



يا صاحب القبة البيضاء

يا احب القبة البيضاء في النجف
من زار قبرك واستشفى لديك شفي
زوروا ابا الحسن الهادي لعلكم
تخطون بالاجر والاقبال والرلف
زوروا لمن تسمع النجوى لديه فمن
يزره بالقبر ملهوفاً لديه كفي
إذا وصل فاحرم قبل تدخله
مليياً واسع سعياً حوله وطف
حتى إذا طفت سبعا حول قبته
تأمل الباب تلقى وجهه فقف
وقل سلام من الله السلام على
أهل السلام وأهل العلم والشرف

فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية
السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١١)



Muhammad Zubair

No.:
Date



ديوان الوقف الشيعي/ دائرة البحوث والدراسات

م/ مجلة القبة البيضاء

السلام عليكم ورحمة الله وبركاته...

اشارة الى كتابكم المرقم ١٣٧٥ بتاريخ ٢٠٢٥/٧/٩، والحاقاً بكتابنا المرقم ب ت ع / ٤ / ٣٠٠٨ في ٢٠٢٤/٣/١٩، والمتضمن استحداث مجلتكم التي تصدر عن دائرتكم المذكورة اعلاه، وبعد الحصول على الرقم المعياري الدولي المطبوع وانشاء موقع الكتروني للمجلة تعتبر الموافقة الواردة في كتابنا اعلاه موافقة نهائية على استحداث المجلة.

...مع وافر التقدير

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٢٠٢٥/٧ / ٢٠

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إشارة إلى كتاب وزارة التعليم العالي والبحث العلمي / دائرة البحث والتطوير

المرقم ٥٠٤٩ في ٢٠٢٢/٨/١٤ المعطوف على إمامهم المرقم ١٨٨٧ في ٢٠١٧/٣/٦

تُعَدُّ مجلة القبة البيضاء مجلة علمية رصينة ومعتمدة للترقيات العلمية.

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فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية
تصدر عن دائرة البحوث والدراسات في ديوان الوقف الشيعي
السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١١)

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العنوان الموقعي

مجلة القبة البيضاء
جمهورية العراق
بغداد /باب المعظم
مقابل وزارة الصحة
دائرة البحوث والدراسات

الاتصالات

مدير التحرير

٠٧٧٣٩١٨٣٧٦١

صندوق البريد / ٣٣٠٠١

الرقم المعياري الدولي

ISSN3005_5830

رقم الإيداع

في دار الكتب والوثائق (١١٢٧)

لسنة ٢٠٢٣

البريد الإلكتروني

إيميل

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IRAQI
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الرقم المعياري الدولي
(3005-5830)

مَجَلَّةُ السَّابِقَةِ اجْتِمَاعِيَّةٌ فَصَلِيَّةٌ تَصَدَّرُ عَنْ دَائِرَةِ الْبَحْثِ وَالدراسَاتِ فِي ذِيَّانِ الْوَقْتِ الشَّبَعِيِّ دليل المؤلف.....

- ١- إن يتسم البحث بالأصالة والجدة والقيمة العلمية والمعرفية الكبيرة وسلامة اللغة ودقة التوثيق.
- ٢- إن تحتوي الصفحة الأولى من البحث على:
 - أ. عنوان البحث باللغة العربية .
 - ب. اسم الباحث باللغة العربية . ودرجته العلمية وشهادته.
 - ت. بريد الباحث الإلكتروني.
 - ث. ملخصان أحدهما باللغة العربية والآخر باللغة الإنكليزية.
 - ج. تدرج مفاتيح الكلمات باللغة العربية بعد الملخص العربي.
- ٣- أن يكون مطبوعاً على الحاسوب بنظام (office Word) ٢٠٠٧ او ٢٠١٠ وعلى قرص ليزري مدمج (CD) على شكل ملف واحد فقط (أي لا يُجزأ البحث بأكثر من ملف على القرص) وتُرَوَّدُ هيئة التحرير بثلاث نسخ ورقية وتوضع الرسوم أو الأشكال، إن وُجِدَتْ، في مكانها من البحث، على أن تكونَ صالحةً من الناحية الفنية للطباعة.
- ٤- أن لا يزيد عدد صفحات البحث على (٢٥) خمس وعشرين صفحة من الحجم (A4).
٥. يلتزم الباحث في ترتيب وتنسيق المصادر على الصيغة APA
- ٦- أن يلتزم الباحث بدفع أجور النشر المحددة البالغة (٧٥,٠٠٠) خمسة وسبعين الف دينار عراقي، أو ما يعادلها بالعملة الأجنبية.
- ٧- أن يكون البحث خالياً من الأخطاء اللغوية والنحوية والإملائية.
- ٨- أن يلتزم الباحث بالخطوط وأحجامها على النحو الآتي:
 - أ. اللغة العربية: نوع الخط (Arabic Simplified) وحجم الخط (١٤) للمتن.
 - ب. اللغة الإنكليزية: نوع الخط (Times New Roman) عناوين البحث (١٦). والملخصات (١٢). أما فقرات البحث الأخرى؛ فبحجم (١٤) .
- ٩- أن تكون هوامش البحث بالنظام التلقائي (تعليقات ختامية) في نهاية البحث. بحجم ١٢ .
- ١٠- تكون مسافة الحواشي الجانبية (٢,٥٤) سم والمسافة بين الأسطر (١) .
- ١١- في حال استعمال برنامج مصحف المدينة للآيات القرآنية يتحمل الباحث ظهور هذه الآيات المباركة بالشكل الصحيح من عدمه، لذا يفضل النسخ من المصحف الإلكتروني المتوافر على شبكة الانترنت.
- ١٢- يبلغ الباحث بقرار صلاحية النشر أو عدمها في مدة لا تتجاوز شهرين من تاريخ وصوله إلى هيئة التحرير.
- ١٣- يلتزم الباحث بإجراء تعديلات المحكمين على بحثه وفق التقارير المرسله إليه وموافاة المجلة بنسخة معدلة في مدة لا تتجاوز (١٥) خمسة عشر يوماً.
- ١٤- لا يحق للباحث المطالبة بمتطلبات البحث كافة بعد مرور سنة من تاريخ النشر.
- ١٥- لا تعاد البحوث الى أصحابها سواء قبلت أم لم تقبل.
- ١٦- دمج مصادر البحث وهوامشه في عنوان واحد يكون في نهاية البحث، مع كتابة معلومات المصدر عندما يرد لأول مرة.
- ١٧- يخضع البحث للتقويم السري من ثلاثة خبراء لبيان صلاحيته للنشر.
- ١٨- يشترط على طلبة الدراسات العليا فضلاً عن الشروط السابقة جلب ما يثبت موافقة الاستاذ المشرف على البحث وفق النموذج المعتمد في المجلة.
- ١٩- يحصل الباحث على مستل واحد لبحثه، ونسخة من المجلة، وإذا رغب في الحصول على نسخة أخرى فعليه شراؤها بسعر (١٥) الف دينار.
- ٢٠- تعبر الأبحاث المنشورة في المجلة عن آراء أصحابها لا عن رأي المجلة.
- ٢١- ترسل البحوث على العنوان الآتي: (بغداد - شارع فلسطين المركز الوطني لعلوم القرآن)
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- ٢٢- لا تلتزم المجلة بنشر البحوث التي تُخلُّ بشروط من هذه الشروط .





محتوى العدد (١١) المجلد الثاني السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦م

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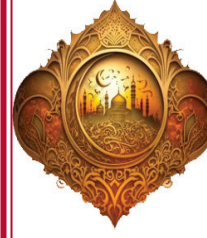
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فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية العدد (١١) المجلد الثاني
السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م



Diasporic Identity, Border Surveillance and Postcolonial Belonging in Lisa Halliday's Asymmetry

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السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١١)





Abstract

This study investigates the construction of diasporic identity through a critical approach grounded in postcolonial thought and recent British–American literary discourse. Particular attention is given to the section entitled “Madness,” where the narrative follows the temporary detention of Amar Jaafari, an Iraqi–American economist. The analysis explores how the novel articulates questions of mobility, belonging, hybrid subjectivity, and racialized control within the geopolitical climate shaped by post–9/11 security regimes. Drawing on contemporary diaspora scholarship, the paper proposes that the novel operates as a literary challenge to hegemonic assumptions surrounding terrorism, national security, and cultural legitimacy. Its tripartite composition: “Folly,” “Madness,” and “Desert” produces a deliberate structural imbalance that parallels unequal relations of authority between institutional surveillance systems and racialized individuals. Through close reading informed by postcolonial feminist inquiry and intersectional analysis, the study demonstrates that the text exposes the continued vulnerability of Arab and Muslim diasporic subjects, showing that social privilege, formal citizenship, and educational capital do not necessarily prevent exclusion under securitized political conditions. The article further contributes to postcolonial literary criticism by expanding current discussion of the novel and situating diasporic inquiry within intensified contemporary border governance and counterterror discourse.

Keywords: Asymmetry, diasporic identity, transnational subjectivity, racialized surveillance, postcolonial literary criticism

Introduction :

Since its release in 2018, Lisa Halliday’s *Asymmetry* has gained recognition as a very important piece of contemporary American fiction because of its formal innovation and intellectual complexity. The book has received many critical reviews and it was often listed among most distinguished works. Organized into three uneven parts: *Folly*, *Madness*, and *Desert*, the text builds a narrative architecture that is deliberately fragmented and resists to be coherent immediately. *Folly* examines an unequal relation between Alice, a young assistant, and an old famous novelist who resembles Philip Roth, while *Madness* tracks the experience of Amar Jaafari, an Iraqi–American economist detained at the Heathrow Airport. The final section, *Desert*, shows a short radio dialogue that makes the novel’s structure more complex. Although the scholars have



focused on metafiction and literary inheritance, especially in Folly, the second part remains less examined in relation to the diaspora and surveillance of the racialized subjects.

The present research responds for this absence by analyzing Asymmetry using the key concepts from postcolonialism and diaspora studies. It suggests that Madness acts like a literary intervention against those narratives of post-9/11 that connect the security and political suspicion with Muslim identities. Through Amar Jaafari's detention, the novel reveals how power of institutions continues to build Arab subjects inside the racialized frameworks. Furthermore, the formal asymmetry of the text—visible in the length of narrative and shift of perspective—functions not only as an experiment of aesthetics, but as a structural reflection of the power relations that define the diasporic life under border control. Halliday exposes “the problem with the idea that history repeats itself is that when it isn't making us wiser it's making us complacent. We should have learned something from Yugoslavia, Bosnia, and Somalia, yes.” (Halliday, 2018, p. 198).

This research contributes to the postcolonial literary studies in several ways. First, it provides a reading of a novel that received limited attention in this specific framework. Second, it expands the diaspora studies by examining the identity under conditions of the post-9/11 border governance. Third, it demonstrates how the fiction uses structural imbalance to describe the realities of the diasporic life. Finally, the study enters the debates about representation, especially the ethical problems of narrating the experiences of the displacement and the unequal access to voice.

2.1 Postcolonial Approaches to Representation and Power

Postcolonial theory constitutes a major critical framework to examine the ways literary texts engage with the enduring consequences of colonial rule. These consequences are deep. It relates particularly to structures of authority and cultural domination, and how subjectivity is formed in the postcolonial contexts. Scholars can investigate how the formerly colonized communities articulate their identity. They negotiate historical marginalization. Also, they construct forms of agency within the contemporary global realities. A central contribution to this field emerges from Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978). This work exposed how the Western epistemological systems produced the East as a discursive construct. The East became subject to classification, interpretation, and also



control. Said demonstrated that representation is not a neutral descriptive practice. Instead, it is an instrument closely tied to political power and imperial authority. Within this framework, Orientalist discourse established a hierarchical opposition. The West appeared rational and modern. In contrast, the East was repeatedly framed as culturally inferior, irrational, and even dangerous. Such representational patterns served to justify the imperial intervention in the past. Moreover, they continue to influence the modern political and cultural narratives today. We see this relevance especially in the post- 9/11 discourses. There, Arab and Muslim identities are frequently interpreted through the revived security-oriented stereotypes. These reproduce the earlier colonial imaginaries.. Hillady illustrates to the communal thinking of the West about itself: “We ride too high on deceptive notions of power and security and control and then when it all comes crashing down on us the low is made deeper by the high. By its precipitousness, but also by the humiliation, you feel for having failed to see the plummet coming...lulled by years of relative peace and prosperity we settle into micromanaging our lives with our fancy technologies and custom interest rates and eleven different kinds of milk”. (Halliday, 2018, p. 216).

Postcolonial scholarship further argues that colonialism extended beyond the territorial domination. It included production of knowledge and regulation of cultural consciousness. Colonial power shaped the systems of meaning. Through these systems, colonized populations interpreted both self and society. For this reason, we must understand decolonization as a process that exceeds the formal political liberation. In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s formulation (1986) genuine decolonization requires transformation of the inherited mental structures. He calls this the decolonizing the mind (1986). This process involves resistance to internalized colonial assumptions and the reassertion of marginalized epistemologies. Literary production occupies a significant position in this intellectual project. This is because postcolonial writing often intervenes against the dominant ideological narratives. It generates alternative modes of interpretation. In this regard, literary texts may function as a counter-hegemonic discourse. They are capable of questioning inherited representations and making visible the silenced perspectives. Recent developments in postcolonial theory have moved away from the rigid colonizer/colonized binaries. Now, scholars look toward more fluid understandings of hybridity and mobility. They discuss transna-



tional interconnection. Contemporary critics emphasize that postcolonial identity is rarely unified. Rather, it is formed through a continuous negotiation across the overlapping cultural, historical, and political locations. This perspective is particularly productive in the diaspora studies. Individuals often inhabit multiple affiliations simultaneously. Belonging remains provisional and contested (Bromley, 2017).

2.2 Diaspora Studies and Transnational Identity

Diaspora studies examine how dispersed communities keep attachments to the home places while they establish social and political lives in the new geography. Earlier scholarship was usually framing diaspora through exile and the collective trauma however, more recent theories have expanded upon this by acknowledging the productive dimensions of the subjectivity. (Bhabha, 1994).

In this regard, Pokharel (2020) explains that the field moved from historical condition toward a mode of consciousness shaped by memory and the transnational affiliations.

Recent theoretical discussions give much importance to the transnationalism. This highlights the capacity of subjects to stay active across the state borders and engage in more than one social space at one time. Such approach questions the nation-centered models that treat the nation-state as the exclusive frame. Instead, identities emerge through the relational networks. Within this perspective, Abdin et al. (2025) examine the postcolonial transnational displacement as a continuous process where individuals reconstruct the identity by negotiating many cultural and political contexts.

Several concerns organize the contemporary scholarship. Most significant are the belonging and displacement. This is what Maxey (2006) describes as the "strange suspension." Here, subjects exist in overlapping affiliations without the complete integration. Memory and homeland stay central to this consciousness. The homeland is an imagined site of the emotional attachment even when return is restricted or no longer desired by the subject. Generational location also complicates the identity. The first-generation migrants face different pressures from later generations who are born in host societies, as discussed by Bromley (2017).

Discussion

3.1 Asymmetry within Contemporary Diasporic Literary Discourse

Lisa Halliday's *Asymmetry* can be interpreted within the wider field of the contemporary diasporic fiction. This is because the book addresses



central concerns which are associated with transnational subjectivity and hybrid cultural positioning. Also, it discusses about unstable forms of belonging across the geopolitical borders. While the novel is authored by American writer and associated with American literary production, the section named *Madness* unfolds mostly in London. Specifically, it happens within the institutional space of the Heathrow Airport where the immigration procedures and border regulation become the central narrative forces. Through such setting, text enters into direct dialogue with concerns that have occupied British postcolonial and diasporic writing, especially regarding surveillance and exclusion. In this respect, its thematic orientation and narrative construction reveal the affinities with works produced by writers like Hanif Kureishi, Zadie Smith, and Kamila Shamsie.

Recent diasporic fiction relies frequently on the experimental narrative modes to articulate discontinuities. These are associated with the displacement and multilayered identity formation. Biswas (2025) argues that fragmented identity constitutes a defining feature of such writing, with discontinuous textual organization functioning as a literary equivalent of the diasporic fracture. Similarly, Bromley (2017) explains that contemporary diasporic narratives generate alternative representational models. These are capable of moving beyond reductive categories and resisting inherited mechanisms of othering. Such formal departures indicate that conventional realist narration often proves insufficient for expressing the unstable character of the diasporic existence. Therefore, making formal experimentation an essential literary response.

Within this framework, *Asymmetry* shows similar formal tendencies through its tripartite composition and the indirect relations established among three sections. Instead of clarifying the connections linking *Folly*, *Madness*, and *Desert*, the novel leaves these relations open. This requires the interpretive participation from reader in order to trace internal correspondences and thematic imbalance. This structural indeterminacy parallels the diasporic subject formation itself. Here, identity emerges through movement across disconnected social locations rather than through linear continuity. In this sense, the novel formally embodies what Morve et al. (2023) describe as the "third space," a discursive zone in which meaning is produced through negotiation and relational instability rather than the predetermined coherence.

2 Constructing Diasporic Subjectivity in *Madness*: Amar Jaafari under



Institutional Detention

Amar Jaafari presents a complex articulation about second-generation diasporic subjectivity. As he is Californian-born son of the Iraqi immigrants, his position reflects what Bromley (2017) conceptualizes as a post-emigrant condition. In this situation, legal belonging to country of birth does not eliminate social processes of exclusion or symbolic marginalization. Although Amar possesses formal American citizenship, his experience at the Heathrow Airport demonstrates that nationality alone cannot neutralize forms of racialized suspicion. This suspicion is directed toward individuals associated with the politically marked origins in post-9/11 security context. His American passport, professional status as an economist and linguistic competence fail to prevent his identification as suspect. It is because his Iraqi ancestry and Muslim-associated name continue to frame institutional perceptions of his identity.

Within the novel, belonging and displacement are not separate phases but concurrent dimensions of the existence. Amar's biography is deeply rooted in United States through education and professional integration. However, his Iraqi familial background remains constitutive of personal consciousness. Family memory and transnational affiliation contribute to a selfhood that cannot be reduced to single national frame. Therefore, his experience corresponds to what Aman et al (2025) describe as a liminal position situated between processes of incorporation and affective attachment to the inherited origins. The detention episode at Heathrow functions as concentrated representation of the diasporic dislocation. Confinement operates at physical level and symbolic level. Amar becomes suspended within a bureaucratic space that destabilizes his assumed civic belonging. The repetitive questioning directed toward his Iraqi relatives and religious background places him in a position where ordinary mobility becomes conditional. Such institutional interrogation reflects Maxey's (2006) formulation of strange suspension. Consequently, the diasporic existence remains exposed to the interruption and deferred recognition. Amar's character demonstrates layered hybridity commonly associated with postcolonial diasporic formation. His daily movement across multiple cultural registers illustrates an ability to inhabit different social codes. Professional participation in American corporate life coexists with the inherited Iraqi family practices. Western literary forms intersect with Arabic poetic references. This produces an identity shaped through ongoing interaction. This dynamic corresponds to



what Morve et al. (2023) identify as the third space, where cultural meaning emerges through negotiation across intersecting traditions. At the same time, the narrative does not idealize hybridity as seamless coexistence. Amar repeatedly encounters forms of estrangement in both national contexts. In American environment, Iraqi origin remains socially legible as difference and activates stereotypical readings. In Iraq, by contrast, his American socialization and secular habits create distance from relatives. This dual tension reflects identity instability discussed by Nisar et al. (2021) where diasporic individuals experience incomplete attachment to both host society and ancestral homeland. The text therefore presents hybridity as unstable process marked by contradiction. Amar's relation to Islam further intensifies this. Although he comes from Muslim family background, religious practice does not occupy central place in his adult self-definition. He understands himself primarily through secular orientation. Nevertheless, external institutions continue to interpret him through inherited religious categorization. The questions posed by immigration authorities demonstrate how complex identities become narrowed. They use administrative frameworks that privilege simplified markers over lived subjectivity.

3 Memory, Homeland, and Transnational Consciousness

Inside the diasporic subjectivity of Amar, memory operates as fundamental apparatus for cognition and emotion by which the belonging is always negotiated. In this regard, we might understand the memory through Khandare's (2025) formulation about a psychological form of "home", one that provides continuity of the self and the symbolic stability when the territorial rootedness is becoming uncertain. While staying in the detention space, Amar's mind often moves. It shifts from the interrogation room to the Baghdad childhood scenes, family stories, and market smells, or scenes marked by social disruption. These memories do not function merely as the sentimental return to the past. Rather, they reveal an affectively complex engagement with homeland where attachment remains inseparable from the historical burden and the discomfort.

The story constructs memory via the discontinuous movement of time. It emphasizes the fragmentation over the chronological coherence. Such things occur because the recollections emerge by associative links, which are prompted by the sensory perception or situational tension, instead of the sequential narration. This temporal dislocation corre-



sponds to what Zacharias (2014) describes as the diasporic “in-between world”. In this world, the temporal boundaries between past and the present remain permeable. It allows multiple locations to coexist within the consciousness. Therefore, the linear temporality is replaced by recursive movement across the spatial registers.

The relationship of Amar to Iraq as a homeland is shaped additionally by the history of the conflict and instability. His memory includes domestic rituals. It also includes the images of the war and suffering of the relatives who continued to live in Baghdad. Through this duality, the novel resists the idealized construction of the homeland as stable source of the authenticity or the uncomplicated belonging. Instead, the homeland appears as a historically contested space. It is marked by the trauma and political violence, while nevertheless remaining indispensable to the formation of the diasporic identity.

Intergenerational Configurations of Diasporic Subjectivity

Amar’s identity, as a person born in United States from Iraqi immigrant parents, places him within framework of second-generation diaspora. This specific location shapes his sense for belonging through a set of social and cultural tensions. As Bromley (2017) explains, later generations in the diasporic communities often encounter exclusion that persists despite of legal citizenship. The novel reflects this condition. Amar’s experience shows that formal citizenship does not remove the processes of racialized categorization. He holds American nationality by birth. However, institutional perceptions continue to associate him with the foreignness because of Iraqi background and his Muslim name.

Inside diaspora studies, second-generation subjects are often understood as negotiating the overlapping cultural systems. Bahmanpour (2010) conceptualizes this condition through the notions of hybridity and liminality. These are very visible in Amar’s formation. His relationship with Iraq is not grounded in the uninterrupted lived experience. Instead, it is constructed through parental transmission and family memory. Also childhood visits to Baghdad. Consequently, his attachment for Iraq emerges indirectly. It is mediated by inherited narratives and symbolic affiliations rather than continuous residence. At the same period, his primary socialization happens in the American environment. This produces a layered consciousness. This orientation corresponds to what Aman et al. (2025) identify as liminal condition situated between the assimilation and nostalgic affiliation.



The narrative further foregrounds the intergenerational variation in Amar's household. It contrasts his experience with his parents as first-generation migrants. Their connection to Iraq stays more immediate. It is sustained through the ongoing communication with relatives and religious observances. Amar's relation to these practices is less fixed. While he remains involved in family traditions, his outlook reflects secular tendencies and the broader American cultural influences. Such variation illustrates pattern in diaspora scholarship. Successive generations develop the differentiated modes of cultural attachment. They negotiate identity through the degrees of continuity and selective affiliation.

5 Institutional Surveillance and Racialized Security in the Post-9/11 Context

Amar is detained at the Heathrow Airport. This event constitutes a very important narrative moment where the novel *Asymmetry* examines how racialized surveillance and security work after the eleven of September. Through this specific episode, the book demonstrates how the contemporary border regimes function by assigning the suspicion to bodies based on racial signifiers instead of the demonstrable evidence. Amar's treatment illustrates that institutional surveillance practices frequently target the individuals. These are people whose names or religious associations correspond to the pre-established security assumptions regardless of their legal status. Halliday describes this interrogation process as administrative but also very intrusive. The official procedures intersect with private questioning. He must discuss about his family in Iraq and his views on the U.S. foreign policy. This indicates that bureaucratic authority extends into the ideological examination. In this way, the process positions him in a framework of the continuous suspicion. Here, innocence must be repeatedly demonstrated rather than presumed. Such procedures correspond to what G ven (2025) conceptualizes as racialized systems of exclusion. In these systems, institutional power identifies subjects as culturally external and politically suspect. Halliday further exposes the Western logic through the statement: "Exceptionalism is only a problem when it is used to justify bad policies. ignorance is a problem. complacency is a problem" (Halliday, 2018, 81). The detention reveals psychological consequences. It creates a sustained identity-based unease that goes beyond the immediate discomfort of the confinement. In this regard, Amar experiences what Nisar et al. (2021) describe as anxieties of identity. This is manifested through a heightened awareness of self-pre-



sentation and the realization that external perception is always shaped by racial categorization. His reflections indicate a sad truth. Neither academic achievement nor professional status can neutralize the vulnerability from the markers of difference. The narrative further connects this detention to the geopolitical climate of the War on Terror. His journey to Iraqi Kurdistan is motivated by family, but it becomes interpreted through a securitized lens. This lens collapses complex identities into simplified threat categories. The suspicion of the immigration officers reflects a wider discourse. In this discourse, Iraqi and Muslim identities are associated with the terrorism through the generalized assumptions. This mechanism directly recalls Said's concept of Orientalism. In this concept, the heterogeneous societies are reduced to the fixed representations to sustain Western narratives.

6 Fragmented Temporality and Nonlinear Narrative Construction

Inside the novel *Madness*, the temporal dislocation is functioning as a primary narrative mechanism. The text is constantly shifting between the confinement of Amar at the Heathrow Airport and the recollections from different geographical moments. This nonlinear structure reflects what Zacharias (2014) identifies as a characteristic for the diasporic consciousness. In this state, "past and present constantly interpenetrate" and the linear temporal progression gives way to a recursive movement between times. It mirrors the psychological experience of Amar. As he waits in detention, his mind moves by association between the present circumstances and the memories triggered by sensory details or the questions of immigration officials. This temporal disruption serves several functions. Firstly, it creates a psychological realism. It represents how the consciousness is operating under the stress instead of following a chronological order. Secondly, it shows how memory functions in the diasporic identity formation. Past experiences remain actively present. Thirdly, it challenges the linear narratives about immigration and the integration. Usually, these suggest a straight progression from the homeland to host country, or from foreign to American. Instead, the novel shows identity as involving a constant movement. There is no final arrival at a stable belonging. Such structural fragmentation also corresponds to what Khandare (2025) characterizes as a fragmented narrative mode for the postcolonial subjectivity. These repeated transitions between the Iraq and California produce a layered narrative composition. It avoids a singular perspective. In this aspect, the text reflects the form of



fractured selfhood identified by Biswas (2025). Here, the diasporic identity emerges not as a fixed coherence but as a shifting configuration that is shaped by the context and the contradiction.

The Ethics of Representation: Halliday's Authorial Position

The Asymmetry illustrates a main debate in the literary ethics today. It is very important to examine how writers represent identities that are not their own. One specific issue comes from Lisa Halliday's decision to write "Madness" from the perspective of Amar Jaafari. He is an Iraqi-American man whose life is under the racialized surveillance and suspicion after 9/11. This narrative choice has caused many academic discussions about the authorial legitimacy and the political results of speaking for people with different social locations (Goyal, 2002, 63). Halliday herself mentions a specific psychological state for creativity: "I once heard a filmmaker say that in order to be truly creative a person must be in possession of four things: irony, melancholy, a sense of competition, and boredom" (Halliday, 2018, p. 129).

Many scholars believe that the literary representation is more ethical when writers discuss about the social experiences that match their own history. From this angle Halliday's character Amar is seen as part of the cultural appropriation debate. This view emphasizes "own voices." It argues that the stories of marginalized groups have more authenticity if the authors come from those same communities. So, the Iraqi-American stories are thought to have more credibility if written by Iraqi-American authors.

However, another critical position exists. It says the literature must go beyond the limits of the biography. If fiction is only about the autobiography, the intellectual possibilities will become too small. So, the ethical writing is not just about the author's identity. It is about the method: does the writer use the research and avoid the stereotypes? The question is not if Halliday can write about Amar, but if she does it with enough depth. Halliday states that she:

"Another was that I was constantly trying to shoehorn characters into each other's lives, planting them on street corners or in cafes together so that they could talk. So that they could explain things to each other, from across the great human divide" (Halliday, p. 213, 2018).

The book is self-aware of these problems. In "Desert," the radio interview creates more ambiguity about who owns the story. Moreover, the link between "Folly" and "Madness" forces the reader to think. How does



the fiction handle the ethical responsibility when it crosses the social differences?

Conclusion:

This research examines how the diasporic identity is constructed in the Lisa Halliday's *Asymmetry* by using postcolonial perspectives and diaspora scholarship, thus responding to a lack of the sustained critical attention for this work. Through the close reading and concepts of cultural hybridity and racialized surveillance, this analysis has demonstrated that *Asymmetry*, specifically in section "Madness," creates a complex challenge to post-9/11 discourses about the terrorism and national security. The book shows identity as a dynamic thing. It is a layered condition which resists the simple classification. Using the character Amar Jaafari, Halliday discusses about the hybrid position of second-generation subjects; these people live in many cultures but remain vulnerable to racialized markers despite their legal citizenship and professional status. Amar's detention at the Heathrow Airport reveals how the security structures continue to use selective surveillance based on the ethnic background rather than the reality. This study contributes for postcolonial literary criticism and diaspora studies by showing that these frameworks are relevant for contemporary American fiction. Moreover, it highlights the novel's focus on the memory and homeland, while it also examines how the non-linear narration shapes the diasporic experience. Finally, the study participates in the broader scholarly discussions regarding the ethical implications of narrating the experiences across the cultural differences.

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فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية العدد (١١) المجلد الثاني
السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م

Website address

White Dome Magazine
Republic of Iraq
Baghdad / Bab Al-Muadham
Opposite the Ministry of Health
Department of Research and Studies

Communications

managing editor

07739183761

P.O. Box: 33001

International standard number

ISSN3005_5830

Deposit number

In the House of Books and Documents (1127)

For the year 2023

e-mail

Email

off reserch@sed.gov.iq

hus65in@gmail.com



السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١١)



فصلية تُعنى بالبحوث والدراسات الإنسانية والاجتماعية العدد (١١) المجلد الثاني
السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م



السنة الثالثة ذي القعدة ١٤٤٧ هـ آيار ٢٠٢٦ م العدد (١١)



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