

## The Representation of Arab immigrants' identity as portrayed in Diana Abu-Jaber's novel *Arabian Jazz*: Postcolonial migrant Theory.

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### Abstract

The United States has been a successful land of immigration since the late 1800s. The Arab immigration is a part of that fortunate history. This paper aims to represent Arab immigrants' identity through Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993) by using the Postcolonial migrant. The story is about the Ramoud family, who have migrated from Jordan to the United States, and one of them confused identity. Jemorah, Matussem Ramoud's daughter, has "a double-consciousness" where physically she is like an Arab but not her cultural and attitude. She struggled with her identity because she was born in Jordan and grew up as a teenager in Euclid, the United States. Her aunties also insist that Jemorah get married to an Arabian because they want to preserve the heritage, Arab culture, and the family's honor. Her condition is quite different from Melvina, Jemorah's younger sister, in that she can adapt well to American culture. This novel also examines identity as a component of hybridity, especially in Jemorah and Melvina, as the main characters. This paper concludes that the second generation of Arab-Americans lost their identity, and it is quite different from the first generation, who preserve their Arab heritage, norms, tradition, values, and identity.

**Keywords:** Arab-American, Arab immigrants, Double consciousness, Hybridity, Identity,

### INTRODUCTION

The immigration process is a constant or permanent phenomenon in human life. This process involves the movement of people across borders, significantly impacting individuals or groups, destination countries, and countries of origin. This process is driven by many factors, such as seeking better economic opportunities, access to specific educational programs, political fear of persecution, improved living conditions, escaping war and conflict, finding better healthcare, seeking greater political freedom, reuniting with family, and marrying an individual from another location or country.

These immigrants have dreams or visions that living in developed countries will provide freedom to pursue education, obtain employment, or even avoid the political system. Furthermore, there is an assumption or an opinion that immigration will significantly improve their living standard, similar to host countries. However, if poorly managed, immigration can also create political tensions, strain communities, and pose risks to immigrants, as in the United States.

There are many immigrants in that country, and one of them is the Arab immigrants. As we ascertain, the United States has the

largest [immigrant population in the world](#). Pew Research Center, an independent non-profit and non-governmental organization in Washington, D.C, the United States, explained that the number of Arab immigrants in the United States is increasing yearly. There were 3.7 million Arab immigrants in 2012, and right now, the number has increased a lot. They currently reside in large cities, such as Houston, Detroit, Chicago, Los Angeles, New Jersey, and Washington, D.C. The condition also happened in the United Kingdom, a non-profit organization named The Arab British Centre, which also recorded that 355,977 Arab immigrants reside in London, United Kingdom. The Arab immigrants choose to live there because those large cities have adequate infrastructure to support the needs of immigrant communities. This infrastructure includes schools, health services, religious services, and even social services, all of which use Arabic. For these immigrants, their arrival also shows their identity, even though they are not native residents. In fact, Arab immigrants also see Western countries as countries that provide better and higher education than in their own countries.

Western people, especially the United States residents, understand the Middle East, Arab immigrants, and Islam better, but this does not apply to some Americans who still have a domineering attitude (Said, 2003). Lydia Saad, a director of social research in Washington, D.C., wrote that 27% of Americans have a negative viewpoint of immigrants. They even believe that immigrants should not be accepted into the United States. This is due to several factors that can't be found in the United States, such as heterogeneity in the Arab American Ethnic. Among Arab Americans, ethnic identity is likely interwoven with religious, gender, racial, and national identities. (Abdulrahim et al., 2012; Awad et al., 2021; Maghbouleh et al., 2022). The second is about gender differences in ethnic identity among

Arab Americans. Men are more often in the workplace, and Arab American women, especially immigrants, are often responsible for duties in the home and have fewer opportunities to assimilate into American culture (Amer, 2014). Age and Immigration differences are the last factor that the older Arab American adults would identify more strongly than younger adults, especially in their ethnic identity. However, Arab American young adults may have more negative private regard because they are still exploring their ethnic identity (Umaña-Taylor et al., 2014).

Eastern identity is one of the challenges faced by Arab immigrants. One of the effects of losing identity for Arab immigrants was the World Trade Center Bombing in 1993. The eyes of the United States residents thought all Arab immigrants were terrorists. "Identity - who we are, where we come from, and what we are - is difficult to maintain in exile" (Said, 1985). Transnational networks are a concept chosen by immigrants, although some immigrants sometimes want to obtain a permanent identity as citizens (el-Aswad, 2006, p. 112). Transnationalism can't be separated from culture, and all immigrants should understand these parts of the concept. They have to know their original old customs, language, family, and traditions as Arabs. Cultural hybridity for Arab American immigrants describes the blending of their ancestral Arab culture with American culture to create new, distinct identities and artistic forms. This dynamic process is explored through concepts like Homi Bhabha's hybridity. There are many results, such as in language, music, cuisine, and social practices. It also reflects a complex negotiation between inherited traditions and the experiences of living in a new homeland. However, the lives of Arab immigrants are still shackled by racism and discrimination, both as an identity and a religion. Racism is a pattern or method that places people in a social hierarchy system,

both in individual and groups, based on characteristics such as culture, language, religion, or nationality (Emerson, Korver-Glenn, and Douds, 2015). Arab immigrants still accept racism, especially from anti-immigrants, xenophobic, or nativist, in which these terms describe individuals or groups, or even attitudes that are opposed to immigrants. Those organizations have a negative desire to maintain the power and cultural dominance of the native population.

Region, gender, and religion are interconnected factors in the Arab world. There is a widespread belief that Arab is not a single country, gender roles are also heavily influenced by patriarchal systems, and Islam is the region's primary religion. Diana Abu-Jaber wrote her novel "*Arabian Jazz*" in 1993 to strengthen the complex identity of Arab Americans. She was born in Syracuse, New York, in the United States, and her father was Jordanian while her mother was American. Most of her novel's story was taken from her true story, symbolizing the hybrid culture of the second generation who feel caught between the traditional Arab and American society. The word "Arab" represents the character's origin and the Arab traditions they uphold, while "Jazz" represents improvisation and a unique identity formed from these cultures.

The novel follows the Ramoud family, especially Matussem Ramoud, a Jordanian immigrant who loves jazz and has two daughters, to whom he plays jazz to cope with the death of his wife, Nora. He has two daughters, Jemorah and Melvina, who have different characteristics. The first daughter, Jemorah Ramoud, is unsure of her identity and struggles between her Arab and American roots. Jemorah never understood the traditional Arab customs, and she always felt pressure to live with them. While her younger daughter, Melvina Ramoud, is someone who blends her Arab-American identity. On the

other hand, Matussem Ramoud's older sister, Aunt Fatima, insists that her nieces get married to an Arab for the reason of preserving traditional values and Arabian culture. The content of this novel shows the challenges of blending an Arab identity in Western countries, especially the United States. All immigrants believe that they have to follow the new culture and tradition without leaving their original customs.

## METHODOLOGY

Research design is a process that enables a study to proceed and be implemented from beginning to end. Furthermore, research design also includes a work plan that addresses all research questions. The analysis in this paper employs qualitative methods, a research method that aims to understand phenomena experienced by research subjects, such as behavior, perception, motivation, or actions, through descriptive language (Moleong, 2005, p. 6). The data for this analysis are taken from the *Arabian Jazz* novel by Diana Abu-Jaber. Descriptive input or perspectives are a source for selecting the data, and the data in the printed work is taken through close reading and taking notes. Not only that, the data in this research is also taken from books and related articles, especially about the identity of Arab immigrants. The collected data is analyzed so that the researcher can answer all questions.

There are some steps in doing this qualitative design research. The first one is choosing a research topic. In this case, the author focuses on the lives of Arab immigrants in the Western area, especially in the United States. The immigrants are not only the first generation but also the second generation. Formulating a research question will be the second step, so there's a point to this research. The third step is conducting a literature review, particularly by reading and taking notes. Those two parts are fundamental and essential in recollecting

data for this research. Creating a framework to guide this study is also important, so there will be ways to answer questions. Collecting data from this research is also important, and the last step is publishing this research in a journal. Those ways help the author to display the results of this research.

## RESULT AND DISCUSSION

"Arabian Jazz" can refer to a musical genre that blends traditional Arabic music with jazz elements, but it quite differs from the "Arabian Jazz" novel written by Diana Abu-Jaber. Diana Abu-Jaber is an Arab-American immigrant who writes her literary works in English. She expresses her bilingual creativity, including her experiences as an immigrant, which was not found in the written mode at the time of the production of *Arabian Jazz*. This novel portrays the challenges and cultural conflicts of an immigrant, a Jordanian family, adjusting to life in Euclid, New York, the United States. This paper also underlies the struggle between Arab traditional customs and the modern lifestyle of America. The novel's underlying power springs from its exploration of tensions between past and present, dreams and reality, and the traditional ways of the "Old Country" versus the modern lifestyles of America.

### *Arab Immigrant Identity*

The *Arabian Jazz* novel highlights the concept of hybridity, where characters embody both cultural influences, Arab and American. The protagonist in this novel, Jemorah, struggles to balance her Arab heritage with her American upbringing, while her only sister, Melvina, embraces her American identity more readily. Melvina and Jemorah attempt to redefine their position in society and reassert themselves through their hybrid identity. However, both of them interpret their Arab culture differently, as emphasized by the way they reconcile their Arabic language and heritage. Based on Homi K. Bhabha's concept, cultures are not purely independent but interconnected with one

another (Bhabha, 1994). People must follow and join a culture in that society if they want to stay and live continually. Based on her book, *The Location of Culture* (1994), Bhabha also criticizes the West's stereotyping of the East, and there is no static culture and every culture is changeable.

The issue of Arab American identity is one of the problems addressed in this novel. Jemorah and Melvina, were born and raised in Euclid, a fictional town located in upstate New York. They lived there with their own father, a Jordanian named Matussem Ramoud, while her mother, a white one, had passed away. There is a tradition in Arab culture in which a woman with her age older than 18 years old, must get married, and it happened to Jemorah. The following quotation shows Melvina illustrates the dual-culture identity of Arab Americans.

"Just stick with me," Melvie said. "And Remember the bedouin saying: 'in the book of life, every page has two sides.'" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 5).

The phrase "two sides" represents the core concept of Bicultural Identity as Melvina navigates two cultures, two families, and two languages. It also reflects the tension between preserving Arab heritage and adopting American culture. Jemorah, Melvina older sister, develops "a double consciousness" in which she sees herself torn apart between two worlds, facing the cultural traditions of the East and adopting Western traditions in their search for a place to belong. While Melvina accepted American culture, Jemorah was still struggling with the challenges and navigating her identity, particularly with her father's cultural norms. She even refused to come to the "Family Function Season", a time for the family to get together, and also the intensified search for a husband for Jemorah. All aunties, especially Aunt Fatima, wanted to have an

Arab husband for Jemorah to preserve Arab heritage, traditions, and culture. According to Aunt Fatima, an Arab partner is more loyal and responsible to family and needs. Arabic culture holds strong ties to tradition, and they even choose their partner over friends.

Aunt Fatima, Matussem Ramoud older sister, always insists that her nieces get married to an Arabian, not an American. She always pressures her nephew, Jemorah, to conform to Arabian traditional cultural norms, which include early marriage for women. Aunt Fatima, who represents the extremist Arab culture, views women as being inferior to men and can only be fulfilled by marriage. By the age of almost 30, Aunt Fatima thinks Jemorah is getting older and emphasizes the need for her to marry as soon as possible. While no visiting aunts were scheduled that summer, Aunt Fatima more than made up for them.

“Is your duty, is sacred obligation, to get that baby-girl married,” Aunt Fatima said (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p.8).

The requirement for the husband to be Arab is tied to traditional beliefs, as an Arab man would be more concerned with safeguarding the family's honor. By marrying an American, so her big family, Matussem Ramoud's family, does not have Arab descendants. Jemorah's father, Matussem Ramoud, just obeys what his older sister states, even though he feels irritated when Aunt Fatima always mentions his sins for marrying Nora, a white woman. Matussem knows that Aunt Fatima's experiences make her a consistent woman, especially against the White. The reason behind her troubled personality and her patriarchal behavior is understood especially after she narrates the story of her born children buried alive.

The hybridity also takes a few steps to Jemorah when she has a lovely attraction to

Ricky Ellis, a half native American who works at the gas station. Jemorah feels that she can negotiate her hybrid with Ricky Ellis.

“Jem moved closer, placing her head against his chest. They moved, ever so slightly, together, and it felt to Jem like they had begun wending their way along a path of music, finding their way. She could hear the sound of the drums through the movement of Ricky's chest, jazz and trills of Arabic music, bright as comet tails, and through this, the pulse of the world”. (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 374).

Her last dance with Ricky Ellis links different components of identity as she broke her identity problems. She feels she will be like her father, marrying someone from Western countries, and making room for her father's music. The wedding ceremony between Jemorah and Ricky Ellis also represents the cultural clash faced by Arab American characters. It also reflects the complexity and acceptance of characters in the community.

### ***Arab American Jazz***

Jazz is an original African American music characterized by improvisation and developed in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century in New Orleans. This music blends influences from blues, ragtime, and European music. On the other hand, novel *Arabian Jazz* is not only a type of music, but it also represents the improvisational, intertwining, and complex fusion of identities and cultural experiences by Arab American immigrants.

“He had become increasingly bemused over the years, wandering into abstraction, traveling in and out of conversations like a visitor to foreign places. Only at his drums did he seem to focus, concentrate with the purpose of remembering, steering rhythms into line, coaxing a steady—in his word,

peripatetic—pulse out of air (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 1).

The life of Matussem Ramoud was empty, in which he lived alone and cared for his own daughters, but Jazz is his passion. Combining two cultures and languages is not as easy as people thought, but he must survive and show the public that he can live successfully.

None of his relatives in Jordan understands his life in America, but they feel happy when he plays jazz. When he played jazz, they heard noise, and when he played Arabic music, they could dance; this was good enough for them (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p.1).

Playing jazz is one of the ways for Matussem Ramoud to blend Arab and American culture, especially after his wife, Nora, passed away. He does not care what people say about his life as long as he raised himself and his daughters, although his sister always blames him for marrying with Irish-American. His wife, Nora, was someone who supported him to live independently in America. She also American link to Matussem's new country and helps him understand American culture and language. The death of Nora left him totally disoriented and unable to deal with his new country, the United States.

"She taught him how to speak a new language, how to handle his new country. His American lover. Through the year of their courtship, she took his hands and fed him words like bread from her lips" (Abu Jaber, 188).

In the beginning, Nora was a teacher for Matussem, and she taught him how to navigate American life, language, and culture. Nora also guides and helps him to adapt by providing new words, cultural information, and food. Food is a complex communication by expresses cultural identity, strengthening social bonds through shared experiences, and

creating opportunities for conversation and connection between individuals and communities. In this case, Nora introduces the taste of American food while Ramoud shares Jordanian food, although it is not in reality. Nora is Matussem Ramoud partner of adaptation, especially when he arrived in the United States and knew nothing. She also helped Matussem to adjust to American life by teaching him how to speak like an American and guiding him through cultural differences. At the end, Nora and Matussem Ramoud are a combination of two cultural identities, American Arab.

Matussem's obsession with Jazz underlines the similarities between Arab-Americans and African-Americans, both groups being the subject of marginalization at the hands of the dominant culture and attempting to negotiate their identity through an act of improvisation that does not follow the conventional. Stereotyping and Representation in *Arabian Jazz* assimilation as the ultimate goal in the first place. His choice in jazz demonstrates the unfamiliar territory he treads as an immigrant, since he does not hold on to some form of traditional music from his homeland, hence rejecting assimilation, nor does he favor a genre typically popular among white Americans, hence fully assimilating. Matussem's position in the mainstream American culture is similar to that of Jazz in American music, both carving their own niche away from traditional choices. Matussem also believed that any music was prayer, and he also prayed to the sky, especially for his lovely wife, Nora.

"He believed that any music was prayer, sending a message out to the sky. Nora was always his audience; she was over there listening. He knew that drumming—its sound and intensity—had the power to penetrate the heavens and earth" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 12).

Matussem believes his jazz is a prayer to Nora, which is why he loves jazz and expresses that his jazz is his offering to make Nora happy ever after. Music, especially jazz, was Matussem's way of protecting himself from the death of his wife, Nora. Jazz is also a genre of Matussem's music to lock himself from his loving memories.

### ***Generational Differences***

There are many generations in the novel *Arabian Jazz*, in which they have different identities. The first generation is Matussem Ramoud and his sisters. They preserve the Arab culture, although they know they need to assimilate into the culture of America. Aunt Fatima, as one of Matussem's older sisters, acts as a caretaker, especially after the death of Matussem's wife. She also insists her nieces get married to an Arab until Matussem brings home friends from work, all Arabs.

"At Jem's twentieth birthday party, Aunt Fatima and her friends from the Ladies' Pontifical Committee sat together and sang dirges in Arabic about loneliness and aching hearts. Matussem brought home friends from work, anyone from the head of oncology to the guy who managed the used-car lot down the street. All Arabs, all fifty years old at least, and all looked to Jem to be at death's door" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 8-9).

The quotation shows Aunt Fatima's responsibility to find an Arab man for her nieces. She upholds traditional Arab cultural norms, particularly regarding marriage and the safeguarding of the family's honor and name. She believes an Arab husband is more likely to protect the family's reputation and maintain its cultural values, contrasting with American values that she perceives as a threat to her heritage.

Jemorah and Melvina's aunts also give prohibition, especially getting close to someone from America. They do not want her

nieces to receive bad treatment.

"It seemed to Jem that virtually from the hour of her mother's passing, her aunts had converged around her with warnings about men. They told her: stay with your father, he needs you now; ignore boys, they're stupid and conceited; avoid men, they're stupid and dangerous; you don't know what they can do to you, what they want to do. Each summer, visiting Auntie Nabila or Lutfea or Nejla would take Jem's face between her hands and examine Jem's lips to see if she'd been kissed. "Not yet," they'd whisper, crossing themselves. "Alhumd'illah, thanks be to God. She's a good girl!" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 8).

Their aunts are like angels for Jemorah and Melvina, so both of them never receive bad treatment from men, especially after their aunts examine Jemorah's hand and lips to see whether she has been kissed or not. Their aunts will be very happy to see the condition of both of them, especially after they check Jemorah and Melvina's condition. They want their nieces to care for Arab tradition, although they know both of them live in American society. Jemorah and Melvina show respect for their aunties since the death of their mother. Their aunties' advice is valued, and they also play central roles in family life.

This condition is quite different from the second and the third generation. Their society is not Arab but Arab American, where they act as Americans mostly and lose their identity as Arabs. The way Melvina gets angry with her father shows disrespect, and even though she did not care about people's opinions, as long as her father gives suitable answers. The following quotation shows Melvina's disrespect for her own father.

"Melvina glowered, eyes blackening, waiting in the doorway for her father

late Monday evening. "Tell me why," she said as he entered the house. "Why must you go to that snake pit at all hours of the night? What attracts you?" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 15).

Family is the second important part to Arabs, after faith in Allah. The way Melvina gets angry with her father is acceptable, but the glower in her eyes shows disrespect. She never thinks about her father's responsibility to raise her until she becomes a nurse, head nurse. Children are considered "jewels" in the Arabian and they have different roles for males and females. As we know that honor and dignity come from family in Arabian culture.

American youngsters have different social norms from Arabian youngsters. Melvina, Jemurah's sister, who is influenced and affected by American social norms, also has a bad habit not only with her father but also with her aunties. There's a complex interplay between expected behaviors and individual expression, as young people develop their identities and social awareness. The following quotation shows the bad norms of Melvina.

"Estrelia tried to wave Melvie away, but the confrontation thrilled Fatima; gin was boiling through her, mingling with a hundred petty grievances and irritations. Zaeed was up on the dance floor with Amy; there was nothing to constrain Fatima; she was free. Soaring on a hot wind of anger, she shouted, "Your mother dies on purpose because she hates Arabs!" Melvina slapped her so hard that Fatima spilled out of her chair" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 48-49).

All people feel surprised when they look at Melvina's action, and nobody will ever blame her since Aunt Fatima mocks the death of Melvina's mother. Melvina's action also shows that friends play a significant role in shaping attitudes and behaviors. Not only that, the

influence of social media plays a big role in that it has bad consequences on youngsters, especially hatred and violence. In identity, youth often form their identity in groups, but this process also needs time, especially if they live independently.

Another harmful effect on youngsters is beer. This type of drink is similar to alcohol, negatively affecting young people by impairing brain development. Most young people in the United States drink beer to feel a sense of independence, and some of them primarily due to peer pressure. They also drink to cope with stress and anxiety, especially after they try to solve problems. The following quotations show the impact of drinking beer on Melvina and her friends.

"Merv liked nurses because they started screaming and laughing after a few drinks, and screaming made him feel like business was good. He especially liked Melvina because even though she never screamed, she looked like she could kill with her bare hands" (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 6)

Melvina and her friends express that beer can solve their problems, especially work problems. They do not realize that starting to drink beer is dangerous because the brain is still developing into the early twenties, and it can also affect memory and decision-making. It is important to bear in mind that the first generation of immigrants is in touch with immigrants, but not the second and the next. It is almost impossible for Jemurah and Melvina to adapt to an unfamiliar culture, and they will forget their roots sooner.

### ***Reconnecting to the Past***

The first generation will feel confused when they arrive in a new land. On one side, they must stay in that area because they want it, but on the other hand, they will feel a new custom and tradition. They were born with an old life,

then they give their string to a new life. Some of them still remember their past and reconnect it to the future. The following quotation shows Aunt Fatima remembering her past to her younger brother, Matussem Ramoud.

“Finally she said, “Matussem, Matussem, Ya Matussem, remember when you are five and I am six and I give you all my grabia cookie to eat? Do you?” Matussem had no such memory. He put his hand over the receiver and sighed as deeply as he could. Then he said, “Yes?” “And you remember when you are six and I am seven and I make this boys stop pick on you and call you shorty?” “Fatima, please, take pity—”. “Fatima, please, take pity—” “What I am saying exactly! I am taking pity on you all your life and these how you repay me. These how you treat she who give the breads from her mouth, her flesh and blood—” (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 2).

Aunt Fatima is repeating the past when she was in Jordan, and she opens Matussem’s that Aunt Fatima took care of Matussem before he moved to the United States. Connecting with family is one of the ways for Aunt Fatima to awaken Matussem’s mind that Arab immigrants still have a lovable norm. Aunt Fatima relies on family and religious communities for social support. She also asks Matussem never forget this norm or aspect, although they still live in the United States at present.

Aunt Fatima is recognized as a person who preserves Arab tradition, not only in norms but also in marriage. Her big family, especially Uncle Zaeed, Aunt Fatima’s husband, always remembers Fatima’s action at the wedding, especially when she gives an Arabic card to the couple.

“Zaeed knew this was one of a hundred different versions Fatima had of the Old Country. The children born in America would hear how they were descended from saints and how neglectful young people were of the Old Ways. When cousin Samir married an American, Fatima attended the wedding dressed in black and gave them a card written in Arabic, “Samir, this would kill your sainted mother, bless her sacred name, if she were still alive.” (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 32-33).

Aunt Fatima believes that weddings are a deeply significant event that blends spiritual, familial, and cultural traditions. She knows marrying an American will lose those aspects, especially the family relationship. Uncle Zaeed, Aunt Fatima’s husband, recalls his memory when Aunt Fatima gave an Arabian card as a prayer for the couple, especially reminding her cousin not to lose Arabian tradition or norms. This is one way for Aunt Fatima to preserve Arab tradition, although she lives in a Western country.

Marrying an American is a sin, and Aunt Fatimah will make sure this condition never happens to her lovely cousins, Jemorah and Melvina. This condition appeared in Aunt Fatima’s mind because she did not like it when her brother, Matussem, got married to Nora, an Irish-American woman, and she always scoffs at her.

“Soaring on a hot wind of anger, she shouted, “Your mother dies on purpose because she hates Arabs!” (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 49).

The quotation above shows how Aunt Fatima rejects an American in her big family. Many different factors make Aunt Fatima do that, and one of them is cultural differences. America and Arabs have a complex bond, and she has a negative view of Americans, since

Arab Americans navigate issues of cultural identity and heritage with their community.

This situation also happened to Matussem Ramoud, particularly after the death of his wife. He lost his soul and guidance, particularly his teacher, to adapt to the culture and tradition in the United States. He remembered his deceased wife when he played drums.

“Matussem had started out that Monday evening before the party, trying to arrange the kind of drum solos an archbishop might like; but he ended up thinking of his wife (Abu-Jaber, 1993, p. 12).

Matussem’s memory always comes up when he looks at drums. Drum is not only a musical instrument, but it is a ritual custom in which his deceased wife is the only audience. Matussem thinks that drumming had the power to integrate heaven and earth. He always smiles and feels happy when he plays drums.

## CONCLUSION

The identity of the Arab American is usually a complex issue since there will be severe differences between the Arab and American cultures, such as cultural heritage, religious diversity, blending culture, sense of belonging, and the impact of discrimination and racism. The *Arabian Jazz* novel shows that Jemorah and Melvina lost their Arab identity, especially after their mother died. They do not lose their mother, but they also lose an integral part of their identity. Their mother is not only someone who takes care of them but also provides guidance, especially in American society. The enforcement of Jemorah shows how the cultural tradition of the East, especially the Middle East, could create a conflicting identity.

The Arab immigrant identity in the results and discussion of this research shows the

assumption of colonial identity through the repetition of discriminatory identity effects. The novel *Arabian Jazz* also indicates the identity of second-generation Arab-Americans who feel marginalized in American society due to their hybrid background. Not only that, Diana Abu-Jaber portrays the strategy of maintaining a strong Arab identity, Aunt Fatima, while adopting American social norms. The Novel, *Arabian Jazz*, examines how Western perceptions of Arabs are often based on negative stereotypes.

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