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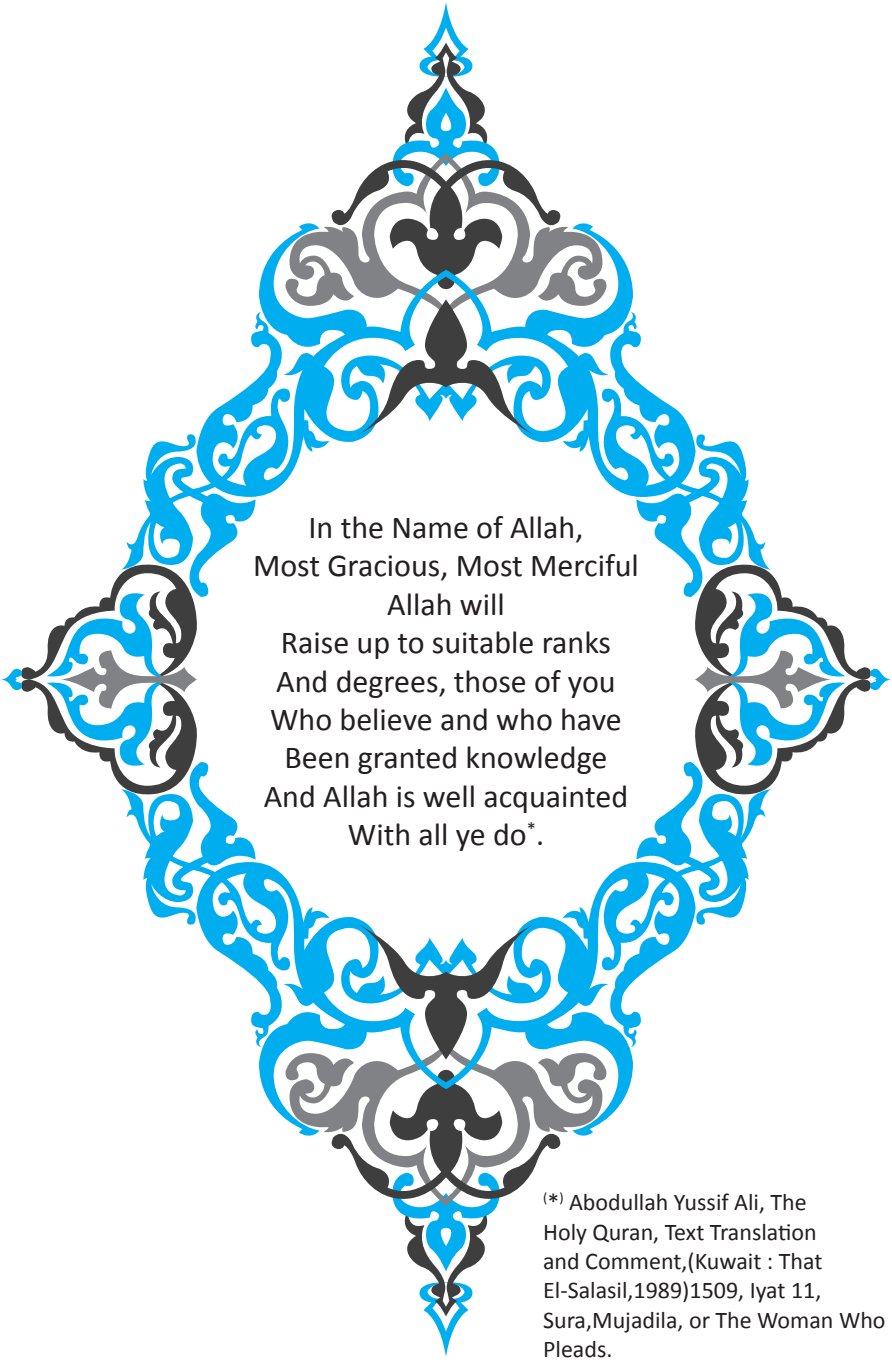

In the Name of Allah,
Most Gracious, Most Merciful
Allah will
Raise up to suitable ranks
And degrees, those of you
Who believe and who have
Been granted knowledge
And Allah is well acquainted
With all ye do*.

(*) Abodullah Yussif Ali, The Holy Quran, Text Translation and Comment,(Kuwait : That El-Salasil,1989)1509, Iyat 11, Sura,Mujadila, or The Woman Who Pleads.

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In the Name Of Allah
Most Compassionate, Most Merciful

... Edition word ...

Thanks be to the Creator of the Universe and be equal to the brilliance of His face and the grandeur of His sceptre, it is to bear witness to that there is no god but Him, one and only one without a partner, He has the universe, all thanks be to Him, it is He who can do everything. It is to bear witness to that our master and prophet is but His creature and His messenger as His chosen one and lover (Peace be upon him and his immaculate and benevolent posterity and peace be upon His evidence on His earth and in His heaven , Imam Al-Mahdi the ever waited, May Allah expedite his honest resurrection).

Now ...

No sooner does Al-`Ameed heave into effulgence than it reaches the pinnacle as a scientific hallmark and a research monolithic a number of researchers and scholars embraces, whose minds are avid for fathoming what scientific and epistemic values the journal holds in various humanist fields. Today it is to lay the hands of the prescient readers upon a scientific avalanche of multiplex academic scientific studies in Islamic sciences, Arabic language, sociology, history, psychology and so forth.

As previously done, the Al-`Ameed incharges allocate an occasional edition in the publication; the current one gives salience to the figure of the waited Imam Al-Mahdi (May Allah expedite his resurrection)

and holds certain academic studies on such infallible imam; major reasons for his great resurrection, the philosophy of his bevy and adherents in waiting for him.

In the edition are there much gripping and stimulating issues worth pondering and contemplating; such is not of oddity for the scientific Al-`Ameed orbit and its readership.

Both the consultation and editorial board in the paramount Al-`Ameed journal take the opportunity to invite colleagues and researchers in the various humanist majors to publish their studies and products in the Al-`Ameed journal that pledges a buttress to the creative and earnest researcher inspiring to promulgate the fruition of his mind and efforts.

Imam Al.Mahdi
(May Allah expedite his resurrection)
and the Philosophy
of Waiting

The Presence of the Absence: Displacement of Home and Identity in Selected Literary Texts by Palestinian-American Woman Writers

تماثل وغياب:
النزوح عن الموطن والهوية في أعمال أدبية مختارة للكاتبتين الامريكيتين الفلسطينيتين

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خضع البحث لبرنامج الاستلال العلمي
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Abstract

The present research studies the problem of displacement of home and identity in selected literary texts—"Hamadi", and Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood by the Palestinian-American woman writers, Naomi Shihab Nye and IbtisamBarakatrespectively.Approximately quarter-million Americans of Palestinian descent began coming to the USA in the latter part of the 19th century. Refugees suffer from loss of both the self and home. What is lost in exile is not just a physical place, but it is a displacement of selfhood and one's history.

However, the eradication of homeland and identity urges Palestinian writers to look for their geographical homeland of Palestine and for a restoration of identity. Arab American writers diagnose the absence, invisibility, and /or the exclusion of their history within the American culture embracing the Arab-American identity, after trying in vain to assimilate to the American culture as a form of homecoming.

Through their artworks, Naomi Shihab Nye and IbtisamBarakat seek not only the need for homecoming and identity retrieval, but also seek to forge an understanding of home to contain all facets of their identities as Palestinians, as Americans and as women. Israel occupation influences them and makes them sensitive to all issues of injustice. Nye and Barakat depict new visions of their Palestinian homeland and identity and try to counter exile to claim a whole self.Both writer try to wipe out the various kinds of discriminations believing in the power of poetry to reform society and present solutions to solve its problems.

They explore their relationship to the Middle East and construct a new sense of home with a Palestinian identity. Writing helps them to recreate home and restore their identity by giving voice to the silencing of Palestinians. Being of mixed heritage encourages both writers to oppose violence calling for peace, compromise and acceptance even of the enemy. They believe that the task of the writer

if to find a comprehensive language between the warring parties, and that to come back home is to recover the genetic self. They are trying to achieve a holistic oneness through their writings by including all minoritiesand the warring sects. They believe that demonstrations and revolutions are unprofitable. They hail foe cohabitation and friendship between the conflicting parties. What Nye and Barakat try to say is that true happiness is not dependent on a geographical space but it is an intellectual matter; Jerusalem may be lost, on the geographical level, but it may dwell intellectually in the mind and in literature where nobody can extract it.

ملخص البحث

يدرس هذا البحث مشكلة النزوح من الوطن وفقدان الهوية في النصوص الأدبية المختارة «حمادي»، وتذوق السماء، طفولة فلسطينية بقلم الكاتبتين الفلسطينيتين – الأمريكيين، نعومي شهاب ناي وابتسام بركات على التوالي. إن ما يقارب ربع مليون أمريكي من أصل فلسطيني بدؤوا بالقدوم إلى الولايات المتحدة الأمريكية في الجزء الأخير من القرن العشرين. وقدعانى اللاجئون من فقدان الذات والوطن إذإن الذي فقد في المنفى ليس مجرد المكان المادي وإنما هو ضياع الذات والتاريخ ايضا. ومع ذلك، فإن القضاء على الوطن والهوية يحث الكتاب الفلسطينيين على البحث عن الوطن الجغرافي لفلسطين واستعادة الهوية. قام الكتاب العرب الأميركيون بتشخيص غياب و / أو استبعاد تاريخهم في الثقافة الأمريكية بعد تبني الهوية العربية الأمريكية، محاولين عبثا استيعاب الثقافة الأميركية شكلا من أشكال العودة للوطن.

من خلال أعمالهما الادبية، نعومي شهاب ناي وابتسام بركات لم يسعيا إلى ذلك للحاجة إلى العودة للوطن واسترجاع الهوية فحسب، ولكن سعيا للتوصل إلى فهم جديد لمفهوم الوطن ليشمل كل جوانب هويتهما كامرأتين فلسطينيتين أميركيتين أيضاً. ان الاحتلال الإسرائيلي اثر على الكاتبتين وجعلهما حساستين لجميع قضايا الظلم في العالم إذ ان ناي وبركات صورتا رؤى جديدة عن وطنهما وهويتهما الفلسطينية محاولتين مواجهة المنفى للمطالبة بذات متكاملة. وحاولت

كلتا الكاتبتين القضاء على أنواع مختلفة من التمييز لاعتقادهما بقدرة الشعر خصوصا والادب عموما على إصلاح المجتمع وإيجاد الحلول المناسبة لحل مشاكله.

حاولت الكاتبتان المغتربتان إعادة استكشاف علاقتهما مع الشرق الأوسط وبناء إحساس جديد بالوطن والهوية الفلسطينية. وقد ساعدت الكتابة كلتا الكاتبتين على استعادة هويتهما بإعطاء صوت للفلسطينيين الذين تم إسكاتهم. ان الأرث المختلط شجع الكاتبتين على نبذ العنف والدعوة إلى السلام والقبول والتسوية مع العدو. تؤمن الكاتبتان بأن مهمة الكاتب هي إيجاد لغة شاملة بين الأطراف المتحاربة، وأن العودة الى الوطن تكمن في إمكانية استرجاع الذات.

وحاولت الكاتبتان التوصل إلى تحقيق توحيد شامل من طريقة كتابتهما وذلك بشمول جميع الأقليات والطوائف المتحاربة معتقدتين أن المظاهرات والثورات هي وسيلة باتت فاشلة ولا جدوى منها و بدلاً عن ذلك لا بد من التعايش وبناء روابط الصداقة بين الأطراف المتنازعة. يعتقد ناي وبركات أن السعادة الحقيقية ليست متوقفة على مساحة جغرافية معينة وإنما هي مسألة فكرية ؛ قد تضيع القدس، على المستوى الجغرافي، ولكنها ستبقى عالقة فكرياً في الأدب وفي عقل القراء إذ لا يستطيع أحد استئصالها من مخيلتهم.

The present research studies the problem of displacement of home and identity in selected literary texts-"Hamadi," and Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood by the Palestinian-American woman writers, Naomi Shihab Nye and Ibtisam Barakat respectively.

Approximately quarter-million Americans of Palestinian descent began coming to the United States in the latter part of the 19th century.(1) The "undocumented" people or refugees suffer from loss of the self and home.(2) Edward Said writes, "Exile is … the unhealable rift between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home….what is true of all exile is not that home and love of home are lost, but that loss is inherent in the very existence of both."(3) Exile is not just expulsion from the geographical location that constitute "home," but it also means expulsion from one's history and individualism.(4) What is lost in exile is not just a physical place, but it is a displacement of selfhood itself. Due to that "terminal loss,"(5) there is a necessity to construct both a new home and a new sense of identity.

Denied permission to go home, Palestinians also denied the permission to narrate their history; therefore, it makes possible the erasure or absence of the Arab history in the consciousness of the west and justifies the ongoing oppression against the Arabs. For instance, the Israeli destruction of Palestinian civilian infrastructure in the West Bank in March-April 2002 is justified as part of the global "war on terror."(6)

Living in the age of anxiety and estrangement, the artists portray the modern age as if it were orphaned and alienated. George Steiner proposes that 20th century western literature is "extraterritorial";(7) a literature by and about exiles suggesting that to create art in a civilization of homelessness, the artists are supposed to be homeless and contemplate what is cross-cultural and transnational through language.(8) In other words, eradication of homeland and identity urges Palestinian writers to look for their geographical homeland of Palestine and a restoration of identity. As what Said

states, “All of us speak of awdah, ‘return,’ but do we mean that literally, or do we mean ‘we must restore ourselves to ourselves?’”[9]

Arab American writers experience a deep sense of homelessness and marginalization. They diagnose the absence, invisibility, and/or exclusion of their history within American culture embracing the Arab-American identity, after trying in vain to assimilate to the American culture, as a form of homecoming.[10] Jutta Ittner writes, “Home is not a place because it extends from the innermost self throughout the world… .”[11] The Palestinian-American writers, Naomi Shihab Nye and Ibtisam Barakat, who are imbued with exile, engage in literal and metaphorical journeys to familial, historical, cultural, and personal sites of origin.[12] They are seeking not just a particular geographical space but also seeking to recreate home and identity in writing.[13] Homemaking and identity retrieval become an act of their aesthetic creation.

Through their prose and poetry, Palestinian-American writers Naomi Shihab Nye and Ibtisam Barakat not only trace the need for homecoming and identity retrieval, but also seek to forge an understanding of home to contain all facets of their identities: as Palestinians, as Americans, and as women.[14] Exiled from their Palestinian homeland, they are marginalized within the U.S. culture. By the power of imagination, Nye and Barakat depict their Palestinian history as well as new visions of home and identity.[15]

The Palestinian-American writer, Naomi Shihab Nye tries to find a genetic home within. She was born in the United States to a Palestinian father and an American mother, and was firmly rooted in a bicultural and ecumenical identity. Her father became a refugee in 1948 and married her hard-working American mother.[16] The miscellaneous structure of the author’s family suggests Nye’s desire to see different countries cross boundaries to believe in mixtures.[17] Her prose and poetry suggest the multiplicity of her different heritages–Palestinian and American, Christian and Muslim.[18] On her first visit to Palestine, the teenaged Nye never felt at home, telling her parents to go back to the US. Yet, by the time of her return to the US as an adult, she came to realize the richness of her experience in Palestine and constructed a new sense of home:”Home had

grown different forever. Home had doubled. … [I]t seemed impossible to forget the place we had just left."[19] Nye says, "[T]o be in your genetic home… you will feel … the level of blood… level of the seen and unseen. Maybe this is heritage, that deep well that gives us more than we deserve."[20]

Nye inspires the substance of her short story "Hamadi" from her personal biography. She speaks out against injustice and dispossession and tries to counter the alienation of exile to claim a "whole self,"[21] as what she suggests in "Hamadi," which talks about a Palestinian family consisting of a Palestinian father, an American mother, and the daughter Susan whose family is forced to immigrate to the US after the Zionists have stolen their home.

Hamadi represents the presence of the absent the Arab homeland and identity: "In fact, I already know. It is there and it is not there."[22] He is an archetype character that stands for all the true Arab. Susan, a young girl, feels interested in Hamadi, as she becomes a freshman in a high school, for his inner true beauty. She enjoys his wisdom. He implicitly answers her "thousand questions around. Why this way? Why not another way? Who said so and why can't I say something else?" ("Hamadi," 242).

In spite of his rough outside appearance, Hamadi is full of beauty and wisdom from the inside. Susan is able to catch sight of that hidden true beauty inside Hamadi's character, which differs from the false artificial beauty of the brittle women, at the school of the counselor's office, who hold a yardstick both sides tightly. These women represent domination, cruelty, and fragility. Like the yardstick, they are brittle, uncouth, shallow-minded, and easily breakable, wasting their time in gabbing about "fingernail polish and television," ("Hamadi," 242).

while Hamadi devotes his time for helping the others: "He did not like to sit down, but he wanted everyone else to sit down ("Hamadi," 244).

While Susan's father travels back to Jerusalem once every year to see his family, Hamadi does not take a trip back to Lebanon, for he does visit his relatives through his imagination and through Gibran's poetry: "'Remembrance is a form of meeting,' my brother Gibran

says, and I do believe I meet with my cousins every day" ("Hamadi," 245). His small, modest, Spartan room represents Gaza—the lost homeland: "His Spartan room. 'A white handkerchief spread across a tabletop, my two extra shoes lined by the wall,' this spells 'home' to me, and this says 'mi casa.' What more do I need?' " ("Hamadi," 244).

For Susan, Hamadi is an escape from exile she has felt as her family have emigrated to the US far away from their ancestors' country— the occupied Jerusalem. For this young girl, Hamadi represents regeneration, life after death, youth, vitality, wisdom, true beauty, and hope. She enjoys his company and advice, even though she is a young girl while he is an old man. She associates him with the classical mythical figure Sphinx, Giza and with Gaza in Jerusalem, as in the quote below:

> *That's when she daydreamed about Saleh Hamadi, who had nothing to do with any of it. Maybe she thought of him as escape, the way she used to think about the Sphinx at Giza when she was younger. She would picture the golden Sphinx sitting quietly in the desert with sand blowing around its face, never changing its expression. She would think of its wry, slightly crooked mouth and how her grandmother looked a little like that as she waited for her bread to bake in the old village north of Jerusalem.*
>
> ("Hamadi," 242)

The Egyptian Sphinx is a huge statue with the head of a man and the body of a lion adjacent to theGreat Pyramids of Gizaon the west bank of theNile River.[23] Through the Sphinx image, Nye brings the Egyptian and Palestinian cultures together to confirm the unity and universality of the Arab cultures, which may seem absent in the US where people have different culture and language. The occupied Jerusalem exists intellectually and emotionally inside the character's mind and is reflected on his behavior, feelings, and thoughts.

The Sphinx asked ariddleto the travelers to allow them passage. Those who cannot answer theriddlesuffer a mortal a fate.[24] Similarly, Hamadi answers Susan's thousand questions about her ancestral homeland; unlike her father who avoids talking about his previous life in Palestine. When the riddle is answered, the Sphinx throws

herself/himself from a high rock and died.[25] The death of Sphinx, in Nye's short story, means the end of the old worn ideas based on hatred and on the rejection of the differences of the others.

Henry Fischer relates the head's attachment to the lion's body, it is "a suggestion of shape-shifting, of metamorphosis, that is appropriate to the king who is, uniquely, the link between mankind and the gods, and stands constantly on the threshold of these two worlds."[26] Likewise, as the Sphinx, located in a transitional position connecting the world of the ancient gods with the Olympus deities, Hamadi is the interconnecting gateway towards integration, harmony, cohesion, and acceptance of the differences of others.

Susan's family lived in Jerusalem when she has been seven years old. Nevertheless, she is trying to preserve her ancestral heritage from absence, caused by immigration, alienation of exile, and forgetfulness, through the retrieval of her childhood memories in Gaza and through her demand to have her father talk about his life in Palestine before their migration to the US. "She didn't want him to forget anything" ("Hamadi," 244).

She associates Hamadi with her forlorn grandmother, regardless of the sex differences. " 'He's my surrogate grandmother,' she said. 'He says interesting things. He makes me think. Remember when I was little and he called me The Thinker? We have a connection.' She added" ("Hamadi," 244), and:

> *[S]he thought of her far-away grandmother and said, "Let's go see Saleh Hamadi. Wouldn't he like some of that cheese pie Mom made?" And they would wrap a slice of pie and drive downtown. Somehow, he felt like a good substitute for a grandmother, even though he was a man.*
>
> ("Hamadi," 244)

Like Ibtisam in Tasting the Sky, Hamadi finds a shelter in the Arabic language. Although he rarely speaks Arabic, like other refugees in the US, he protects his native language and heritage from oblivion by reading the poetry of Kahlil Gibran. "Saleh always says he stayed with Gibran when he first got off the boat. 'I'll bet that popular guy Gibran has had a lot of roommates he doesn't even know about' "

("Hamadi," 245). He never gets married. "I married books," he said. "I married the wide horizon" ("Hamadi," 245).

Kahlil Gibran is Susan's favorite writer, who helps her to retrieve her heritage. Although Hamadi has never met Khalil Gibran in reality, he meets him intellectually whenever he reads poetry. Susan thinks that art is "[j]ust a different kind of true" ("Hamadi," 245).

Nationalism is an assertion of belonging to a home, a heritage, a language, culture, and an identity.[27] Arab nationalism brings Hamadi and the poet together, as if they were brothers, as it gathers Susan's family with Hamadi in Texas. Hamadi speaks patiently:

> *Yes, I met brother Gibran. And I meet him in my heart every day. When I was a young man—shocked by all the visions of the new world—the tall buildings—the wild traffic—the young people without shame—the proud mailboxes in their blue uniforms—I met him. And he has stayed with me every day of my life. ... He turned dramatically. "Make no such distinctions, my friend. Or your life will be a pod with only dried-up beans inside. Believe anything can happen.*
>
> ("Hamadi," 245)

The word "distinctions," here, has multiple connotations. It implies various kinds of discriminations whether national or religious, sexual or racist. Nye is trying to wipe out the various kinds of discriminations. She believes in the power of poetry to reform the society and solve its problems. "Poetry humanizes us in a way that news, or even religion, has a harder time doing. A great Arab scholar, Dr. Salma Jayyusi, said, 'If we read one another, we won't kill one another.'"[28]

Nye is trying to achieve a holistic oneness through her writings by including all minorities, ethnic groups, and the warring sects. She bridges the abyss through language and believes in the possibility of putting an end to all types of discriminations. In her article, "Letter from Naomi Shihab Nye, ArabAmerican Poet: To Any Would-Be Terrorists" Nye says:

> *Have you noticed how many roads there are? Sure you have. You must check out maps and highways and small alternate routes just like anyone else. There is no way everyone on earth could travel*

on the same road, or believe in exactly the same religion. It would be too crowded; it would be dumb. I don't believe you want us all to be Muslims.[29]

On Hamadi's rickety desk lays a row of different love stamps issued by the post office. " 'You must write a lot of letters,' Susan said. 'No, no, I'm just focusing on that word,' Hamadi said. 'I particularly like the globe in the shape of a heart,' he added" ("Hamadi," 245).

The row of different love stamps on Hamadi's rickety desk indicates his universal love to all humanity regardless of differences. Unlike Susan's dull uncles who waste their time watching TV, Hamadi encourages Susan to collect donations to be sent to the hospital of children in Bethlehem. Her father wonders, "Why do you like Hamadi so much all of a sudden? You could show half as much interest in your own uncles"("Hamadi," 248).

Susan is the only freshman who is assigned to do proofreading, because she spends most of her time reading The Prophet by Gibran with her friend Tracy whom she has met at a literary magazine. She favors Gibran's poetry to American language and history. True friendship brings the Christian and Muslim girls together. Tracy is interested in Gibran's poetry and sympathizes with Hamadi even though she is not Arab. "You know that place where Gibran says, 'Hate is a dead thing. Who of you would be a tomb?'" ("Hamadi," 247).

Nye says that many people, Jews and Christians, who are equally troubled by the inequity, have strong, caring feelings for Arabs and Palestinians even when they do not have to. They speak out in public even when it is uncomfortable for them to do so, because they feel that is their responsibility. She requests Arabs to "think of them, please: All those people who have been standing up for Arabs when they didn't have to."[30]

Nye believes in "the power of the word and keep[s] using it, even when it seems no one large enough is listening. That is one of the best things about this country: the free power of free words."[31] She exalts the power of the word in most her artworks asserting that words can connect the world in a harmonious coherent way, just like Gibran's poetry, which brings Susan, Tracy, and Hamadi to-

gether despite of their religious, national, gender and age differences:

> *Remember, here in this book—wait and I'll find it—where Gibran says that loving teaches us the secrets of our hearts and that's the way we connect to all of Life's heart? You're not talking about liking or loving, you're talking about owning.*
>
> ("Hamadi," 247)

During the party, which is made to collect donations for the hospital of children, people make fun of Hamadi and laugh when his back is turned, because of his "outdated long overcoat, his clunky old men's shoes and elegant manners" ("Hamadi," 248). Nevertheless, Susan speaks proudly and "more loudly than usual. 'I'm honored to introduce you to one of my best friends, Mr. Hamadi' " ("Hamadi," 248).

During the party, Susan's father has been gazing off into the sky thinking about "all the refugees in camps in Palestine far from doorbells and shutters" ("Hamadi," 250). He flashbacks his childhood memory in Jerusalem as if it were inviting him to "Come over, come over" ("Hamadi," 250).

He is doomed to live in two different places at once.

The character of Tracy represents the possibility of a compromise to link the conflicting cultures. The little American girl is impressed by the poetry of Khalil Gibran. Tracy's acceptance of Khalil Gibran's poetry confirms her acceptance of the Arab culture. Susan's family, immigrants from Palestine, Hamadi, an immigrant from Lebanon, and other immigrants from other Arab countries—all live in a strange country, Texas, where people have different beliefs and heritage; yet, they are united by their Arab identity. They show their ability to befriend and coexist with others intimately, as in the case of Tracy and Susan. Hence, Nye expresses the need to connect with other people despite their differences.

What makes Susan loves Hamadi is his benevolent love to humanity. Around Christmas, she invites him to go caroling with her and some of her friends. Tracy likes Eddie who is going out with Debbie. They all go caroling together. When Tracy has some trouble,

Hamadi tries to comfort her, pressing her face against the old wool of his coat, and wails as she hears a song, and says something Susan would remember years later. Whenever Susan feels sad far away from her homeland, she keeps repeating Hamadi's words: "We go on. On and on. We don't stop where it hurts. We turn a corner. It is the reason why we are living. To turn a corner. Come, let's move" ("Hamadi," 250).

As Nye's mouthpiece, Hamadi suggests that in time of difficulties, the conflicting parties have to turn down the page of hatred and disagreement so that they can go on.

Another Palestinian-American writer is Ibtisam Barakat about whom Nye says, "Ibtisam Barakat is a luminous writer and thinker. She is a wondrous healer, too."(32) Ibtisam Barakat's life was turned upside down at the age of three when Israel occupied the West Bank and East Jerusalem following the 1967 war. "I will never know what my life would have been like without having grown up under Israeli occupation."(33) Israel occupation influences her it makes her sensitive to all issues of injustice that exist in the world.(34) Barakat states that at least 200,000 Palestinians fled their homes in the Six-Day War, and that her family was among them: "So I wanted to write this story [Tasting the Sky]for the children of that night, including the young girl I was, and for children everywhere, especially those denied a childhood."(35) After earning her bachelor's degree from Birzeit University in the West Bank, Barakat moved to New York in 1986. Later, she earned Masters in Journalism and Human Development and Family Studies, both from the University of Missouri-Columbia.(36)

Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood is a story on the Six-Day War that armed a conflict in June 1967 between Israel and the Arab states of Egypt, Jordan, and Syria. Within six days, Israel conquered the Sinai Peninsula, Gaza Strip, West Bank, and Golan Heights, which became collectively known as the Occupied Territories.(37) In 2000, the Jews had controlled the Western wall, also known as the Wailing Wall, in the Old City, the holiest site in Judaism. As a result, the Six-Day War was followed by what has come to be known as the War of Attrition.(38)

The core of the story is told from a child's viewpoint. Tasting the Sky: A PalestinianChildhood consists of three parts: Part I takes place in 1981. Part II begins on the first day of the Six-Day War and spans four years, ending in 1971. Part III goes back to 1981. On her way home from Birzeit to Ramallah, at the Israeli army checkpoint at Surda, where she has gone to check a mailbox for messages from her pen pals, Zionist soldiers have caught her. To remain calm, she thinks of her pen pals from across the globe. A Zionist soldier, with his eyes "hidden behind sunglasses, dark like midnight," harshly inquires the young girl "to where?"[39] He repeats the question while she keeps silent, for she does not expect the soldier to direct the question to a high school girl "like me is visible enough, exists enough for a soldier with a rifle, a pistol, a club, a helmet, and high boots to notice.... She stutters "Ramallah," and the solider astonishingly says ... 'Ramallah?' ...'Khalas. Ma feesh Ramallah. Kullha rahat'" (TS, 4).

The face of the Zionist soldier is without expression, and his sunglasses are like a fence that barricades the Zionists from the Palestinians. "I search for the soldier's eyes, but his sunglasses are walls that keep me from seeing. I search for anything in his face to tell me more than the words he's just said about Ramallah" (TS, 4). Several questions squall in the mind of the young girl, which she would like to know an answer for them: "What does he mean? Are the homes all bulldozed down? And the people? My father and my family, will I find them? Will they wait for me? Fear is a blizzard inside me. A thousand questions clamor in my mind" (TS, 4). She is too young to understand the language of hatred that dominates the world around her. It is destined for her to suppress her feeling since her childhood. "I want to open my mouth and let my feelings escape like birds, let them migrate forever" (TS, 5). Had she tried to express her true feelings, like other Palestinians, she would have been punished.

The solider orders the driver to transport the passengers to the Military Rule Center. It is a prison-court military compound on the way to Ramallah. The compound seems as a carcass of a monster. Barakat shows the inhumane maltreatment of the Palestinians on the hand of the Zionists who collect the passengers as if they were

unavailing orange peels piled up on the table. The color of their identity cards is orange. Among the passengers is a teenage boy who starts to squawk even before the soldier touches him:

> *The sound breaking the anxious silence is shocking. At first, the giggles are faint, then they grow so loud that soldiers from outside the yard hear and come to see. The boy's laughter is dry and trembling. Worried. I know what he feels. He wants to cry, but in spite of himself, in spite of the soldiers and the guns, all he can do is giggle.*
>
> (TS, 6)

The loud laughter of the young boy reflects his repressed feelings of horror, which he is unable to display. In Jerusalem, children do not enjoy natural innocent childhood; they are not allowed to laugh or express their thoughts unreservedly. The Military Rule Center is an image that represents the intellectual, emotional, and physical imprisonment, from which the Palestinians suffer after the inception of the Zionist state. The young boy undergoes hysterics that is embodied in his dry and trembling snigger, which reveals the inner rough chaos inside him. Consequently, the angry soldier punches the boy who continues to giggle until he receives a kick on his knee from the soldier's boot that makes him stop his zigzag laughter and begins to cry painfully to be led inside the building. Terrified by the scene, the other passengers who witness what happens to the boy stand motionless without knowing what will happen to them.

The soldier looks at Ibtisam and the other passengers through the smoky panel. She wants to ask him if "if Ramallah is not really gone," (TS, 7). The young girl associates her domineering mother with the Zionist colonizers: "But something in my mind wags a warning finger not to ask, not to do the wrong thing. It's a finger like Mother's, telling me to get home in a hurry, not ever to be late. But I am already many hours late" (TS, 7). Her mother's predomination differs from that of the colonizers in that she behaves as a responsible and protective mother who attempts to protect her children from danger, while the Zionist predomination stems from a desire for displacement of the Arab existence. After being the original citizens of Palestine, the Palestinians become a mere minority. Yama is

a flat/type character who behaves as a guardian of her family. She would not like her children to be involved in politics and would like them to "'Khalas, insay, insay,' she demands impatiently. ' Forget, just forget'" (TS, 7).

Mother does not want her daughter or any of Ibtisam's siblings to do anything that could cause them trouble with the Zionists. " 'Imshy el-hayt el-hayt wu qool yallah el steereh,' she says"(TS, 8). Mother wants her children to be invisible and walk by the wall. "Be invisible if you can, is her guiding proverb" (TS, 8).

She believes that demonstrations and revolutions are unprofitable. Birzeit is where the students go to college after finishing high school in Ramallah. In Birzeit, college students are actively involved in politics and have fights with the Israeli army. They chant for their freedom from occupation.

> *But I did not go there to chant for freedom. I have my freedom. It is hidden in Post Office Box. This is what takes me from Ramallah to Birzeit. Post Office Box is the only place in the world that belongs to me. ... If I die, the key for the box will be under the ground with me. Having this box is like having a country, the size of a tiny square, all to myself. I love to go there, dig the key out of my pocket, turn its neck around, open the door, then slowly let my hand nestle in and linger, even if the box is empty. I wish I could open my postbox every day. I feel that my hand, when deep inside it, reaches out to anyone on the other side of the world who wants to be my friend.*
>
> (TS, 8)

The author hails for cohabitation, and friendship between the conflicting parties. The young girl finds that true freedom does not exist in demonstrations, revolutions, or any form of violence, but it exists inside the postbox through which she receives letters from hr pen pals all over the world despite their different nationalities. What the author wants to say is that Arabs and Zionists should cope with each other living friendly, and that the true happiness is not dependent on a geographical space but it is an intellectual matter; Jerusalem may be lost, on the geographical level, but it may dwell intellectually in the mind and in literature where nobody can extract it.

The researcher disagrees with the author on the point that giving up one's country to the hand of the invaders in time of struggle is not the same as living friendly with the different others in time of peace. Do the Zionists or any other nation in the world accept to live friendly with the different others in the time of war? Surrender and subjection to the will of the occupiers does not mean acclimatization to live friendly with the different others. The young girl lives in a peaceful, imaginative Utopia through the letters she exchanges with her pen pals who share their experiences and become acquainted to each other's culture. Through this exchange of letters, the girl compensates for the lack of freedom in reality.

The second part of the story describes the Six-Day War in June 5, 1967, whenIsraeloccupied the PalestinianWest BankandGaza Strip, and the war aftermath. At the start of the Six-Day War, Israeli soldiers conduct raids and their planes bomb Ibtisam's home; therefore, she flees with her family to Jordan. While she waits her father to return from work, she sees him running frantically shouting "'Turn Back!' … 'Tell your mother the war has started' … 'Run!'" (TS, 20). People continued to pass by Ibtisam's house, spreading the news of impending terror. The novelist says that at least 200,000 Palestinians fled their homes in the Six Day War, and that her family was among them: "So I wanted to write this story for the children of that night, including the young girl I was, and for children everywhere, especially those denied a childhood."(40) The young child blindly follows people who are tramping towards the nearby caves in search of shelter, and who are trying to cross a bridge at the border to Jordan. When Ibtisam sees a woman with a braid down her back, she thinks that she has found her mother. The woman proves to be a stranger, and Ibtisam retreats into her inner world where she can feel neither terror nor pain. Ibtisam forgets her shoes and is separated from her family. She experiences exile at the moment she has lost her family. In an essay titled "A Morning With my Mother," Barakat describes her reunion with her mother after eleven years of exile:

> *In USA, mother, if I say I am Arab, some people jump as if I were a nightmare…. There are times when I cannot stand in the face of what some people throw at Arabs…. when my wounds healed and*

I could stand again I came back to you. I wanted you but only saw the demolished homes…the clanking of guns that tear through people's lives threatened forever to make me the unwanted other….Maybe I would be able to tell the world about us [someday], and the world would listen ….Maybe, Mother, someday I would be able to return home. But for now, this visitor visa that expires in a day says we're slaughter cattle, and our journey must only be one-way. …I see the harsh years of history stretched between us. I see that we cannot decipher what we had written with our hands.(41)

Barakat seeks to transform displacement of her home to something bearable. She writes, "Today I knew the past cannot sustain me. A human must come home to the present anywhere."(42) However, during the same night the young girl is reunited with her family after walking a long distance barefoot. Her feet are injured, but she must continue with her family onto Jordan in hopes of finding refugee camps. As she finds her family, she feels almost nothing(43) She writes, "I could neither cry nor smile. And although I walked up to them, and they to me, we had become a heartful of fright estranged" (TS, 174).

The phrase, "a heartful of fright estranged," encapsulates the emotional estrangement that accompanies the girl's physical dislocation. Her estrangement is cooled down with the passage of time. Her family bombards a tanker and sticks inside and outside it journeying toward Jordan: "quickly, people stuck themselves to the white truck like ants on an abandoned candy bar" (TS, 31).

On entering Jordan, the family finds a shelter that "wasn't much more than a box of strangers packed in like sardines" (TS, 37).

Inside that box, called shelter, Mother tries to quiet her youngest daughter, Maha, whose siren cries may draw attention to their hiding shelter. "Because there was no room for love and lullabies in the narrow trench, Mother [snaps] sharply at Maha, who quickly [stops] her cyring" (TS, 22). The mother instructs her children to respond to all of her directions "with the speed of a bullet. The three of [them], who had become more like soldiers than children that day, nodded [their] heads in compliance" (TS, 32).

Children have lost the sense of childhood.

The refugee shelter that Ibtisam's family stays in is the home of Um and Abu Muhammad, who opened their home to shelter the refugees… though they are strangers: "they kissed [their] cheeks and held [them] for a long time while thanking Allah for [their] safety" (TS, 43).

This quote reveals the Arab thoroughbred temperament and characteristics as their generosity with the guests and harboring the strangers. The shelter begins to feel like home where the strangers remember each other's names, share their miseries, and listen to each other whenever their sorrow sounds too heavy to bear alone. Although war is going on, the refugees make friends and a new home with others.

At the end of Part II, Ibtisam, seven years old, and her family return home only to leave again because her mother feels it is still not safe. Unable to continue living in constant fear, the mother takes her four children to live atDar El-Tiflorphanage in Jerusalem, where they suffer hunger, cold, and fear.(44)

Mother hears that, after the war, the government of Jordan has turned many schools into temporary housing for West Bank refugees. Therefore, she insists to move to a school. A year later they return to their home in Ramallah only to leave again when Israeli soldiers come to the house, one of them throws kisses at the mother, hugged his body up and down as he points to hers.Before the soldier leaves, he has made a circle with his hands, to indicate that he will return one day. Consequently, the mother refuses to wait for another day and the family sells the house to move closer to the city where the soldiers will not bother them.

Afterwards, Ibtisam's family travels to different villages, called Balads, to inform relatives and friends about the coming celebration of the circumcisions of her two brothers. The medicinal customs of the Palestinian family include pouring "water into a bowl with Qur'an prayers on the inside. [Her mother] called it the bowl of trembling, taste al-rifeh. If one drank from it, [her mother] believed, one got healed from heart-stopping fear" (TS, 114).

The father believes that placing cups on one's back would purify the body. Ibtisam's father drops "burning pieces of paper inside glass cups and [turn] them upside down against [her] skin. The fire instantly died, and only smoke remained. Somehow the cups clung to [her] skin" (TS, 115).

The Arab thoroughbred traditionshave a large presence in Barakat's memoir.

Throughout the memoir, the author emphasizes the fact that war, and gunfire become a normal part of her life. Then, the howling of dogs begins. Animals come to the city searching for food; however, this howling does not keep Ibtisam from hearing gunshots as bullets enter the bodies of the strays. The novelist poignantly relates her experience with the street dogs:

> *The packs retreated, but the injured dogs were left crying in voices that grew smaller and smaller until they resembled the whimpering of infants. Tears soaked my face. I knew they were dying and that they had come to our door only because, they, like us, were seeking refuge. But instead of understanding, we shot at them, the way the warplanes shot at us. I listened until there was only silence.*
>
> (TS, 39)

The author assimilates the situation of the stray animals that are exposed to gunfire, hunger, and fear to the situation of the Palestinians who are displaced from their homes.No one listens to the howling of the stray dogs that are left to die in pain, similar to the Palestinians who have been shut up until their voices become smaller and smaller as the whimpering of infants. The writer is trying to deliver the Palestinian voice to Western society through her artworks.

Furthermore, the young girl chews the lines of her pen pals' letters and tastes their meaning; even though they are written in English, Spanish, Latin, Germanic, and other languages, Ibtisam is able to communicate and understand the language of her cosmopolitan friends, as revealed below:

> *Paper and ink, poems and my postbox are medicines that heal the wounds of a life without freedom. On some days, I wish I could*

> *stay inside my postbox, with a tiny pillow made from a stamp with a flower on it. At the end of the day, I could cover myself up with one pink enveloped letter and sleep on a futonlike stack of letters from my pen pals….*
>
> (TS, 9)

In this quotation, the young girl tastes freedom that is absent in reality through the magical power of words. Although Ibtisam, sometimes, feels that words seem to be inefficient or less influential: "Letters are like prayers; they take a long time to be answered" (TS, 11); yet, what is missing in the real world can be compensated through language and imagination. The young girl finds limitless freedom inside the postbox despite its small format. For her, the postbox is a Utopia where she can enjoy freedom and natural childhood that are missing in reality, and where she can share her imagination with her cosmopolitan siblings.

The author, Barakat, uses writing as a means for communication, as well as for self-understanding. For her, writing is "a clear and spacious window."(45) Whether she feels there is freedom or fear outside or inside is reflected in her writing. In Tasting the Sky, Ibtisam argues with her Greek friend about baklava or baklawa a kind of sweet that is made during festivals. While Dimitri insists that baklawa is a Greek tradition, Ibtisam assures him it is Arabic: "Perhaps it is both, we finally decide to agree, since both our peoples love it" (TS, 9).

She likes to write "Great Ramallah" to her British friend Hannah from Great Britain so that "[w]e would be equals then" (TS, 10). Both girls enjoy reading the same books, such as Gulliver's Travels and Emil and the Detectives, but with different inclinations: she loves thesebooks because Gulliver and Emil know exactly what it is not to be free, and both of them are fond of friendships with strangers. Ibtisam sees the world through the words of her pen pals. She is eager to answer all their questions, except questions related to her childhood. "I have nothing to say. It's like a curtain comes down and hides my memories. I do not dare part it and look. So I skip all childhood questions and reply only about the day" [Italics mine] (TS, 11).

Moreover, Ibtisam associates her strict mother with the Zionist soldier. Form the child's viewpoint, mothers and soldiers are enemies of freedom; therefore, she is doubly occupied. Mother is forced to act sharply with her children. She restricts their freedom and does not allow them to go to certain places because she is so keen to keep their safety. Ibtisam cannot absorb this fact. She tries to alleviate the strict tempers of her mother by writing kind prayers in her mother's journal, hoping that when her mother reads them she will be gentler with her:

> *When unsatisfied, she pokes my chest and curses me. To answer her, I write poems about the cruelty of mothers. 'What difference is there between a mother and a soldier? None.' I underline my answer. 'Mothers and soldiers are enemies of freedom. I am doubly occupied.'*
>
> (TS, 12)

However, all the child's attempts are in vain, as her mother writes "Liar," next to Ibtisam's words, and then erases them. The faint traces remain. The mother and her daughter are unable to communicate or understand each other; hence, they rely on journals, which represent language in its written form as a means of understanding. "My true journal is written … in my mind, with an invisible hand in the air. … I want to wander the streets after school… walk away from a world I do not understand, a world that tells me daily there is no place in it for me" (TS, 12).

The author shows to the readers the disintegration of family relationships, such as mother-daughter and father-son relationships, because of the occupation and war. Similar to the cruel mother, Ibtisam's father plays the role of a confidential detective as he pursues his daughter whenever she goes to the school; however, he does not pursues her out of distrust as what the young girl thinks:

> *He must want to see how I behave on the streets when I am alone. … 'Yaba, why not wait outside until I leave?' I said one .'What for?' he asked. 'So that you can follow me,' I fumed. He became outraged and charged after me. I bolted into a room and locked the door. 'Why do you challenge me?' he shouted.… 'You dig your head into your Nakleezi books like a sheep, grazing all day,' he*

said, and sighed, perhaps wishing he, too, could read English books.

(TS, 13)

His pursuit stems out of his fear that any harm may inflict his daughter by the Israeli soldiers. "They, too, watch how we walk and what we do. Without looking at them, we know exactly where they are" (TS, 13). Her love for language and words seems to dissolute her relationship with her father: "It takes away his authority over me. The books, not he, are my references"(TS, 13).

However, as Ibtisam gets mature she recognizes that what really comes between her and her parents is not language but the Zionists. The members of her family suffer disintegration and are unable to enjoy normal family relationships:

The soldiers are another force that separates us. Father knows that they, not he, are the ones who control every one of us. We are not free to be a family the way he wants, with him a lion in our lives. He is like a lion in the zoo. Any of us can be taken away any day. No one can stop that, no matter how hard he roars from the fenced space allotted to him. … [W]ar lives inside him. Every night, he wakes up shouting that someone is going to kill him, kill us all. He punches at the air, kicks with his feet to free himself, and cries for someone to help him.

(TS, 14)

Every night Yaba suffers nightmares related to the Zionist soldiers who attack him and his family members. His daughter tries to comfort him but all her attempts are in vain. The mature Ibtisam becomes aware of the main reason that pushes her father to pursue her and that pushes her mother to be strict with her. She realizes the importance of her mother's advice " 'Imshy el-hayt el-hayt wu qool yallah el steereh,' she says. … "Walk by the wall" (TS, 15) only after she is released and on her way home. Her mother's advice becomes her guidance to reach home. On the road, she has seen what her father has described in his nightmares. "With every step I take, more images of war appear. … like Father, I have become ill with war" (TS, 15).

The impact of war on them will not end with the end of war because it leaves deep wounds that are unforgettable. The only means available to Yaba to express his suppressed fear is through dreams while Ibtisam resorts to writing to alleviate her pent-up feelings; in case she cannot write she will cry "on the air that comes into and leaves my chest, I write all the things that happen to me" (TS, 15).

As defense mechanism, Ibtisam has to forget the torturing memories so that she can go on living. Her mother advises her "'Khalas, insay, insay,' she demands impatiently. ' Forget, just forget' " (TS, 7).

Ibtisam's mind is unable neither to block the painful memories of her childhood nor to create a visionary wall that functions as a line of demarcation to barricade the painful memories of the past from the existing present. She will relive the Six-Day War terror whenever she holds a pen to write: "Her mother thinks that 'When a war ends, it does not go away,' ... . 'It hides inside us.' ... 'Do not walk that road,' ... . 'Insay. Insay' 'Just forget!' But I do not want to do what Mother says. I cannot follow her advice. I want to remember" (TS, 7).

Ibtisam will not forget and will not follow her mother's advice. Throughout writing, she recalls her nostalgic feelings to Ramallah; despite its absence, Ibtisam will hold its memory immortally in her writing as well as in the minds of her readers: "I want to hold Ramallah the way one holds oneself when there is no one else to touch" (TS, 15).

She finds joy when she discovers Alef, the first letter of the Arabic alphabet. This is the beginning of her passionate connection to language, as it becomes her shelter, allowing her to bring together the fragments of her world; it becomes her true home.[46] Beside her friends around the world, the little girl finds an "eternal friend Alef [, the first letter in the Arabic alphabet,] helps [her] find the splinters of [her life]... and piece them back together" (TS, 169).

The author uses writing to alleviate her alienation of exile.

In the epilogue, Ibtisam highlights the fact that the reminiscence of the SixDay War and its aftermath will be kept through her memory, and that exile cannot eradicate her personal memory.

While at the start of the story, she feels as if she were a bird caught in a cage, "wish[ing] for nothing," at the end of the story, she hopefully awaits"[t]he day/When she will/Find her home/By asking/Her heart to/Take her there/Listen/Today is that day" (TS, 16).

The author retreatsinto her inner world where she can sense the presence of her home that exists through the lines of her writing. In the quotation above, it is obvious that Barakat seeks a different kind of home: "an internal home grounded in memory."(47) She suggests that home is a matter of self-creation, and that it can be both sustained and recreated in the heart.(48) Home loses its spatialand geographical property; therefore, it becomes easy for the author to sense the presence of home inside her heart and thus it becomes an emotional entity that can be sensed and listened to even in the case of its absence. Homebecomes a harmonious part inseparable from her identity and all her existence.

To sum up, Nye and Barakat's Palestinian experiences offer them an understanding of exile in the same way language makes them feel the presence of their Arab identity and homeland. They explore their relationship to the Middle East, and their construction of a new sense of home within a Palestinian identity. Palestine remains part of their identity even when they suffer the alienation of exile. However, exile does not eradicate their historical and personal memory.(49) Their fear, as "undocumented people,"(51) is transformed into an awareness of the power of words. To lose faith in words is to lose faith in their freedom. Writing helps them to recreate home and restore their identity no matter how difficult this task. Through writing, they give voice to the silencing of Palestinians. In addition, being of mixed heritage encourages both writers to oppose violence calling for peace, compromise, and acceptance of the different others. Barackat and Nye try to find a comprehensive language between the Arabs and the Jews. They suggest that to come home is to recover the genetic self. They try to fend off exile through their writings.

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