

The Identity Crisis and the Quest for Belonging in Hassan Abdulrazzak's Play Love, Bombs & Apples: A Critical Reading of the Arab Diasporic Experience ♦

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Abstract

This paper examines the representation of identity crisis and belonging in Hassan Abdulrazzak's play Love, Bombs & Apples by approaching identity and diaspora as dynamic, historically contingent processes rather than fixed or essential categories. Adopting a qualitative textual analysis, the paper focuses on selected scenes from the play within a theoretical framework informed by contemporary cultural criticism on diaspora, performative identity, and postcolonial discourse. This framework serves as an interpretive lens through which the paper traces the transformation of the self, the dramaturgical articulation of belonging, and the tension between individual memory and collective diasporic experience. The analysis reveals that the play constructs identity as a fluid, performative formation continually reshaped through language, irony, and dramatic action, while homeland emerges as an unstable concept produced through contradiction and narrative deconstruction. By foregrounding these dynamics within the dramatic structure itself, the paper moves beyond descriptive readings and offers an original applied contribution to the critical discussion of Arab diasporic theatre, demonstrating how identity and belonging operate as central organizing forces in contemporary diasporic drama.

Keywords: Diasporic theatre, performative identity, cultural hybridity, self/other, postcolonialism, Arab diaspora, contemporary Arab theatre.

أزمة الهوية والسعي إلى الانتماء في مسرحية حسن عبد الرزاق الحب، القنابل والتفاح: قراءة نقدية في تجربة الشتات العربي

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المستخلص

يتناول هذا البحث تمثيلات أزمة الهوية والانتماء في مسرحية حسن عبد الرزاق الحب، القنابل والتفاح من خلال مقارنة نقدية تنظر إلى الهوية والدياسبورا بوصفهما عمليتين ديناميكيتين مشروطتين تاريخيًا وثقافيًا، لا بوصفهما معطيات ثابتة أو جوهرية. يعتمد البحث منهج التحليل النصي النوعي لعدد من المشاهد المختارة من المسرحية، ضمن إطار نظري مستمد من دراسات الهوية والدياسبورا في النقد الثقافي المعاصر، ويُوظف هذا الإطار بوصفه أداة تفسيرية لتتبع تحولات الذات، وتمثيلات الانتماء دراميًا ولغويًا، والتوتر القائم بين الذاكرة الفردية والتجربة الجماعية في سياق الشتات. وتكشف نتائج التحليل أن المسرحية تُقدِّم الهوية باعتبارها بناءً أدائيًا متحوّلًا يُعاد تشكيله عبر الخطاب والفعل الدرامي، فيما يُعاد إنتاج مفهوم الوطن من خلال السخرية والتناقض وتفكيك السرديات المهيمنة. ويسهم البحث، من خلال ربط الإطار النظري بالبنية الدرامية للنص، في تقديم قراءة تطبيقية تتجاوز المقاربات الوصفية أو التعميمية السائدة، مما يعزز النقاش النقدي حول مسرح الشتات العربي ويبرز كيفية عمل مفهومي الهوية والانتماء بوصفهما عناصر بنيوية فاعلة في الدراما العربية المعاصرة.

كلمات مفتاحية: مسرح الشتات؛ الهوية الأدائية؛ التهجين الثقافي؛ الذات/الآخر؛ ما بعد الكولونيالية؛ الشتات العربي؛ المسرح العربي المعاصر

1.Introduction

The issue of identity and belonging remains one of the most prominent issues that occupy modern literature, especially in the context of the diaspora experience imposed by forced migration, political conflicts, and social and economic challenges. The research on these literary phenomena is not limited to the study of the characters and the events of certain literary work, but extends to the reading of the psychological, cultural and social dimensions that reflect the experience of the Arab in the face of the diaspora. In this context, Hassan Abdulrazzak's *Love, Bombs & Apples* comes as an expressive model for the internal conflicts of the characters, who find themselves fragmented between their cultural roots and their identity scattered in a new environment, which makes them vulnerable to conflicts, alienation, cultural shock, and sensitivity to belonging.

The play presents the issue of "fragmented identity" as a complex state that includes the overlap of social, political and psychological factors, where individuals find themselves between belonging to their cultural roots and the need to adapt to a new environment. This rupture is manifested in personality struggles with oneself and the other, and in the constant search for an area of belonging that restores its sense of existence and recognition. Hence, identity analysis in the play becomes more than a personal study; It is a reading of human experience that reflects the suffering of the contemporary Arab diaspora.

This paper puts forward an in-depth reading of the aforementioned play from the standpoint of identity and belonging, with a profound attention on the lived experience of the Arab diaspora, which influences the awareness of the self and the stance of the individual within society. By following the psychological and social shifts of the characters, the relationship between identity and belonging can be understood as ongoing process developed under the influence of cultural, historical, and political conditions. Furthermore, the play attempts to provide a critical view of life in the diaspora, where individuals face the challenges of preserving their language, heritage, and connection with their indigenous countries, in exchange for the pressures to adapt to the new environment in which they live.

Identity, in this context, is not fixed or predetermined, but rather a continuous process of formation, refraction and renewal, reflecting the individual's conflict between the past and the present, between the roots and openness to the Other, and as Nelson and Grossberg state, "identity

is unstable and never guaranteed in advance; identity is part of an event's contextual determinations, the articulation of its effects” (Nelson and Grossberg, 1988, p.11). Also, the search for belonging in the play is not just a personal desire, but rather a collective social situation that reflects the suffering of Arab societies in the diaspora, where belonging becomes a means of psychological and social survival, and self-reconstruction in the face of difficulties and obstacles.

This vision makes the play an important space for the study of literary and social phenomena associated with the diaspora, and paves the way for analyzing the relationship between literary text and contemporary social reality. It can be seen how the play uses spatial and temporal space to depict the state of the diaspora, allowing researchers to analyze the relationship between the environment and the soul, and between society and individual experience. Its aim as such to reveal the ways in which the play addresses issues of rupture and alienation, whether through characters, monologues, or narrative construction, to clarify how literature can be a tool for understanding the human and social crises that Arab society is going through. Consequently, this paper posits the following questions, (1) How are marginalized identities constructed in relation to the Other? And, (2) How do comedy, symbolism, and dramatic language deconstruct stereotypes?

By addressing the aforementioned questions as the cornerstone, this paper provides a critical reading of Hassan Abdulrazzak’s play, *Love, Bombs & Apples*, focusing on the fragmented identity and the search for belonging in the Arab diasporic experience. To this end, the psychological, social and cultural dimensions of the play will be highlighted, which contributes to a deeper understanding of the relationships between literary text and reality, and enhances the ability to link individual experiences with collective issues in contemporary diasporic drama.

2. Literature Review

Issues of identity and belonging in diaspora literature are among the topics that have attracted the interest of researchers, especially with regard to the cultural alienation and psychological conflict of identity. The study of Kenza Dafir and Yahya Yechouti (2023) titled” *Hybridity and the Illusion of Identity Quest in Amin Maalouf’s the Disoriented*”, represents the hybrid identity and cultural overlap, and how the characters reflect a state of constant search for a stable identity in the midst of cultural pluralism. The study concludes that the identity in

multiple contexts is not consistent, but rather a continuous process of formation and re-evaluation, reflecting the rupture and intertwined affiliation of the characters in the diaspora.

Moreover, the study of Mariam Bakkal and Youssef Altkerroum (2022) entitled, “Shifting Identity/ies in the Literature of Arab Immigration and Exile: Hanan Al-Shaykh’s Hikayat Zahra (The Story of Zahra) as a Case Study”, is the representation of the Arabic novel in exile, with a focus on the changing identity of the characters. The study showed that the characters live in a constant struggle between belonging to the original land and the desire to integrate into the host society, which reflects the psychological and social rupture of identity in diaspora literature.

On the symbolic and religious level, on the other hand, the study of Kamal Yusuf (2022) titled, “Religious Identity Representation of Arab Diaspora in the Linguistic Landscape of Shop Signs in Sydney, Australia“, is an analysis of how the language and religious symbols are used to promote identity and belonging to the Arab communities in Australia, indicating that commercial signs and religious phrases act as means to highlight collective belonging and identity preservation in the host society.

Despite the abundance of studies addressing identity and belonging in Arab diaspora literature, most have focused on Western contexts or exile literature outside the Arab world. Furthermore, previous studies have often treated identity as a general theoretical or social concept, while neglecting the profound psychological dimension of the characters' internal conflicts and how this inner turmoil is reflected in the narrative and narrative style.

In addition, most studies have concentrated on short stories or fragmentary narratives, neglecting plays that address the diaspora experience on multiple levels, including character, setting, language, and literary symbolism. Some studies have also approached identity and belonging from a purely social or political perspective, overlooking the relationship between the psychological fragmentation of identity and the narrative structure of the play.

Accordingly, this paper examines Hassan Abdulrazzak’s play, *Love, Bombs & Apples*, as a case study representing fragmented identity and the search for belonging within the context of the Arab diaspora. It

combines psychoanalytic character analysis, narrative analysis of style and symbolic spaces, and the approaching of contemporary theories on identity and diaspora to offer a critical reading that reflects the complex interactions between the individual and society, between past and present, and between original and acquired belonging.

This study relies on the literary-analytical critical method to understand how to embody a fragmented identity and to search for belonging in *Love, Bombs & Apples* by Hassan Abdulrazzak. This approach enables the study of literary texts in depth by analyzing characters, events, narration, and symbolic spaces, with an emphasis on the psychological, social and cultural dimensions of rupture and migration. Through this framework, the paper reveals the relationship between individual identity and collective belonging, and understand how characters are affected by the new environment and diaspora events, and the internal conflict or the search for a place to belong. The paper also follows the descriptive analytical approach to deconstructing the elements of the play, with a focus on the structure of the text, the narrative style, and the internal dialogue of the characters. This includes observing symbolic repetitions, and metaphors that are employed to reflect the psychological and social rupture of the personalities.

Nevertheless, contemporary theories about identity and the Arab diaspora were based on the framing of analysis, in order to ensure the pertinence of literature to the social and cultural reality, and to highlight the role of the play in presenting a critical vision about the human experience in the diaspora. This combination of textual and theoretical analysis provides a critical reading of the dimensions of identity and belonging, and enhances the scientific value of the study in the field of contemporary Arab literary criticism.

3. Literary Analysis of Love, Bombs & Apples

Love, Bombs & Apples is a theatrical play written by Hassan Abdulrazzak. It premiered at the Arcola Theatre as part of the Shubbak Festival in 2015 and has since seen subsequent revivals and tours. The play is a one-act performance comprising four monologues, each presented as a separate scene performed by a single character. The four characters come from diverse geographical and cultural backgrounds: a Palestinian, a British Pakistani, a young British man from Bradford, and an American Jew. Through these monologues, the text links the personal issues of individuals such as desire, identity, love, belonging and general and global issues such as occupation, terrorism, immigration, and the

relationship between East and West. In this way, the play seeks to show how the individual in the time of globalization cannot be completely separated from the political and cultural structures that affect them. The style combines black comedy with existential loss, where tales are presented with boldness and sarcasm, which makes the work a social and political simulation at the same time. Consequently, this chapter meticulously reads fragmented identity and the search for belonging by doing four analytical essays, each of which accurately addresses a specific scene in deep-text analysis.

3.1 A Reading of Love in the Time of Barriers

In this scene/monologue, the Palestinian appears as an actor from Ramallah and begins to think about a relationship with an English girl named 'Chanel Girl', despite the Israeli separation wall and surveillance. The text focuses on the moment of challenging as a symbol of his desire to transcend what is supposed to prevent love and humanity. There is a prejudice to the idea that the wall is not only a material stone, but a symbol of psychological and cultural barriers as well. In this context, it is presented how love becomes an act of resistance in itself, and adherence to dignity in the shadow of oppression. The scene concludes with the vision that identity and belonging are not canceled by the individual desire to be liberated and live.

However, the character of the Palestinian reflects the conflict of affiliation and the cultural root as the psychological and cultural tensions experienced by the individual in the diaspora. Through this character, Hassan Abdulrazzak presents the deep internal struggle between the geographical affiliation of the mother land and the necessity of living in a new society that imposes its own rules and values. He states:

Sex. It's such a problem, isn't it? Don't you find? Even when you're famous, as I nearly am, it still is. Beat. Not that long ago, I was playing Hamlet at Al-Kasaba Theatre in Ramallah. The actor playing Claudius was chosen because he looked like the spitting image of president Mahmoud Abbas. (Abdulrazzak, 2016, p.15).

This duality between the root and the original homeland on the one hand, and the host society on the other hand, constitute the essence of the dramatic conflict, and give the play a unique human and critical dimension. This conflict arises from the experience of cultural and social alienation, as the young man finds himself in the face of the standards and expectations of the host community, while trying to preserve its original identity, inherited from the family and the homeland. This scene

highlights this conflict through daily situations that seem simple on the surface, but in depth reflects an internal fragmentation and self-division. This division is not just a personal feeling, but rather a reflection of a collective experience experienced by many Palestinian immigrants in the diaspora, which makes the play connected to the social and political reality of the generations of the Palestinian diaspora in Europe and Britain.

Dramatically, Abdulrazzak deploys dialogue and everyday language that reveals sarcasm and irony to embody the psychological and cultural tension of the Palestinian youth, “Then I hear this woman’s voice. ‘Can you light mine?’ I turn around to see this gorgeous, gorgeous girl, cropped hair, green, almost phosphorous eyes” (16). This literary technique gives the text a double dimension; on the one hand, it presents an interesting theatrical narrative, and on the other hand, it emphasizes the critical nature of the text, as the audience can see the gap between the self-rooted identity in the homeland and the identity imposed through interaction with the other, “like those of a cat’s, dressed in some sexy, I don’t know what it was: Chanel, maybe Versace dress. The kind of dress that says if you don’t have a Platinum card in your wallet, don’t bother saying hello” (16). Here the theater appears as a space for self-review and stereotypes, rather than presenting a rigid realistic narrative. This, among other things, parallels with what Bhabha conceptualized as “Hybridization” from which he states:

Colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite. Which is to say, that the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence; in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference. (Bhabha, 2004, p.120-121).

Accordingly, the play represents the relationship of the Palestinian to the family and cultural roots, which constitute an internal reference to his identity. Often, the characters' conflict is manifested by the difference between family expectations and the surrounding societal pressures, leading to a state of constant psychological tension and Palestinian character becomes a mirror of the cultural diaspora experience, and offers a way to understand how the individual struggles with affiliation and alienation on the psychological, social and cultural level. Moreover, the critical analysis of the character reflects the dramatic symbols related to the homeland and the cultural root. For instance, references to places, food, traditions, and local language can be seen as tools to confirm identity and adhere to the roots, while the text also uses cultural or material symbols in the host community to clarify the conflict between

the original affiliation and the imposed affiliation. This symbolism makes the play a multi-level text.

The personality of the Palestinian reveals the tension between the individual and the group, as the individual in the diaspora is not only experiencing an internal conflict, but also faces the attempts of the host community to reshape it according to new standards," I secretly text few mates whilst she's talking but the replies are all the same: 'forget it', 'no chance' or my personal favourite: 'cut your losses and settle for a hand job.'" (18). This interaction between the person and society aligns with Edward Said's notion of orientalism from which he states," The Orient was Orientalized not only because it was discovered to be 'Oriental' in all those ways considered commonplace by an average nineteenth-century European, but also because it could be that is, submitted to being made Oriental." (1978, p.5-6). This as such creates layers of dramatic complexity, and makes the Palestinian identity in the play a state of continuous negotiation between the self and the other, between the past and the present, and between the inherited affiliation and the acquired affiliation.

From a literary critical perspective, it can be said that this scene presents a contemporary vision of the concept of the Palestinian diaspora, where it highlights the contradictions between national identity and cultural affiliation in a strange environment, and highlights psychological challenges. Social and political facing young immigrants: And I'm thinking: thank you God, thank you Ariel Sharon, thank you Netanyahu, thank you Knesset. Thank you for giving me this moment. I hug her and say something like 'but there's plenty of love also if you care to find it.' She laughs and asks 'why are Arab men so cheesy?' (19-20).

The Palestinian character in *Love in the Time of Barriers* reveals an identity forged under the pressure of a forced duality between memory and separation, where belonging is embodied as an incomplete state, reclaimed only through the constant tension between self and place. This monologue demonstrates how dramatic language becomes a space for representing the psychological schism resulting from living on the margins, where individual experience intersects with the structures of cultural and political exclusion imposed by the context of diaspora. Thus, the text does not present a completed identity or a definitive stance toward the homeland, but rather exposes the fragility of belonging itself, emphasizing that identity in this context is constructed performatively

through conflict, not stability. This analysis paves the way for the following monologue, which deepens the approach to belonging from a different angle by reformulating the relationship between collective memory and ironic discourse as a dramatic mechanism of resistance.

3.2 A Reading of Level 42

This second scene/monologue of the play presents a young Pakistani-born in Britain; SAJID, and is arrested on terrorism-related charges over his book, which Britain saw suspicious. The play uses this event to dismantle the stereotypes and stigma, which are called the Muslims or immigrants of Britain, especially after the events of global terrorism. He feels that his desire for literary expression has turned into a threat to the regime, which makes him face an identity crisis; a writer who wants to be liberated, and a suspect who wants innocence. The text also highlights the contradiction between freedom of thought and expression on the one hand, and the security services and the society that prevents that freedom on the other hand. This story confirms that the individual cannot be isolated from the security policies and laws that are applied on behalf of the state.

Sajid represents a dramatic model of hybrid identity, formed within the diaspora as a result of the constant interaction between disparate cultural systems, not as a harmonious synthesis, but as a state of perpetual tension. Homi Bhabha defines hybridity as a third space where identities intersect, where the self is reshaped outside the binary of pure origin and national belonging, and where meaning becomes the product of ongoing negotiation, never definitively resolved. Within this framework, Sajid's identity does not appear "dual" in the sense of a balanced division, but rather as a fractured identity manifested through everyday discourse, irony, and a constant oscillation between conflicting cultural and religious references:

OK, this is just between us, but being in prison is just about the best thing that ever happened to me. When I came out, it was awful. I had grown used to the silence of the cell. Really used to it. So there I was in my parents' house, my mum fussing over me, my dad saying 'now you're a man my son' as if he suddenly lost Allah and found Kipling. And on top of that, all my mates were rushing to see me, like, well like a herd of bison. I reckon that's why the Europeans killed all the bison when they reached America, they couldn't stand the noise. (23).

This hybridity is clearly evident in the monologue in which Sajid recounts his experience of leaving prison, where multiple linguistic and cultural levels converge in a single sentence. The reference to the father who "lost God and found Kipling" is not merely a metaphor, but reveals

a cynical awareness of a symbolic substitution in which Islamic religious authority is replaced by British colonial cultural authority at a moment that is supposed to affirm the completion of manhood and belonging. This dissonance between God and Kipling embodies the fundamental struggle of hybrid identity: a self that demands conformity with two contradictory discourses simultaneously, without fully belonging to either.

Moreover, the comparison of the friends to “a herd of bison” is not simply a humorous image, but carries a profound meaning related to belonging and exclusion. In the colonial memory, the bison is a symbol of systematic extermination as a prerequisite for the advancement of “civilization,” and Sajid repurposes this symbol to express his feeling of suffocation within his own community, not just within the host community. Thus, the dark humor reveals the paradox of belonging in the diaspora: the community that is supposed to provide security becomes a source of noise and psychological pressure, while forced isolation in prison becomes a moment of false stability.

This reading reveals that cultural hybridization in this monologue is not limited to the thematic level but is also manifested within the linguistic and symbolic structure of the text, where identity is embodied through irony, semantic shifts, and the deconstruction of key cultural symbols. Therefore, Sajid does not present a self-divided between two cultures, but rather a self constantly being reshaped within the space of diaspora, as an incomplete performative identity, forged through conflict rather than reconciliation. Hybridization also highlights the internal tensions of the personality, which oscillate between loyalty to the roots and subject to new social norms, making the dramatic conflict rich and complex. The hybridization significance is also manifested in interaction with other characters within the play, whether with the Palestinian or British, where cultural and social disparities in the form of tensions, conflicts or partnerships are highlighted temporary.

Through this interaction, the text presents the multiplicity of belongings, and highlights how immigrant identities can become the scene of conflict and negotiation. These characters are not only individual models, but rather collective experiences of immigrants, which contribute to the production of new narratives about identity and belonging in contemporary theatrical texts:

That’s good, huh? Planes coming!

I decided that yes I could, in retrospect, with hindsight, looking in my

rear-view mirror so to speak, yes I could have spotted the signs. So what better way to express my newly discovered insight into terrorism than to write a novel about it? I was determined to become East Acton's answer to Zadie Smith! (24-25).

Symbolically, Abdulrazzak deploys spatial and symbolic elements to clarify the mixed identity struggle. For example, references to old homes in the country, traditional food, or cultural celebrations, intersect with hosts of society such as schools, streets, and public places, to create a complex connotation that reflects dual identity. These theatrical symbols confirm that the identity is not fixed, but is constantly reproduced through cultural and social action, which makes the Palestinian figure in the diaspora intersect with the Pakistani in the experience of crossbreeding and double affiliation and this closely aligns with what Homi Bhabha posited; 'Mimicry', in which he stated, "Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which 'appropriates' the Other as it visualizes power." (Bhabha, 2004, p. 16).

The scene's text also reveals the relationship between identity, popular culture and daily politics, as Sajid faces conflicts related to discrimination and stigmatization, which reflects the psychological and social challenges faced by young immigrants, "So why couldn't I write the novel despite my incredible organisational skills? Well because I shared a room with my brothers: Atif, Akram and Ahmad. After I was born, . my dad grew lazy and only chose names beginning with A." (25). This monologue offers a contemporary reading of the concept of diaspora, presenting a multifaceted identity that encompasses cultural, social, and political affiliations, as Sajid acknowledges, "So the novel stayed for a long time as a set of notes, going nowhere. It was only after I graduated from South Bank uni and entered unemployment that I found the time to finish it." (25). Sajid is not portrayed as a ready-made model of the immigrant or a stereotype, but rather as a space for critical self-reflection and societal contemplation. He represents a point of convergence between past and present, between roots and new culture, and between original and acquired belonging. This dynamism reveals that identity in the context of diaspora is not a fixed state, but rather an ongoing process of negotiation, in which belonging is reproduced and reshaped through conflict and interaction with the new environment. This makes the text a platform for the critical embodiment of multiple identities and the dimensions of the experience of migration and alienation.

3.3 A Reading of The Apple

In this third monologue, a British young man from Bradford appears frankly and sarcastically, shows how the social and economic emptiness can support ideological temptations, and the "attractive alternative" emerges in his mind as a more attractive choice than the reality in which he lives. Through bitter humor, the writer addresses the topics of jihad, self-legislation, and ideology as an absurd choice, but convincing for some. The scene also highlights the role of local culture, class, and identity in making future decisions for young people. In conclusion, the questions are raised: Is the option war or societal involvement? Can change start from an internal reality and not by fleeing abroad?

The character of the British young man in the play is a pivotal model for understanding the site where class, media discourse, and Islamophobia intersect:

I like to go in about ten. Westfield. Bradford. Yeah, bro. We have a Westfield in Bradford now. Didn't you know? But get this. 'm the only one that's figured this out, I swear. I reckon, right, I reckon, they put that Westfield in there to pacify us. Stop us doing jihad. I swear I'm the only one that's figured this out. Me. (34).

This character represents the prevailing stereotypes of immigrants as well as the internal contradictions that can appear in the Western individual as a result of facing cultural difference. Dramatically, the young British man appears through dialogue and theatrical situations, as he interacts with the immigrant characters in a way that reveals the distance between oneself and the other, "Have you been to a mosque? No? It's a matter of time. You all will, inshallah. Yeah, didn't you know? Britain is a Muslim country now. They said so on Fox TV. On Fox, they said Bradford is a Muslims-only city now." (34).

This interaction is not just a superficial difference in language or habits, but rather a critical representation of the clash between different cultural values and perceptions, which makes the text more profound and adds a social and political dimension to the theatrical text. The character also shows the contradictions between individual values and society, as the British young man can be friendly and welcoming in some scenes, and in other scenes reflecting social and political biases towards immigrants, "I'm fibbing....?"'m fibbing... See before you ever step into the Apple store, you probably have watched hours and hours of their sermons on your laptop." (35). This dynamic makes the play a platform to highlight the tension between individual freedom and the rules of the host society, which allows for a critical reading of the daily situations faced by immigrants in Western societies.

From the perspective of identity analysis, this character is a mirror of the social and cultural other, through which it is possible to understand how the host community of immigrants, and how stereotypes and expectations are formed around them. For example, the text shows how prejudices or minor discrimination can generate internal conflict for immigrants, and influence their perception of their identity and status in society, “So I get in, Westfield, Apple Store, and I don’t go to the iPhone. Uh-uh. No, not straight away. Cause it knows. Don’t ask me how, it knows, it just knows, it knows I’m checking it out.” (36).

Symbolism plays an important role in portraying this character, as the writer uses the place, clothing, and even physical gestures as tools to deepen the critical understanding of the British young man. For example, British culture may be symbolized by public scenes such as schools, streets, and official places, as these spaces become a symbol of cultural dominance and domination of the social scene, as opposed to the private space of immigrant personalities who represent freedom of expression and original belonging.

I like to go up to it. I like to stroke the glass. I love that glass. Is it glass? I don’t know what it is...but I love it. I love it. I slide my finger down and I get to that thing across the middle...you know...the fake slider and I touch it with my thumb. I like the feel of my thumb over the fake slider...argghhh, it’s so...it’s so...one day you’ll be mine I think and then I slide it, sometime gentle, sometimes not, it changes...and you know what happens next? You know? It makes a click sound. (37).

This interaction paves the way to analyze the multiple levels of cultural and social conflict, and understand how the theater can be a tool of critical meditation and social empathy. The scene also provides a deep reading of how identity is formed in the face of the other. The British young man is not just a stereotype that represents the West, but rather a revealer of cultural contradictions, social policies, and internal psychological conflicts that arise when interacting with different cultures. This dimension makes the theatrical text rich, as it goes beyond the traditional narrative to become a space for social and political criticism, and a space through which identity, power, and critical affiliation can be understood.

From an aesthetic perspective, Abdulrazzak deploys techniques such as black comedy and symbolic humor to highlight the character of the British young man, as his attitudes sometimes turn into sharp critical moments that reveal the tensions between oneself and the other. This

method allows the audience to see cultural difference in a critical way without slipping into direct irony or negative generalization, making the play more profound and rich in presentation.

Ultimately, the young British man serves as a critical mirror to the host society, revealing how stereotypes, cultural expectations, and social differences influence immigrants' perceptions and daily experiences. Through his interactions and behavior in the text, the monologue demonstrates how this character can deconstruct prevailing stereotypes and expose the ongoing tensions immigrants face in reconciling their original and acquired identities. The text also highlights that identity in the context of diaspora is not a fixed or complete state, but rather an ongoing process shaped through social practice and interaction with the new environment, requiring constant negotiation with the norms of the host society. This monologue offers a broader perspective on how to grapple with belonging on both individual and collective levels, demonstrating that the dramatic representation of the "Other" can be an analytical tool for understanding social and cultural relationships and a means of shedding light on the difficulties immigrants encounter in achieving self-awareness and social recognition. This, among other things, illustrates how marginalized identities are constructed and methods of negotiating belonging are employed, while offering a critical perspective on the means by which belonging and identity are reproduced in contemporary diaspora theater.

3.4 A Reading of the LANDING STRIP

ISSAC, the New Yorker in the play is one of the most complex characters, as he represents the symbolic dimension of the general conflict between violence and peace, war and safety, bombs and apples. Through this character, Abdulrazzak reflects global conflicts at the political and social levels, and turns it into a personal and dramatic conflict within the theater space, allowing the audience to see the impact of major events on marginalized and immigrant individuals. This character is distinguished by its ability to symbolize the great dimensions of human conflicts. The New Yorker is not just an individual within the text, but rather a tool to represent the violent and institutional forces that affect the daily lives of immigrants.

When I started dating Sarah, we made love like primitive humans in a cave. But now, lately, it kinda cooled. After she met my parents, dad especially, yeah, it cooled. An intimate night now is us huddled in front of the TV, eating ice cream out of the tub and binging on Mad Men

which means instead of fucking, it's like we're watching our grandparents fuck. (38).

Through his movements and dialogue, the text reflects the constant threat posed by the global policy to the weak and marginalized groups, both at the political and social levels. This dynamic makes the play more than just a dramatic show, but rather a text that simulates contemporary reality and raises questions about human justice and peace, "Next day, I read the email like a thousand times, you know with a cringing expression on my face which I always have when I read something I should've never sent." (38).

The play thus serves as a platform for representing global and social conflicts at the individual level, highlighting how these tensions shape identity and experiences of belonging. Even in monologues delivered by a single character, dialogue with other personalities whether Palestinian, Pakistani, or British produces multiple layers of meaning. Through separate voices, implied interactions, and direct audience address, the monologue conveys the pressures, negotiations, and contradictions inherent in diasporic identity. For instance, the American young man is deployed alternately as a challenge and a catalyst for reflection, prompting the character to confront issues of self-perception, cultural negotiation, and integration:

Pam goes on: 'When there is an implied criticism — it is always best to frame your request in a loving, seductive and positive manner.' OK? And then she wrote out what I'm supposed to say. I read it and I was like...this could get ugly.' (39)

This exchange illustrates how the character navigates expectations imposed by others while maintaining agency over his own voice. The presence of other characters' perspectives within a one-actor structure enables the text to critically explore the construction of identity and belonging, showing that diasporic experience is inherently dialogic, contested, and multi-dimensional. This interaction makes the text a critical tool for discovering the influence of major powers on marginalized individuals, as it demonstrates how theatrical symbols can be a means of presenting social and political criticism in an aesthetic and influential way:

Sarah, hey, listen. What, no, nothing wrong. What no! Mom is not coming over. No. It's OK. Don't panic. Thing is, you see. I wanna say...No, dad is not coming over either! I just want your landing strip to guarantee extra excitement. What? Yeah, I know that makes no sense. I

know that. It's not what I wanted to say... What I wanted to say. Well, thing is, sweetheart, it would really, really, really turn me on...if...you...were.. (40).

ISSAC here reflects the symbolic and material threat. It embodies the invisible forces that make up the reality of immigrants, such as immigration policies, discrimination, or economic and social outlook. In this way, the text presents a contemporary reading of the struggles of the major powers and their impact on the marginalized individual, and shows how theatrical characters can be a mirror of the contemporary global society and its political tensions.

The text of this scene also highlights the relationship between theatrical symbolism and human experience, as the character of the ISSAC shows that the threat is not just a direct act, but rather extends to the psychological, cultural and social dimension. Through movement, dialogue, and symbols, the text provides critical analysis of global tensions and their impact on marginalized and immigrant individuals, "What the hell? I don't remember specifying the type of aircraft. Did you hear me say that? How the fuck did she come up with that?" (41).

This monologue clarifies how diasporic identity and belonging are negotiated under conditions of social and political pressure. The character of ISSAC embodies the psychological and social tensions faced by marginalized individuals, symbolically representing the interplay of strength, fragility, threat, and social influence. In doing so, the text demonstrates that theater deploys not merely as a depiction of daily life, but as a critical tool for examining the effects of global and local power structures on individual identity. As such, it shows that the fractured identity and belonging are continuously reconstructed through interaction, negotiation, and the confrontation with external pressures. Moreover, the monologue contributes to diaspora discourse by highlighting the performative and dialogic nature of identity in contemporary theater, revealing how cultural hybridization and lived experience are shaped by broader political and social forces.

Conclusion

In conclusion, this paper reveals how *Love, Bombs & Apples* embodies the crisis of identity and belonging within the context of the Arab and Western diaspora through its four main characters: the Palestinian, the Pakistani, the British, and the New Yorker. The analysis shows that each character represents specific dimensions of the tensions

between roots and belonging, tradition and modernity, and the Self and the Other. For example, the Palestinian reflects the conflict between cultural belonging and original roots, the Pakistani presents the experience of cultural hybridity and dual identity, the British embodies the image of the “Western Other” and illustrates how social and cultural expectations shape individual attitudes, while ISSAC symbolizes major tensions, including violence, and social and political threats.

These representations reveal the mechanisms by which belonging and alienation are produced, showing that identity is constantly reshaped under social, cultural, and political pressures, and that theater functions as a space for multi-dimensional literary and social critique. Through character analysis, it becomes evident that Abdulrazzak deploys dialogue, symbols, colloquial language, and critical irony as mechanisms to deconstruct stereotypes and reconstruct a critical discourse on diaspora and migration. The text demonstrates that the play does not merely narrate events in a traditional manner, but rather offers a platform for critical reflection and socio-political analysis, revealing the interplay between global powers and individual identities, between violence and peace, and between original and acquired affiliations. This process illuminates how fragmented identities are constructed and how mechanisms of belonging or exclusion operate within the context of diaspora.

This paper also contributes to the critical framework of Arab diaspora theater by highlighting specific dimensions of psycho-social and cultural analysis. It is important to acknowledge the limitations of this paper, as the analysis is confined to four specific monologues. Future research could expand the scope to include theatrical performance, audience responses, or comparative studies of Arab diaspora plays with other cultural productions, thereby deepening understanding of the relationships between identity, belonging, and theatrical context. As such, *Love, Bombs & Apples* presents a theatrical model demonstrating how Arab diaspora drama can combine symbolism, social critique, and literary aesthetics, highlighting the fragmented human experience and the persistent search for belonging.

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