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*The Feminist Novelistic Movement in Multicultural Societies:
A Comparative Study of the Cultural Content and Intellectual Vision in Tony Morrison's and
Inaam Kachachi's Novels*

Doctoral Thesis

SUMMARY

The relationship between remembrance and literary imagination permeates Toni Morrison's writing. The experience of slavery, through spatial mutation and temporal discontinuity, led to an absence in the Black-American consciousness. This absence results not only in a crisis of memory, but also in a cultural alienation. Toni Morrison exposes the mechanisms of this cultural alienation by recourse to memory. She uses two levels of remembrance in the composition of her works. Anxious to compensate for the silence of the official history on the Black experience in the United States, the African-American writer uses authentic facts, which she presents in a precise way by the imagination, and in doing so, gives meaning to another type of reality. Drawing from her personal and collective history, Morrison presents a true epic of the black people through African legends, and through subversive and innovative narrative techniques. Narrative focus is given to the African Americans who can tell their stories from an internal point of view. This recourse to memory in her novels serves not only to understand an essence, but also to create an identity. The author denounces in her novels a society that tends to neglect its cultural roots. It opens the way to a collective memory that reconciles.

In this melting pot that is the United States, the black is the only minority to have left his homeland without his consent, chained. The link to the land of origin is thus broken. This spatio-temporal discontinuity of African-Americans in the New World, combined with the hegemony of the dominant culture creates an alteration of memory and a loss of bearings. For

the author, the notion of slavery can be read at a sociocultural level. Memory is often associated with suffering in Morrison's novels, and characters are tempted to repress their memory to avoid suffering.

American society has the particularity of using "hyphenated" socio-ethnic categories such as African-Americans, Hispanic-Americans, or Arab-Americans. This "hyphenated" identity that seemed stable and functional exploded in a thousand pieces with the twin towers in the aftermath of the attacks of September 11, 2001. Rumors about Arab-Americans rejoicing in restaurants following the attacks have begun to circulate and "Islam" and "Arab" began to rhyme with "terrorism", targeting, without any distinction, any American of Eastern origin. The so-called actors of "terror" have become victims of the "hysterical" terror that has developed in reaction to these events. Just as fiction has focused on the reasons that may lead an individual to perpetrate a terrorist attack, it also deals with the aftermath of September 11, 2001, the wars (Afghanistan, Iraq), the Patriot Act (September 26, 2001), and the stigmatization of the Arab-American population. Indeed, one of the consequences of 9/11 was the resurgence of an identity questioning, particularly in the United States. Thus, authors of fiction have examined the impact of 9/11 on the meaning of "Americanness" and on the possibility of maintaining a hybrid identity, mainly for people from the Arab-Muslim community, thus restoring the question of multiculturalism.

Fiction writing feeds on themes that have more or less close relations with the social. Literary creation does not escape this concept whose writing is characterized by the bursting of scriptural systems, the transgression of taboos and the violence of the tone. In this sense, literature as a written manifestation of social thoughts and traditions will allow us to conduct our reflection in a very detailed way from the works of two women writers belonging to entirely different cultural and social environments: the African American Nobel Prize winner

Toni Morrison and the Iraqi Christian Chaldean Inaam Kachachi. Both deal with humanitarian issues. This is the common feature of them and that is the main reason behind choosing this topic. In this regard, Morrison's novels *Beloved* and Kachachi's *The American Granddaughter* will constitute our body of analysis. Iraqi author Inaam Kachachi's novel *The American Granddaughter* (2008) features characters from the Arab-American community whose identity shattered following the attacks on the World Trade Center. This question of identity urges us to rethink the conditions of belonging to a community, as well as the development of individual identity in a relation conditioned by the responsibility towards others. The reaction to the event, the emergence of the other ourselves in the eyes of others, the criteria for building a personal identity dependent on society are the gateways that I want to open to address these texts and think about an identity configuration that has become impossible.

Zeina, Kachachi's narrator, grew up in Iraq, but had to flee the Iraqi regime with her parents to settle in the United States. Naturalized American, she has the feeling of belonging to the American community, which pushes her after 9/11 to engage in the American army like interpreter. The return to Iraq that this commitment entails leads to a double challenge to her hybrid identity, because, being first perceived by her comrades in the American army as an Arab, she must ostensibly demonstrate her Americanness, while in the eyes of the local population and her Iraqi family she lost that Arab identity by working for the occupying army, and taking US citizenship which makes her a traitor. Having thought she could facilitate communication between the two communities that form her hybrid identity, she is confronted with the impossibility of reconciling her Arab origins and her Americanness in Iraq and the United States in the world that emerges after the 9/11 attack that provoked a rupture of identity for this immigrant by forcing her to deny this other in her by the choice she makes in favor of her adoptive country.

If we go back to the history of literature concerning the image and status of women, we notice that the acquisition of this status has gone through several phases and several hazards of a rather eventful history. In the traditional patriarchal society – not only in the Arab world, but also in Western Europe and the Americas – the woman was usually portrayed as a weak creature, enslaved by man, useful only for taking care of her children and keeping the house, being totally excluded from all social life. However, since the nineteenth century, the literary landscape has been considerably enriched by the feminine contribution. They tackled various themes, among the most daring. This literature enjoys today a great news success with a liberalized public.

Our dissertation is based on several research hypotheses formulated in accordance with a number of questions to which we have hopefully provided suitable answers. Thus, we have been interested in the extent to which connections can be established between the literary works written by two writers belonging to different geographical spaces, and with entirely different cultural backgrounds. We found it necessary to investigate the way a writer like Toni Morrison succeeds in reflecting the precarious condition of women in a society dominated by racial and ethnic stereotypes, or how a writer like Inaam Kachachi mirrors the painful impact of uprooting, relocation, and possible return of the exiled woman. We have been concerned with any elements that may be detected in these writers' works which ultimately point out to the different degrees their female characters are facing their "otherness" and, along the same line of thought, we have tried to find out whether the theoretical principles of Feminism may offer the key to a proper understanding of these writers. Considering the circumstances of slavery and the forced migration of the Africans to slavery in America, it was important to underline how Toni Morrison (and her characters) can

cope with their otherness as blacks in the predominantly white America. Finally, if the relationship between the exiled and his/her adoptive country is defined by an intensifying feeling of powerlessness, we have demonstrated how the Iraqi writer's characters respond to their exile on the background of the recent developments in their country of origin.

By asking and answering these preliminary questions, one might come to a better understanding of the essence of otherness – be it as a result of the cross-Atlantic slave trade, or the cultural impact of migration on the exile's existence – in multicultural societies, as well as the cultural content and intellectual vision in Tony Morrison's and Inaam Kachachi's Novels.

However, the domain of comparative literature is practically limitless, with its stylistic and literary boundaries still hard to discern: what is to be included and what is to be left out of it is still a matter of arduous debate. The current dissertation, thus, tries to shed light on two particular directions of study: Tony Morrison's views on the condition of woman in multicultural America, and Inaam Kachachi's position towards the complexity of the existence of the Arab woman in exile. The active presence of both writers in the literary landscape of the USA and France/Iraq makes it mandatory to reduce any scientific inquiry to a number of literary products, considered most suitable for our purpose. In this thesis, we have concentrated our efforts mostly on two particular texts, which have come, with the passing of time, to be understood as representative for the aspects taken into consideration: Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (a novel which has already become a canonical text), and Inaam Kachachi's *The American Granddaughter* (a novel originally written in Arabic and translated into English). We make reference, whenever necessary to other novels written by Toni Morrison while, in the case of the Iraqi writer, for the sake of simplicity, we restrict our

comments to the only novel published in English, avoiding other works published in Arabic and French only.

The method we have followed in approaching these two different women writers is that of the comparative approach. We start from the assumption that the study of literature from a comparative perspective goes well beyond the geographical borders of a specific country, providing the most appropriate instruments for and increasingly making efforts to open itself to new cultural dimensions that go well beyond the boundaries of the canonical productions of Western civilization, to include in its scope other non-Western languages and literatures, in this case the literature of the Arab world. On the other hand, and in accordance with the title we have chosen – *The Feminist Novelistic Movement in Multicultural Societies: A Comparative Study of the Cultural Content and Intellectual Vision in Tony Morrison's and Inaam Kachachi's Novels* – it has been necessary to apply the principles of Feminist criticism to both authors and identify those particular elements that distinguish the Feminist thought in the cultural space of the multicultural American society and the Arab world. Moreover, our approach to Inaam Kachachi made it necessary to apply a contextual approach and relate the plot of *The American Granddaughter* to the recent events in Iraqi history.

Our dissertation is structured in Introduction and three parts, containing three chapters each, and a chapter of conclusions, followed by Illustrations and Charts, Annexes, and the list of Works Cited. All the illustrations belong to the public domain, and all the resources mentioned into the text are properly cited and listed in the Works Cited list.

PART ONE: A Theoretical and Contextual Approach is made up of three chapters – Chapter One: *Comparative Literature and Otherness*; Chapter Two: *The Early Shaping of a Feminine*

Diasporic Writing; and Chapter Three: *Novelistic Trends of Contemporary Feminist Literature* – and establishes the theoretical background for our critical discourse.

Chapter One: *Comparative Literature and Otherness* provides the theoretical foundation for our investigation, and underlines the general principles of comparative literature – the basic approach to our critical endeavor – and define such notions as otherness, diaspora, exile, diasporic writing, with a special stress on the evolution of Arabic comparative literature.

We start from the basic assumption that Comparative literature, as a hermeneutical practice, is responsible for the study of literature *through cultures*; goes well beyond the geographical borders of a particular country, which explains our choice of the two writers considered. We make reference to the authoritative position of outstanding theorists of the field: Jonathan Cullen, Djelal Kadir, Steven Tötösi de Zepetnek, Manfred Schmeling to reach the conclusion that Comparative literature has developed into the systematic study of supranational ensembles, in which the linguistic variety and the relations with otherness weave a canvas that is projected in the literary theory and criticism. On the other hand, if the borders exist, they shouldn't be ignored: as they can be political, historical, cultural, linguistic, etc., the comparatist must take into account the different aspects that come into action as soon as one of these barriers is crossed. The postcolonial critics Edward Said and Homi Bhabha postulate the concept of "otherness": Said argues that the colonial relationship between colonizers and colonized, the marginal other, is a hierarchical relationship that does not suppose mutual interchange, while for Bhabha, "otherness" is linked as a process to the concept of "mimicry", the attempt of a displacement of the position and effects of the colonial subject through the movements of repetition, iteration and variation – cultural and political identity are constructed through a process of otherness. On the other hand, the term "diaspora" includes both migration and colonization, and it applies to the Arab diaspora. We have mentioned the

understanding of the phenomenon of diaspora of Robin Cohen, Philippe Fargues, Philip Marfleet, Ami Elad-Bouskila, Stuart Hall, Jonathan Culler, and Salman Rushdie. A special sub-chapter is devoted to the development of the discipline of comparative literature in the Arab world, and the contributions of the pioneers of Arabic comparatism, such as Rifa'a al-Tahtawi, Adib Ishaq, Ahmad Faris al-Shidyaq, Najib Al-Haddad, Sulayman Al-Bustani, and Ruhi al-Khalidi and Qusati al-Homsi.

Chapter Two: *The Early Shaping of a Feminine Diasporic Writing* traces the shaping of a feminine diaspora in America: it starts with the presence of African enslaved women during the Middle Passage and their infamous treatment by the slave traders, and continues with the awakening of the self-awareness of the Arab women and their (literary) resistance against the traditional patriarchal society, the development of an Arab American community, and the contemporary status of this community in the aftermath of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. One of the important elements worth-mentioning about the slave trade was – according to Stephanie Smallwood – its “one-way trajectory” and the sexual abuse the African women were subject to aboard the slave ships and, later, on the plantations. It was a demonstration of volition and power directed at the whole slave community, as seen in first-hand accounts and in the comments of Michael Angelo Gomez, Henrik Clarke, and Angela Davis. We found it necessary to underline the unexpected connection between the American symbol of liberty, and the Arab world: Frédéric-Auguste Bartholdi’s intention of naming an earlier version of the Statue of Liberty, “Egypt Carrying the Light to Asia.”

The complexity and diversity of the Arab world has long intrigued Western analysts, and we found it necessary to explain some of the often confused basic terms – Islam/Muslim and Islamism/Islamist – before highlighting the intense nineteenth-century debate on the equality of gender and male supremacy, or women’s emancipation and access to education, and the

contributions of thinkers such as the Indian Sayyid Mumtaz Ali, the Egyptian Qasim Amin, and the Tunisian Tahar Haddad. Traditionally excluded as active participants in the construction of the historical and cultural narrative of the Arab world, discredited and neglected in their country and abroad, and even labeled as agents of colonialism and Western culture, Arab women of letters and activists have long sought visibility in debates at the regional, national and global levels. We mention the opinions of writers and activists Fedwa Malti-Douglas, Fadia Suyoufie, Djebbar, Sahar Khalifeh, Fadia Faqir, or Leila Abouzeid who introduced complexity into the debate on national and pan-Arab identity, and highlighted the gaps in historical, literary, and linguistic traditions. In their novels, they broaden the framework of feminist categorization parameters and develop female identity far beyond the nationalist imperatives of anticolonialism; the identity of their women characters is not collective, and is therefore not limited to postcolonial nationalist identification. The women in their novels attain a kind of subjectivity urging them to get rid of the Islamic collectivist tradition and of the Western secular individualism. We refer to the studies of Courtney Radsch and Sahar Khamis, Miriam Cooke, Hanan Hussam Kashou. After a necessary account on the condition of woman in the Middle East and Iraq (as viewed from the perspective of the Holy Qur'an) and the developments in feminist thought during and after Saddam Hussein's rule, we provide a few considerations on terrorism and violence, with a stress on domestic violence and male dominance in a traditionally patriarchal society.

Chapter Three: *Novelistic Trends of Contemporary Feminist Literature* is based on the assumption that feminist literature is considered to be creative due to its intimate connection with the women's causes and because it defends their freedom and rights. We develop on the idea that important feminist works had an impact on societies throughout history and they helped women to get their freedom and independence. Even though feminist literature is considered to be focused on the different shapes of sexuality that were included in the

production of feminist literature, we will not limit ourselves to analyze a specific theory as the female authors were influenced by all sorts of theories, such as Marxism, psychology and structure theories. We want to demonstrate that the essential idea of the feminist literature or philosophy regarding the women's movement refers to what happened during the female oppression and plight for a long time in both creative space and critical literature.

We consider the present feminist debate along the line of feminine literature, and devote ample space to the French school of feminine/feminist thought (Simone de Beauvoir, Hélène Cixous, Chantal Chawaf, Luce Irigaray or Julia Kristeva), and also mentioned the contributions of the British feminist critics Elaine Showalter, Patty Stoneman, Margaret Homans and Kate Flint. The ongoing debate on women's writing is an opportunity to assert and make exist an aesthetic position within the struggle of women and to transpose it into the literary field and the university field by proposing an aesthetic theorization combining literary practice and critical production. Palestinian researcher Isam M. Shihada defines feminism as a movement that seeks to enhance the quality of women's lives by defying the norms of society based on male dominance and subsequent female which implies the emancipation of women from the shackles, restrictions, norms, and customs of society. We rely our demonstration upon more recent studies on feminism written by John Peck and Martin Coyle, Lois Tyson. When she writes about the African American women's writings, Deborah E. McDowell is of the opinion that black women novelists have assumed throughout their tradition a revisionist mission aimed at substituting reality for stereotype. African American novels encourage the creation of a dynamic and complex relationship between the author and the reader, entailing the production of a specific critical theory coming from within the texts. The vision of black writers is definitely unique given the narrative innovation and the reconfiguration of the usually limited and distorted social and human message conveyed. On the other hand, we cannot examine the East-West criticisms of gender relations without

expanding Edward Said's statement that the Muslim world exists "for" the West and we affirm that the West also exists "for" the Islamic world, while the intention of African American writers to encourage a historical, political and social interpretation of their texts brings black novels very close to the literary tradition of realism, but they put their own touch to it by adding elements of magical realism, of re-memory, of call-and-response, of blues, of naturalism and/or of existentialism.

PART TWO: *The Intellectual and Social Contents of Toni Morrison's Novels* is the first analytical component of our critical endeavor, and discusses Toni Morrison's writing from three apparently different viewpoints in three chapters: Chapter Four: *Towards an African American Version of Feminism*; Chapter Five: *Racial and Ethnic Discrimination*; Chapter Six: *Slavery and Man's Self-respect*. We underline, whenever necessary, some of the recurrent themes in the African American novel, such as the writer's reclaiming of the African past, the quest for freedom, the importance of family and community, and her (women) characters' struggle to survive the racial, class, and gender discrimination.

Chapter Four: *Towards an African American Version of Feminism* prepares the road to a more detailed discussion of Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* by tackling such topics as the emergence of Black feminism, the relationship between the traditional patriarchal African American thought and feminism, and an account of the African American Feminism. We first underline the perception of feminism within the African American community, with the black feminists calling for a proper definition of patriarchy – a concept that proved incompatible with African American feminism.

The development of African American Feminist thought is seen in the context of the nation-wide debate in the second half of the 1960s, when the emergence of black feminism was seen as the failure of black women activists to make their voices heard in the black movement and

white feminist organizations. Black feminist thinking is based on the need to link issues of race, class and gender in the struggle for blacks, as seen in the writings of Pauline Terrelonge, Vicky Crawford, Benita Roth, Barbara Smith, Paula Giddings, or Kimberlé Crenshaw. As regards the black patriarchy, the analysts think that the concept itself should be redefined, to avoid the degradation of gender relations within the racial group. Under the circumstances, the African American writer is aware of the importance of the connection that can be established between the reader and the text which can and must be both revealing and challenging; thus, African American literature is always engaged in a productive process because it encourages the readers to search for meaning underneath the surface of a piece of writing and complete the existing silences within the text and at the end of it characterized usually by open-endedness. As such, the mission of African American women is reflected in the themes of their novels: victimization of women through physical and psychological violence; sexual exploitation; the fight for survival in a world governed by racism, sexism, classism and stereotypical thinking; psychological and social bonding among women with common experiences and aims; and the relationship between black women and men.

În *Beloved*, schimbările intermitente de perspectivă de la un personaj la altul și modificările frecvente ale structurii temporale provoacă existența unor straturi de prezentare în schimbare care obligă cititorul să fie conștient și să se concentreze asupra fiecărui detaliu, fiecărui obiect, indiferent cât de ne semnificativ s-ar părea sau devreme ce se va dovedi a fi cheia care ne deschide înțelegerea unui fapt de mare transcendență. Morrison își înzestrează narațiunea cu o viziune a evoluției istorice afro-americane, cu atacuri indirecte, dar puternice asupra sclaviei, cu simbolism și folclor evocativ, cu impactul comportamentului comunității, cu un studiu aprofundat al dragostei în toate fațetele și cu o observație precisă a relațiilor umane.

Chapter Five: Racial and Ethnic Discrimination deals with Toni Morrison's engaged writing

and her responses to the realities of slavery, and the present condition of the African American woman. It starts with an incursion into the development of racial thought, in the eighteenth century and during the colonial era, with a stress on the official abolition of slavery in France in 1848, and the evolution of the negro character, first in the scientific texts, then in the so-called exotic literature which turns the negro into a romantic character. We stress the importance of the *Negritude* movement and the contributions of the Francophone writers Léopold-Sédar Senghor (Senegal) and Aimé Césaire (Martinique) who see Negritude as the cultural heritage, the values and the spirit of the Negro-African civilization, and the connection between this movement and the Harlem Renaissance and its major voices: W.E.B. Du Bois, Langston Hughes and Claude McKay, Jean Toomer and James Weldon Johnson. As extra-literary responses to racism, we underline – besides the importance of the Social Movement for Civil Rights – the artistic dimension of music which, according to Theodore Adorno, has the same origin as the social process, and that social evolutions, analogous to the self-revolution of musical material, are charged with an evolving emotional repertoire that is impregnated with history.

A review of Toni Morrison's novels highlights the recurring themes which approach central topics of human concern, such as racism, sexism, war, poverty, incest, betrayal, murder, and the meaning of community and love. We proceed to our analysis from the idea that the marginalization of the African American community is the consequence of the racial demarcation which delimits two spaces within the American society: the center of the majority (white) and the peripheral space of the minority (black). Toni Morrison refuses this inclination towards invisibility and this silencing of the black woman in American society. On the contrary, she seeks to give voice through writing to this minority of speeches, even within the black community itself, and constructs her female characters from certain characteristics that are, in general, very present in all her protagonists. We further refer to

some of her novels, highlighting: the common experience of skin color reduction leading to the black community's exclusion from the circle of power (*Sula*); the traumatic effects of the culture of women's commodification (*A Mercy*); preservation, education, cultural awareness and healing that characterize the mother-daughter relationship (*The Bluest Eye*); slavery, the loss of identity and the re-appropriation of the past (*Beloved*); and the parallel between music and Morrison's own narrative technique (*Jazz*).

Chapter Six: *Slavery and Man's Self-respect* discusses the burden of slavery, the causes that led to the change of the Africans in America, the way from slavery to gratuitous torture and the African Americans' struggle against national amnesia as seen in Toni Morrison's novels *Beloved*, *Paradise*, *Song of Solomon*, *A Mercy*, and *God Save the Child*. Our analysis starts with a reference to decolonialism, viewed by Walter D. Mignolo as the counterpoint of modernity/coloniality, and as a counterpoint to the re-organization of colonial modernity with the British Empire and French colonialism. Frantz Fanon questions the alienation by a dominant world which subverts and alters communities as well as subjects in their personal development, and Jean-Paul Sartre underlines the fact that "the European has only been able to become a man through creating slaves and monsters". Toni Morrison has often expressed her desire to lift the veil on what could have been the reality of slavery in the United States. In *Beloved*, resorting to magical realism, she responds with the supernatural, supposed veil that would cover the gap in the heart of Sethe that refers to the fault of slavers. In *Paradise* the symbolism of the black in the Christian universe refers to an alienating speech that translates the process of subjection, the consciousness of an order stigmatizing the "black subject". In *A Mercy* Toni Morrison tells a story that goes far beyond the simple binarism of black and white, constantly changing the concept of otherness, and it shows us that slavery and racism were not inherent in colonial ideology, but that they were rather a "couple" built, planted, institutionalized and legalized over decades. We refer to the opinions of researchers

Maryemma Graham, Amaryll Chanady, Bonnie Angelo, John Anthony Cuddon, Ashraf Rushdy, and Missy Dehn Kubitschek. In her latest novel, *God Help the Child*, Toni Morrison appeals to the sense of responsibility of the African Americans towards their children and their daughters. It represents a manifesto of hope in the resilience of the young generations, despite the faults of the fathers. To conclude, the formal and thematic characteristics of Morrison's novels are clearly ascribed to an African-American tradition that tries to keep the cultural legacy of her race alive. She establishes as one of her main narrative strategies the analysis of the complex relationship between race, gender and social class as determining elements in the identity of the African American being. Through the ritualistic memory of the past Morrison allows her characters to create their own history, initiating the process of reconstruction of an identity where the experience of female victimization becomes a memory that allows them to overcome the conditions of the present.

PART THREE: *Human and Existentialist Concern in Inaam Kachachi's Novels* is a presentation of the Iraqi woman novelist Inaam Kachachi's position on the condition of the Arab woman in the diaspora, the plight of the uprooting and of a hybrid identity, and the drama of return. It consists of three chapters – Chapter Seven: *The Identity of the Arab/Muslim woman*; Chapter Eight: *The Archives of Memory – Inaam Kachachi's Fictionalization of History*; Chapter Nine – *Migration and the Dilemma of Return* – which situate the Iraqi writer in the context of the Feminist movement in the Arab world, discusses such concepts as “exile”, “diaspora”, and hyphenated identity as seen in the novel *The American Granddaughter*, with reference to the writer's other novels.

Chapter Seven: *The Identity of the Arab/Muslim Woman* deals with the background and coordinates of Arabic feminine literature in the context of the movement of feminism in the Middle East and the liberation of the Arab women's writing. It was necessary to draw the

development of feminism since the colonial times – when it involved the awareness and analysis of gender inequalities, the deprivation of women’s rights and the efforts of women to remedy them – to the more recent version of Islamic feminism. In the Arab/Muslim world, customs are as powerful as the law itself, and they subject personal and family matters outline the limits within which a Muslim woman can be expected to define her own identity: the space of identity for women is defined as that of the Muslim woman. The main precursors of the feminist movement proposed, with their objectives and approaches, to ensure women greater dignity and freedom through education, equality of rights with men, and the abolition of the veil. We mention the contribution of notable Arab feminist activists, and the critical positions of the scholars, such as Ziba Mir-Hosseini, Fatima Mernissi, Raja Rhouni, Margot Badran, Amina Wadud. We underline the idea that a “traditional reading of the tradition” is dominant in the Arab-Islamic culture: the West does not want to realize that most of the real problems that affect Muslim women derive from the contradictions that the Muslim world has been subject to, and the feminist movement believed that the problem of female emancipation was not a religious issue but rather it was a social phenomenon.

The liberation of the Arab women’s writing is therefore a complex process that started in the nineteenth century with the discovery and adoption of the Western literary genres and forms. The contemporary Arab women writers put their pens at the service of the political liberation movements and social improvements of their respective countries. These literary works fall into four categories, following the traditional approach (private life prevails over the public); the realistic approach (ideological, political and social tensions); the feminist approach (personal experiences, a rightful position in society); the socio-political approach (understand and combat the problems that afflict their society or their country). We mention a number of outstanding Arab writers, including some of the Iraqi writers in the diaspora. Finally, we comment on the historical evolution and present condition of the Christian community in Iraq,

to which Inaam Kachachi belongs.

Chapter Eight: *The Archives of Memory – Inaam Kachachi’s Fictionalization of History*

analyzes the novel *The American Granddaughter* starting from Derrida’s interpretation of Freud’s theory of memory: Derrida makes the Freudian concept of repression an unconscious archiving modality, but still existing and conditioning our approach to an event. The event in this case is represented by the 9/11 terrorist attacks, and the novel details their impact on the character of Zeina—the young Iraqi exile rejected by her own country and accepted by the USA, and then rejected by her own people when she returns to Iraq as an interpreter for the American army. Zeina feels abandoned by her own Iraqiness, and the only identity she can accept is the American, the one that will later explode and turn her into “a cracked mirror”. It is an individual ethic—that of one’s acknowledging the existence of the other, and the limit of his own being, that engenders a necessary responsibility towards the other—that makes Zeina take action. The 9/11 events trigger her dormant (if not completely inexistent) patriotic feelings and offer her the justification for the decision. Back in Iraq after the forced exile, Zeina has to overcome the inner struggle within her hybrid, hyphenated identity—an identity answers Homi Bhabha’s claim for a migration that challenges the well-established national identity. On the other hand, Zeina struggles to come to terms with her own “in-between-ness”, her hybrid Arab-American identity, and decide on her correct allegiance.

Rahma, Zeina’s grandmother is the main Iraqi character in the novel. The widow of a former officer in the Iraqi army, and the repository of family memories, she is a living “archive” which unfortunately draws on the past only, without opening to the future. Rahma’s overwhelming personality and her impact on Zeina’s consciousness is seen throughout the whole novel until Rahma’s death in the end—when she turns into a tutelary figure whose words and thoughts are archived in the memory and body of her granddaughter. We mention

Derrida, who draws a parallel between the unconscious archive and the development of a ghost figure with which we can dialogue and which influences our decisions and actions, such as the ghost in *Hamlet*.

We also underline the importance given to writing in Inaam Kachachi's novel. To the protagonist, writing is a way to try to overcome her condition, and her computer is both a logbook of her experience in Iraq and a diary witnessing the decomposition of her identity: the words become actors, and this translates their ability to concretize the images so that they do not get disintegrated. The novelist proposes to consider the act of writing as an act of duplication which emphasizes the distance from self intrinsic to the writing of oneself. Zeina is the emblematic, passive spectator, a translator and a mediator, who crosses her world without taking part, pointing out the dysfunctions of fictional and imaginary devices. The dilemma faced by the hybrid narrator is similar to that experienced by the female protagonist of other novels by Arab diasporic women writers, for example Leila Aboulela's *The Translator* (1999), Fadia Faqir's *My Name Is Salma* (2007), and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz* (1993). Their characters' fictional experiences mirror the Arab immigrant's experience, including dislocation, racism and rejection, assimilation, hybridity and heterogeneity: they are caught in the divide between nations, loyalties, home, and family.

Chapter Nine: *Emigration and the Dilemma of Return* continues the analysis started in the previous chapter, with a reading of *The American Granddaughter* from the perspective of the emigrant's return to the native land, touching on such notions as memory and identity, diaspora, hybrid (hyphenated) identity, translation as a cultural transfer, with a special discussion of Inaam Kachachi's novel *Tashari* (2013), seen as a narration of displacement between personal memory and history. If identity can only be built in the framework of the symbolic interaction with others, then Inaam Kachachi's novels highlight those elements that

determine the identity of the Iraqi people, whether in exile or at home. If identity is a constructive building in dynamic interaction with others, her novels specify who these *others* are, and their role in shaping the contemporary Iraqi cultural and collective identity.

In this novel we encounter at least two opinions on migration: Zeina sees it as a form of settling, the whole world can be her homeland, and she may consider herself a citizen of the world. On the other hand, Muhaymen defines emigration as captivity, which leaves one suspended between two lives, with no comfort in moving or turning back. We mention the authoritative opinions on migration and diaspora of a number of scholars, such as William Safran, Paul Gilroy, Stuart Hall, Leyla Al Maleh, Steven Vertovec, Jørgen Nielsen, and Barbara Nimiri Aziz.

We have devoted a significant section of this chapter to the novel viewed from the point of view of language and vocabulary, and underlined its modernity, and the phenomenon of diglossia, common to a lot of contemporary Arabic narrative: the frame of the novel is in classical Arabic, the dialogues are almost all in the Iraqi dialect. We note the writer's insistence on Zeina's Assyrian ethnic heritage, combined with her knowledge of Arabic poetry and the use of an elegant form of Arabic language. Various passages in the novel convey a picture of the linguistic activity in Iraq as a hotbed of crisis and bear witness to the fact that it contains a bundle of different tasks, and Zeina's tasks as a translator make her oscillate between her American identity and her Iraqi heritage. She speaks a hybrid language, a language that feeds on family heritage (Arabic), and societal education (English). Her speech juggles between the two languages, using Arabic idiomatic terms that seem more appropriate to a given situation than their English equivalent. English expressions punctuate the Arabic text, whether it is familiar uses of swear words, or lyrics of songs.

One further example of displacement as a result of exile is the character of Wardiyya

Iskandar, the protagonist of Kachachi's novel *Tashari*, whose experience is presented as part of the transformations of the international political and social scene in the second half of the twentieth century. Wardiyya's children experience this transnational tragedy and fight feelings of uprooting and strangeness by using their memories and their family and national history. They rethink their relationship with their country of origin by reconciling their multiple identities, national, cultural, religious and political, without compromising the relative stability and sense of belonging to their host country. This experience of displacement imposes on the characters in Inaam Kachachi's novel a new form of belonging, which could be defined as "nomadic citizenship". What is striking in the analysis of this novel is that for many displaced Iraqis, the word exile has lost some of its true meaning, the myth of return has finally collapsed, and the countries of exile have become their new homeland.

CONCLUSIONS: *Toni Morrison and Inaam Kachachi in the Mirror of Comparative Literature* underlines the tenets of comparative literature as seen from the perspective of the Western scholarship and the growing interest in other literatures and other cultures of regions and groups traditionally alienated from the canon, with the stress on the confrontation of different critical and assessment systems, different classification criteria and terminologies, leading to a universalizing perspective. On the other hand, the Arab/Eastern comparative researcher can weigh literature on another or favor eloquence to another on a methodological and scientific basis, in order to reveal the pros and cons of the literature and explain the superiority of one literature on another. If, according to Toni Morrison, it is movement that defines humanity in the contemporary world, then the comparatist studies literature of the world in movement, and the free transit from one nation to another. We have established and hopefully covered two outstanding similarities between the two writers: both deal with exiles, and both adopt a feminine-feminist position in their personal treatment of the condition of

woman: the African American woman in white, racist America, and the Iraqi diasporic woman, facing the burden of displacement and acceptance in the new environment of their exile.