina "smiles faintly... She was from here, and yet she wasn`t. How could she

explain?" (p. 54). The narrator asks, "Was she really going home?" to reflect Juana/Adelina`s ambivalence towards calling Mexica home (p. 54). Clearly, Juana/Adelina occupies the liminal space between a Mexican and American.

Her migration to the north allows Juana to undergo a profound change. As Doña Martina`s granddaughter points out, the woman who returns to the village seventeen years later is not the poor girl who left the town in search of her father. Even if she urges her interlocutor to address her by her real name, the transformation she has undergone cannot be reversed so easily. She is not merely "Juana anymore." She is "now a successful woman who has done what needed to be done" (p. 227); therefore, she is advised to keep her new name: Adelina. Indeed, calling her Juana/Adelina as I have done here would better reflect her hybrid identity.

On a final note, Grande leaves the question of Juana/Adelina`s return to the United States ambiguous. However, the imagery of one plate from her parents` wedding gift that remains intact and the fact that she inherits it can be interpreted as a symbol of marriage and family. It would be safe to assume that Juana/Adelina will return to the United States. The author implies that Juana/Adelina will reclaim Los Angeles as her Latina space and unite with Dr. Luna. Yet, the woman will always retain her ties to Mexico, where she spreads her parents` ashes and where her younger brother lives. Even though her rendition of Mexican migration is excessively dramatic, Grande presents a thorough interpretation of the gendered "social, economic, physical, and emotional consequences of migration" (de Veritch Woodside, 2012, p. 75-76). Her narrative deals with being altered because of journey and may appeal immediately to Latino and Chicana readers in the United States.

4.2.2. Return to Sender

4.2.2.1. Transnational Migrant Spaces in Return to Sender

Return to Sender is set in the fictional town of Bridgeport, Vermont, a northeastern state of the United States. The town is modeled on Bridport, a small farming community in the same state and imagined primarily as a white space. Reflecting the racial make up of its namesake, the town lacks the ethnic diversity associated with increased intercultural encounters. Therefore, the Cruzes` difference is conspicuous. Furthermore, Vermont imagines itself as one of the final vestiges of "authentic Yankee whiteness" (Vanderbeck, 2006, p. 641). *Return to Sender*

(Alvarez, 2009b) imagines Bridgeport as a place where both positive and conflictual intercultural encounters take place and frames the Mexicans` irregular migration to this rural setting in terms of mutual benefit. The Mexican farmers need jobs; the American farmers seek affordable farm assistance. Furthermore, the friendship that develops on the Paquettes` farm is an example of positive intercultural encounter.

However, Bridgeport is also a scene for inimical encounters. The exclusionary rhetoric is personified in Mr. Rosetti`s character. This elderly Vermonter adamantly opposes hiring undocumented immigrants. He plants a sign in his front yard that reads "Take Back Vermont" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 191). He maintains that anyone who employs undocumented workers must be imprisoned. He perceives it as "disgraceful" how every farmer hires undocumented Mexicans and "even our law enforcement people are turning a blind eye to it!" (p. 188). When he explodes at a town meeting, Mr. Rosetti alludes to the US code 1324a, which prohibits hiring an unauthorized alien (Justice, 2020). Mari references this "crime of hiring Mexicans without papers" in her diary, which works as a testimony both in the story world of *Return to Sender* and before the readers (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 270). The law requires employers to run background checks on applicants. Employers may not hire a candidate if the investigations reveal that they lack status in the United States. His sustained encounter with the undocumented other changes Mr. Rosetti. When he comes to know the young Cruzes through his relationship with Elise Paquette, the Cruzes` "American grandmother" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 93), he is eager to show them "the proud face of America" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 275). "God bless America," prays the man after a visit to the veterans` cemetery, which prompts Mari to think "Both North and South America … remembering the swallows" that migrate between the two regions (p. 276). Nonetheless, Mr. Rosetti`s initial exclusionist views leave their place for interpersonal intercultural relationships informed by mutual respect even if this transnational relationship indicates uneven opportunities for transborder mobility. Another negative encounter that takes place in Bridgeport is the ICE raid on the farm, which results in the Cruzes` eventual deportation back to Mexico. The protagonist details the incident in her diary, "a record [left] behind for the whole world" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 295).

Alvarez presents Durham, a county in North Carolina, as another crucial undocumented migrant worker habitat. For Mari, Durham is a place of waiting: "Waiting for you [Mamá] to return. Waiting for the laws to change so I can visit my birthplace in México and be able to come back into the United States again" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 18). In addition, Durham is also the city where Mari ransoms her mother from the smugglers. By placing the Cruzes in Durham and elaborating

on the reason why the family relocates to Vermont instead of awaiting the missing member in a familiar location, Alvarez indexes the undocumented residents` presence in North Carolina.[20]

Washington, D.C. is a symbol of Tyler`s patriotic ambitions. The boy saves the earnings he makes by tending Mr. Rosetti`s lawn for a field trip to the nation`s capital. He later forgoes the trip by offering his savings to Mr. Cruz to "buy" his wife back from her kidnapper (p. 217). Ironically, it is Mari and her mother who visit this city despite their undocumented alien status. The US capital is also the scene where immigrant rights protests take place. Mari offers an account of the immigrant presence in the city by mentioning "millions of people camped out in the main square … blocking the entrance to government buildings" (p. 309). Mari`s reference to the migrant rights protest documents their challenging of the country`s immigration policies. Alvarez comments on the ultimately abortive *Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act*, which was approved by the House of Representatives on 16 December 2005. The Act was the most comprehensively vindictive immigration legislation in US history. Had it passed at the Senate, this bill would have criminalized an estimated 11 million undocumented residents in the United States by transforming their unlawful presence in the country into a felony, making them subject to mandatory detention and removal (Cavanaugh, 2019; Chavez, 2013b). That is, it would have converted any immigration violation into felonies indictable with imprisonment. As a result, even legal permanent residents would have been irreversibly rendered 'illegal' aliens for minor violations. In addition, the bill also sought to impose criminal sanctions on anyone who knowingly assisted an undocumented resident. Mari indexes the protests in reaction to the bill. Critics such as Cavanaugh (2019) pointed out that the bill was the culmination of decades-long proliferating nativism. The bill posed an enormous threat to the undocumented and their allies. In response, undocumented immigrants and young students mobilized on what was labeled *el día sin immigrants* or the day without immigrants (Chavez, 2013a). The protests blocked the bill on May 25, 2006. Instead, the Senate passed the Comprehensive Immigration Reform Act of 2006, which stipulated the expansion of the border wall in populated areas along the US-Mexico border, increased surveillance inside the country, and a path to citizenship for some undocumented residents. *Return to Sender* translates this legal framework and the contemporary political atmosphere by allowing Mari to register Latino/a communities` response. In a sense, thanks to Mari`s letter, young readers become familiar with a cushioned interpretation of the flawed bill and the ensuing protests.

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[20] North Carolina is home to a significant number of undocumented residents originating from Mexico and Latin America. See *The Latino Migration Experience in North Carolina* (2018) by Hannah Gill for an insight into the demographic shifts, challenges, and opportunities presented by Latino/a migration to Durham.

Another key location in *Return to Sender* is Las Margaritas in the Mexican state of Chiapas. The migrants` rural hometown is located near Mexico`s southern border with Guatemala. Having moved to the United States at four, Mari barely remembers the town. After the Cruzes` deportation, Tyler`s grandmother and Mr. Rosetti visit Mari and her family. Mari reports the elders` intercultural dialogue as follows:

> [*Abuelito*] and *Abuelote* sit around "talking" with Mr Rossetti, which is funny to watch, because *Abuelito* and *Abuelote* don`t speak any English, and Mr. Rossetti doesn't understand Spanish. They all just jab the air with their canes and gesture and nod at whatever one of them is saying. (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 309)

Ironically, not knowing each other`s language does not prevent these elderly men from interacting. Members of two farming communities forge a transborder dialogue in the imaginary world of this transnational story.

The US-Mexico border occupies a crucial space in *Return to Sender*. Mari associates the border with death and refers to the snake as the sign of evil. Alvarez goes one step further by making her co-protagonist comment on the constructed nature of the border: "a huge pen came writing across the land, drawing a big borderline," writes Mari in a letter addressed to her missing mother (p. 29). The US-Mexico border looks deceptively porous for Mexican migrants. Mari narrates the plans for her mother`s entrance into the United States safely "through a reservation, disguised as the wife of an Indian Chief" (p. 30). Nonetheless, the border 'vanishes' migrants. After months of waiting, Mr. Cruz explains to the girls that their mother is "probably watching [them] from the other side of life" (p. 97). The phrase "the other side" ambiguously connotes both transborder migration and death (Caminero-Santangelo, 2016). By inserting similar dialogues in the novel, Alvarez salutes to other fiction and nonfiction texts that represent border deaths.[21]

4.2.2.2. Sociopolitical Space in Return to Sender

Alvarez`s novel invokes the transnational socioeconomic forces that push the Cruzes to Vermont. In a letter addressed to former President George W. Bush, Mari explains the economic factor that impelled the Cruzes to seek employment in the United States. The Cruzes abandoned farming in Mexico because farming ceased to be profitable. According to Mari, "the companies

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[21] Some crucial fictions include *The Guardians* (Castillo, 2008), "In Transit" (Bátiz, 2017), and *Lost Children Archive* (Luiselli, 2019*).* I analyze the latter elsewhere.

that buy corn and coffee did not pay enough for [Mari`s grandfather] to be able to even buy the stuff he needed for the next planting" (p. 61). The comment indexes the detrimental impacts of the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) without naming it in the text (Nevins, 2008). Research supports the negative impacts on Mexican farming communities` welfare and its connections to emigration (Fernández-Kelly & Massey, 2007; McCarty, 2008). Furthermore, Mari quotes her Tio Armando saying "[they] have come to north to collect what is owed to [them] for their hard work" (p. 61). With these allusions, Mari establishes the link between the Cruzes` presence in the United States and transnational economic activities.

Alvarez offers further context by presenting how family-owned dairy farms in rural Vermont rely on undocumented immigrant labor to survive the onslaught by corporate agribusinesses. When Tyler is shocked to see the newly hired Mexicans and takes issue with their 'alien' presence, marked by their "brown skin and black hair," the boy explodes: "There's some Indians trespassing!" (p. 3). For him, "although they don't wear feathers or carry tomahawks, [the Mexicans] sure look like the American Indians" (p. 3). Mrs. Paquette explains the need to hire undocumented Mexicans as follows:

> Dairy farms were struggling. Hired help was hard to find. And if you did find someone like Corey (a US citizen), he only wanted to work eight hours a day, five days a week. Problem was cows needed milking twice a day every day, and the milking had to be spaced at least eight to ten hours apart. (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 7)

Alvarez draws on a pro-immigrant rhetoric that highlights undocumented Mexican immigrants` labor contributions to the US economy. To placate the boy, Mr. Paquette explains they can keep the farm that thanks to the "trespassers" and continues: "they`re the best helpers a man can ask for" (p. 13). Mrs. Paquette addresses Tyler`s fears by adding that the Mexican laborers are "like our angels" (p. 14). She explains that the farm might go under without the Mexicans` labor.[22] By allowing her US citizen character to utter these words, Alvarez foregrounds an argument immigrant rights activist and historian Aviva Chomsky reiterates in her monograph: "The work that undocumented migrants do is essential to the functioning of the [US] economy and the comfort of [its] citizens" (Chomsky, 2014, p. 14). In conclusion, the Paquettes rely on the Mexicans` labor to stave off bankruptcy; the novel ensures that the reader becomes aware of the interdependency between American farmers and Mexican farm laborers.

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[22] *Under the Cloak of Darkness* (Jackson, 2015), a feature-length documentary, focuses on Vermont's Mexican farmworker population who works long hours every day to keep Vermont's struggling dairy farms going. Because many of these workers are undocumented, they live in almost complete isolation.

Tyler embodies the fear that some Americans feel against the Other, a panic intensified in the aftermath of 9/11. The heterodiegetic narrator observes that though "Tyler hates to admit [that]… after September 11, he's… scared of strangers from other countries who might be plotting to destroy the United States of America" (p. 42). Tyler is upset that "illegal people are living on their farm" (p. 57). Tyler`s transformation from a boy who feels that her family is committing a crime by hiring undocumented migrants to one who appreciates the mutual benefits of forming a transborder alliance depends on his understanding that Mari and her family`s unauthorized presence in Vermont is a consequence of larger sociopolitical powers that put both families under a financial strain. Tyler goes through the stages of avoidance before reckoning with the Mexicans` presence (p. 83). His growth also necessitates learning about the history of what is popularly called the Underground Railroad in reference to a network of secret northbound routes and safe houses established throughout the United States to help African Americans escape slavery during the 19th century (p. 117). In the end, he plots the Mexicans` escape in the face of an immigration raid on the farm.

By imagining Tyler`s attitude as something that is bound to transform, the novelist inverts acculturation processes. In mainstream theories of Intercultural Communication, the newcomer is expected to undergo acculturation (Galchenko, van de Vijver, & Kirillova, 2006; Kim, 2017; Liu & Gallois, 2014). Scholars of cross-cultural psychology research tend to view this process as unidirectional, placing the onus of cultural adaptation on the immigrant (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011). In the imaginary world Alvarez creates, however, intercultural learning and change are bidirectional. It is not the newcomer who needs to overcome the shock of being in a new environment and adapt their ways to fit in the host culture, which is often incorrectly defined as stable. It is the citizen, as well as the newcomer, who must learn to live with difference. Tyler`s transformation happens gradually, beginning with his realization that the dairy farm is struggling and finding local help is costly. Nonetheless, the actual change comes about thanks to his friendship with Mari. Therefore, his initial rejection evolves into an acceptance of the two families` interdependency. First, he understands that the farm`s survival depends on the Mexican`s labor. His reluctant "¡Hola!" at the first encounter with the three young Cruzes gives way to acceptance as his friendship with Mari deepens (p. 43). In the end, he admits that "María ... deserve[s] to stay in our country" and it "would be a better nation with [Mari] in it" (p. 282). Alvarez wishes US citizen readers who may be apprehensive of welcoming the undocumented in their communities to undergo a similar change; Tyler`s transformation exemplifies this desired shift and growth.

Return to Sender is intended as a critique of the xenophobic moral panic in the United States. The book offers a literary solution to the immigration policy. Mr. Paquette expresses this well when he explains to Tyler why he should stop worrying about harboring "illegal people" on their farm (p. 57): "Sometimes, a country has these laws that have nothing to do with what`s right or what`s best for most of the people involved" (p. 56).

The references to immigration raids to workplaces serve as indexes of the sociopolitical context as well. The Cruzes live in fear of deportation. Mari narrates her family`s precarious presence in Vermont under the threat of deportation as follows:

> [Papá feared] that la migra would pick him up first and deport him back home, where he`d have to find the money to pay for the dangerous crossing once again. Papá worries most about what would happen to my sisters and me if he was taken away, especially with you not around to at least be one parent in the family. (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 18)

In addition, Tyler begins to worry that the Cruzes might be next when he overhears his father and uncle discuss raids on farms in the valley: "he doesn`t really want Mari and her family to go away. He wants the law to be changed so they can stay, helping his family" (p. 113). By Thanksgiving, he begins to plot escape plans for the Mexicans should the Homeland Security raid the farm (p. 117). His final acceptance of the undocumented Mexicans is marked in a note that reads "Thank you for helping save our farm" (p. 191).

Alvarez invokes the Development, Relief, and Education for Alien Minors (DREAM) Act, a legislative proposal for granting residency status to qualifying undocumented immigrants who arrived in the United States as minors (Gonzales, Terriquez, & Ruszczyk, 2014). In a letter Mari addresses the US President as follows: "I apologize that I am here without permission" (p. 58). She links their insistence in staying in the United States to the fact that the Cruzes are a mixed status family. She reasons that returning to Mexico "is not as simple as all going back" on account of "a division right down the center of [their] family. [Mari`s] parents and [Mari] are Mexican and [her] two little sisters, Ofie and Luby, are Americans" (p. 59). Also, she repeats her defense to Tyler. By declaring innocence in her reported interaction with Tyler, Mari appeals to American readers to give thousands of immigrants in her situation a chance (p. 70). Tyler`s response is marked with a patriotic sentiment: "I know it`s not your fault, Mari…. [But] I`d rather lose the farm than not be loyal to my country" (p. 70). Alvarez takes issue with the brand of patriotism Tyler exemplifies: the novel shows that allegiance to the United States of

America does not necessarily exclude the undocumented migrant who contributes to the wellbeing of the country.

Mari`s claims of innocence and appeals to inclusion are reminiscent of the language immigrants' rights groups have used to galvanize support for the DREAM Act. However, it is unrealistic to expect a young reader to decode the discourse on which Mari and Tyler`s conversation, as well as Mari`s appeal to President Bush, relies. Therefore, adult readers need to unpack Mari`s migrant justice advocacy rhetoric. Mari personifies what is called a DREAMer: an undocumented immigrant who was brought to the United States as a minor. The DREAM Act was first introduced in the US Congress in 2001 to provide a pathway to permanent residency to a limited number of undocumented immigrants who entered the country as children. The bill was shelved in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks (Martinelli, Salazar, & Estrada, 2021). Since its introduction, the Act has been deployed to put pressure on US presidents to initiate a relief program that would later become the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) policy, which offers qualified undocumented young immigrants in the country access to relief from deportation and renewable work permits.[23]

Alvarez`s literary engagement with the DREAM Act is explicit in the following quote:

> Tyler knows it`s not Mari`s fault that her parents snuck her into this country. He doesn't like being mean to her, but he also doesn`t want to be friends with someone who is breaking the law, even though that law, according to his dad, needs changing. (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 77).

Alvarez suggests interventions by wiser elders, such as Grandma and Mari and Tyler`s teacher (Mr. Bicknell) necessary to remind apprehensive Americans of their immigrant pasts and promote more accepting immigration discourse. Acting like an opinion leader, Grandma convinces Tyler that Gramps would have approved of the Paquettes` hiring of the undocumented Mexicans. She draws an analogy between their own arrival and the Mexican`s presence in Vermont when she says, "We Paquettes came down from Canada back in the 1800s. Nobody in America got here—excepting the Indians—without somebody giving them a chance" (p. 87). Furthermore, she underlines the Mexicans` labor contributions and insists that immigration law needs to change when she blurts: "the cows can`t wait for their milking till the

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[23] Gonzales, Terriquez, and Ruszczyk (2014) estimated that the DACA helped temporarily defer removal from the United States for nearly two million eligible undocumented youth and young adults in 2013. Though the DACA does not offer a pathway to legalization, it has the potential to improve the incorporation and documented mobility trajectories of the eligible youth. The Trump administration ended DACA in September 2017 and was forced to restore it after the US Supreme Court ruled in June 2020 that cancellation of the program violated federal law.

politicians get the laws changed!" (p. 87). Likewise, Mr. Bicknell underscores the role immigration played in the processes of US nation building. Mari and Tyler`s progressive teacher draws an analogy between Mexicans` ongoing immigration and that of Italians in the 1880s (p. 190). Grandma`s and Mr. Bicknell`s calling upon the nation`s immigrant history helps Tyler to adopt a more reasonable attitude towards the undocumented Mexicans on the farm. Alvarez proposes that only through learning their past as an immigrant nation, Americans will become a more inclusive people.

Surveillance is another central sociopolitical theme in *Return to Sender*. The Paquettes fear that their phone might be wiretapped and censor their conversations about the undocumented help they hired. Tyler takes on the vigilante role and spies on the Mexicans` comings and goings on the farm. Mari reports Mr. Bicknell`s comments that surveillance "happens when your government is a dictatorship" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 274). Mari and Tyler`s teacher functions as the author`s mouthpiece in critiquing the surveillance state that emerged post-9/11.

Yet another sociopolitical problem *Return to Sender* records is the impacts of undocumented parents` detention on children. The parents are detained as criminal aliens on account of a misunderstanding and Mr. Cruz`s resistance to arrest and striking a federal agent (p. 277). Mr. Cruz is held in detention in New York and New Hampshire (p. 285); Mrs. Cruz is initially sent to one unknown location (p. 276) and transferred to a detention clinic in Boston (p. 284). Mari witnesses her parents` arrest from a distance. Through her account, Alvarez documents the anguish children suffer due to parents` immigration detention. For Mari, the psychological toll manifests as biting nails and sleep deprivation. Furthermore, the family conceals that they have children in the United States on account of fear that the children might be sent to foster care. Often, extended family members raise children left behind when undocumented parents are detained and deported (Chaudry, 2011; Chaudry et al., 2010). Staying with relatives or in foster care leaves the children of deportee parents traumatizes (Dreby, 2012). Because the Cruzes are a mixed-status family and because they face criminal charges, their incarceration lasts longer. By telling the immigration detention and deportation from the perspective of an undocumented child, Alvarez "put[s] a face" on an otherwise anonymous immigration case representative of thousands of others (p. 285). Traumatized by separation, Mari resolves: "I wasn`t sure I wanted to live [in Mexico] anymore. But I`d rather go back and be together with my parents than stay here, all separated, with Mamá and Papá behind bars" (p. 278). Alvarez is intent on showing how parents` detention injures children.

4.2.2.3. Hybrid Language and Cultural Identity

In this part, I seek responses to the following questions: How do the migrants (and their creators) mediate their membership to the nation through language? If language is an index of national identity and belonging, how is the imagined community of a nation disrupted via hybrid language use?

Alvarez peppers her English text with Spanish expressions. In contrast to Grande`s silent shifts to her mother tongue, Alvarez presents Spanish language expressions in italics, allowing the reader to recognize the switch. As well, she provides the readers with English equivalents of Spanish expressions except when it is clear from the context. To illustrate, Mari quotes her father saying, "*Más allá en El Norte*" and adds its English equivalent, "even farther north" (p. 17). Alvarez`s migrant co-protagonist brings the two languages in which she functions to the core of her letter writing. The closing line of her letters read: "with all my heart and with my *corazón*, too" (p. 22) or "*Con amar* and with love" (p. 34). Mari embraces both Spanish and English. Alvarez not only allows the protagonist to act out her bilingual identity throughout the novel but also explains the rationale behind her linguistic strategies in author`s note. For instance, for the reader to understand that Mari writes some of her letters in Spanish, Alvarez leaves the diacritic mark in "México" when Mari uses the word.

The migrant character is empowered through their use of English. Mari is the bridge person between her Spanish-speaking family and the Anglophone characters. During their first encounter with Mrs. Paquette, Mari translates the adults` words back and forth. *"¿Qué dice?"* asks her father: "What did she say?" (p. 32). In addition, when her Tio Felipe (Uncle Felipe) gets into trouble with his employer, Mari offers to call his employer since her "English is almost perfect" (p. 24). Furthermore, Mari teaches Tyler the distinction between Spanish words that separate maternal grandparents from those that stand for paternal grandparents. She is also the language broker for her younger siblings, who prefer to speak English in protest to Mr. Cruz`s insistence on mother tongue. It is Mari who convinces her younger sisters to go along with their father`s wish for them to speak Spanish in preparation for their eventual removal. Mari`s role as an intercultural communicator and cultural mediator does not merely mean she engages in translating between the characters. To illustrate, supposedly writing her second letter to her mother, she describes Mexico as a "vast and beautiful" country and orients the reader to find her birthplace "at the very tip of Mexico in the south" (p. 26).

Return to Sender features transculturation, as opposed to acculturation, in the sense Ortiz (1947) discusses the term. The process of acculturation is imagined as unilinear; theories of acculturation presume the flow of influence from the dominant culture/subjects to the dominated cultures/subjects (Celenk & Van de Vijver, 2011; Galchenko et al., 2006). In contrast, transculturation denotes bi/multidirectional cultural contact and influence (Ortiz, 1947; Pratt, 2008). Mari improves her English at school and acquires new colloquial expressions from the Paquettes; she teaches Tyler, her other classmates, and the reader Spanish. A classmate writes: "*Gracias* for the help with my *español*" blending the two codes just like Mari does in her letters and diary entries (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 282). Moreover, when another classmate expresses her appreciation of learning about "the dead people`s holiday" and adds, "if I could still be American, I would love to be Mexican, too. Love and *amor* to you" (p. 282). Alvarez blends Spanish in English utterances: "the catalog we found in the *patrones`* trash" (p. 96) or their missing mother`s photograph "belongs to the altar with your *abuelita*" (p. 96)

Return to Sender engages in repeated language play and illustrates how literal translations between English and Spanish can lead to amusing misunderstandings. Mari`s challenge in comprehending English idiom indexes her linguistic in-betweenness. To illustrate, when the Paquettes` daughter boasts her grandmother "can sew like a barn on fire" Mari is puzzled. She reflects on her misunderstanding by saying, "My goodness! For a moment I wondered what kind of a strange grandmother would sew like that" (p. 33). Similarly, Mari misinterprets the idiom when the grandmother compliments the girls by saying her late husband "would have been tickled by you girls" (p. 93). Mari is yet to comprehend that the expression means the man would have been delighted to meet the young Cruzes. Furthermore, Mari is lost when Mr. Paquette`s sister admits that she "pushed the envelope" (p. 133): that the woman extended the limits of what is reasonable when she insisted on placing the grandmother in a nursing home escapes the culturally hybrid protagonist. Not only the idiom but also the practice of leaving an elderly family member in an institution, away from home and family, are foreign to the smart female character.

Alvarez ironically tasks an undocumented youth with educating intended readers: Anglo-American young readers. Mari`s sections in the book establish her as an in-between character. She enjoys a tenuous social membership to American society (Carens, 2013). Her membership is lived out through her hybrid language use. She functions as an interpreter, translator, and mediator both inside the story world of the novel and for readers. She may lack the formal status there, but she is an articulate member of the rural Vermont community. Moreover, Socolovsky

(2015) may be right to claim that Mari`s letters and diary entries function as "metonymic markers of the work permits" the adult members of her family lack (p. 389). Mari`s letters mark her presence in the United States.

Mari`s in-between status results in conflicts as well. In reference to a disagreement between herself and her mother about Halloween, Mari reveals that "even if I had been born in México, I felt a huge desert stretching between my parents and who I was becoming" (p. 102). Another excerpt from her letters attests to Mari`s acute awareness of her own otherness. She complains: "I am not like my sisters, who are little American girls.... I was born in México, but I don't feel Mexican, not like Papá and my uncles with all their memories and stories" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 21). The dilemma Mari needs to reconcile with is that of an in-between character. She claims belonging to the United States, but this claim is recognized neither by the bullies at school nor by the law which labels her "alien" in the United States. Being different than her younger siblings is disconcerting. The girls` language choice indicates their emotional belonging. Mari addresses her parents in Spanish as Mamá and Papá whereas Ofie and Luby call them "Mommy" and "Daddy" (p. 273). Unlike US-born Luby and Ofie, Mari cannot confront the bullies who call her "illegal alien" even though the label does not make sense other than reminding her that she "was born on the wrong side of the border" (p. 21). She cannot understand how being born in Mexico makes one illegal: "What is illegal about me?" asks Mari. The teacher`s assistant explains that "an alien is a creature from outer space who does not even belong on this earth!" (p. 21). Alvarez draws on immigrant rights discourse that denounces the use of "illegal" to define undocumented migrants. *Return to Sender* openly challenges the association of being undocumented to criminality. When she explains "We are not criminals!" Mari demands recognition and equitable treatment in the United States (p. 203).

In response to Mari`s dilemma, Alvarez imagines a sense of belonging that transcends national divides. In *Return to Sender,* transnational belonging straddles both nations and languages to which the migrant attaches herself. In her letter addressed to George W. Bush, Mari discusses the Mexican Revolution in comparison to Independence Day. Her ambassador role is observable when she writes, "Mr. President, when it turns into the 16th of September, it will be our Fourth of July in Mexico" (p. 71). After a comprehensive account of the significance of that date for Mexicans, she reveals how she will celebrate it in Bridgeport. She promises to turn her face toward Mexico and cheer "*¡Viva México!*" However, Mari`s loyalty to her country of birth does not prevent her from acknowledging that "we are all citizens of one planet, indivisible with liberty and justice for all": she vows to cry *"¡Viva los Estados Unidos del Mundo!*" "Long live

the United States of the World! ¡*Viva!* ¡*Viva!* ¡*Viva!*" (p. 72). In addition, writing from Las Margaritas after the family`s deportation, Mari claims ownership of both national spaces. Resembling herself and her two younger sisters to swallows, she writes, "Las Margaritas is our home, but we also belong to that special farm in the rolling hills of Vermont" (p. 314). By invoking the image of the migratory bird, Alvarez highlights open spaces instead of bounded territories that are divided by concrete and ideological walls. Mari`s diary entry reads: "like my own family, swallows have two homes, one in North America and one in South America" (p. 267). In a distinctly border defying scene, Mari resembles herself to a "bouquet of flowers, with Mexican roots and North American flowers" (p. 175). She announces: "We *are* Americans. …America is the whole hemisphere, north and south. We are *all-american! Raíces méxicanas y flores norteamercanas*" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 175 italics in original). Alvarez advances a transnational belonging that connects the United States and Mexico.

Intercultural encounter on the farm results in intercultural borrowing. One such festivity is The Day of the Dead, observed by Mexicans in early November. Tyler`s grandmother prepares an altar, which she calls "a memory table" (p. 85), in her late husband`s honor with the help of the three Cruz sisters. For Tyler, the altar is "the weirdest thing" (p. 82); for another Paquette, it is "a vodoo altar" (p. 116). Despite these unenthusiastic reactions by Tyler and his aunt, readers witness an authentic instance of cultural hybridization occurring when the grandmother adopts this Mexican tradition. Another instance of cultural borrowing takes place on Three Kings Day, a holiday widely celebrated in Mexico and other Spanish-speaking countries on January 6. Mari prays the American Santa Clause and the Three Kings to bring back her mother and Uncle Felipe. Supposedly telling her uncle how they celebrated the Mexican holiday at the grandmother`s house, Mari familiarizes the readers with a Catholic tradition; she also notes its relation to Candlemas, the Feast of the Purification of the Virgin Mary celebrated on February 2. The Cruz girls` "American grandmother" models the desired behavior of openness and acceptance. In sum, Mari and other characters perform cultural hybridization in *Return to Sender*.

4.2.2.4. Gendering Migration, Gendered Narration

Return to Sender is attentive to the connection between gender and migration. Indeed, the novel suggests that the dangers involved in clandestine migration across the US-Mexico border are aggravated due to the migrant`s gender. Mari`s mother remains in the literal limbo of death and life in much of the novel. The reader learns from Mari`s letters that she traveled back to Mexico

to visit her dying mother and was scheduled to return "the safer way, through a reservation, disguised as the wife of an Indian chief" (Alvarez, 2009, p. 30). The mother goes missing somewhere between the two countries and is presumed dead. Mr. Cruz explains to the girls that their mother is "on the other side of life" (p. 97). Then, one day the woman manages to call the Paquettes. When her smugglers agree to release Mrs. Cruz in return for ransom money, the woman is a "*paquette*" transported by men (p. 232). The novel depicts women as vulnerable actors in illicit mobility infrastructures between Mexico and the United States by emphasizing their gender-specific susceptibility to sexual assault and other forms of exploitation at the hands of migrant smugglers.

The novel`s younger readers are spared the graphic details of Mamá's traumatic border crossing. Mari`s evasive account of the sexual, physical, and emotional abuse her mother has suffered when she was held hostage leaves the reader in suspense as to the extent of the woman`s pain. Nonetheless, Alvarez offers enough hints to help the reader comprehend the gendered nature of violence the woman endured. Mrs. Cruz`s missing teeth, scars on her body, and poor mental health give away the circumstances of her capture. Alvarez presents a toned down version of gender-based violence addressed in critical migration studies texts that focus on the US-Mexico border (e.g., Staudt et al., 2009; Vogt, 2013, 2018). Exploring the kidnapping and sexual exploitation of irregular women migrants on the migrant trail, Salvadoran journalist Oscar Martínez quotes Luis Flores, head of the International Organization for Migration, saying:

> The biggest problem isn't in what we can see, it's beyond that. ... Migrants who are women have to play a certain role in front of their attackers, in front of the coyote and even in front of their own group of migrants, and during the whole journey they're under the pressure of assuming this role: I know it's going to happen to me, but I can't help but hope that it doesn't. (Martínez, 2013, p. 43).

Scholarly research concerning women`s migration to the United States attests to the prevalence of gendered violence and its consequences for the whole family (Dom'nguez-Ruvalcaba & Corona, 2010; Infante, Idrovo, Sánchez-Domínguez, Vinhas, & González-Vázquez, 2012; Vogt, 2013). In *Return to Sender*, psychological impacts persist even after unification with family, leaving the woman "jumpy and screaming" at night (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 291). By inserting Mrs. Cruz`s kidnapping and sexual abuse in this adolescent novel, Alvarez addresses feminists concerns in irregular migration across the US-Mexico border (e.g., Boyd, 2021; Oso & Ribas-Mateos, 2013; Zavella & Segura, 2007).

Return to Sender is also a gendered narration. Mari tells her story in letter and diary format. The girl`s first-person perspective foregrounds her female gaze. Mari attains her agency by elucidating her justifications for the family`s unlawful presence in the United States. The young character manages to win her classmates` and an ICE agent`s sympathy, which is imagined as a model for readers` compassion in real life. Alvarez`s strategy of first-person narration establishes an affinity between Mari and readers. The audience hears the girl`s 'testimony of innocence' and is likely to feel sympathy with the girl. Furthermore, the girl`s diary entries and her oral testimony at the police station allow decriminalization of the Cruzes (Maya Socolovsky, 2015). Mari`s record keeping allows her mother to move away from the category of a violent criminal, a member of a human trafficking network, toward the position of a victim of the crime. Because they find her missing handbag in the smuggler`s stash house, the ICE assumes that she is affiliated with a smuggling cartel. When she is detained during a raid on the Paquette`s farm, the woman occupies the terrain of a criminal alien until Mari testifies and proves her mother`s innocence (p. 277). Deliberately ascribing narrative agency to Mari, Alvarez wishes to empower Mari`s real-life counterparts.

4.3. DISCUSSION: FROM WORD TO THE WORLD

It is important to connect these two prose representations of hybridity and in-betweenness and its non-fictional counterpart. Therefore, now I contextualize the findings by drawing on the larger context of transnational women`s narratives that engage migration from Mexico to the United States. I accomplish this by paying close attention to Grande and Alvarez`s connection to migration. My analysis suggests that the fictions under investigation index poverty as the root cause of irregular migration from Mexico to the United States. Both authors place the border between Mexico and the United States at the center of their narratives and elicit sympathy for the migrant characters. Upon closer examination, however, the texts differ in their approach to the larger theme of irregular migration. Relatedly, they develop divergent visions of intercultural communication.

4.3.1. The Authors

Reyna Grande was born in Mexico, in 1975. When she was two, her father migrated north (Grande, 2012, p. 6) and, in 1980, her mother joined her husband, leaving Reyna and her two elder siblings to the care of their paternal grandmother (Grande, 2012, p. 7). At nine and a half,

Reyna crossed the border with her father. By that time, her parents had separated. Grande documents her own clandestine border-crossing and experiences as an undocumented immigrant in her memoir, *The Distance Between Us* (2012). To quote the author:

> [W]hen I was four years old, I didn't know yet where the United States was or why everyone in my hometown of Iguala, Guerrero, referred to it as El Otro Lado, the Other Side. What I knew back then was that El Otro Lado had already taken my father away. (Grande, 2012, p. 3)

Grande received her green card in 1990 through the Immigration Reform and Control Act (IRCA), the amnesty program President Regan introduced (Grande, 2012, p. 250). The author became a US citizen in 2002 (p. 320). Grande regards the United States as her home and expresses her in-betweenness by drawing on an image, which will resonate well with most readers who have firsthand experience of immigration: "My umbilical cord was buried in Iguala (….) I consider myself Mexican American because I am from both places. Both countries are within me. They coexist in me. (....) And my writing is the bridge that connects them both" (Grande, 2012, p. 320). In an interview on migration and writing, she addressed the question of belonging and argued that she claimed her home country as her own through writing.

Grande`s oeuvre comprises two autobiographical novels: *Across a Hundred Mountains* (2006) and *Dancing with Butterflies* (2009); her memoir, *The Distance Between Us* (2012) and its sequel, *A Dream Called Home* (2018); and *Somewhere We Are Human: An Anthology on Migration, Survival, and New Beginnings* (2022), a collaborative piece with undocumented and formerly undocumented writers. Grande writes about family separation and trauma embedded in migration to the United States.

Julia Alvarez (born in New York, 27 March 1950) is a prolific Dominican American poet, novelist, and essayist. The author spent the first ten years of her childhood in the Dominican Republic (Sirias, 2001). Her father's involvement in a failed political plot to overthrow the dictator Rafael Leónidas Trujillo Molina forced her family to flee the country in 1960 (Alvarez, 1998, p. 16). Alvarez rose to prominence with the novels *How the García Girls Lost Their Accents* (1991), *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994), and *Yo!* (1997). Alvarez's publications as a poet include *Homecoming* (1984), *The Other Side/El Otro Lado* (1996), and *The Woman I Kept to Myself* (2004). She has two autobiographical essay compilations entitled *Something to Declare* (1998) and *Once Upon a Quinceañera: Coming of Age in the USA* (2008). Alvarez is best known for works that examine cultural expectations of women both in the Dominican Republic and the United States and for rigorous investigations of cultural stereotypes (Harrison

& Hipchen, 2013; K. L. Johnson, 2005). She is part of Latina writers` movement that weaves together themes of the experience of crossing the borders of Latin America and the United States (Coonrod Martínez, 2007; Sirias, 2001). The writer has been an inspiration for the younger generation of Latina writers such as Angie Cruz, Junot Díaz, and Reyna Grande.

Alvarez addresses the integration processes of the Latino/a immigrants into mainstream culture and shows that identity can be deeply affected by gender, ethnicity, and class. Alvarez's early works are influenced by her experiences as a Dominican immigrant in the Unites States and focus heavily on issues of exile and assimilation. This is evident in characters who, just like younger Alvarez and her sisters, "translate" their appearances "into English" (Alvarez, 1998, p. 39). In addition, Alvarez presents women`s and girls` perspectives on migration. *Return to Sender* (2009) and *Afterlife* (2020) explore irregular migration from Mexico.[24] Alvarez is the co-founder and convener of Border of Lights, a collective of activists committed to promoting peace and solidarity between the Dominican Republic and Haiti.

4.3.2. Immigrant Authors, Im/Migrant Characters

It is worth considering the authors` experience of migration and learning the language in which they produce to better comprehend their fictional work. Both Grande and Alvarez arrived in the United States in their middle childhood (ages 6-12). Therefore, they belong to what Rumbaut (2004) calls the "1.5 generation" of immigrants. These immigrants have a memory of their home countries and were able to read and write in their mother tongue before they left. Hence, 1.5 generation immigrants often combine their knowledge of the home countries together with the experience they gain through migration. However, these two authors` circumstances of migration and their home environment vary considerably. Grande entered the United States 'illegally' and spent her formative years undocumented. She grew up in a broken family and lived with her abusive father before moving in with her former teacher (Grande, 2012, 2018). Alvarez, on the other hand, arrived as a legal resident. Her parents were educated and spoke English fluently. Nevertheless, despite the difference in their immigration status, the two authors experienced racial discrimination at school. Alvarez recalls being bullied by her schoolmates. Grande explains that her undocumented status pushed her to silence in the classroom and notes how her teachers passed over her during reading sessions and ignored her attempts to write in English. Both admit that their exclusion motivated them to channel their energies to mastering the new language (Alvarez, 1998; Grande, 2012). Despite the

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[24] I analyze *Afterlife* elsewhere.

discrimination she experienced in the school yard, Alvarez (1998) reminisces her time at school as positive: she feels that she was fortunate to have teachers who "nurtured in [her] a love of language" (p. 27). The quote below explains the author`s relation to her mother tongue:

> I grew insecure about my Spanish. My native tongue was not quite as good as English, as if words like *columpo* were illegal immigrants trying to cross a border into another language. But Teacher`s discerning grammar-and-vocabulary-patrol ears could tell and send them back. (Alvarez, 1998, p. 24)

The circumstances of their upbringing and personal experience have shaped their fiction, though this influence is more distinct in Grande`s novel. Grande (2019) admits that *Across a Hundred Mountains* speaks to her "deepest fear" and continues: "What would have happened to me if my father had never returned? What would have become of my life?" (p. 80). Furthermore, the author explains her choice of referencing her own anxiety in fiction as follows:

> I used many of my experiences to give shape to Juana`s life: my father leaving for [the United States], my fears of being forgotten and never seeing him again, the shack where I grew up, the train station where my sister worked selling quesadillas (just like Juana), the summer floods, my mean grandmother, crossing the border illegally. (Grande, 2006, p. 262)

Autobiographical elements in *Across a Hundred Mountains* go beyond the points the author notes above. Grande constructs her gendered migration tale by fictionalizing many sad events from her childhood. Thus, through her sorrowful migrant`s story, the author emerges as a Chicana author who occupies the in-between space between Mexican and American. Her bilingual text straddles the two sides of the border. The stories come from Mexico; they are told in the de facto national language of the United States. Grande (2019) admits that the novel aimed to answer a personal question and states her purpose for writing as follows:

> When I first started to write at the age of thirteen, I did not have heroic ambitions or lofty dreams for my writing. My writing was not meant as political engagement. It was not an act of protest, not a call for social change or a demand for social justice. It was not an act of activism. I was not writing to raise my voice to speak up for my immigrant community. I was not writing to change other people's perception of the world. I wasn't using language to fight for human rights. … Now I do write for all of these reasons and more. But back when I was a young girl, writing for me was simply an act of survival. I wasn't trying to save the world. I was trying to save myself. (Grande, 2019, pp. 78-79)

And she continues, "Through my writing, I was able to transform myself from being an undocumented immigrant on the margins of society to a professional writer who knew she had a place in the world" (p. 80). In her debut novel, Grande reveals the migrant characters` relationship to and movement through literal and linguistic borders. Grande joins her Chicana/o predecessors to self-represent, and thus publicly assert, her Mexican American identity. At the

same time, she challenges the unifocal notions of home, belonging, and nation. This is most vivid when her protagonist narrates a conversation between herself and another passenger during her trip back to her birthplace: "She was from here, and yet she wasn`t. How could she explain?" (Grande, 2006, p. 54). This moment becomes meaningful when one pays attention to the author`s account of her trips back to Mexico after she gained legal status. The question, "Was she really going home?" (p. 54), which pre-occupies Juana/Adelina points to the author`s ambivalence towards calling Mexico home and foregoing her American side.

Though it is straightforward to discern the link between the immigrant author and the central character in Grande`s debut novel, attempting to establish that connection between Alvarez and her adolescent character proves challenging if one limits oneself to the plot development in the novel. There are several additional obstacles, too. For one, the author did not experience irregular migration and deportation. Secondly, by taking up the subject matter of undocumented immigration from Mexico to Vermont, Alvarez transcends the topics that concerned her early works, which included distinctly autobiographical elements (Sirias, 2001). Some have interpreted the author`s addressing of this topic as her commitment to her Latina roots, and there may be some truth to this claim. Nevertheless, my contention is that in this novel for young readers, Alvarez addresses a topic that deeply resonates with her: making her immigrant`s voice heard by using the language that belongs to the powerful. This is where it is possible to observe a link between the young female character and the seasoned author.

Alvarez refers to her relocation to the United States as the most pivotal moment that determined her writing career. The author describes her learning English in sixth grade as arriving on "the shores of [her] new homeland" and her eventual fluency as "land[ing] in the English language" (Alvarez, 1998, p. 29). She defines literature as "a portable homeland" (Sirias, 2001, p. 2). Alvarez conveys her opinion on the hybridization of culture through her use of borrowings, refashioning of Spanish and English expressions, continuous use of mixed idiomatic expressions, and Spanglish malapropisms (Kafka, 2000, pp. 96, 101).

Alvarez connects her becoming a writer to her bicultural and bilingual experience. She admits that Chinese American author Maxine Hong Kingston`s memoir, *The Woman Warrior* (1976), and Chicana writers Alma Gómez, Cherríe Moraga, and Mariana Romo-Carmona`s *Cuentos: Stories by Latinas* (1983) paved the way for her to gain confidence in creatively writing her dual experience as Dominican and American. Alvarez proclaims:

> I am not a Dominican writer or a Dominican in the traditional sense (.…) I`m also not *una norteamericana*. I`m not a mainstream American writer with my roots in a small town in Illinois or Kentucky or even Nuevo Mexico. I don't hear the rhythms in English as a native speaker of English. Sometimes I hear Spanish in English (and of course, vice versa). .(…) That`s why I describe myself a Dominican American writer. That`s not just a term. I`m *mapping a country that`s not on the map*, and that`s why I`m trying to put it down on paper. (Alvarez, 1998, pp. 172-173, emphasis added)

Alvarez follows other immigrant authors who carve fictional maps for themselves through their 'peculiar' language use. She responds to "a clarion call" the progenitors of Chicana writing (e.g., Anzaldua, Gómez, and Moraga), made in the 1980s (Alvarez, 1998, p. 168) and continues to write "una literature" (a literature) that testifies to and acknowledges "a migrant people, *mujeres en la lucha*" (women in the fight, p. 168, emphasis in original). It is in this context that one needs to look at Alvarez`s dual language use to notice the link between this seasoned author and heradolescent character and to appreciate the novel`s potential in intercultural communication. I do not suggest that Mari is Alvarez when she was an adolescent or the plotline in the novel reflects the elements of the author`s autobiography. However, I maintain that one needs to pay close attention to Mari`s strategy of turning to writing to assert her migrant`s voice and her fashioning a bilingual and bicultural identity to recognize the affinity between the character and the author.

It is possible to trace Alvarez`s signature technique of writing in dual language in *Return to Sender*. The author presents Spanish words and expression in italics. In addition, whenever she uses a Spanish expression, she presents its English translation or provides contextual cues to allow communication with the Anglophone reader. However, in her author`s note, Alvarez indicates that she views bilingualism as a desired feature to "connect ourselves with other countries and people and understand what it means to live inside their words as well as their world" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 324). Clearly, according to Alvarez, for intercultural communication to take place between interlocutors who speak different languages, there needs to be a certain level of linguistic contact and common ground. Hybrid language, or what she calls "Spanish in English" is the perfect place for positive intercultural encounter to take place (p. 324). Piller (2017) observes in her introductory textbook on IC that fictional and non-fictional narratives of intercultural mediators are "immensely inspiring" and they allow us to understand how intercultural communication takes place in specific contexts (p. 338). Alvarez`s co-protagonist embodies a bilingual and intercultural communicator. And there lies the book`s greatest potential for intercultural communication. Similar to her creator, Mari is *la golondrina*, the swallow figure. She establishes bridges between Mexico and the northeastern state of Vermont.

Hybrid, or what Alvarez labels "*the golondrina* people" build bridges. The world needs more *golondrina* people to negotiate different worlds and fuel intercultural understanding.

CHAPTER 5: PERFORMANCES OF HYBRIDITY IN THE THIRD SPACE AND LITERARY INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION

5.1. WOMEN COMMUNICATING IN THE THIRD SPACE

Considering Joseph Conrad`s *Heart of Darkness*, Bhabha (2009) points out that Marlow, the eloquent storyteller, narrows the distance between the Self and the Other by entering an ethical proximity. Marlow inhabits the Third Space between the native and his Anglophone audience. He occupies a translational moment. Similarly, the im/migrant characters in *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b), *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009), *Across a Hundred Mountains* (Grande, 2006), and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b) engage in intercultural conversations, albeit with differential success, with the Anglophone reader. Linguistic and cultural translation takes the central stage in their communication. In *Heart of Darkness*, Marlow comments on a conflictual encounter between the European Self and the African Other. In comparison, the protagonists in the four novels reflect on conflictual encounters in the post-9/11 sociopolitical context. They help readers imaginatively rebuild the extratextual reality on which they reflect. My analyses in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 partially discovered their "implied story" by identifying the im/migrant characters, mapping their transnational maps, cataloguing the sociopolitical incidents with which they concern themselves, highlighting their hybrid language use, and considering the link between gender and migration as well as gender and narration (Friedman, 2011). Thick descriptions in those chapters aimed to answer my first two research questions, which were:

1. How can transnational writing by women, four examples of which this study analyses, serve as a resource to descriptively trace im/migrant experience?
2. What kind of topographic, sociopolitical, and linguistic maps do the data gathered from the analysis offer?

In this chapter, I answer the remaining questions. First, I evaluate the notions of nation, culture, border, and agency by drawing on the findings in the preceding chapters. Secondly, I consider the ways in which this case study may support IC inquiry and open itself a space in the field. My goal is to map the ways in which transnational fiction can be deployed in IC inquiry. Many literary texts feature, and may contribute to the negotiation of, hybrid cultural identities. Transnational novels are rich sources: they not only feature but also encourage intercultural interactions and cultural hybridization. They expose readers to characters and world views that

are different than theirs. They translate culturally specific themes and ways of existence. In addition, hybridity portrayed in transnational fiction may be deployed in IC inquiry to discuss notions of identity and culture. Therefore, I argue that more samples of transnational fiction need to be incorporated in IC research.

Before proceeding further, let`s remember who the central female characters are in the four novels I analyzed in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. I call these fictional subjects "women speaking on the hyphen." The hyphen is a connective punctuation mark. It conjoins two constituent parts whose interaction on the hyphen forms a novel interface. This resultant interface exposes the constituent parts to ongoing revision. Let`s imagine that Arissa (Abdullah, 2009b), Fatima (Yunis, 2009), Mari (Alvarez, 2009b) and Juana/Adelina (Grande, 2006) are sitting at a table with a view of the Capitol Hill. Whereas Arissa has donned her headscarf, Fatima has brought one of her colorful copies of the Qur`an. She is dipping her pita in guacamole, an avocado-based dip with origins in Mexico, silently comparing it to his grandson`s recipe. Mari is wearing an Our Lady of Guadalupe pendant, a powerful symbol of Mexican identity. She is also carrying her diary, which served as the playing ground for her hybrid cultural identity. The most introspective of these fictive guests, Juana/Adelina remains silent, brooding over her double consciousness and staring at the rosary she inherited from her parents. This imaginary caucus will attend an IC workshop whose themes are nation, culture, borders, and agency. The participants of this invented IC circle will share what they think being an American means in the post-9/11 context. How would these characters introduce themselves to each other? How would they define nation, culture, borders, and agency?

As documented in Chapter 3, Arissa (Abdullah, 2009b) and Fatima (Yunis, 2009) might say they immigrated to the United States as trailing wives to their compatriots. Arissa may reveal that though she is highly educated and fluent in English, she stayed home until her husband`s death on 9/11, and then has devoted herself to childcare under the guidance of her in-laws. She may disclose that moving to Houston, Texas, constitutes the first step of her relational agency. By taking a job as a journalist and representing successful South Asians in the United States in a media outlet, Arissa positions herself within the larger South Asian community and emerges a speaker for her cultural group. Fatima might confess that when she arrived in the United States at seventeen as a trailing spouse to her much older compatriot, she spoke no English. She might also boast that she has learned the language by watching baseball games and overhearing her neighbors` quarrels. She may hide the fact that she is illiterate.

As detailed in Chapter 4, Juana/Adelina was born in an unnamed town in Mexico. She began her northbound journey at fourteen. Spending two years in Tijuana transformed her irrevocably: she arrived in Los Angeles as Adelina Vasquez when she was nearly sixteen. All this biographical information needs to remain a secret, however. It is doubtful whether Juana/Adelina might welcome questions about her late teenage years and early adulthood to illuminate the time when she lived and earned a college degree in Los Angeles. Mari, 12, might repeat that she was born in Chiapas, Mexico. She may argue that though she lacks legal citizenship, she is a social member of American society. She might remind her interlocutors that she is innocent because she crossed the border clandestinely at four. It is probable that she will insist that she must be granted a stay of removal in the United States. That is, she will advocate for temporary suspension of her deportation order. Her narrative is likely to cover the fact that she is in a mixed-status family. Additionally, she will speak for her mother, María Antonia Santos, who was held captive by her smugglers for an extended period.

Arissa and Fatima are what Lalami (2020) calls "conditional citizens" in the wake of September 11. Their loyalty to the nation is considered suspect. Lalami characterizes the state of conditional citizenship as follows: a conditional`s "relationship to the state, observed through exposure to its policies or encounters with its representatives, is affected in all sorts of ways by [their] being an immigrant, a woman, an Arab, and a Muslim." An American passport is a powerful tangible proof of national belonging and allows the holder to travel across national borders without much restriction as dramatized in *Across a Hundred Mountains* (Grande, 2006) whereas the lack of this mighty document is linked to illicit border crossing, border death, maltreatment by smugglers, living in the shadows, and expulsion from the national territory, as staged in *Across A Hundred Mountains* and *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b). However, carrying this authoritative artifact does not preclude everyday exclusions. Lalami (2020) recalls an airport exchange when an agent asked her partner how many camels he had traded in for her. September 11 has aggravated these everyday humiliations, which range from mere inconveniences Arissa notes in *Saffron Dreams* to serious consequences such as detention and deportation. Lalami also remembers a junior colleague`s curt response upon her inquiry of a project submission: "What are you going to do? Shoot me? Isn`t that how you people solve things?" The specific bias Lalami faced is not restricted to airports, the literal physical gates of the nation. Many others report being followed in stores (Bayoumi, 2008, 2010, 2011, 2015). This bias is dramatized in *The Night Counter* and *Saffron Dreams*. Arabs and Muslims are perceived as "lesser people: their religions, languages, cultures, customs, and modes of dress are marked not only different but also inferior" (Lalami, 2020) and this perception is reinforced by

popular media, whose purpose is to justify Muslims` and Arabs` subjugation (e.g., Alsultany, 2012; Shaheen, 2003). Both Fatima and Arissa may foreground their bifocal identifications in narrating themselves into the body of the nation. As her familial tale reveals, in asserting her belonging to the nation; Arissa may negotiate the

Abdullah takes issue with everyday exclusion in *Saffron Dreams*. As detailed in Chapter 3, Arissa exposes and responds to Islamophobic reactions of fellow New Yorkers after 9/11. Arissa promises to forfeit certain traditions she has brought over from Pakistan in return for acknowledgment as a full member of US American society. Removing the veil is an articulation of her desire to fit in. By dropping a public marker of her Muslim identity, she hopes to avert future unkind stares, verbal assaults, and physical attacks. Her plea for inclusion underscores the woman`s hyphenated American identity. In the US context, assimilation has been understood as the traditional response to difference (Hartmann & Gerteis, 2005, p. 218). Assimilation puts pressure on the newcomer to adopt American values, despite the lack of empirical support to speak of distinct American values. Arissa`s strategic removal of the veil after a physical assault signals concession. She compromises and demands recognition of the effort.

In contrast, Yunis ridicules Arab Americans` attempts to pass by covering their Arab, and by association Muslim, identity. Fatima embraces her own Lebanese, Muslim, and American identities. She introduces the reader to a complex demography to represent how Arab Americans cope with the post-9/11 atmosphere. *The Night Counter* is a literary reconstruction of Arab American life following the 9/11 attacks, which raised questions about Arab Americans` loyalty to the nation. Though not launched by members of the heterogeneous Arab Americans community, the terrorist attacks caused intense public scrutiny, backlash, and government surveillance (Cainkar, 2002, 2009; Cainkar & Maira, 2005; Howell & Jamal, 2009; Naber, 2006). For Arab and Muslim Americans, citizenship has historically been determined by crisis, with 9/11 marking a yet another watershed moment (Baker & Shryock, 2009). Yunis`s strategic creation of multiple interpretations of Arab Americanness and scattering of Fatima`s progeny across the United States in *The Night Counter* heterogenizes both the nation`s space and the figure of Arab American. Yunis inserts an assorted group of Arabs into her alterative US American past and present. That is, she spreads the Arab American 'them' among the American 'us' in both temporal and spatial terms, thereby redefining the terms of inclusion for Fatima and each of her progeny.

Citizenship is formulated in terms of civil, political, and social rights and obligations. The term is often considered coterminous with the nation-state. However, migration and transnational networks disturb this boundedness (Benhabib, 2004; Benhabib & Resnik, 2009). In addition, it is erroneously assumed that all legal members enjoy these rights equally. The lived experience of membership differs significantly depending on social, political, and economic factors that intersect with race and gender. Racial, ethnic, religious minorities and women are subjected to exclusion and discrimination (see Castles, 2007; Lowe, 1996). Following the 9/11 terrorist attacks, Arab American and Muslim American identity is perceived as "an identity in question" (Baker & Shryock, 2009, p. 14). In Baker and Shryock`s view (2009), the "blend of pervasive stigma" associated with Arab and Muslim identity and "urgent attempts at social integration produce a distinctive process of citizenship" the authors term "disciplinary inclusion" (p. 16). In other words, after September 11, Arab and Muslim Americans were associated with the enemy and required to prove their commitment to the nation by demonstrating their patriotism in ways other Americans were not expected to (Baker & Shryock, 2009; Lalami, 2020; Shryock et al., 2011). In the aftermath of 9/11, members of the Arab American community in *The Night Counter*`s and the Pakistani American woman fictive world experience a form of disciplinary inclusion and present palpable selves in public.

The post-9/11 was defined by fear. As Tyler embodies in *Return to Sender* (Alvarez, 2009b), many Americans dreaded they would suffer a terrorist attack anytime. Moreover, as *Saffron Dreams* (Abdullah, 2009b) and *The Night Counter* (Yunis, 2009) thematize, Arab and Muslim Americans have been concerned that non-Muslim and/or non-Arab Americans may perceive them as terrorists or terrorist sympathizers. The larger society`s aspiration to monitor and discipline Arabs and Muslims in the United States was coupled with the state`s surveillance regime. The 9/11 airstrikes were traumatic for all Americans, but individuals of Middle Eastern heritage and Muslims suffered the combined stigma of race, national origin, and religious affiliation (Baker & Shryock, 2009, p. 12). "The Terror Decade" increased discrimination and harassment, which led to feelings of estrangement, ambivalence, and persistent anxiety. In *The Night Counter*, Amir`s concern about Fatima`s headscarf, Bassam`s changing his name to Sam, and Randa`s going so far as to have plastic surgery to erase her ethnic, and by association religious identity and volunteering to cooperate with the FBI may be called their adaptive responses. Fatima and her progeny perform their hybrid identities under the shadow of American nationalism, which continues to imagine the nation as predominantly white and Christian, despite the legal inclusion of other groups into the nation through changes to citizenship law over the years. In the tense atmosphere of post-9/11, Arabs and Muslims

intensified their efforts to protect themselves by presenting desirable performances of Americanness (Howell & Shryock, 2011). Yunis`s elderly protagonist's American tale unfolds within this sociopolitical backdrop.

Shryock, Abraham, and Hovel (2011, p. 11) invoke the idea of guestroom to describe how Arab Americans in Detroit invested in creating a collective space to welcome strangers, giving them a good impression of their culture, while keeping these outsiders away from parts of the house where the 'family' lives. Mosques, museums, interfaith education centers have served as identity parlors, where Arabs and non-Arabs enter not as fellow citizens, but as identity performers and observers. In this respect, the public space where Arab and/or Muslim membership to the nation is enacted contains "a cosmetic wall" between the Arab and/or Muslim Americans and the larger society (Shryock et al., 2011, p. 10). This cosmetic wall allows brief sessions of cultural sensitivity training and visits by interfaith groups, all designed to instruct and inform. However, intercultural communication requires deeper engagement between the Self and the Other (Samovar, Porter, McDaniel, & Roy, 2015). Only sustained meaningful contact with the Other, or a citizen perceived to be the Other, can engender changes in attitude and behavior.

The Night Counter passes beyond the formulaic exposure in the reception area. It opens a hole in the cosmetic wall. This crack promises meaningful interaction between the Anglophone Self and the fictionalized Arab American Other. By placing Fatima and Scheherazade in Fatima`s bedroom and kitchen, Yunis leads readers to the private quarters of an Arab American family`s house. As a result, the sterile and pleasant transactions one would expect in the guestroom leave their place to intimate conversations. Ridiculous secrets are revealed through Fatima`s nightly accounts, Scheherazade`s eavesdropping, and the FBI`s illicit probing. Initially, Fatima is denied an audience. For her grandson, Fatima`s nocturnal "yakking to herself" is concerning (Yunis, 2009, p. 202). The absence of an actual listener for her nighttime tales hints at the difficulty of being heard. Fatima finds a listener in an FBI agent of Arab heritage, Sheri Hazad, who insists on misunderstanding the Arab American matriarch. Still, Fatima`s madness is positive, and the arrival of an attentive listener, Decimal, suggests an eventual acknowledgment of Fatima`s American tale. *The Night Counter* suggests that hybrid and in-between Arab Americans can communicate with the audience only when younger generations of Arab Americans listen to the older generations' personal Arab American stories.

Mari, the youngest among the fictional patrons of the café, is an eloquent speaker, unlike her undocumented mother, who remains silent in the novel and at the table. Despite her young age, Mari converses with the older women about adult topics. Mari is a third culture individual (Moore & Barker, 2012). She has lived in a country other than her nationality during her developmental years (Pollock, Van Reken, & Pollock, 2010). Being socialized into American culture at school and through her friendship with legal members of the nation while keeping her connection to her mother tongue and Mexican heritage at home, Mari has developed a hybrid bicultural identity. Her in-between cultural identity stems from her mobile upbringing, which involved a clandestine border-crossing at four; an interstate journey with her father, two uncles, and two younger siblings; and the eventual deportation to Mexico. She has undergone multiple transitions. However, she is not a typical third-culture youth: the term refers to children who cross state borders with relative ease because they are dependents of elite nomads, including corporate or military personnel. Mari is a third culture individual, even though the circumstances of her mobility are in stark contrast to that of children within affluent families. Moreover, certain aspects of her presenting herself suggest that she is a cultural chameleon. She experiences cultural marginality and exclusion while simultaneously inserting herself into the US national time and space through her letters, diary entries, and oral testimony. She has specialized intercultural communication skills, which enable her to serve as a language broker and cultural translator. Mari is well equipped to thrive in either the United States or Mexico, because she is a competent agent of intercultural communication. Her creator ensured that Mari can blend in and bridge cultures. She reaffirms her in-between position through her bilingual writing and speech. She also uses her transnational expertise in negotiating with the Anglophone assumed reader. She mediates between undocumented migrants and the citizen reader. Her cultural hybridity enables Mari to have a vision that extends beyond the nation.

These im/migrant women confront Anglophone readers. As Holliday and colleagues (2021) might agree, the café is their intercultural communication zone. It is a cultural identity terrain where the women present themselves against the identities that are imposed upon them. They challenge perspectives and make concessions. When these women meet at the imaginary Capitol Café, they bring with them different experiential backgrounds and values (Samovar et al., 2015). The protagonists in this imaginary encounter perform their hybrid cultural identity born out of divergent experiences. As explored in the previous chapters, these women meet in the in-between space of their perceived 'original' cultures (Kalscheuer, 2014). The give and take of interaction yield further hybridization. The generative energy of the Third Space is pregnant to incremental changes in the interactants` perceptions. One only needs to recall a

scene in *The Night Counter*, where Fatima meets her mixed-race great granddaughter with whom she initially refuses to speak. The girl looks unlike any of Fatima`s progeny. Also, she represents a different worldview. Yet, the two communicate in the transgenerational space when each makes concessions.

As explored in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, transnational maps of gendered mobility and encounter enable the authors to foreground their characters` hybridity and in-betweenness. Feminist theorists long ago showed that space is inherently gendered (Massey, 1994); Rose, 1993). Spaces and places enable implicit assumptions about what men and women can do. Insisting that space emits gendered messages entails looking at how literary texts imagine spaces, to which I turn below to highlight a few salient spatial configurations in the texts.

Space and spatiality are central in the exemplary transnational fictions. Of course, textual events take place in certain places, but these given locations—the setting—are far from empty containers in which the characters` time-oriented narratives unfold. The geography of each text profoundly interacts with the characters` identities. Moreover, the verbal maps in the texts guide the reader through the transnational story world featured in each text. Some locations are real places, such as New York City in Abdullah`s *Saffron Dreams* and Los Angeles in Yunis`s *The Night Counter* or; others are imaginary realms, such as Bridgeport in Alvarez`s *Return to Sender* and Juana/Adelina`s birthplace in *Across a Hundred Mountains*, although each relies on real life counterparts. Space has implications for the characters` psychology and becoming in-between individuals.[25] Space reinforces the characters` transnationality and cultural hybridity. Moreover, the im/migrants contest visions of the land as the national space. The land-as-nation gives way to land-as-transnation. To illustrate, *Saffron Dreams* imagines Queens in New York City as a multicultural neighborhood whose residents are primarily non-white (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 181). However, New York City—its parks and public transport—becomes a hostile place for Arisa in the wake of 9/11.

Likewise, by locating the younger Fatima in Detroit, home to North America`s oldest and greatest Arab American population, Yunis registers Arab American presence in Michigan. Also, the novel portrays a deeper spatio-temporal context by placing the origin of Lebanese migration

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[25] I am making this comment based on my perusal of some foundational texts on space (Soja, 1989; Thrift, 1996) and theorization of the Third Space (Soja, 2009). Providing a thorough review of what is called spatial literary studies is beyond the purview of this project. Some influential publications include *The Spatial Turn* (Warf & Arias, 2008), *Spatiality* (Tally Jr, 2013), *Literary Cartographies: Spatiality, representation, and narrative* (Tally Jr, 2014) *and The Routledge handbook of literature and space* (Tally Jr, 2017).

to Detroit to the Great Famine of Mount Lebanon during World War I. In Fatima`s words, her first husband Marwan and his father set out for the United States immediately before Britain blockaded "our harbors to defeat the Turks" (p. 34). Hence, Fatima`s account registers the first wave of Arab immigration to Detroit (Gualtieri, 2009). Also, the landscape of Fatima`s diasporic memory, an imaginary village in rural Lebanon, contrasts her granddaughter`s report of the place. Deir Zeitoun, the memory space for Fatima, is demolished. By scattering Fatima`s progeny to various US states and envisioning varied life courses for each child and grandchild, Yunis suggests that Fatima and her descendants are in and of the nation. Their imaginary life stories constitute the Arab American story of the last hundred years. They are not 'friends' of the nation; they are culturally hybrid Americans.

Return to Sender (Alvarez, 2009b) considers what happens to national identity and patriotic notions of American-ness when the citizen encounters the migrant alien in a small imaginary town with racial homogeneity. Bridgeport is a place of intercultural friendship that exceeds gender, race, ethnicity, legal status, and language boundaries. Alvarez`s deliberate mapping of an imaginary town into being registers the presence of undocumented Mexicans in Vermont. In comparison, in *Across a Hundred Mountains*, the otherworldly spaces of Tijuana affect Juana`s sense of self. Both *Across a Hundred Mountains* and *Return to Sender* depict Mexico as a place of extreme poverty. Grande comments on how post-9/11 surveillance state turns undocumented Mexicans into timid and scared laborers without human rights. Alvarez, more vocally than Grande, interrogates the factors that force Mexicans to leave their home and demands that undocumented residents be acknowledged as transnational members of the United States and Mexico. She proposes that both parties change because of intercultural encounters.

Physical borders are imagined as the edges of the national space, but they are places where different languages and ways of seeing meet. Primarily considered in spatial terms, borders are portrayed as dangerous zones of passage. The nation state is thought to become vulnerable at its edges. Bodies inhabiting the edges of a nation enter a liminal space, which escapes the classification schemes that help place them into 'proper' cultural boxes (Turner, 1991). Borders primarily index spatially, but they also mark temporal and linguistic liminality. Inhabitants of the liminal space pass through a mixed cultural realm different from the preceding or subsequent phases. For Turner, the defining feature of this liminal phase is ambiguity. To quote Turner, border subjects or "threshold people":

> elude or slip through the networks of classifications that normally locate states and positions in cultural space. Liminal entities are neither here nor there; they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed by law, custom, convention, and ceremonial. (Turner, 1991, p. 95)

If the liminal spaces "are open to the play of thought, feeling, and will" as Turner (1991, p. vii) suggests, figures of the margin are at the threshold of a major transition. Spatial, temporal, and linguistic margin dwellers like Juana before she becomes Juana/Adelina (Grande, 2006) are creatures of threshold and transition. To illustrate, in Tijuana, Juana lives in this betwixt space that separates her from the old innocent child in an obscure Mexican town.

Similar to Juana`s literal and figurative border crossing moment, Fatima`s encounter with an immigration agent at Ellis Island dramatizes this liminal moment with striking vividness. Juana`s border crossing, the culminating event of her transition from Mexican-ness to American-ness is her initiation into a novel hybrid self, complete with her new name and English as her preferred language of presenting herself to the world. Juana`s metamorphosis to Juana/Adelina is complete when she crosses the US-Mexico border. When she returns to Mexico years later, she is surprised to be called Juana. Besides, even though she presents herself as Juana García, the culturally hybrid woman remains "a stranger" to her dying mother (Grande, 2006, p. 232). The implication is that the journey has radically transformed the woman. In comparison, Fatima`s immigration as a dependent wife is closely linked with her lack of voice in the nation`s de facto national language. Her first husband speaks in her name at the country`s bureaucratic border. Marwan 'translates' Fatima to the state; the woman remains bewildered at the spatial and temporal threshold. Conversations between feminist and postcolonial theorists have taught us to pay close attention to not only who is speaking, but also how, to whom, and on behalf of whom they are speaking. Upon arrival in the United States, Fatima is spoken about at Ellis Island, but decades later, thanks to much encouragement by Scheherazade, the elderly Lebanese American matriarch regains her voice and owns her Arab American story. It may be deduced that Fatima`s agency is suspended at the 'gate' of the nation when she arrives; it arises, albeit in fragments, in old age.

The novels also portray borders as metaphorical separators. The headscarf serves as a symbolic border in *Saffron Dreams*, precluding any meaningful interaction between Arissa and those who associate her veil with the 9/11 attacks. The veil pushes the wearer to the outer edge of the nation. Likewise, her undocumented alien status erects an unsurmountable border between Mari and the bullies at her school.

Nevertheless, it is vital to reiterate that literary space portrayed in these fictions does not have to correspond to actual spaces and places of the referential world. If "a novel is a figurative mapping" as Miller (1995) claims, then every fiction writer is "a cartographer" (Turchi, 2011). The literary writer "projects a map onto the often chaotic world that the narrative will attempt to represent, offering a figural or allegorical representation that can be used to guide the reader in various ways" (Tally Jr, 2013, p. 8). Actual visual "[m]aps presuppose narratives, which in turn may function as maps" (Tally Jr, 2014, p. 1). As Tally underlines, narratives not only "organize" but also "mobilize" spaces to tell a story. The authors` mapping transnational spaces strengthens accounts of linguistic and cultural hybridity. The space in these texts stretches the national space of the United States of America beyond its borders and entangles it with other real and imagined places, which helps blur the figurative boundaries of the nation. The four authors offer alternative mappings of the nation, conjoining Pakistan (Abdullah, 2009b), Lebanon (Yunis, 2009), and Mexico (Alvarez, 2009b; Grande, 2006) to the United States. The four texts feature spaces of the nation, but also the spaces of transnational memory and longing. The im/migrants` experience in transnational spaces leads to hybridization and double vision. They feature intercultural encounters. Transnational fiction is inevitably a literary space where local and global meet to generate what Appadurai (1996) calls "glocal" in their discussion of immigrant transnationality. The four novels weave the connective threads between 'here' and 'there' to create transnational literary geographies. The im/migrants` affective geographical compass exceeds the boundaries of the United States.

Im/mobility across the US-Mexico border is a major theme in *Across a Hundred Mountains* and *Return to Sender*. Both Grande and Alvarez present the difficulty of clandestine border crossings and refer to snakes as the symbol of death on the border. The former opens with the scene where Juana/Adelina reaches her father`s makeshift grave "in the middle of the border" (Grande, 2006, p. 16). Alvarez goes one step further by having Mari comment on the constructed nature of the border: "a huge pen came writing across the land, drawing a big borderline," writes Mari in a letter (p. 26). Implementation of NAFTA made the border permeable for capital, restrictive for Mexican migrants (Fernández-Kelly & Massey, 2007). In addition, as border security measures became more stringent in the wake of the 9/11 attacks, more Mexicans have permanently settled in the United States to prevent the dangers of exit and reentry. Mexicans` cyclical mobility between the home country and the United States has become deadly. The US-Mexico border has its own logic and agents, which include both animate agents (i.e., smugglers, the US Border Patrol agents, fellow migrants, and snakes) and inanimate actants (i.e. rocks, dry soil, and desert temperatures), which altogether transform

migrants (De León, 2015). In *Across a Hundred Mountains*, border symbolizes the deadly and dehumanizing effects of harsher immigration policies; *Return to Sender* details how migrants enter illicit border-crossing networks, thereby becoming vulnerable subjects.

If the spatiality of their im/mobility informs these characters` in-betweenness so does the temporality of their im/migrant experience. Therefore, it is necessary to interpret the characters` cultural hybridity and in-betweenness against the backdrop of the sociopolitical events that prompted the authors to create them. Given that I detailed this aspect in the analysis chapters, I want to discuss this in reference to one of the books and summarize central arguments in the other three.

In *Return to Sender*, the fictional encounter between Mari and Tyler brings to the foreground two opposing viewpoints around who should be included in the nation. Tyler`s patriotic fervor, indexed through his penchant for surveillance of the Mexican laborers on the farm— "trespassers" in his view—parallels "the perceived threats to the nation`s security and the American way of life" (Chavez, 2013a, p. 136). Tyler personifies Americans who interpret Mexicans` immigration to the United States as invasion. Fed by alarmist information, Tyler enthusiastically embraces vigilantism. His eagerness to protect the farm from Mexican 'intruders` is akin to self-appointed vigilantes` craze for enforcing the nation`s borders (Hassian Jr. & McHendry Jr., 2012). Tyler confesses that his fear of the foreigners has intensified since 9/11. He fears that "strangers from other countries (…) might be plotting to destroy the USA" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 42). One needs to remember, however, that anti-Mexican rhetoric did not start with the terrorist attacks (Chomsky, 2014; Nevins, 2002, 2008, 2010; Ngai, 2014). Repressive legislation introduced in the wake of September 11, namely the USA Patriot Act of 2001, has contributed to criminalizing Latino/a/x migrants including Mexicans, effectively punishing them as if they were terrorists (Nicholas De Genova & Peutz, 2010; Talavera, Núñez-Mchiri, & Heyman, 2010). Relatedly, September 11 led to the creation of the Department of Homeland Security in 2002, which intensified US-Mexico border militarization and surveillance of undocumented im/migrant communities within the country. In other words, the border traveled to the interior following non-white im/migrant communities (Chávez, 2012; Ono, 2012). Mexicans, along with other immigrants, have been subjected to preventive detention and summary deportations without access to legal counsel or appeals.

Alvarez`s strategic ordering of Tyler`s and Mari`s perspectives has implications. Mari`s account lays bare Tyler`s mistargeted angst. Inhabiting the hyphen of Mexican-ness and (unofficial) American-ness, Mari shows that undocumented Mexicans in the United States are not a threat to the imagined unity of the American nation. Mari`s first-person account summons readers to accept undocumented immigrants` struggle for inclusion, most visibly demanded in May 2006, when thousands of undocumented immigrants and their documented supporters marched against the proposed Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 (HR 4437). Had it passed, the bill would have made felons of all undocumented immigrants (Chavez, 2013a). Indeed, Mari enacts her social membership through her narrative. Her letter to George W. Bush mimics the advocacy of the undocumented youth popularly called the DREAMers. "My name is Maria Dolares," declares the girl and presents herself as "a voter from a future where everyone is treated fairly" (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 60). Hence, she mirrors and sets a precedent for actual undocumented residents including journalist and immigrant rights activist Jose Antonio Vargas, who revealed their undocumented status in a similar fashion (Vargas, 2018). Mari`s letter writing to the President is an act of political statement. It appeals to the reader and initiates a conversation about the criteria to determine who should be considered a member of the nation. Mari is an undocumented citizen and represents about one million youth. She advocates for the DREAM Act, which would provide youth in similar circumstances with a path to citizenship. Mari proves she is an American without the right papers on account of being "born on the wrong side of the border" (Alvarez, 2009b, pp. 20-21). The way the author orders Tyler`s and Mari`s take on what is happening on the farm (i.e., the United States) helps establish that Tyler`s fears about undocumented aliens are misdirected.

Written for younger readers, Alvarez`s novel is a tool of civic education and intercultural communication. The hybridity of the main character emerges as a major theme: Mari navigates the cracks and nooks between Mexican and American cultures, stitching together the overlapping pieces of the transnational fabric. As Ong (2013) noted, efforts over representation comprise the ideological work for world making. Mari`s letters and diary entries index her social membership to American society, even if she lacks the legal membership. The oath of allegiance, the ritual of legal membership and naturalization processes for individuals born outside the United States, does not feature in Fatima`s, Arissa`s, or Juana/Adelina`s tales. All three women are legal members of the nation. In contrast, Tyler`s personal "Thank you for saving our farm" note to Mari immediately after he leads the town assembly in the Pledge of Allegiance is an allegory of inclusion (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 162). It is no small a gesture, given that this welcoming ritual is performed by "an upstanding young man" who carries the

American flag and takes pride in patriotism (Alvarez, 2009b, p. 162). Alvarez imagines a nation inclusive of its undocumented residents.

As illustrated in former US President Bush`s address to the nation, even when the speaker acknowledges that the label "American" encompasses all members "from every walk of life" the Union is imagined as homogeneous. Also, the national subject is often coded as male in narratives of the nation. Collectively, the four authors experiment with textual disruption of the homogeneous national imaginary through their fictions. They map a narrative territory that includes im/migrant women of Pakistani, Lebanese, and Mexican origins. Furthermore, they put forward their own versions of the national story. They engage with the national narrative, which pushes them to the margins or excludes them, as culturally hybrid gendered subjects with transnational ties to their home countries.

The portrayal of the alien as a menace to the nation has been a central component of American nationalism. To be an im/migrant implies attachment to more than one country. Hence, the im/migrant is automatically marked as un-American. The figure of the alien introduces a differential other whose presence is necessary to create the imagery of a homogeneous national identity (Behdad, 2005). Perceived as the menacing actor, America`s Other varies because every epoch creates its own 'enemy' alien depending on political pressures and economic demands. For instance, the eugenics of the early twentieth century constructed immigrants from eastern and southern European counties as racially inferior, bringing out the racist quote with the 1924 Act, which Yunis indexes in *The Night Counter*. Similarly, the association of Mexican and Latin Americans with illegality enabled the passage of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1986, which made it unlawful to hire an undocumented alien, creating masses of precarious labor (Nicholas De Genova, 2013), which Grande (2006) alludes to in *Across a Hundred Mountains*. Furthermore, the 9/11 strikes brought undesirable visibility on Muslims, Arabs, and immigrants of Middle Eastern origins. The attacks offered the perfect excuse to reinforce the essentialist packaging of the Middle Eastern, Arab, and Muslim Other as security a threat to the nation (Cainkar, 2002; Jamal & Naber, 2008). The ensuing discriminatory laws subjected those deemed Other to surveillance, interrogation, detention, and deportation without legal counsel.

To summarize, the four creative works foreground the experience of their female migrant protagonists in relation to the sociopolitical context in varying intensity. *Saffron Dreams* focuses on one epochal catastrophe, the air strikes on New York City`s World Trade Center, to

confront gendered Islamophobia. In comparison, *The Night Counter* imagines an Arab American version of the nation's history while presenting Arab Americans go about their lives in the aftermath of 9/11. Both *Across a Hundred Mountains* and *Return to Sender* present tragic tales of cross-border migration because of which the migrant undergoes a profound transformation. In contrast to Grande`s scant reference to distinct sociopolitical factors that inform the imaginary transborder migration, Alvarez`s novel serves as a repository of sociopolitical data for its young readers. Alvarez`s overt strategies in engaging in the immigration debate challenges readers to realize the interconnections between Mexico and the United States. In comparison, Grande`s migrant tale remains subtle in its references to the context.

Linguistic hybridity in the texts disrupts the nation`s de facto national language. Language both enables communication and is a tool for constituting personal and cultural identities. There exists no language use that is not punctuated by its contexts and the speaker`s positionality just as there is no neutral means of representation (I. Chambers, 2001, p. 22). Moreover, Chamber reminds us, the journey transforms us profoundly and this transformation presents itself in language:

> None of us may simply choose another language, as though we could completely abandon our previous history and freely opt for another one. Our previous sense of knowledge, language and identity, our peculiar inheritance, cannot be simply rubbed out of the story or cancelled. What people have inherited—as culture, as history, as language, as tradition, as a sense of identity—is not destroyed but taken apart, opened up to questioning, rewriting and re-routing. The elements and relations of our language and identities can neither be put back together again in a new, more critically attuned whole, nor be abandoned and denied. The zone we now inhabit is open, full of gaps: an excess that is irreducible to a single centre, origin or point of view. In these intervals, and the punctuation of their lives, other stories, languages and identities can also be heard, encountered and experienced. Our sense of being, of identity and language, is experienced and extrapolated from movement: (...) the 'I' is constantly formed and reformed through such movement. (I. Chambers, 2001, p. 24)

If we dwell in language, as Chamber insists, its limits are the limits of our world. The Self meets the Other within its fluctuating boundaries. Each encounter with the Other enables stretching and refashioning its boundaries (I. Chambers, 2001, p. 30). Instances of linguistic hybridity are indicators of im/migrant characters` cultural hybridity. Indexed most vividly by mixed language use, cultural hybridity is neither static nor independent of its material roots. It is a complicated process in which im/migrant individuals makes constant use of available cultural and material resources. Individuals and groups enter these hybridization processes as positioned subjects, but they also reposition themselves in relation to sociopolitical demands (Lowe, 1996, pp. 82, 210).

Therefore, hybrid cultural identities thematized in the texts need to be understood in socially constructed positions which are mediated through language use.

The authors deploy linguistic translation as a tool for intercultural communication. In *Saffron Dreams*, linguistic hybridity is inseparable from cultural translation. Arissa deploys literal translation to make Islamic cultural elements concerning burial rituals legible to her non-Muslim and/or non-Pakistani reader. As explored in Chapter 3, two other themes she translates extensively are marriage and widowhood in Pakistan. Arissa`s 'translated' bilingual narrative juxtaposes different languages and worldviews.

Written in the third person with occasional examples of direct speech, *The Night Counter* and *Across a Hundred Mountains* present linguistic hybridity at two levels. On the one hand, the main characters use expressions from their respective mother tongues. On the other hand, the narrators insert foreign words into the English text to index the characters` linguistic shifts and cultural hybridity. Fatima speaks Arabic with Scheherazade and English with everyone else. Code-mixing ensures that the Anglophone reader can follow Scheherazade and Fatima`s conversation in a foreign language. Fatima inserts Arabic expressions into the grammatical structure of English and 'transaltes' them by offering background information. Some of these expressions remain untranslated whereas most are glossed. Fatima switches to English as she begins to recount her personalized American tale. The disembodied narrator notes: "Fatima did not know that in telling this story of America she had reverted to English" (p. 80). Likewise, the woman speaks English when she responds to an FBI agent`s questions about Amir. Still, the woman`s direct speech includes frequent mispronunciations. Fatima`s 'broken' English marks the woman as a perpetual foreigner. In addition, the third person narrator has access to Fatima`s consciousness and uses English translation to define culturally specific Arabic expressions. *Return to Sender* shows very successfully that nations and their languages are not bounded entities with no outside contact or influence. Mari, the in-between protagonist, helps every Anglophone classmate embrace her dual language.

To summarize the salient points explored in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4, the im/migrants deploy their linguistic repertoires to communicate with those who hold power. Juana instrumentalizes English to claim membership at the border point. Mari addresses President Bush and immigration agents in English even though she writes her diary entries in Spanish. Arissa uses her advance knowledge of English to represent her home culture to Anglophone readers, both in

the story world of the novel and the assumed reader of the novel. Fatima, the only illiterate person, takes pride in her knowledge of Arabic and English, even though her mistakes mark her foreignness in both codes.

Furthermore, if "a national culture is the whole body of efforts made by a people in the sphere of thought to describe, justify, and praise the action through which that people has created itself and keeps itself in existence" as Hall (2013, p. 403) asserted, how are we to think of American culture after reading these four transnational fictions?

I posit that we need to define the national culture in the United States with reference to the concerted efforts of its documented and undocumented residents. All these communities vie for power in the public sphere. Fictional authors such as Alvarez, Abdullah, Grande, and Yunis take it upon themselves to represent their own or other disadvantages communities within the body of the nation. The notion of nation is often discussed in kinship terms. The American nation is imagined as "a spirited group of people of different races, origins, and creeds, bound together by common ideals" (Lalami, 2020). However, not everyone is invited to this family, which is made up of transnational linkages. Some of its members are conditional citizens whose skin color and faith negatively impact their relationship to others in the country. Arissa in *Saffron Dreams* is not only visibly non-white but conspicuously Muslim. In *Across a Hundred Mountains*, the central character attains privilege of citizenship by passing as an American. In *Return to Sender*, the undocumented residents are expelled from the protections of citizenship. In *The Night Counter*, Yunis imaginatively reconstructs Arab Americans` participation and contributions to the American nation to assert that their membership spans over a century. Yunis aligns the Abdullahs` family history with the nation in a desperate move to realign the membership of Arab Americans with the nation.

Women engage with the nation in different ways than men. "Women are both of and not of the nation" (Alarcón, Kaplan, & Molallem, 1999, p. 12). Nation hails women as both bearers of the nation and the custodians of particular cultural identity (Kandiyoti, 2013). Immigrant women who move as trailing partners, such as Arissa and Fatima, are under the pressure to transmit the cultural practices they bring from the old country. Fatima continues to use mother tongue and maintain cultural practices through culinary choices and modes of dress. Fatima`s insistence on teaching her daughters how to make kibbe, passing her secret recipe to her grandson, and gifting of her embroidered wedding dress to her youngest daughter dramatize women`s cultural

custodian role. Also, her wish for the children to speak Arabic indicates her desire to ensure cultural continuity. In contrast, Arissa aspires to break free from this responsibility while shouldering the role of a cultural representative.

As Giles noted, in the aftermath of the terrorist attacks, the United States desired "to relapse nostalgically into simpler forms of patriotism" (2002, p. 286). This yearning for a mythical homogeneous past must be thought together with nativism, or an aversive engagement and strong hostility to a domestic minority due to their foreign connections and 'un-American' features (Higham, 2002). The renewed national fervor in the wake of the 9/11 has had material consequences for those whose inclusion was deemed suspect. To illustrate, Arissa`s headscarf is understood as a marker of her alienness in this respect. Combined with the perception that the foreign is a malice to the nation, this perception forces the wearer to the margin. The immigrant wearer, in return, 'chooses' to exchange this marker with inclusion to the nation.

Collectively, the four novels confront the myth of homogeneity by featuring im/migrant characters and representing different processes of cultural hybridization. They strive to remind readers that the United States is an "immigrant nation" composed of a veritable medley of portraits (Portes & Rumbaut, 2014). Furthermore, the texts underscore transnational linkages and transformation. To illustrate, the cultural hybridity showcased in *Return to Sender*, especially lived by Mari and her sisters and their senior US citizen companions, brings to mind the cultural hybridity Gilroy (1993) speaks of in reference to the syncretic dynamic of hip hop. What producers of African American hip hop cultures do by cutting, mixing, and engaging a dialectic of appropriation and recombination to create a syncretic form, the girls and Elise Paquette create by setting up a memory table by blending religious rituals from Mexico and Vermont. Alvarez`s novel is a site of transnational affiliation that requires the hybridization of all involved, whereas Abdullah`s novel is a call for affiliation by transcending the barriers created by a different religion. *Saffron Dreams* promises compromise on the part of the Muslim immigrant in exchange for the acceptance of the larger society. In Grande`s novel, the idea of nationality and cultural affiliation is performatively fragmented because of linguistic and geographical border crossings. Yet, in the latter, it is not the US American culture that is hybridized; rather, it is the Mexican immigrant. Writing about an era that was particularly inhospitable to its alien or 'foreignized' residents of a particular skin color, ethnicity, and religion, the four novels aim to disrupt the persecution of these communities.

As discussed in the Introduction, the United States is "trans-nationality of all the nations" (Bourne, 1916). The fabric of the United States is woven by threads from other lands. Except for Native Americans, who comprise one percent of the population as of 2020 (US Census Bureau), all members of the nation have a story that connects them to the exterior of the nation. Portraying female protagonists` migration to the United States, the four novels urge readers to reckon with the im/migrants` transnational links and stories. The texts also expand the cultural destination of the nation. The characters' frequent vacillating between two ways of thinking in two languages has identity ramifications. The transnational fictions under analysis feature transnational subjects whose stories suture the United States to elsewhere spatially, temporally, and linguistically. The women`s sense of self is framed by at least two "vectors" or nodes of reference (Hall, 2013, p. 395). Each transnational subject in these fictions "lives with and through, not despite, (...) difference; by *hybridity*" (p. 402, emphasis in original).

The notion of "migrant ambivalence" emerges most centrally in *Across a Hundred Mountains*. The term migrant ambivalence indicates "a performative sense of being in the midst" (Bhabha, 2007, p. 41). The ambivalent subject`s movement across time and space hints at their belonging as "insecure security" (Bhabha, 2007, p. 40). Junana/Adelina is neither insider nor a total outsider of Mexican and American cultures. Anzaldúa deploys the Nahuatl word "nepantla" to theorize Mexicans` "traveling from the present identity into a new identity" (Anzaldúa, 2019, p. 344). In her view, the Mexican migrant who is "at the moment of crossing the barbed wire fence into a hostile 'paradise' of el norte, the United States, is caught in a state of nepantla." According to Anzaldúa, the US-Mexico border is both a geopolitical and metaphorical site. Grande employs these double meanings in her fiction. Juana becomes Juana/Adelina at the port of entry and remains 'stuck' in her new hybrid self.

Return to Sender encourages active engagement more explicitly than *Across a Hundred Mountains*. The book suggests building cross-border bridges at personal and community level as a viable solution for Mexicans` migration to the United States. It also suggests that US immigration policies change. Whether or not readers will be moved to act on their sympathies once they come out of reading this novel is of course another issue. Still, her co-protagonist`s modelling of a migrant intercultural broker role elicits a certain response to matters of immigration to the United States. In Alvarez`s thinking, intercultural competence is a relational approach that pushes everyone involved toward reinventing a new common culture. The versatile Dominican American writer devotes her creative energy to imagine how it might feel for a migrant girl to live undocumented in rural Vermont with constant fear of deportation. Mari

documents her undocumented life via her letters and diary entries. Her letter writing allows the migrant character to assert her membership in both Mexican and US societies though, legally, she is an outsider in the United States. Alvarez`s narrative on clandestine border crossing depicts an imaginary world where cultures touch and co-pollinate each other, allowing both the migrants and citizens establish a hybrid consciousness. Alvarez helps migrant Mexican children in the US find their stories in the fiction (Alvarez, 2009a). The book`s central strength lies in its modelling of a transnational friendship that transcends class, gender, national, ideological, and linguistic borders. She concludes by highlighting the importance of mutual understanding and transnational allyship.

Alvarez`s and Grande`s protagonists claim belonging simultaneously to Mexico and the United States. To quote Bhabha (2004, p. 13), Juana/Adelina experiences being "unhomed" through cross-cultural initiation. Of course, Bhabha has the colonized subject in mind. But I extend this concept to speculate on fictional im/migrants to the United States, who negotiate cultural difference. Her transborder migration and linguistic transformation have rendered this female migrant in-between characters. Mari`s own border crossing is less traumatic, and her initiation to the interface called the Third Space is gradual. Still, both characters occupy the Third Space in which the "borders between home and world become confused" (p. 13).

The intercultural communication envisioned in the novels do not take place between Americans and those who reside 'out there' in Lebanon, Pakistan, or Mexico. The fictive others are 'here' in the United States, living heterogenous lives. When these im/migrants arrived, they brought personal and group histories, faiths, and languages to American cities and towns, anticipating to complicate the existing sense of culture and national imaginary (I. Chambers, 2001, p. 2). Their stories promise transnational futures open to further hybridization. The im/migrants` journey entailed crossing the US-Mexico border surreptitiously (Alvarez, 2009b) or under a new name (Grande, 2006) as well as anxiously clutching passports and visa documents at the Ellis Island (Yunis, 2009) or other ports of entry (Abdullah, 2009b; Grande, 2006). Their journeys render both the points of departure and arrival open to gradual transformation along with expected shifts in the im/migrants` sense of self. As one of the most eloquent theorists of migrancy suggests, migration "calls for a dwelling in language, in histories, in identities that are constantly subject to mutation" (I. Chambers, 2001, p. 5). Im/migrants obtain the habit of dwelling in the in-between spaces that flow through their language use, religious rituals, dress sense, and cooking styles in addition to other surface level cultural behavior. However, the im/migrants portrayed in the texts are not passive conduits of inherited ways of being. They

work the received rules to form individual interpretations. The im/migrants women represented in the novels allow a glimpse into what it means "to come from elsewhere, from 'there' and not 'here', and hence to be simultaneously 'inside' and 'outside' (…) the national histories (I. Chambers, 2001, p. 6). In essence, these women speak from and wish to make themselves at home in the in-between space of their transnational inheritance and heterogenous present.

5.2. OPENING A CAPACIOUS ROOM FOR LITERATURE IN INTERCULTURAL COMMUNICATION RESEARCH

A glimpse through the webpage of the Society for Intercultural Communication and Training Research Center (SIETAR-USA) offers clues about the current themes in the field. The titles listed by Intercultural Press, an affiliate of SIETAR-USA, promise to equip readers with cultural competence, teaching them how to work effectively and live harmoniously within cultures other than their own. It is impossible to not notice that most of these intercultural communication survival kits equate culture with the nation-state and resort to the myth of distinct original cultures (Lewis, 2010; Storti, 2017). Some vow to teach "American ways" by unearthing "the unique American psyche and national character" (Althern & Bennett, 2011) and showcase the diversity of American cultures and "dominant American values" by focusing on attitudes, customs, manners, and daily life in the United States (Lanier & Davis, 2005); others promise to "crack the cultural code" that separates Mexicans from Americans (Crouch, 2004), offer tips to understanding Arabs (Nydell, 2018), and teach "the art of crossing cultures" (Storti, 2022). One wonders what "the deep-seated attitudes" indexing "the American character" might be in Althern and Bennett`s handbook for foreigners expecting intercultural contact with Americans. In *Living in the USA*, Lanier and Davis (2005) register the transformation the country has undergone since September 11 and promise to guide the audience—international travelers, short-term visitors, aspiring and prospective immigrants to the United States. The book`s stated objective is to showcase the diversity of US American cultures and values by dedicating sections to identity pockets, such as "African Americans," "Native peoples," "gays and lesbians," and "the disabled." Not surprisingly, the 3.7 million Arab Americans (Arab American Institute, 2021) and 3.45 million Muslim Americans (Mohamed, 2018) do not find any room in their presentation of co-cultural groups. Furthermore, though the US Census Bureau regards religious identity as a component of ethnic identity and estimates Islam will become the second dominant faith, neither of the IC handbooks dedicate space to discussing these groups. Also, there is no mention of the undocumented residents estimated to be between 10 and 12 million

(Chavez, 2013b; Urrea, 2017). One would expect that these groups might have deserved a line or two in an intercultural communication guidebook.

It may be argued that many practical guides leave the vital liminal crack this project illuminates unaddressed due to their excessive focus on the 'us' and 'them' divide based on citizenship. To illustrate, teaching US American national character to outsiders Althern and Bennett (2011) envisions the distinction between the American Self and the foreign Other as unbridgeable. Moreover, most extant IC books visualize communication as profitable business transactions (e.g., Gibson, 2022; Storti, 2017). In the process, some tend to lump diverse communities under singular titles, such as "American culture" and "Latino culture" and miss the opportunity to listen to individual voices of those marked as different . Others gloss, for instance, the imagined whiteness of the United States, thereby eliding difficult conversations about micro and macro forms of racism directed towards the racially marked members of society who are deemed different based on their ethnicity, religion, and/or legal status.

Readers often do not turn to literature for information or practical advice on how to behave when they encounter someone from a different cultural group. Still, fiction is a tool for personal enrichment. In my corpus, the transnational articulations that engage the nation, culture, borders, and im/migrant agency create alternative visions of what America means to those occupying the in-between spaces of the nation. The fictional subjects challenge the prescriptive constructions of the nation. These transnational novels underscore transnational affective and material linkages. They rewrite the American story to include Arabs, Muslims, and (un)documented im/migrants of Mexican origin. While one may be skeptical about literature`s subversive thrust, the imaginative construction of specific, locally situated but globally networked worlds in transnational fiction forces the reader-critic to see the world from the perspective of a certain character. Readers` encounters with each of the in-between characters in the four novels may open their eyes to the processes that have transformed these characters into culturally hybrid subjects against the complicated backdrop of macro contextual incidents and power relations. In addition, readers may observe how these characters navigate discrimination because they are excluded from the unitary narratives of American patriotism.

Having a critical approach to IC means being attentive to the social and political issues that inform intercultural communication; power relations between interactants; and the covert and overt facets of culture (e.g., Halualani, 2018; Halualani & Nakayama, 2010; Moon, 2010;

Nakayama & Halualani, 2010). Critical IC emphasizes that intercultural interactions occur in sociohistorical contexts and are shaped by power relations between interactants. In this scholarship, culture is defined and explored as an active site of struggle rather than as a dormant framework. Culture and cultural identities are created through discursive performances (Hall, 2013). Whereas traditional IC inquiry focuses specifically on face-to-face interactions between members of different cultural groups, critical IC looks at how macro processes, contexts, and power structures affect individuals` micro processes of actions. Communication encompasses the articulation processes of ideological positions. This dissertation is attentive to the macro dimensions that affect interactions between individuals. Therefore, it insists on the relationship between the texts and their contexts in addition to begin attentive to the intercultural encounters portrayed in them. The two of the texts confront religion-based racism and reveal how the fictional subjects perform their hybrid cultural identities. The other two fictionalize irregular migration from Mexico to the United States. These fictional narratives open a door to the characters` worlds. They expose readers to various forms of the imagined intercultural contact between the characters. They also engage in intercultural communication with readers who approach these texts from culturally divergent positions.

There are certain challenges in bringing traditionally disparate fields into contact. However, to open a capacious space for literature in IC, the chasms between the three fields that feed this dissertation need to be narrowed. The first challenge is to overcome the divide between American Studies and Postcolonial Studies. American Studies continues to disregard the issues Postcolonial Studies takes to be central and marginalizes the themes of intercultural encounter and cultural hybridity stemming from colonial and neocolonial contact. Some Americanists are skeptical about supporting a field of study that seems to focus on Africa, Asia, or South America. Instead, given the division of knowledge into disciplines and regions into discrete area studies, postcolonial concerns tend to be added to departments of national literatures. Postcolonial Studies is often subsumed in ethnic studies. In the fragmented US literary and cultural imaginary, 'mainstream' is imagined as "a carrier of paradigmatic models of nation and (…) cultural coherence, inviting the newcomer to acculturate. The 'marginal' works, which are alternatively labeled postcolonial literature or ethnic writing, focus on the diasporic and the interstitial (Buell, 2013, p. 24). Navigating thorough Postcolonial Studies, transnational literature does not promise to abridge these two opposite thrusts but sheds lights on the overlaps between apparently imageries.

The second obstacle is the difficulties associated with bringing transnational literature under the purview of IC inquiry. In this study, I turned to transnational literature and attempted to read exemplary fictions through an IC perspective. I call this subfield Literary Intercultural Communication. The term encompasses two lines of research. I focused on texts that represent women`s migration to the United States and offered a systematic exposition of spatial, sociopolitical, and linguistic aspects of gendered intercultural contact and hybridization. Though my project left out the other line of research, which is the reception of these fictions by actual readers, it was attentive to the ways in which these books aspired to communicate with their assumed readers. I traced how the characters and their creators strived to establish affective bonds with their readers.

The third obstacle concerns the uncomfortable relationship between IC and Postcolonial Studies. Postcolonial theory has made significant contributions to IC discipline, despite the fact that most IC research fails to acknowledge that various intercultural phenomena of postcoloniality and communication are intertwined (Shome & Hegde, 2002). Cultural hybridization results in double vision. The notion of Third Space has been illuminating. Intercultural communication takes place in the Third Space, where individuals with divergent cultural traditions engage in a special form of negotiation and translation. As elaborated in Introduction and Chapter 1, the notion of the Third Space denotes an alternative positioning to the binary model favored in mainstream IC inquiry. The binary model assumes that an individual or group coming from one 'distinct' culture interacts with an individual or group from another 'distinct' culture. In this model, culture is often taken as national culture. Mainstream IC scholars insist that intercultural communicators embody certain national and cultural characteristics that constrain their behavior. The goal of IC training in this paradigm is to reduce misunderstandings stemming from cultural differences and prevent clashes. The binary model suggests that the Self, representative of one culture, meets the Other, the representative of a foreign culture, in the neutral intercultural playground. They meet as the guest and host, the tourist and the local, and the foreign representative of a transnational corporation and the local representative. As argued in Chapter 1, this binary model fails to account for transforming interactions between individuals in ongoing dialogic mutuality.

Conversely, most comprehensively theorized by postcolonial scholars, the notion of Third Space implies that interactants are neither 'pure' selves nor the completely 'alien' Other. The Third Space stresses the in-between space where communication takes place and where new hybrid identities are developed in interaction. This "liminal space" enables meaningful

exchange and allows newness to emerge (Turner, 1991). Intercultural communication takes place in this in-between zone where the Self and the Other affect each other through interaction. Communication acts are embedded in the context and informed by power relations between interactants, who exhibit active agency by initiating or participating in intercultural communication, but whose communicative acts are shaped by power dynamics in the immediate micro and surrounding macro contexts, a point enacted most vividly in *Return to Sender* and *Saffron Dreams*. This temporal, spatial, and linguistic in-between zone is where polarity is softened (or at least there is an effort to soften) and hybridity—hybrid language and culture—is enacted, giving way to the emergence of newer expressions. This notion of hybridity nourishes on Bakhtin`s discussion of linguistic hybridity. The social field in which the actors perform provides the network or frame where the individual acts drawing on their multiple language and other resources, values, and dispositions, while also rewriting those resources through interactions. In this respect, the Third Space posits that an individual embodies not so-called stable culture, which is understood as a national, racial/ethnic, or religious identities, but a perpetually recreated positioning. The Third Space may best be characterized as a space of ambivalence and contiguous jockeying for dominance. The Third Space is a physical space or place; it is the position from which an individual speaks. For instance, it is the metaphorical or figurative location of cultural mediators who function as interpreters and translators. The notion of Third Space may imply a degree of objectivity. However, this is not the point. Also called intercultural speakers or communicators, the inhabitants of the Third Space speak from certain positions, because actors of the Third Space enter this intermediary position from certain angles (Byram, 2008). The Third Space is a sphere of enunciation, where new hybrid identities emerge through ongoing negotiation and reciprocal impact (Ikas & Wagner, 2009). In this project, the Third Space has two meanings. First, it denotes the temporal, spatial, and linguistic moment or point from which the immigrant characters speak. Second, it marks the temporal, spatial, and linguistic moment from which the transnational authors write.

Furthermore, this dissertation builds on the assumption that sustained intergroup contact may help reduce prejudice between majority and minority group members. Research confirms that having extended contact with members of an outgroup precipitates more constructive attitudes towards that outgroup (e.g., Vezzali, Hewstone, Capozza, Giovannini, & Wölfer, 2014). When close social contact is not viable, one is likely to encounter members of other cultures through media. Vicarious or indirect contact with members of other cultural groups through media including prose fiction has implications for intercultural communication (e.g., D. R. Johnson et al., 2013). To begin with, positive media portrayals of intergroup interactions in literature bear

the potential to reduce prejudice. Alvarez (2009b) explicitly builds her novel for younger readers on the idea that positive interracial contact represented in literature will attenuate prejudice against undocumented migrant workers whereas Abdullah`s (2009b) novel gravitates towards initiating intercultural communication with the implied non-Muslim audience by relying on intimacy of the diary format. Yunis (2009) relies on intertextuality to parody the othering of Arab Americans.

Turning attention to the primary texts in the final analysis, it is possible to draw several conclusions. The women are writing back to the empire from their Mexican American (Grande), Dominican American (Alvarez), Arab American (Yunis), and Pakistani American (Abdullah) standpoints. Grande maps the United States as a primarily Latino/a space whereas Alvarez highlights an intercultural encounter between the Mexican migrant and the American citizen. Yunis creates an Arab America that is in constant interaction with immigrant groups of other ethnicities. Abdullah`s objective is to mitigate the division between the nation 'proper' and its Muslim others. These authors and their female characters become the creators and custodians of transnational imaginaries in the post-9/11 context.

Abdullah, Alvarez, Grande, and Yunis seem to support the assertion about the link between gender and genre by taking up traditionally feminine subject matters, motifs, and narrative strategies. Abdullah`s heroine sets out to complete a novel her husband left unfinished amid her domestic tasks. She recruits her mother-in-law to assist in childcare, cooking, and other household chores in order to be able to complete her deceased spouse`s "masterpiece" (Abdullah, 2009b, p. 96). Likewise, Alvarez`s young protagonist, Mari, writes her letters and diary entries amid chores associated with her role as a young mother to her younger siblings. The young fictive author documents these interruptions—markers of female literary production—in no abstract terms. Furthermore, Grande (2012, 2018) acknowledges the link between gender and genre in her memoirs by referencing her writing processes as a young single mother. The most elusive among the four in terms of sharing biographical information with readers, Yunis relies on the renowned storyteller, Scheherazade, to enable an illiterate elderly immigrant to tell her transnational American story. The elderly woman`s speech involves a lot of coaxing. The narrative voice in *The Night Counter* emerges at night and old age for Fatima, when the responsibilities of child rearing—eleven including the grandson—and household chores subside.

In Grande`s hands, the heroine needs to become a prostitute to gain access to knowledge about her father`s whereabouts. But leaving the house and becoming a sex worker do not suffice. She needs to acquire a new language—English spoken at US-Mexico borderlands—to metamorphose into her American self. Juana/Adelina finds herself in the feminine space of a Mexican American family`s kitchen, helping them make a Mexican dish. Grande leaves the issue of returning her protagonist to the United States vague. In *Return to Sender*, Mari`s feminine view is conciliatory compared to the unbending tilt of Tyler`s perspective. In *Saffron Dreams*, Arissa aims to bend the vitriolic rhetoric about Muslim men as an enemy of the nation through her intimate feminine voice. Furthermore, the women in *The Night Counter* and *Saffron Dreams* engage in a societal topic from their female standpoint of being grounded in the home. *In Return to Sender*, Mari dwells on the prospect of being 'unhomed' through impending deportation. In *Across a Hundred Mountains,* the female character leaves home/land.

The gender/genre debate covers the question of subversive properties of women`s writing. Female appropriations of the bildungsroman, such as Grande`s debut, imaginatively reconstruct what used to be a male-centered genre. Grande`s fiction is a tale of female survival and achievement in the face of a fatal border. However, it is difficult to prove that women might have an innate propensity towards certain forms, or the novel is their forte as previously thought. Hence, the question of whether there is a distinctive female genre remains unanswered. It would be wise to guard oneself against making assertions verging on the essentialist views. Eagleton might be right when she claims that it is hardly "possible to produce definitive evidence to prove that 'x' is the writing of a woman and 'y' is the writing of a man" (M. Eagleton, 1989, p. 65). Therefore, attempts to characterize women`s writing remain unresolved. As a result, I contend that the similarities and differences between these four authors and the relationships with others who tackle similar subject matters are determined by various factors, including the author`s gender, language background, academic and literary foundations. Still, one needs to acknowledge the distinctive angles of vision and expressions of their female characters. Idiosyncratic articulations of the hybrid identity relate to both their gender and migration experiences. Still, I agree with the argument that there are specifically female perceptions and stylistic modes specific to women (Lee, 1995). After all, the authors are gendered creators. They perceive and invent the world through the prism of their gender, along with their class, educational, linguistic, and cultural background, age, disability, and so on.

Gender also interrelates with mobility. In two fiction works on irregular migration to the United States, women migrants face sexual violence. In *Across a Hundred Mountains*, Adelia`s

boyfriend/pimp rapes Juana. In *Return to Sender*, Mari`s mother is kept as a sex slave. To capture immigrants` agency in *Return to Sender*, we need to look at the young migrant and her mother separately. Urrea (2017) argues that "undocumented immigrants have no way to tell you what they experienced, or why, or who they are, or what they think" (p. 42). Mari`s first-person account challenges this assumption.

Nations are historically contingent artifacts, imagined through artistic, literary, legal, and so on discourses. In Andersonian terms, the nation is supposedly based on "a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson, 2006, p. 16) and "fraternity" (p. 40) notwithstanding the vertical power relationships among actors. Bhabha`s "DissemiNation" critiques the national boundedness we observe in Anderson`s examination and proposes the hybrid to challenge homogeneity. The texts analyzed here also problematize insular imaginaries and the "prison-house of a monolithic national identity" (Fluck, 2009, p. 7). In these accounts, the American national cultural imaginary is inflected with gendered narratives that bear traces of other places, stories, and languages. There is no denying that literary texts are refractions of different ideologies. These four texts present the reader with a feeling of the times they imagine. They refract the national narratives. For instance, the American dream of individual transformation from a modest beginning, most vividly imagined in Grande`s migration saga *Across a Hundred Mountains*, dramatizes how Juana overcomes adversity. Her new name and performance in the new language epitomize the split identity she acquires in the border town of Tijuana.

Yunis's *Night Counter* has the potential to reflect and react to a plethora of social, historical, and political phenomena. It may pave the path to intercultural engagement. Though they employ different literary techniques to achieve their goals, both Yunis and Abdullah respond to the negative stereotypes about Arabs and Muslims. Their goal is to construct bridges that can promote intercultural awareness through literature. Abdullah tells the American reader that the calamity of September 11 was not caused by Islam per se but by a few misguided extremists. She insists, less successfully than Yunis, that a veiled Muslim woman may not be oppressed and voiceless. Arissa asserts her subjectivity by telling her own story. In the end, the woman survives in the fine line of her in-between world. Abdullah endorses the project of liberating Muslim women from the restrictive patriarchal traditions of her homeland on the one hand and the hegemonic Western gaze and discriminating media discourse on the other.

The authors' engagement with hybrid language foregrounds im/migrant women's cultural liminality. The illustrate with one example, Yunis deploys bilingualism and multivocality to rewrite American history from the perspective of the illiterate yet mathematically adept immigrant woman. Yunis's extraordinary method of weaving this immigration story through this illiterate immigrant woman's perspective is worth acclaim. So is her use of disarming humor. Abdullah to some degree, and Yunis fully clears the ground for resistance. Parody in *The Night Counter* licenses transgression and forestalls readers` resistance. While Abdullah (2009b) exposes gendered cultural oppression and Islamophobia in somewhat nausea-inducing sentimentality, which risks pushing readers away, Yunis (2009) successfully compels the American reader to acknowledge the nation's hyper visible Other. To extract Fatima's immigrant story, Scheherazade glides over more than a hundred years of colonialism and US international politics, remembering important conflicts. Fatima`s narrative points to a discrepancy between an irretrievably mythical past in Lebanon available only to her imagination and all too intrusive facts of the hostile present after September 11. These two books offer valuable opportunities for analyzing the intricate links between literary and political spheres, which is now beginning to attract more CI scholars` attention.

This project argues for adopting transnational literature as a medium of IC inquiry. Literature of all genres, from the novel to the comic book and poetry, can be rich sources of intercultural experience and learning. But with its focus on transborder associations, the use of borrowed vocabularies from other languages, and the subjects matters which concern transnational subjects, transnational novel is a particularly apt genre for analysis that either discovers imagined/represented experience of intercultural communication or explores how readers interact with the specificities of transnational fictions. IC inquiry and training must stop paying lip service to the importance of literature. Fictional prose texts feature sustained narratives of the politics of the Self and the Other. They represent, for instance, how a marginalized person deals with the processes of being othered. Responding to demonization consciously and always forward-looking in its aspirations to promote intercultural understanding and dialogue, the texts about the marked Other present cultural practices in certain ways in relation to the sociocultural environment. Allusions to specific cultural practices, or the fictional subjects` doing things in certain ways, reveal much about their sense of cultural identity. Literature reflects, and impacts, an individual`s sense of their cultural identity. One`s perception of their cultural difference may be underpinned by their gender, ethnicity, and/or religious identity. Literary narratives allow for the bottom-up observations of cultural behavior and self-presentation. They acquaint readers with the characters` individual mindset and worldviews.

In this project, I illuminated how the four literary texts instrumentalized the accounts of the female characters` gendered journeys to the United States. The narratives confront discrimination and prompt discussions about actual im/migrants` cultural hybridity. The fictional individuals utilize literary transnational geographies to teach the assumed reader about places that shaped their in-between identities. Their focus on hybridity and in-betweenness, in turn, helps them confront exclusion and discrimination. The central characters in the novels desire to meet readers as complete human beings with feelings and opinions, rather than as the feared or despised other. As Nussbaum (2018) points out in reference to the intercultural encounter between Huck Finn (a white boy) and Jim (a fugitive slave) in Mark Twain`s *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, "Reading can create such encounters in the [reader`s] head, so that the ones that happen in the world are a little less crude, a little less deformed by anger and fear." Despite heavy theorizing and a lot of empirical research describing how intercultural actors communicate, IC remains inadequate in training for harmonious intercultural communication. This study foregrounded the uses of literature in assessing the textual images of the marginalized other.

Literary IC inquiries may also take the form of studies of fictional representation in specific sociopolitical issues. In the present project, I focused on how the four texts composed by im/migrant women responded to the sociopolitical issues of concern for the racialized other. In Chapter 3, I revealed how Abdullah`s female protagonist takes issue with gendered forms of Islamophobia. I revealed that the author appeals to non-Muslim readers` emotions and seeks to raise intercultural awareness and initiate intercultural dialogue. I also documented how Yunis ridicules Arab Americans` oppression by upending the stereotypical representations of Arabs. I praised Yunis`s adoption of an intricate method to dispel negative Arab stereotypes perpetrated by Hollywood and the undiscerning mainstream media organs. Abdullah`s protagonist struggles for recognition as a full member of American society by telling an 'I' story in which the woman disassociates from the disparaging images of being a Muslim woman. In comparison, Yunis`s central female character aims to set the record straight by verifying Arab Americans` membership to the national sociocultural life. In Chapter 4, I underscored how Grande and Alvarez bring the gendered vulnerabilities undocumented residents of Mexican origins confront in the post-9/11 context. Grande`s protagonist reworks the conventional road narratives of Mexicans` migration. Alvarez`s young protagonist speaks her own fictional truth to participate in conversations about many undocumented youths in the United States. Other literary IC scholars may find ways to investigate how raced and gendered fictive subjects tell their personal stories in relation to specific sociopolitical incidents, thus referencing the referential world. In

addition to concentrating on transnational spaces in the texts, I traced the texts` accounts of sociopolitical incidents by considering those with which the central characters concern themselves. The primary im/migrant characters comment on political incidents when they negotiate their identities as culturally hybrid subjects in the post-9/11 American society.

Issues around language constitute an important component of IC research. Language takes such a remarkable place in IC research that it is possible to speak of a subfield within IC that explores the intersections of foreign language learning, teaching, and use and intercultural communication. Transnational fictions may serve as productive means of intercultural communication teaching when educators bring carefully chosen extracts to sessions. Readers may encounter the vocabularies of foreign languages in these fictions. Meticulously curated vignettes may familiarize readers with foreign expressions from the target languages. In addition, the readers may investigate how the characters position themselves through their language use. The reader-critic might consider the interculturality of the text by focusing on its language; they may trace instances of code-mixing and code-switching.

Language is inextricably connected to culture; therefore, fictional texts that feature im/migrant characters and their 'foreign' mother tongues inevitably engage in cultural representation and translation to enable communication with target readers. Also, transnational fictions that immerse readers in their story worlds help their audience gain insights into how their fictive inhabitants feel, think, and go about their lives. Their fictive residents often choose to explain culture-specific attitudes and practices. Exposure to foreign cultures through transnational prose narratives may not guarantee that intercultural understanding will automatically emanate from these encounters, but it constitutes a necessary first step. If one is to successfully foster intercultural understanding, the adoption of transnational fictions for intercultural teaching necessitates going beyond superficial appreciations of these texts. Carefully curated intercultural texts or vignettes from these intercultural texts need to be explored in relation to their representations of 'foreign' cultures in translation. Transnational fictions open a literary window to the other`s world. What's more, this window does not limit itself to revealing the surface level aspects of the foreign culture such as food, dress code, and festivals; it often features sustained discussions of the inherent values in that foreign culture in addition to representing how the central character interprets, lives, and contests those hidden aspects.

Literary IC may also illuminate how readers use literary texts. Learning about the Other is an opportunity to learn about the Self and IC training may benefit from studying transnational texts, which often feature and decry othering as a major hindrance to communication. Readers bring their own cultural understandings into their encounters with fictive others. Careful analyses of transnational texts allow one to gain insights into the incidents that shape the Other`s identity. Readers may explore their own values, beliefs, and attitudes in relation to the ones they encounter in fiction. An appreciation of the incidents that shape the fictive other`s understanding of the world may set a precedent for readers to develop understandings of how their perceptions of the world are also shaped by the incidents in their immediate social circles. Studying transnational fictions increases their awareness of their own cultural perspective and help them articulate their own stance. Readers may reassess their own presumptions and biases in light of the sustained interactions with the fictive other. For these to happen, IC scholars need to conduct a two-prong project. First, they must survey samples of transnational writing to determine the areas of focus. Next, they can investigate how readers interact with certain aspects these texts. In this respect, adopting transnational fictions to investigate these texts with an IC lens does not repudiate the mainstream methods of research in the field. Rather, textualizing IC inquiry means enriching its sources and methods.

Transnational fictions are rich mediums of intercultural research and training, but the literary IC researcher and/or trainer must remember that such fictions are not inherently better tools. Some transnational fictions perpetuate prejudiced images of the foreign; others fall into the cultural relativist trap and romanticize certain 'traditional' features of the foreign cultures they represent. For instance, some samples of transnational fictions about Muslims and the Middle East inadvertently reify the patriarchal family structure when trying to dispel misunderstandings about Islamic culture. Such concerns bring us to the danger of being exposed to a single story or perspective. To overcome this problem, literary IC scholars and trainers who adopt transnational fictions in their classes should conduct comparative studies of alternative representations of the same subject matters. Alternatively, they may adopt narratives that have dual or multiple perspectives. It is crucial to introduce a repertoire of texts. A discerning reader will notice the narratives that feed the dominant negative stereotypes; novice readers must be trained to recognize and cope with reductive representations. This caveat underscores the important role teachers serve as intercultural mediators at the text selection and analysis stages. In an unscrupulous may result in contact with the Other`s culture through fictions that may confirm, rather than question, the essentialist view of that culture. In contrast, a carefully curated corpus

of intercultural texts and coached reading of these texts may lead to mediated intercultural dialogues between the reader and the fictive other, which may be transferable in real life.

Chapter 5 had two objectives. First, it aimed to consider how the fictional subjects whose stories we encounter in the four transnational novels might help us define the notions of nation, culture, borders, and agency. Secondly, it pointed to a gap in the IC field and considered how literature might be utilized in IC research. I proposed Literary Intercultural Communication and specified a two-tier research agenda. On the one hand, the researcher may conduct meticulous text analyses; on the other, they may investigate how actual readers interact with the representations. Conducting a more experimental research study also entails determining the specific areas of focus. Positive intercultural dialogue between members of distinct cultural groups presupposes that the interactants stand on a certain threshold of cultural awareness. Sustained encounter with the cultural other may potentially foster intercultural communication with them. Explicit intercultural scenarios and encounters depicted in the texts ensure mediated communication. It is worth reiterating that the goal of intercultural learning is to ensure intercultural dialogue. When the reader actively engages with and processes the text, they immerse themselves in the Other`s culture and ways of going about life. The intervention must be made with a careful choice of texts. Transnational texts dealing with sociopolitical incidents such as September 11 and its aftermath, restrictive immigration strategies, and fatal border regime may do more than offering information about these controversial issues: they are likely to affect the reader at deeper levels necessary for behavioral and attitude change. After encountering who speaks in the Third Space, readers may approach their own Third Space of intercultural affinity because literature stimulates imagination and has a transformative power.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This PhD dissertation examined four novels published in the United States following the terrorist attacks on September 11, 2001. At the textual level, I aimed to trace hybridity and in-betweenness of their im/migrant characters. My objective was to draw on these sample literary texts to initiate a discussion about Literary Intercultural Communication. I characterized the four books in my corpus as transnational fictions. The modifier "transnational" describes processes, cultural products, and people located between national boundaries. I underlined that my use of the term refers to non-state actors. Furthermore, I insisted that the transnational inherently relates to the national because of its double move both directed towards the inside of a given nation and to its outside through intercultural encounters, traversal effects, and new configurations of hybrid and in-between identities. I concluded that the transnational turn in American literary studies began in earnest at the intersection of minority, multicultural, and postcolonial literatures, and that transnationalism as a methodology emerged in the 1990s.

I underlined the epochal significance of 9/11 and the United States` calamitous response. It has been more than twenty years since the fateful terrorist attacks, which brought unwelcome attention to Arab and Muslim American communities, changed the perceptions of immigration, and triggered harsh policy changes. I proposed im/migrant women`s transnational fictions as complementary interpretations of the sociopolitical era, alternatively called post-9/11, the Terror Decade, and Post-Gatekeeper period. Im/migrant women offer nuanced interpretations of the social processes that affect their lives. Their stories attest to the overflow of territorial borders. Abdullah spins an 'I' story of a first-generation immigrant from Pakistan, while Yunis recounts a "we" story to rebut the demand for assimilation. Grande focuses on a female migrant`s transformation as a result of the journey. Alvarez imagines a dialogic relationship between the migrant Other and the citizen Self.

In Chapter 1, I mapped the conceptual framework to investigate the four sample post-9/11 works by im/migrant women as examples of translational novels. My first strategy was to understand the notion of "transnational." After that, I surveyed transnationalism in American literary criticism. Next, I distinguished between transnational writing and a host of related terms. My goal was to identify themes and narrative strategies that mark the texts in my corpus

transnational. I proceeded with the understanding that transnational novels transcend national boundaries in various ways: they circulate as finished products, but more importantly, they take various forms of border-crossing and intercultural contact as their main theme. Crucially, they feature linguistic hybridity as a manifestation of the characters` cultural hybridity and in-between status. I navigated through various theories of hybridity as discussed by postcolonial theorists. I argued that the Third Space is a sphere of enunciation, where new hybrid identities emerge through ongoing negotiation and reciprocal impact. I envisioned the Third Space in two ways: the spatial, temporal, linguistic, and gendered point from which the immigrant characters speak and the moment from which the transnational authors write.

The methodological commitment in Chapter 2 entailed, first, offering an overview of major paradigms in IC. Recognizing its multidisciplinary research traditions, I identified post/positivist, interpretive, critical, constructivist, and realist paradigms. I suggested that those following the post/positivist paradigm presume a causal link between individuals` behavior and the cultures by which they are surrounded. Researchers in this tradition strive to document the impacts specific cultures exert on their members` identities and communicative actions. In contrast, interpretive IC scholars agree that communicative actions and culture are co-constitutive, and their job is to interpret communicative acts as active components of culture. Research projects following the interpretive paradigm interpret cultural incidents in context and try to understand cultural phenomena through thick descriptions of ethnographic writing. Differing from post/positivist and interpretive paradigms, the critical IC paradigm defines culture as an ideological power struggle among various vested interests. For this reason, it argues that understanding culture and cultural differences can only be achieved by paying attention to macro contexts in which differences are ascribed, signified, reified, and/or glossed over. Moreover, I stressed that the critical paradigm does not regard communication as a process of encoding and decoding, where meaning travels through a neutral circulation circuit. Rather, in critical IC inquiry, communication denotes the practices of articulating situated meanings. Furthermore, research on interculturality is attentive to the linkages between culture, identity, and power. Critical IC scholars acknowledge that unique identity positions (i.e., race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, socioeconomic class, generation, immigration status, etc.) and their intersections inform communication acts differently. Similar to the critical paradigm, the constructivist paradigm competes with the post/positivist paradigm in that it underlines the active engagement of individuals in the creation of their own world but differs from the critical paradigm with its special focus on the subjective nature of meaning-making. Lastly, the realist

paradigm acknowledges the agency of individuals but considers the constraints that limit individuals` behavior much more important.

Having traced various paradigms informing IC research by relying on the available taxonomies, I observed that the boundaries between different approaches are not always very precise. Nevertheless, there is a deeper ideological rift between various interpretations of the social scientific paradigm, which tends to imagine cultures as distinct geographical blocks that determine their members` behavior, and the multiple variations of the postmodern paradigm, which recognizes that culture is a malleable and socially constructed entity. It is possible to speak of a convergence between interpretive and critical paradigms, giving way to trans-paradigmatic methodologies.

Furthermore, I noted that insights from postcolonial scholarship have contributed to the permutation of critical IC research designs and helped refine their methodologies. Also crucial to my project, these contributions include increased awareness of the field`s and the investigator`s impacts on the processes of intercultural communication and research. With its focus on power relations, postcolonial theory urged IC investigators to be more attentive to uneven power relations between interactants, as well as the macro structures that inform, enable, or restrain communication acts. In addition to increased reflectivity, postcolonial theory has enabled the opening of a fresh avenue in IC research. Still very young, this line of inquiry may be labeled literary IC research. Contrary to traditional IC enquiry`s continued attention to face-to-face interpersonal communication, literary IC research instrumentalizes insights from postcolonial theory and IC research to address micro instances of intercultural interactions, as well as the macro structures that inform them, through text-based methodologies. Informed by interpretive, critical, and constructivist paradigms, I developed my own analytical tool kit with insights I gleaned from my readings on critical literary criticism methodologies, including postcolonial literary criticism and various schemes of feminist literary analyses. In other words, I deploy fictional texts as rich springs to investigate hybridity and in-betweenness to advocate for ample room for literature in the IC field. The novel can afford such in-depth analysis thanks to its ability to create rich fictional life worlds and characterization. Moreover, transnational novels about im/migrant subjects are particularly apt sources: they portray the so-called Other not quite outside of the nation and national culture.

As I explained in Introduction and the relevant analysis chapters, I chose the four texts after considering numerous novels published in the wake of September 11. An ever-evolving annotated bibliography allowed me to register the expanse of transnational fiction. Literary analysis involves close reading of primary sources and systematic categorizing textual data. Once I determined the four texts for scrutiny, I tabulated references to certain places, times, events, languages, identity positions in relation to the characters and/or narrators. I recorded the contexts where in each book a certain comment or phrase emerged. Because I had the electronic copies of the four novels, and hard copies, I used the comment features on my electronic book reader. In this sense, the content analysis I engaged with was ethnographic content analysis. It entailed careful observation of the life worlds in the four novels. The next step was the classification and interpretation of the data to make statements about the overt and covert discourse on linguistic and cultural hybridity in the books. The data collection was far from linear. Data analysis went hand in hand with data collection and the actual writing of the findings, each illuminating the other phases. Rather, my analysis began with the first reading of each primary text: initial hunches evolved into refined observations presented in the two analyses chapters. Reading notes hastily scribbled in the continuously evolving annotation journals were refined before they found their place in the final draft. I corroborated my hunches as I interacted with the primary works and many secondary texts.

The tool kit I present in Chapter 2 helped me conduct a systematic analysis. First, I identified the im/migrant character(s) in the text. My goal at this step was to understand how im/migrants position themselves via a vis the nation-state and the other members of American society in the sociological context academically known as Post-Gate Keeper Period, the Terror Decade, or post-9/11. Next, I built a verbal map of the transnational geographical spaces the im/migrants wander, inhabit, and recall. After that, I canvassed the sociopolitical/sociohistorical concerns and incidents the texts portray. I determined the specific ways in which the im/migrant characters relate to these sociopolitical incidents. At the next step, I documented the hybrid linguistic space the texts create to index the im/migrant characters` hybrid cultural identities. I also evaluated the im/migrant authors` gendered literary intervention in intercultural understanding. The final step in the analysis took a step back from the primary texts and connected them to the referential world and the authors` politics. Gender weaved through every stage of analysis. Like actual female im/migrants, fictional travelers experience migration and other sociopolitical events and places as gendered subjects; the authors observe life and generate fictional life worlds as gendered creators; and I, the investigator, experience and analyze these texts through a lens informed by my gendered experience.

As mentioned earlier, my analysis in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4 gathered its weight from my engagement with various critical approaches to literary analysis, and gender took a central stage in my discussion. However, as I made progress in writing the dissertation, it was brought to my attention that I could not discuss hybridity and in-betweenness without sufficiently addressing how gender informs transborder mobility and intercultural encounters, as well as the literary representations of these encounters. As a result, the gender aspect of my analysis gained more prominence than I had initially planned. Therefore, I returned to the theory and methodology chapters to make major revisions.

In Chapter 3, I explored hybridity and in-betweenness from Pakistani American and Arab American perspectives. Set in the post-9/11 United States, *Saffron Dreams* depicts the struggle of Arissa Illahi, a Muslim Pakistani American widow. I argued that in *Saffron Dreams*, Abdullah constructs the 9/11 as a deeply traumatic event for her female Muslim character whose life splits into "before" and "after" following the strikes on the World Trade Center, where her late husband worked. The Pakistani American author`s take on the post-9/11 provides a markedly feminine outlook on the impact of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. This 9/11 fiction does not respond to the making of history by merely registering what has changed. Rather, it actively participates in contemporary public discourse by employing a personal tone to interrogate dominant narratives about the 9/11 attacks. Arissa, the central character, attunes readers to the complexity of being a Muslim woman in the post-9/11 United States. Acting as the mouthpiece for her creator, Arissa invites non-Muslim readers to acknowledge Muslims` loss.

Like Abdullah, Yunis feels the burden of representation on her shoulders. *The Night Counter* lays bare the 9/11 paranoia and the state`s distrust of its citizens of Arab heritage. The author recenters a long history of Arab American existence in the United States through the Abdullahs` entanglement in the official history. The reconfiguration of Scheherazade allows Yunis to overlay several cross-cultural references to the United States` operations in the Middle East and Hollywood's role in disseminating skewed racialized and gendered images of Arabs in one stroke. The book successfully depicts how what transpires in the Middle East constitutes an integral part of Arab American experience. Just as Scheherazade, the gifted storyteller, weaves stories to save herself and other young women from despotic Shahryar, so, too, Yunis plaits Fatima`s and Arab American women`s otherwise incomplete stories to confront Arab Americans` racialized oppression in the aftermath of 9/11. Yunis makes two central arguments. First, Arab American culture is not stable. The generational divergences in Fatima`s extended family attest to this constant change, informed by the larger sociopolitical context and

contingencies. Second, Arab American culture is not homogeneous, as the blanket anti-Arab and Islamophobic media pundits would like to paint. The heterogeneity is represented through one fictional family`s tale. Arab Americans` story cannot be captured with the binary logic of the patriot versus the nation`s enemy. Fatima obsesses over her ancestral house in Lebanon and admonishes her grandson for not driving an American car. She claims both Deir Zeitoun and Detroit her home. She is proud of her proficiency in Arabic and English.

In sum, Abdullah and Yunis offer gendered interpretations of 9/11 and the ensuing pressures on their communities. They both foreground the characters hybridity and in-betweenness to challenge othering, or the processes of being perceived as an inferior outsider whose language, religion, values, and attitudes are incompatible with the imagined homogeneity of the 'us' in the post-9/11 United States (Holliday, Hyde, & Kullman, 2021). Relatively new to the United States, Abdullah`s main character promises assimilation. Having participated in every aspect of American society for decades, Yunis`s central character embraces her Arab, Muslim, and American identities.

Chapter 4 analyzed hybridity and in betweenness of migrants from Mexico. *Across a Hundred Mountains* (Grande, 2006) offers more about the lives of women and children left in Mexico, as opposed to Mexican migrants` lives in the United States. Grande creates a melodramatic tale of why Mexicans head north. Following her Chicana predecessors, Grande not only inserts incidents which informed her childhood and reinterprets elements of Mexican folklore, such as the virgen (virgin) versus puta (prostitute) dichotomy into her fiction, but also presents them in her second language, thereby creating herself as the female author of a border-crossing tale (González, 2016; Grande, 2012; Okparanta, 2010). The glorified migrant melodrama in the novel aims to prompt sympathetic emotions as a necessary step towards the inclusion of Mexican immigrants in American society. The novel hopes to exchange migrant suffering with sympathy towards undocumented Mexican migrants (Puga, 2016). However, it may backfire. Immigrant Latina/os and undocumented Mexican readers in the United States may identify themselves in the story; non-immigrant, non-Latino/a/x readers may feel alienated. It seems that *Across a Thousand Mountains* is written with other Latino/a/x readers in mind.

In comparison, Alvarez`s *Return to Sender* appeals to non-Latina/o/x readers in the United States. Intercultural encounter portrayed in the novel encompasses cultural and linguistic translation, bilingual interaction, and borrowing of cultural elements. Though she simplifies

distressing sociopolitical realities to suit target readers` age, Alvarez manages to show how neoliberal economic activities sever rural communities` ties to their soil, forcing some to become irregular migrants, and others to hire undocumented labor to stay afloat. The fiction is set against increased raids in workplaces and removal of undocumented Mexicans. It addresses legislation called Operation Return to Sender, whose stated aim was to remove undocumented Mexican workers with a criminal record (Alvarez, 2009). The operation resulted in summary deportation of Mexicans without legal status, leaving children behind to the care of friends and relatives. The novel documents everyday intercultural communication between two young characters, as well as among various adults. Alvarez`s fiction valorizes the migrant character`s linguistic mediation. *Return to Sender* endorses transnational citizenship, transborder alliance, and intercultural exchange. The novel models transnational bridge building, intercultural dialogue, and friendships that will bring about the common good. Tyler`s relationship with the Cruzes allows him to reckon with his former ambivalence about the binaries of legal/illegal immigrant and patriot/traitor citizen. Tyler`s initial mistrust of the stranger leaves its place to trust. What forms a wide chasm between Mari and Tyler at their initial encounter—Mari`s undocumented status and Tyler`s learned fear of the Other—evolves into friendship, which is possible through a shared interest: stargazing. Mari`s letters and diary entries underscore teachers` role in developing this intercultural understanding and acceptance of cultural difference. Even the old Vermonter who hankers for a mythical homogeneous past without migration from Latin America engages in enriched intercultural communication thanks to the teacher`s respectful confrontation. Alvarez`s disposition toward a deep engagement is apparent in her depiction of Mari and Tyler`s friendship. The Paquettes and the Cruzes forge a new intercultural connection.

Chapter 5 had dual purposes. To begin with, I juxtaposed my findings in Chapter 3 and Chapter 4. I reconsidered the central message the four books communicate with readers. In the second part, I discussed why fiction deserves a more spacious place in IC inquiry. I defined hybridity as the phenomenon resulting from the encounter with different peoples, cultures, and languages. In its more general sense, hybridity points to the mixing and blending that such encounters cause. However, if one emphasizes the process, which involves the communication of beliefs, world views, and negotiation of values across cultural boundary lines, hybridity becomes a more elusive concept than the mere idea of mixture. Intercultural encounters and the resulting phenomenon of hybridity challenge the stability of all parties involved in the exchange. That is, national, cultural, linguistic, and individual identities are redefined thanks to cross fertilization.

Moreover, hybridity brings into play a struggle for language control to seize and ultimately maintain power.

One area this study aimed to address concerned the specificities of women authors` voices. The questions "What makes a woman's text different to a literary work written by a man? What are the themes women writers and their female protagonists and/or narrators deal with? What can we gain from tracing the female themes in works of literature?" motivated my analyses. I observed that the women writers imagined a strong woman overcoming hardships related to raising children while dealing with the loss of a loved one. *Saffron Dreams* and *The Night Counter* centralize female experience of migration to the United States as an adult and perspective of sociopolitical accidents in the aftermath of 9/11. Abdullah`s prioritizes personalized stories; Yunis`s novel features narrative multivocality and re-visioning. In the two novels, the women are strong immigrant characters. Female protagonists reveal the domestic reality of their home, while larger societal tragedies provide the backdrop to their predicament. Motherhood and cooking go hand in hand and constitute major motifs, even though they are sometimes pushed to a secondary position. The recipes of Pakistani food in Saffron Dreams and the kibbe making inserted into *The Night Counter* illustrate that the two women writers employ 'traditionally feminine' motifs. Juana/Adelina`s search for her father allows her outside the home/land, but her visit to a Mexican American household situates the woman in the kitchen. All four fictions focus on the gendered nature of migration. However, the authors differ considerably in their approach to how women and their female children are impacted by migration. Alvarez`s fiction, for example, is informed by feminist concerns such as border violence and the collateral damages of adult migrants` deportation.

This study aligns itself with critical IC studies that are attentive to power relations between interactants and interculturality represented in cultural texts. It builds on and converses with few studies attentive to the affordance of intercultural communication. I aimed to make a major contribution. I adopted female authored fictional texts to probe how they depict the United States as a transnational formation. Since World War II, the United States has managed to present an uncanny ability to both exercise military, economic, and cultural dominance across the planet, while simultaneously representing its citizens as a territorially bounded nation-state. In the aftermath of 9/11, it continued its nationalist trajectories through new legislation and policies. As explored in Introduction and referenced in the analysis chapters, the 9/11 terror attacks led to radical changes, bringing new laws that infringe upon the civil liberties of its Arab and Muslim Americans as well as documented and undocumented (non-white/brown)

communities. The United States military, with its allies, invaded sovereign nation states in the Middle East in a vengeful move. The US Department of Homeland Security was established in response to the 9/11 attacks and has since grown in authority and size, subsuming immigration and naturalization policies and border patrol. The 2001 USA Patriot Act has given the government expanded power to infringe on citizens` civil liberties, with racialized members vulnerable to surveillance.

By adopting female authored literary texts about female im/migrants to the United States, I brought literary texts to the purview of IC inquiry. I revealed that the four texts allude to new regimes of national belonging by foregrounding transnational citizenship and cultural hybridity. The four novels offer alternative stories of experiencing the United States in post-9/11. In addition, I focused on female central characters in my analysis. I revealed the circumstances of their migration to the United States, traced experiences of inclusion and exclusion, and documented strategies for their exerting agency. Given that IC traditionally does not endorse text-based projects, this project had few precursors in the field. This project could be a precursor to prospective Literary IC projects. One future direction might be methodological sophistication. I may harness the preliminary tool kit developed in Chapter 2 to conduct more nuanced analyses of other transnational fictions. One study may specifically focus on how Othering works in prose fictions that represent racial, ethnic, or religious minorities vis a vis a larger group in relation to a specific sociopolitical incident. Another project might focus on how intercultural conflicts are resolved in fictional texts. In this project, I partially documented the perceived Other`s coping mechanisms in the face of religious discrimination. A future project might shed light on this aspect only. Moreover, when working with gendered texts such as the ones I investigated, it would be worthwhile to document the mothering practices of women who are racially and ethnically different. Also, I or other literary IC scholars may polish the questions I posed to make them much more supple. As I mentioned above, the tool kit was meant as an entry point into texts that portray, problematize, or invite intercultural encounters with the Other or foreign. At its current form, the tool kit is comprehensive and open to revision. Future projects may narrow down its perspective. For instance, a smaller project may focus on the politics of representing 'I' and 'we' vis a vis the Other. In that case, the tool kit may be fine-tuned with insights from various Critical Discourse Analysis methodologies. Another may investigate how literary texts create transnational literary geographies to facilitate intercultural learning. A very specific form of scrutiny may consider how the im/migrant and or transnational authors appeal to the reader through para-textual elements. Clearly, fiction remains an untapped source to which more IC investigators turn.

A second direction may investigate how readers engage with these transnational texts of interculturality. My study focused on the texts themselves and revealed the ways in which they present hybridity and in-betweenness. I argued that im/migrants` claims of hybridity were instrumentalized to assert membership and challenge discrimination. Another study may show how audiences have received these fictions. As I mentioned in the Introduction, primary, secondary, and tertiary institutions adopt transnational literary texts to sensitize their students to other cultures. To my knowledge, there is no IC study that probes how students approach these texts. A large-scale future project might investigate actual readers` perception of these texts from the perspective of IC. The researcher may conduct a small-scale project by focusing on one text and carefully introducing certain aspects to research participants, or they may collaborate with other scholars to expose readers to these transnational texts. Cognitive psychologists who study compassion conduct similar social science studies. IC communication scholars may borrow from research traditions and develop projects on how prose texts in general, transnational texts in particular, function as intercultural facilitators or inhibitors. In the latter case, the researchers may, for instance, determine stereotypical representations of the Other in literary texts and investigate how readers respond to these representations.

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APPENDIX 1. ETHICS BOARD WAIVER FORM

APPENDIX 2. ORIGINALITY REPORT