

**DOI: 10.7596/taksad.v10i1.3008**

**Citation:** Altwaiji, M., & Alwuraafi, E. M. (2021). Identity Crisis in Arab Diasporic Novel: A Case Study of Lebanese American Novel. *Journal of History Culture and Art Research*, 10(1), 74-83. doi:http://dx.doi.org/10.7596/taksad.v10i1.3008

## **Identity Crisis in Arab Diasporic Novel: A Case Study of Lebanese American Novel**

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### **Abstract**

Very little has been written on cultural identity and national identity in contemporary Lebanese novel in the diaspora. This study explores how border identity is presented in Rabih Alameddine's *Kooloids* (1998), *I, the Divine* (2001), and *The Angel of History* (2016), three novels about the failure of the Lebanese immigrants to establish their cultural identity in the diaspora. It also gives a bird's-eye view of the myriad problems encountered by the immigrants while trying to build their cultural identity. Rabih Alameddine, a Lebanese American writer whose early literary pursuits focus on melting in the new homeland, represents the impossibility of redefinition and introduces the immigrants' remarkable preoccupation with the quest for national identity and nationhood. He mixes melancholic and ridiculous moments to represent the quest for cultural identity in order to subvert the neo-orientalist discourse which is based on the East/West dichotomy. Moreover, the use of multiple settings and narrators in each novel is also a common theme that explains the physical and psychological effects of the Lebanese civil war and the Lebanese ethnic categories in the diaspora.

**Keywords:** Arab Americans, Lebanese, Culture, Diaspora, Homeland, Identity, Novel.

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### **Introduction: Arab diaspora in the U.S.**

The United States has historically been one of the major destinations for Arab waves of immigration. The term Arab diaspora in the United States refers to Arab immigrants and their descendants who ethnically belong to the Arab-speaking countries stretching from Arabian Gulf to Morocco; a region that comprises 22 countries. Arab community in North America is marked by two major emigration waves: 1870-1910 and 1945-the present (Salari, 2002, p. 581). According to the 2010 U.S. census, the population of the Arab-American community reached 1,6 million; 83 percent of this community is American citizens (Census Bureau, 2010). This ethnic community is largely composed of five major groups of immigrants including Lebanese 40%, Syrians 15%, Egyptians 12%, Palestinians 6%, and Iraqis 3%. According to the 2010 United States Census Bureau report, the population of the Lebanese community ranks first among Arabs with a population of 504,000, Egyptian American group is 170,000, Syrian American group is 190,000, Palestinian American group is 104,000, Iraqis are 101,000. Minor Arab American groups belonging to other countries such as Yemen, Morocco, Jordan, Tunisia, Gulf countries, and Sudan constitute a considerable fraction estimated at 500,000.

As early as the 1880s, Arab Americans' cooperation has been pivotal in determining assimilation into the mainstream American society; Arabs' active participation in the public sphere to achieve integration spoke for the entire generation and changed its opinion on Arabs: "Arab Americans have nonetheless been active in the public square since those early days, creating numerous local and some national institutions of civil society and then becoming heavily involved in the U.S. labor movement" (Strum, 2006, p. 1). Arab American community has succeeded in maintaining their multiple national belongings; a fact that explains Arabs' accessibility to the American Dream without having melted in the white society:

Today Arab-American participation in the fabric of the American political process is an accepted reality. However, early Arab-American participation was largely confined to a handful of activists who executed their vision apart from any organized movement within their respective communities. Their participation was a result of their unwavering commitment to forging a role for themselves in mainstream American politics, a commitment that gave birth in later years to focused lobbying and solid activism (Ahmed, 2006, p. 41)

The similarity between Arabs in terms of language, culture, and traditions usually makes them experience a state of cultural attachment and belonging. Their similar demands of citizenship, education, and identity bring them together.

Focusing on the Lebanese American novel, this study aims to investigate three issues: history of Lebanese American novel, identity crisis in Arab American community, and the difficulty of crossing the cultural borderline. This study of identity in Lebanese American novel follows the interpretive approach to the issue of cultural identity as well as issues related to the writer. It considers the novel, its narrative style, its settings, its characters, and its themes as the main parts of the study's interpretative model. Based on Alameddine's novels *Koolaid's* (1998), *I, the Divine* (2001), and *The Angel of History* (2016) as the main sources of data, this study progresses into a major unexplored area of identity crisis. This study is a call to draw attention to an important part of Arabic literature which has been playing a crucial role in the life of Arab American community members by edifying them from childhood, educating them, providing them with entertainment, and broadening their cultural heritage. It examines the common themes and concerns of the Lebanese American writers whilst highlighting the problems and obstacles facing their assimilation.

## **Historical Background**

From a historical perspective, Majaj (2008) notes that Arab American literature has been existent in the United States for more than two centuries when the Lebanese first arrived in North America: "Arab American literature started in the late 1800s, when Arab immigrants first began to arrive in North America in significant numbers from the Syrian province of the Ottoman Empire, primarily from what is now present-day Lebanon" (p. 2). However, the literature of this ethnic group has only recently been recognized as a part of the national literature and became widely acclaimed as "the last two decades have seen a dramatic increase in publication by Arab-American writers" resulting in "shifting historical and social contexts that have pushed Arab-Americans to the foreground, creating both new spaces for their voices and new urgencies of expression" (ibid., p. 2). This progress in Arab American literature, according to the American critic Metres (2012), is a result of accepting the "idea of the nation-state" and rejecting "so-called Clash of Civilizations"; a fact that explains how Arab American literature took "its place on a global canvas, as one component of a worldwide Arab diaspora in which cultural ties can be reinvigorated" (p. 15). Like other minorities, Arab American writers have experienced the reality of multicultural orientations, accepted it, and continued to maintain a confluence of ethnic identity components such as language, music, and art as a protection against vulnerability:

In a time when even the idea of their belonging to the country is being questioned, these writers seek to reflect their community's quest to regain its own voice and achieve self-representation in order to defend their interests as American citizens and also to defend their Arab heritage (Ghouaiel, 2015, p. 7)

For the purpose of finding a dominant issue in Arab American novels, this part of the study reviews Kayyali's *The Arab Americans*, Abdelrazek's *Contemporary Arab American Women Writers: Hyphenated Identities and Border*, and Conrey's *Contemporary Arab-American Literature: Transnational Reconfigurations of Citizenship and Belonging*. Kayyali notes that Arab American writers address a variety of topics with some recurring themes such as "displacement, diaspora, and cross-cultural identity (2006, p. 88). One theme that is shared with other immigrant groups in the United States is the feeling of isolation and the yearning to find a place (Kayyali, 2006, p. 125). Abdelrazek notes that Arab American writers are skeptical about the notion of "essentialized Arab identity" in modern American society and insist on monolithic identity (2007, p. 4). According to her, Arab American writers not only use their writings as a form of resistance to orientalist discourses and a means of constructing identities but also "as a means to explore and express their feelings about their hyphenated identities, exile, doubleness, and difference" (ibid., p. 4). Opting for homes and homelands enables Arab American writers to metaphorically demolish the distance, and the concomitant difference that accompany them:

...the power of this transnational consciousness permeating contemporary Arab American literature lies not merely in its ability to bridge two separate localities or nationalities deemed as separate and contradictory. The power of this transnational consciousness is rendered most potent and immediate in its potential to collapse and defy the alleged differences between these two entities (Conrey, 2014, p. 179)

## **Cultural Identity or Identity Crisis?**

Lebanese novel in diaspora offers a rich overview and a crucial study field of Arab American novel produced in the United States. This study takes the Lebanese novel, written in the United States

as an example of the development of this genre in the last two decades. Aside from ethnic issues introduced and represented, the cultural aspects of this genre have placed Lebanese American novel within the larger nomenclature frame of internationally recognized literature. In addition to clinging to common issues of diaspora such as exile, homeland, diaspora, and nostalgia, Lebanese American authors take their novel as a platform to reflect on aesthetic values, love, and affinity. The novelist, Rabih Alameddine, selected for this study has common personal orientations and social upbringing with all Arab Americans. This common consciousness leads Lebanese American writers to more address issues pertaining to all Arabs living in the United States. The novels of Rabih Alameddine are examples of a multitude of novels introducing love and affinity among Arab American groups and also determine the kind of relationship with others outside the community. His writings represent a growing literary canon which exposes the community's willingness to co-exist and highlight the Lebanese identification with the rest of Arabs as well as other communities.

Alameddine is an example of the Lebanese spirit of harmony and co-existence in the diaspora. He was born to Lebanese parents in Amman and raised in California from the age of 17. He earned his degree in engineering from the University of California, Los Angeles, and MBA in San Francisco. He authored a good number of novels such as *The Angel of History* (2016), *An Unnecessary Woman* (2014), *The Storyteller* (2009), *I, the Divine* (2001), *The Perv* (1999), and *Koolaid*s (1998). Alameddine is featured by The Guardian as a writer with "a genuine literary pleasure" whose "narrative is digressive, at times didactic, unapologetically mandarin, written in resistance to almost all the current norms" (Messud, 2015). His writings are described by The New York Times Sunday Book Review as narratives that "transcend the mountain of polemic, historical inquiry, policy analysis and reportage that stands between the Western reader and the Arab soul" (Hout, 2012, p. 109). Alameddine won the California Book Awards' Gold Medal in 2014 for his *An Unnecessary Woman* and the Arab American Book Award for his *The Angel of History* in 2017.

*Koolaid*s (1998) is Alameddine's first novel which has different settings: Beirut under the Israeli siege, Lebanon during the civil war, and the United States. The novel features a Lebanese man, Mohammad with an infectious disease. Most of the characters in the novel are not clearly identified; readers recognize them by their familial authority or friendships. There are also characters who are known by their practices or jobs such as the editorialist whose writings describe the loose and shaky political situation in Lebanon and the diarist whose records show that political corruption is the reason behind familial disintegration. In his approach to the issue of cultural identity, Alameddine writes the novel in different fragments of literary chaos; he uses journal excerpts, poems, interviews, statements, and summaries of history.

Cultural identity in the novels of Alameddine is the privileged coexistence of peoples in different cultures; or rather, everything is more common and accepted in countries inhabited by people of different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds. In *Koolaid*s, Alameddine's protagonist, Mohammad is a man of multi-locational experiences; he lives two sides of the world: "In America, I fit but I do not belong. In Lebanon, I belong but I do not fit" (Alameddine, 1998, p. 12). Mohammad's identity is the experience of a navigating entity floating over two cultures. It is scattered in two homes where he, at home, feels two experiences: homelessness and belonging at the same time. This experience of cultural identity, according to Mohammad, carries with him these fragments of personality: "Everyone from Lebanon is a Lebanese first...To be from Lebanon means you are from a place of refuge and tolerance. You share a country with people of many different backgrounds, cultural identities, and faiths" (ibid., p. 22). Through the long journey of his search for settling down, he struggles with nostalgia and separation and finds no sign of unity to bridge the distance. His decision to shift to San

Francisco "where I can teach myself to be human," only serves to agitate him and pulls him further from himself: "I worry whether I will be able to see myself, meet myself" (ibid., p. 19). In the textual shift between feelings of homelessness and identity obsession that colors Arab Americans in *Koolaid's*, we find answers for the associated darkness in the path of search for identity. When Mohammad narrates his memories in Lebanon and compares them with his status now, he is true that the good old days have become a collection of memories as he remembers when he could go "skiing in Faraya, then down for a dip in the Mediterranean at Khalde" when he was "too young when the war started" (ibid., p. 88). This mixture of feelings holds tremendous concerns in *Koolaid's* because it constantly offers a perspective from which to analyze identity conflict and suggests how the readers might retrieve ideas, thoughts, and themes that represent the minds of the people in diaspora.

Alameddine's merged storytelling techniques describe the different aspects of the Lebanese social and cultural fragmentations reflected in Lebanese personality in diaspora. Lebanese identity in diaspora is neither pure national identity nor a hybrid one; it lives the uncertainty of the present "we need to throw away the Arab shackles that everybody tries to bind us with" and seeks refuge in the past "we need to be proud of our heritage and revive it" (ibid., p. 59). Mohammad reflects this inner conflict when he gets the American passport: "The happiest day in my life was when I got my American citizenship and was able to tear up my Lebanese passport. That was great" and later he gets to "hate Americans: And I really do. They are dumb. That's my problem with Americans. They are naive and dumb. And I hate that" (ibid., p. 243). He rationalizes this identity conflict within the ethnic groups by comparing himself with the Americans whose belongings are identified by localities rather than the country:

I guess by now you have figured the historical precedent for Lebanon I am describing is the United States of America. And it is true, during the sixty years of the country's existence no one called themselves "Americans." It was not used. The people referred to themselves as "Georgians" or "New Yorkers" or "Alabamans" or "Virginians." They never referred to themselves as Americans (ibid., p. 201).

In *Koolaid's*, Alameddine asserts that immigrants risk sacrificing their efforts to achieve satisfactory life in the host country across time and space, which of course is common among all the communities in the diaspora. Pointing at the futility of the search for identity in diaspora, Alameddine attaches a comment on the cover page of the novel: "[W]hile pointing out the absurdities of any kind of truth. It contemplates the meaning of death while redefining the meaninglessness of life" (1998). This is not the reality of the protagonist only. It is also the fate of Samir Bashar who lives in Washington D.C. He finds meaning only in his national identity and feels sorry for he "had separated himself for too long" (ibid., p. 208). They become too shaky objects in the light of the socioeconomic demands rather than components of cultural diversity; a fact that leads Alameddine to say in an interview with Nadia Barhoum: "I still feel that way in some ways because I'm neither here nor there...I don't know how it's done for other people...I don't particularly care what one culture says is okay and what culture says is not okay (Barhoum, 2016). Such a quest for identity formation and stability is usually experienced by immigrants of different affiliations and leads them to acquire a broader understanding of their context in the place.

*The Angel of History* (2016) is not different from *Koolaid's*; it is on the rigorous life of the Lebanese immigrants and the invisibility of their stable identity. *The Angel* is a novel set across multiple times and fragmented places. Characters shift through multiple arrays of lives and cultures; and identity has to undergo the influences accordingly. The novel has volumes of reviews by the most prestigious book reviewers and a few can be summarized here. In the New York Times Book Review,

we read "Alameddine, entrancing and unflinching, is in easy command of his bricolage narrative, and he leavens its tragedy with wit" (Gee, 2016). In the Los Angeles Review of Books, Alumit describes *The Angel* as a "remarkable novel, a commentary of love and death, creativity and spirituality, memory and survival...brilliant...[it] hits an emotional nerve" (2016). In San Francisco Chronicle, *The Angel* is described as "Excellent" and "lissome": "the novel is a work of social and cultural memorialization...*The Angel of History* suggests that to be alienated-from past love and from the past itself—is to open the door to memory and creation" (Domestico, 2016). In the British book reviews, for example, Forna writes in *The Guardian*: "This is a story of one life and many themes: death; religion; war; the purpose of art and of love and loss; and the need to remember. Here is a book, full of story, unrepentantly political at every level" (2016). *The Angel of History* follows a Yemeni-born poet Jacob, the novel's central character and its protagonist, and features many events of his life, from his maternal upbringing in Egypt to his final settlement in San Francisco. It is on Jacob's long personality formation journey in which Jacob/Yakoob recalls his life in Sana'a, Cairo, Beirut, Stockholm, and San Francisco reflecting a profound identity crisis and restless heart: "I'm the congenital immigrant...I left parts of me everywhere. I was born homeless, countryless, raceless, didn't belong to either my father's family or my mother's, not one could claim me, or wanted to. I was a rug-born baby" (Alameddine, 2016, p. 50). It is filled with themes of death, despair, creativity, and struggle for survival. It opens with the Satan's (Devil's) interview with Death on whether Jacob is right to forget his painful past in which Death supports the idea of forgetting; a hot-button issue that challenges Jacob's rest and detaches him from the normal life.

In his search for poetic peacefulness, Jacob is cared for by the friendly Satan/Iblees who keeps Jacob cheerful and helps him forget his painful past. Satan summons a wide range of assistants to revive Jacob's happy memories and help him focus on poetry writing because poetry has the ability of "dealing with implausible angst, the mild suffering of the fortunate" (ibid., p. 66). Among these helpers are Margaret, Giles, George, Erasmus, Dionysius of Paris, Pantaleon, Catherine of Alexandria, Cyriacus, Eustace, Cyriacus, Christopher, Barbara, Blaise, Acacius, and Vitus. When memories tackle him and hallucinations reel him backward, Satan talks to him again and again and reminds him that "poetry would correct whatever was wrong" (ibid., p. 101). In between chapters of his experiences, Jacob insists that he has lost the ability to write: "It was easy in the beginning, word flowed, my muse was gentle and seductive, the poems were lousy, of course, I was a child, but I loved them, felt they were inspired" and we simultaneously listen to the reply of Satan saying: "A poet is tormented by the horrors of this world, as well as its beauty, but he can be refreshed, reborn even...Listen to me, Satan said, his eyes infused with flames, get thee out of Eden, poetry can never be unstained" (ibid., p. 201). Jacob's poems and language reflect his brilliance and affability. The depth of his sadness and despair are heartrending. Readers wonder what happens to Jacob to be dominated by the devils and make such creative genius a downer and negative personality.

*The Angel* elaborates on Jacob's present life which is based in the contemporary city of San Francisco. In the foreground, Jacob suffers a serious crisis and has to go to the psych clinic where he hopes to get admitted for few days. He hopes he can at least acquire some pills that will control Satan and other devils who are not ready to leave him easily. He is disturbed by the Satan's interviews with Death and his dead friends. He tells the receptionist at the clinic: "I need to see a Psychiatrist, I was having hallucinations, hearing Satan's voice again-again after a long absence, and his voice was becoming more insistent. My employer wanted me to seek help" (ibid., p. 232). The issue of death is a part of Jacob's backstory; it always hits the emotional nerve of his identity when he recalls his lost and dead friends:

I was feeling deathly depressed and lethargic, spiraling downward, eddies of crappy water whirling down the drain, all of you dead, couldn't force myself out of bed, under the covers I remained, you were no longer there to lift my spirit or the duvet with the pink oleander design, which I once found strikingly beautiful but no more. I found so little beautiful, as each of you became sick, as you died, one by one, I could see nothing but black. Your physical absence was soul-crushing (ibid., p. 165).

The Angel is a record of the Jacob's tattered identity between Sana'a, Cairo, and San Francisco. It records the changes of his identity in the presence of Satan, the journals he writes, the free clinic, and his stories. According to San Francisco Chronicle, Alameddine presents "Jacob's identity" as "a black man" with an inherited Yemeni-Egyptian-Lebanese-Muslim-Christian background; a serious identity issue that matters more than the identity he chooses. In this range of the past memories, Jacob's identity is more impacted by the dark and melancholic childhood days in old Cairo with his poor mother and some poor women belonging to different cultures:

We lived in a house with other women who came in all colors and cultures...came in all shapes and sizes, my lovely aunties, short and tall aunties, white and black, voluptuous and boyish, Egyptian, Ethiopian, Uzbek, Indian, and Yemeni. Most of them, my mother included, sat around in a daze under the hanging lamps, spent half their time in hope and half in waiting, waiting for a miracle that never visited, waiting for something or someone to fly them out of their adopted life (ibid., p. 239).

Key components of Jacob's identity are his identity crisis, his torn ethnic background, his age, and his melancholy while narrating the history of his mother. These issues are written by Jacob himself, but narrated by different people and non-human narrators. Each of these stories reflects conflicts within his identity in metaphorical style and defines different history or side in his life. The first is the story of a small boy trapped in a basement by a conservative adult; it is a "fabulist story about locking my inner child in the basement" (ibid., p. 34). The second is a story of a flying drone in which a boy narrates his mother's experience in Abyan, a southern Yemeni province: "in the small village of Mahfad, my mother's village, which may or may not have been where I was born, my mother could not remember, because even she was unwed" (ibid., p. 88). The third is the story of the suffering of Arab immigrants in America whose lives are "full of suffering and dying and no little whining" (ibid., p. 266). Jacob's new writings, and his new circle of friends within which that relationship evolved, make his life increasingly comfortable over time. As the narrative concludes, Jacob comes to accept many of his thoughts and align with his obsessive perspectives. His experiences of being haunted by sadness, pain, and torn history define virtually every aspect of his present life as a creative writer and clearly create meanings in his present-day life.

Alameddine uses a similar narrative style in *I, the Divine* (2001) to that in *Koolaid's*; the story is made up of fragmented narrations in different written forms. The whole novel is written as a single chapter. Narrative fragments in *I, the Divine* focus on the identity formation of Arab Americans and their diasporic experiences with an emphasis on the present transnational connections as well as the strong commitment to homeland: "I had tried to write my memoir by telling an imaginary reader to listen to my story. Come learn about me...I have a great story to tell you because I have led an interesting life. Come, meet me" (Alameddine, 2001, p. 11). Sarah Nour is the protagonist in *I, the Divine*. Her fragile identity is introduced through her many attempts and recurrent failures to write a memoir or a novel about her life. She cannot put all the fragmented stories of her life together into a coherent text. Her exilic experience is complex and critical. It is different from the experience of protagonists in previous novels. Sarah lived her early life in Beirut with her American mother and Lebanese Druze father. She falls in love with Omar who belongs to a Greek Orthodox family. They rebel against the Druze and the Greek Orthodox traditions and elope to the United States. Later, Sarah is

divorced and continues her life in New York. Being a member of a hybrid family shaped by divorces, familial disintegrations, and remarriages in Beirut and America, Sarah finds peace in writing on her self-imposed exilic experience: "Who am I if not where I fit in the world, where I fit in the lives of the people dear to me?" (ibid., p. 12). These obsessive concerns are central in coloring her diasporic experiences:

I have been blessed with many curses in my life, not the least of which was being born half Lebanese and half American. Throughout my life, these contradictory parts battled endlessly, clashed, never coming to a satisfactory conclusion. I shuffled a nauseam between the need to assert my individuality and the need to belong to my clan, being terrified of loneliness and terrorized of losing myself in relationships. I was a black sheep of my family, yet an essential part of it (ibid., p. 229).

Narrative technique in *I, the Divine* is built on Sarah's quest for self-reinvention and constructing identity as "Sarah Nour el-Din...a Lebanese name...I am originally from Lebanon...Technically, the name is Druze" (ibid., p. 20). Sarah Nour el-Din is named by her grandfather after Sarah Bernhardt (1844-1923), the French actress. Fragmented settings, narrations, and relationships are the real forces that inspire her to write a complete story of her life in a memoir or an autobiographical novel that shall be her "initiation into total femininity" (ibid., p. 59). Sarah, however, discards each successful attempt and starts a new one. She sways back and forth to come with a vigorous composite picture of her torn identity and ends up with the first chapter of her story: "Starting over can mean many different things. If we are talking about changing one's personality, then I would have to say that I do not believe people can start over. We are stuck with the hand we are dealt" (ibid., p. 313). At times she starts with representing her present life in the 1990s in San Francisco as a successful painter filled with sadness and horror of memories such as the difficulties she underwent as a young girl in Beirut: "Growing up female in Lebanon was not easy. No matter how much encouragement parents gave...I was oblivious to such pressures, much to the consternation of many...I was a torn boy, unaware of how girls were supposed to behave" (ibid., p. 78). At other times she starts with her childhood in Beirut during the civil war living with her a Druze father, Dr. Mustapha, and her American mother, Janet, who is divorced because she failed to give birth to a son. She recalls her mother's profound attempts for inclusion in the Lebanese cultural frame but she fails in suturing her identity to the fabric of the Lebanese society despite the fact that she is as good and loyal to the society as the Lebanese themselves:

I am a daughter of a Lebanese man and an American woman, a fairly brief marriage. My mother, in a burst of independence, arrived in Lebanon to study at the American University of Beirut. She was a free spirit, did what she pleased. Like many foreigners who landed on Lebanese shores with dreams of conquest, she was swallowed whole. She fell in love with my father, got married, and had to subdue any sense of individuality she may have had in order to fit in, to conform to what was expected of her. Is it all a facade covering a deep need to belong? Are we simply pack animals desperately trying to pretend we are not? (ibid., p. 228).

*I, the Divine* is in some way about Alameddine's self-creation and finding oneself through characterizing the life and the skills of Sarah. Alameddine affirms such an assumption. When he is asked whether he intended to tell us several aspects of his identity and personal life such as the miserable childhood, belonging to different cultures, habits, playing soccer as well as paining through a woman's character, he says in the *I, the Divine's* afterward: "By definition any writer of fiction uses his or her own life as material. I mean, the story is a product of the writer's mind. Sarah plays soccer, paints, because these are things that interest me" (ibid., p. 258). The novel, as a single chapter, represents both Sarah's and Alameddine's foible of writing and discarding; both the writer and the protagonist consider it a part of the creative career and the crucible in which the writer tests the mettle of his narratives: "Most of my writing has an experimental quality. I set out to tell a complete story



within a set of fragments. I was fascinated by this idea because it reflects the way I think and the way people experience life" (ibid., p. 259). The narrative tone he employs in *I, the Divine* is as laconic as its only one chapter. Moreover, its unique style and the protagonist's epic struggle in a single chapter emphasize that finding identity outside one's cultural frame proves futile and delusive.

### **Conclusion**

The novels examined in this study show a similar experience of identity crisis among Lebanese characters, thus indeed supporting theories of identity in borderline. This experience partly rests on cultural/traditional images in mind and therefore a tendency towards negotiating national belonging and relocation in a seemingly utopian world is noticeable. In the analysis of different aspects of identity crisis in Alameddine's *Kooloids* (1998), *I, the Divine* (2001), and *The Angel of History* (2016), the study reaches to a fact that conflict between inclusion and exclusion is continually reinvented in order to deconstruct a new modes of stability – an attempt of melting in the new culture being one of those modes. In Alameddine's novels, narrators and protagonists suffer from their position in different cultures; a fact that explains Alameddine's torn identity: he is a product of Lebanese and American cultures but not a fusion of the two cultures. Towards the end of the narratives, narrators become aware that the borderline they are trying to cross is hard to complete and not promising. Therefore, the texts imply an awareness of a need for unity and affinity for home and provide a basis for a sense of belonging, if not unity. The author's collective approaches to identity crisis and cultural exclusion conventionalize inclinations to an oriental way of life and Arabic culture. Arab Americans in the novels of Alameddine negotiate a new identity in relation to native culture and stress on the process of redefinition through developing their natural affinity with homeland as an easy remedy for identity crisis.

### **Acknowledgment**

The authors acknowledge the approval and the support of this study by the Deanship of Scientific Research at Northern Border University, Arar, K.S.A. under the grant no. 1115-EAR-2019-1-10-F.

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