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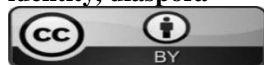
Lectu. Ahmed Ghazi
Mohaisen

College of Education
for Humanities-
University Of Anbar

Email:

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Navigating the Third Space: Hybridity and Cultural Identity in Selma Dabbagh's Novel Out of It (2011)

A B S T R A C T

By focusing on Homi Bhabha's "third space" notion in *The Location of Culture* (1994), this paper attempts to understand how the third space framework allows for the investigation into the complexities of identity formation in postcolonial and diasporic contexts with regard to Selma Dabbagh's novel *Out of It* (2011). Leveraging Bhabha's concept of the third space as a transformative zone of cultural impingement, cultural negotiation including issues of identity, take on particular importance with regard to the hybrid identity. By analyzing the protagonists Rashid and Iman Mujahed, as representations of hybridity in Dabbagh's novel, this paper examines how they move back and forth between Palestinian heritage and Western culture by a close reading of the text. The findings show that Rashid's diasporic experiences and Iman's activism strongly characterize the third space as both an empowered space, where the characters reshape their identities, and as an alienated space due to cultural misunderstanding and reduction. But the novel ultimately depicts identity as something that is fluid, entirely molded and shaped by constant interplay of the cultural influences, familial influences and socio political influences. Finally, this paper argues that the third space framework represents a highly useful conceptualization for the study of identity as an ever-changing ideology within globalized, diasporic stories of identity where characters reimagine their prescribed identity in the face of spatial and cultural boundaries.

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إبحار في الفضاء الثالث: التهجين والهوية الثقافية في رواية سلمى الدباغ
 " غزة تحت الجلد " (٢٠١١)

م. احمد غازي محيسن

جامعة الانبار / كلية التربية للعلوم الإنسانية

الملخص

من خلال التركيز على مفهوم "الفضاء الثالث" لهومي بابا كما ورد في كتاب *The Location of Culture* (1994)، يسعى هذا البحث إلى استكشاف كيفية مساهمة إطار الفضاء الثالث في فهم تعقيدات تشكيل الهوية في السياقات ما بعد الاستعمارية والشتات، وذلك بالتركيز على رواية "غزة تحت الجلد" لسلمى الدباغ (٢٠١١). باستخدام مفهوم بابا للفضاء الثالث كمنطقة تحويلية للتداخل الثقافي والتفاوض، يُبرز هذا البحث أهمية قضايا الهوية، وخاصة الهوية الهجينة. من خلال تحليل الشخصيتين الرئيسيتين، رشيد وإيمان مجاهد، كتمثيلات للتَّهجين الثقافي في رواية دباغ، يتفحص هذا البحث كيفية تنقلهم بين التراث الفلسطيني والثقافة الغربية عبر قراءة متعمقة للنص. وتُظهر النتائج أن تجارب الشتات لرشيد ونشاط إيمان يميزان الفضاء الثالث بقوة كونه مساحة تمكينية، حيث يعيد الشخصيات تشكيل هوياتهم، وأيضًا كمساحة اغتراب بسبب سوء الفهم الثقافي والاختزال. في النهاية، تصور الرواية الهوية كشيء مرن، يتشكل بفعل التفاعل المستمر بين التأثيرات الثقافية والعائلية والاجتماعية السياسية. ويجادل هذا البحث بأن إطار الفضاء الثالث يمثل تصورًا قيمًا لدراسة الهوية كأيدولوجية متغيرة باستمرار في قصص الهوية العالمية والشتاتية، حيث يُعيد الشخصيات تصور هوياتهم المفروضة في مواجهة الحدود المكانية والثقافية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الهوية، الفضاء الثالث، التَّهجين ، الهوية الثقافية، الشتات

1. Introduction

As a theorist of the 'third space,' Homi Bhabha's perspective in *The Location of Culture* provides a sophisticated means of viewing the construction of hybrid identities, especially in the context of a postcolonial culture where 'cultural' and 'political' tensions are at least as high. Bhabha understands the third space as a region of transformation where distinct cultural identities live together but accord with a flow of acceptance and redefinition. It creates a void for a new, fluid identity that is fluid in its own right, continuously built from the ongoing interactions of disparate cultural influences. According to Bhabha, the way identity is approached breaks away from the dichotomous or unitary perspective, and instead enlists the richness and complexity of hybrid identities that are constantly produced through the endless circle of cultural negotiation and the processes of inculturation and acculturation (Bhabha, 1994,p.54). The theoretical lens presented here is crucial to understanding how characters negotiate multiple cultural allegiances that present unstable and multilayered identities.

Out of It, accurately maps these complications of cultural hybridity through the lives of Rashid and Iman Mujahed, Palestinians sandwiched between the paternal heritage and the matriarchal influence of the West. Dabbagh creates Rashid and Iman's journeys to capture the minutiae of the third space, as set out in by Bhabha. Lived identities are an ongoing negotiation between a sense of belonging to a culture and a sense of alienation, a composing

between political commitment and personal aspiration. For example, Rashid agonizes over his part in the Palestinian cause while his dearness for freedom, personal and otherwise, is foiled by the lure of Western ideals. Iman's interpretation of cultural expectations'-insubordination to traditional familial roles combined with a longing to remain part of her heritage- exemplifies identity as a third space. One of the many strengths of Selma Dabbagh's writing is its unerringly precise sense of place. Gaza is "like dried-out coral, ridged, chambered and sandy". It contrasts with Israel, "the other side, that side, the place they came from, that had been theirs", which, studded by solar panels, swimming pools and irrigated fields, looks from above like "an elaborate blanket of modernist design".

This paper explains the psychological and the cultural dynamics that make Rashid and Iman's identities, by applying Bhabha's third space theory to *Out of It*. They show how cultural hybridity is not a matter of conflict, but instead of an ever evolving and redefined practice of living. It also goes beyond Bhabha's framework by incorporating key information from other scholarship pertaining to the formation of identity, migration studies, and more broadly the impact of the postcolonial, providing an overarching picture of how hybrid identities occur and evolve within the third space. This study highlights the importance of cultural hybridity as a response to the pressure of a world increasingly marked by migration, diaspora and the crossing of cultural boundaries, through a close reading of Rashid and Iman's narratives.

2. Literature Review

many recent studies of Selma Dabbagh's *Out of It* explore the themes of identity , anticolonial dimensions and socio-political struggles, against a background of Palestinian and diasporic contexts.

In "Disability and Identity Transformation in Selma Dabbagh's *Out of It*" , Bashiti and Al-Mousa investigate how the character Sabri's disability works to become a site of resistance and reform his identity in terms of oppositional sociopolitical structures. The element of disability in Sabri's narrative and the disability in general allows Dabbagh to skirt the societal norms and occupying powers, as they argue that disability is a way in which to form an identity, shown as resilience within Dabbagh's narrative. This point of view reflects the concept of constrained agency in Bhabha's Bhabha's third space which gives birth to hybrid identities despite limiting forces (Bashiti & Al-Mousa, 2021).

Rahmouni and Abu Amrieh (2023) delve into *Out of It* in their article "Arab Literary Representations of London: Cross-Cultural Romances as Social Spaces in Dabbagh's *Out of It* and Jarrar's *Dreams of Water*". It is through situating its themes in the broader context of Arab literary depictions of Western spaces – namely London – in 'Cross-Cultural Romances as Social Spaces in Dabbagh's *Out of It* and Jarrar's *Dreams of Water* ' that this article has positioned its themes. Drawing on how cross cultural romances work as 'social spaces' in the novel, the analysis also highlights the confluence of Arab and Western identities in what has been termed a 'diasporic space'. *Out of it*, according to them, is not just a geo representation but is also a spatial representation that contains points where cultural interactions and clashes occur. The authors read how across cultural divides, the characters in the texts form their relationships, how Dabbagh portrays romance as a potential bridge for cross-cultural

understanding and how the limitations and challenges of such connections in a world built on power imbalances and historical trauma, are revealed. (Rahmouni, Abu Amrieh ,2023).

Another significant study, "Unfinished Work: Anticolonial Pedagogy in Selma Dabbagh's *Out of It*", Sperlinger explores literatures as a continuation of anticolonial activism, emphasizes the anticolonial dimensions of Dabbagh's work. And consider Dabbagh's narrative as a pedagogical intervention designed to educate the reader on the persistent effects of colonialism and the ongoing battle for Palestinian identity and autonomy. *Out of It*, asserts the author, represents a challenge to traditional pedagogies by not accepting sanitized or simplified portrayals of Middle Eastern conflicts. Instead, Dabbagh offers a narrative that forces the reader to grapple with the moral and ethical problems of Palestinian resistance in an attempt to, perhaps, prise open a more nuanced understanding of anticolonial struggles. As this study suggests, this approach finds echoes in the idea of the 'third space' articulated by Homi Bhabha as a generation of hybrid identities that challenge dominant cultural narratives. foregrounding these experiences of Palestinian characters luminates the permeability of identity and the ongoing discussions needed to hold cultural integrity in the face of external forces.

To conclude, these studies suggest *Out of It* as a rich exploration of identity, anticolonial dimensions ,cultural hybridity and resistance, as signified in Dabbagh's narrative, the story of life in the Palestinian diaspora. Using these different lenses, the novel is demonstrated to be addressing in a profound way issues of cultural negotiation and hybrid identity, and aligning with Bhabha's third space framework, offering a picture of how diasporic identity is shaped.

3. Theoretical Framework

This paper takes Homi Bhabha's concept of the 'third space,' as outlined in his seminal work, *The Location of Culture* (1994), as a theoretical framework this paper is based on. Bhabha contends that postcolonial, diasporic identities are not fixed but always drawn out, across a liminal, hybrid 'third space.' It comes out of the cross fertilisation of various cultural forces which makes it possible for individuals to bring in relative degrees of both inherited and of external influences (Bhabha, 1994, p. 38). Bhabha (1994) writes that this hybrid identity is one that is " the articulation of cultural difference," and is rather making identity a process of becoming, a movement through cultural exchange (p. 66). By applying the third space theory of Bhabha to *Out of It* by Selma Dabbagh, this study examines how protagonists of such a hybrid cultural environment experience the cultural hybridity of Rashid and Iman Mujahed Mujahed, and how providing those identities highlights the difficulties of the identification leading in the world.

The experiences of Rashid and Iman in *Out of It* describe that in a certain sense, the third space is a site of empowerment and alienation. Both the frustrations of this hybrid space and Rashid's disillusionment with the Western perception of his identity are well captured by his disillusionment with his own hybrid identity. He rues how his existence is condoned and misconstrued, asking again, "That question again; a box requiring a simple tick when he really needed to write an essay. 'Gaza?' Rashid raised his eyebrows at the anticipated incomprehensibility of his answer" (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 117). This confirms with Bhabha's idea of the third space disrupting clearly marked categorizations of identity, which requires

fluid full of particulars accounts (Bhabha, 1994, p. 83). Rashid's experience echoes Bhabha's qualification of hybrid identity as arising in discriminable 'in-between' spaces which problematize the ideologically univocal notions of nationality and cultural belonging (Bhabha, 1994, p.89).

Additionally, by their discomfort with Western individualism, Iman's inability to reconcile competing social expectations in this place, the third space functions as an area of contention. "London was quiet to Iman... People behaved in ways that seemed unconnected to others... There was an enviable ability to relinquish involvement in the bigger picture" (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 159). This could also symbolize the challenges of cultural hybridity as Bhabha argues that enabling the third space will often expose people to conflicting cultural paradigms and the sensitivity to having to constantly adapt (Bhabha, 1994, p.56).

Out of It, then employs Bhabha's third space as Rashid and Iman's experiences convey the immediacy of instantiating identities not entirely self-defined but continually influenced, socio political family and cultural. The third space of this theoretical framework of identity, as an evolving and multidimensional construct in diasporic narratives, as the in-between, is thus a space of constraint and possibility (Bhabha, 1994, p. 206).

4. Discussion

4.1. Hybridity and Cultural Identity

In such an interdependent world of today, hybridity has become a typical cultural studies notion, which permits to reproduce the mixing of different cultural impacts and generation of new undefined identities. In a globalized world, migration and advanced technology continue to introduce individuals and communities to, and to integrate, elements from many cultures, resulting in the construction of increasingly hybrid cultural identities at the local level.

In a third space, Homi Bhabha (1994) a prominent theorist in postcolonial studies was one of those who helped theorize hybridity as the product of cultural mixing and synthesis, and his thesis involves new meanings and identities forming from cultural interactions (p.56). Instead of being considered a simple amalgamation of two cultures, this third space is transitional, a place where cultural boundaries can be re-politicized.

Bhabha (1994) claims that hybridity subverts preset cultural narratives and allows marginalized voices a space in which to challenge dominant power structures and to foster groups of cultural identities (p.112). From this perspective identity is redefined as very fluid, continually formed in the context of intercultural interactions rather than as something fixed within traditional cultural and national boundaries.

Cultural identity is for Stuart Hall not an inherent or static essence but 'a process of becoming' in which social, historical and political constructions figure prominently (Hall, 1990, p. 223). Interactions with other cultures are an ongoing identity formation process that Hall sees as an evolving process. It is particularly applicable to case of diasporic communities where individuals continue to have their linkages with their cultural heritage and are

adjusting to the culture of their current location. This hybrid identity enables individuals to perceive parts of their traditional culture, while replacing mostly new cultural practice which corresponds to current circumstances that facilitate a dynamic approach to the self in a multicultural context (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

The phenomenon of hybridity has accelerated at a worldwide historic pace due to globalization and it made possible the exchange and integration of cultural practices cross borders. Canclini (1995) argues that globalization encourages hybridity by having local cultures adapt global influences to stay relevant in an increasingly modernizing world, the expression of which are analyzed by Néstor García Canclini in *Hybrid Cultures* (p.43). The capacity of hybridity to allow local cultures to resist the homogenizing pressures of globalization by selectively incorporating foreign elements while preserving their distinctiveness is what Canclini argues hybridity can do (Canclini, 1995, p. 46). This perspective adds a bottom-up view of how hybridity functions as a means through which marginalized cultures can make statements of identity, in the context of the global flows of culture and capital, and thus represents a countervailing mode of cultural resilience.

Hybridity also shows itself, as culture is expressed in music, fashion, and language in which traditional and modern influence combine to result in new forms. Such hybrid languages as Spanglish or Hinglish, blending English with local languages, are nowadays documented as resulting by linguistic and cultural adaptation (Kachru, 1996, p. 311).

Similarly, pop culture phenomena, such as K-pop, reflect a hybrid form of cultural production that combines elements of Western and Korean music, appealing to global audiences while preserving local cultural characteristics (Jin, 2016, p. 125). These examples illustrate how hybridity is not only a reflection of cultural adaptation but also a driver of cultural innovation, producing identities that are both global and local.

The critiques of hybridity exist, though. Some scholars contend that hybridity can mask power differential in intercultural transaction. For example, Anjali Prabhu (2007), cautions against the use of the hybridity discourse for it largely neglects those underlying inequalities found in cultural mobility where dominant cultures push through their values and practices on weaker ones (p. 21). It debates whether hybridity can provide seriously a platform for voiceless groups or if its offerings will undermine the cultural value of these groups under the authority of global forces. Like this, Edward Said's conception of Orientalism is to point out a great risk of hybrid cultural: Westerners perceptions tend to commodify Eastern culture, making it so Eastern culture becomes part of the same stereotype as it would be otherwise (Said, 1978, p. 5).

On the other hand, hybridity may have consequences of cultural dislocation, when there is a foreignness on a feeling of alienation for being either along with one's traditional culture traditions or the strong culture of the dominant culture. This phenomenon, coined as "cultural schizophrenia" by sociologists, was a testament to the complications for people who are hybridized and live in a reality of conflicting culture values (Eriksen, 2007, p.98). Yet, as these challenges show proponents of hybridity claim that hybridity encourages inclusivity and flexibility, and so is a term that embraces diversity rather than unite.

To conclude, hybridity offers a powerful paradigm within which to think the multiscale complexities of cultural identity in a world made global. Bhabha, Hall, Canclini, and other writings show that hybridity reshapes cultural identity by enabling the exchange and the adaptation of the cultural identity flow, which leads both in resistance and innovation. Yet, hybridity is limited in as respects to power dynamics and cultural authenticity are concerned. With continued societal diversification, hybridity will continue to serve as a central component of discussions of identity and other such issues, as a way to make a more encompassing sense of culture in a setting where separate parts interconnect.

4.2. Hybridity and Cultural Identity in Selma Dabbagh's *Out of It*

Third space is where identities are hybrid because these are the people who have combined their cultural heritage with their own life experience. This involvement is a part of the process where Iman has become committed to activism as she sees her involvements; “a discovery of a legacy that she deserved... a cry for recognition” (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 178). This shows that Iman is a woman who sits between personal conviction and cultural home extraction, as Bhabha's case of an example of a hybrid identification formation (Bhabha, 1994, p. 56). Accordingly, Papastergiadis (2000) argues that hybrid identities are “constructed through a relational process”, in which individuals are woven through various cultural narratives that link them to a number of cultural narratives (p. 14), and that is what Iman had in her sense of self. Rashid and Iman are largely trapped inside Gaza, but they are also children of Palestine's “Outside Leadership.” The novel's action takes Rashid and Iman to England, and both have relationships with Brits. The siblings are easy for a British public to relate to because neither is particularly religious. And, while Iman is passionate about her country, she doesn't have a formulaic political vision. Both sister and brother are feeling their way through the landscape, trying somehow to find their role and their happiness.

In the diaspora, Rashid is testament to the impossible of belonging to the third space, a space in which cultural identities are simplistically limited to mere labels. Frustratingly, he says; “That question again; a box requiring a simple tick when he really needed to write an essay. ‘Gaza?’ Rashid raised his eyebrows at the anticipated incomprehensibility of his answer” (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 117). As Bhabha (1994) explains, the third space exposes the artificiality of fixed identity, which is neither here nor there, and individuals resist to an absolute definite definition of self. Rashid's experience would fit Hall's (1990) position that diaspora complicates identity, as a matter of becoming as well as being (Hall, 1990, p. 225).

Iman's observations about London capture the tension between her communal Palestinian background and Western individualism: “London was quiet to Iman... People behaved in ways that seemed unconnected to others... There was an enviable ability to relinquish involvement in the bigger picture” (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 159). This contrast exemplifies the very limitations of the third space as a cultural articulation of distance, for Iman attempts to balance between Western norms and her own communal values. As Iman challenges the negotiation of conflicting cultural expectations, Rutherford (1990) also proposes that hybrid identities in the third space are sites of ongoing difference and contestation (p. 211).

Rashid's disillusionment in the West highlights how the third space can foster a sense of alienation, as he reflects on becoming, "just another story of a detention, a deportation, a rendition: another story of injustice and illegality to be deleted as junk" (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 202). Bhabha (1994) argues that the third space is often alienating hybrid identities, making them invisible in the politics of difference (p. 83). Rashid's experience reflects Nayar (2010) diasporic melancholia, where people in the diaspora feel disconnected and displaced (p. 102).

Rashid's family further complicates his identity formation, and his relationship with them. Despite eagerly awaiting Iman's return, he feels unfulfilled: "Rashid had waited for Iman's return..., expecting it to lift him out of the place where he had fallen, but her flushed excitement...had left him exactly where he had been" (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 218). It is within this third space which Bhabha (1994) theorizes that simultaneity of presence and absence characterize hybrid identity (p.89). Like Brah (1996), Rashid's identity remains tied to his familial and cultural links in the diaspora space, similarly, Brah (1996) confines the "diaspora space" as a space where people are affected by familial expectations, drawing, in this instance, too, the lines between family and identity (p. 245).

Iman's desire for her homeland cultural legitimacy within the Palestinian community stems from a desire to trace her hybridity through Palestinian art and culture. Dabbagh (2011) describes her activism as having "a discovery of a legacy that she deserved" (p. 25). According to Bhabha (1994) the third space enables people to create 'a hybrid cultural identity' that is amalgamation of individual and collective parts (p. 102). Werbner (1997) agrees with this view, arguing that hybrid identities typically constitute; "dual commitment to individual agency and collective heritage" (p.140).

Iman points to the challenges in living multiple identities in the third space. She notes her lack of comfort in certain Western social settings: "She was sure of it, of her inexperience and ineptitude in that way, in the sexual way; women like Suzi could sniff these things out" (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 156).". As Mcleod (2000) notes, the third space often reveals the asymmetrical power dynamics that dictate cultural expectations (p. 75). So, complicates identity formed among cultural expectations that are constantly in competition with each other. The discomfort Iman is experiencing mirrors the idea of a third space where culture interacts, and therefore challenges the act of self-perception. Iman illustrates the idea of alienation while she declares:

When he had asked her why she had come back, as she could have stayed longer in London if she had wanted to, she had replied, 'But I don't exist there,' laughing as though that was incredibly obvious. (Dabbagh, p.218).

The words of this quote give a hint of the way that she feels alienated as an Asian in London where she feels her identity isn't accepted. This emphasizes her status between two cultural worlds, neither her 'home' culture, nor British society. This third space becomes a space of hybridity negotiating identity, neither fully formalized from one cultural context or the other.

Rashid's fixation on his passport figures his desire for freedom from cultural expectations and his passport is "a religious text, a path to salvation" (Dabbagh, 2011, p. 245). His hope for such an identity beyond the constraints of the inherited, this imagery reads as expressing the kind of "new cultural possibilities" for self-definition, which the third space introduces to

us (Bhabha, 1994, p. 204). Thus, Clifford (1994) makes a similar argument that the third space is a space of potential transformation where people refigure cultural boundaries to achieve autonomy (p. 56).

In his perception of London as a land of freedom, Rashid wanted to escape the seclusion and regulations of Gaza to go into the West. His first night in London exemplifies the Third Space's allure: "On that first night, the street had been rich with promises for his future in London...He would be known. He would be loved. He would be free" (Dabbagh, p. 115). This is Rashid's vision of freedom: London can be an identity on its own, a place where he can flee Gaza's restraints.

Yet, the problem is that as he assimilates, Rashid finds himself in conflict with his own, where moments of self-doubt shine through, such as when he wonders whether or not he has let "the street Arab inside him slip out again" (Dabbagh, p. 115). His self-consciousness demonstrates that he has struggled with bringing together his Palestinian identity with the expectations of London. Through Bhabha's Third Space, Rashid is able to negotiate this multiplicity to be exposed to cultural hybridity neither liberating nor confining. According to Bhabha, cultural identity emerges "cultural identity...emerges in the space in-between", where people engage in the impossible, engaging the pressures of recognizing their own cultural identity and negotiating the cultural meanings of their translating selves (Bhabha, p. 37).

Rashid was having a hard time managing his relationship with Lisa who lives by Western values, and what is opposite with what is inside Rashid and in Rashid's Palestinian background. He imagines how difficult it would be to introduce Lisa into his homeland, reflecting: "Rishid sang to himself, trying to imagine Lisa in Sindibad's, but the image was confused...He would have to cover her up completely to get her into Sindibad's" (Dabbagh, p. 51). This conflict is a perfect representation of Rashid's cultural duality as it puts into practice Bhabha's theory of the Third Space being a sole of unequal friction, where conflicting cultural values exist.

The same goes for Iman's journey after she lived abroad and has re-integrated into Gaza. It is her hybridity spoken in her internal dialogue. Iman maintains her Palestinian identity in her liminal position, and incorporates her diasporic perspectives. This corresponds to Bhabha's idea that in the Third Space identity is not an adherence to a single cultural standard, but a composite of many (Bhabha, p. 183).

Rashid's attempts to see London through Lisa's eyes similarly demonstrate the fluidity of cultural identity within the Third Space: "Lisa did not understand what he saw in these places...With a little time he had learnt to view the street and ultimately the rest of London in the same way that she did" (Dabbagh, p. 115). This adaptability is Bhabha's theory of hybridity consisting in cultural identity which is not static but evolves with one's encounters with others in a shared liminal space.

Gaza and London represent the two cultural fronts that Rashid and Iman maneuver between in *Out of It*, a geographical contrast to what they are. It also imposes its own limitations on Rashid, who's first experience of London is an initial enchantment. Bhabha's theory of the

Third Space as a site where cultural identities are always 'in between' and always being reworked still informs this oscillation between Gaza and London.

Rashid's private space in his room in Gaza further encapsulates his need for a sanctuary from external pressures: "The sky was torn through and chemicals streaked through the air, he would go to this collection after coming down from the roof. He would lock himself into his darkened room " (Dabbagh, p. 30). Rashid's retreat is in this Third Space, and it is a realm where he is able to freely explore in this Third Space his conflicts with his cultural identity by providing him with a private realm of control and thus an internalized realm for self-definition that, according to Bhabha, is the Third Space (Bhabha, p. 39).

And so, as part of Imans' experiences in Gaza we see her ability to find moments of calm in the midst of chaos. That is Third Space as their refuge from this brutal environment. The Third Space's role in reconciling internal conflict gives us an example of this peace found within destruction and this is a powerful demonstration of Bhabha's insight of cultural hybridity as a means of self-discovery (Bhabha, p.183).

Rashid's London was basically his identity crisis. At first he was attracted by the freedoms in London but soon became unsure of London. The same place that had invited freedom was now as tight as anywhere: "He felt he had lost this special Palestinian capability when he was outside in London, but within hours of being back, it had come back too, this ability to know that something had happened, was going to happen, was in the offing." (Dabbagh ,p.235). This crisis hearkens back to Bhabha's point that identity in the Third Space is always unstable, and constantly renegotiated through continuous exposure to other cultures (Bhabha, p. 256).

Iman's story is of the empowerment which gets beyond Gaza's traditional gender roles, of a phenomenon that compels Iman to shed meaning. She was sure her part was bigger than marriage and motherhood. It is also this realization that enacts the Third Space as it is described by Bhabha as a work of self-actualization in which individuals create new meanings for the same identity through the influence of other races and reflections of ourselves (p. 36).

Throughout *Out of It*, this part shows the life experiences of Rashid and Iman which clearly point to Homi Bhabha's "third space," and how cultural hybridity, identity negotiation, and the fluidity of belonging are present in their journeys. Take Rashid's fluctuating life in Gaza and London where the Palestinian and the Western side are so contrary, that the man bows between them for freedom in one place, and feels rooted on the other place. Iman is especially identified as a kind of activist whose personal conviction and communal expectations are negotiated on account of being a hybrid identity which is a blend of agency and heritage. From Bhabha's interpretive vantage point, both characters travel a path of a growing, fluid sense of self that integrates cultural contrasts and defines a liminal meaning in a joined space. This third space thus becomes a space of empowerment, alienation and transformation in which identity is remade again and again in terms of their complex cultural realities.

5. Conclusion

Through the characters of Rashid and Iman, Selma Dabbagh explores the tensions around cultural, social and political identities with a view to places where these identities converge, where the third space lies, and the complexities of third space experienced by hybrid identities. Rashid and Iman's stories illustrate that identity within the third space is not even, and cannot be defined, fixed, or easily pinning. Yet it is a dynamic process constrained by the interplay of Palestinian heritage, diasporic needs and the romance and restrictions of Western culture. Both Rashid's disillusionment with Western Iman's disillusionment with the activism, 'hybrid identities' deal with how hybrid identities inherently empower and alienate. Therefore, the third space becomes an arena of change where the fluidity and ability of identity in a globalized world characterizes cultural border which is blurred. By following the paths of these characters, Dabbagh portrays identity not as some part of a oneness, but as something endlessly redefined by social, political, familial, and self-defined imperatives. This is an illuminating portrayal of the broad theme of hybridity as a continued negotiation of belonging, and of the third space as a place of constraint and potential for self-actualization.

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