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Arab Canadian Writing: Remapping Home

par

Najla Bahri

Département d'études anglaises

Faculté des arts et des sciences

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Université de Montréal

Faculté des études supérieures

Ce mémoire intitulé:

Arab Canadian Writing: Remapping Home

Présenté par:

Najla Bahri

A été évalué par un jury composé des personnes suivantes:

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Abstract

This thesis studies the fiction of several Arab Canadian writers, writers who are, to my sense, quite representative of the Arab Canadian literary community. More specifically, I discuss *Le printemps Peut Attendre* by the Egyptian woman writer Andrée Dahan, *Les Jardins de Cristal* and "L'Inconnue" by the Algerian woman writer Nadia Ghalem, *The Confusion of Stones* by the novelist of Lebanese origins Marwan Hassan, and *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* and *Chronicle of the Flying Egyptian in Canada* by Saad Elkhadem, an Egyptian novelist and a literary critic. In this thesis, I deal with issues of immigration, relocation, remapping and home, and have therefore selected writers whose texts speak to these concerns. I argue that the notion of home is necessary as well as flexible. Despite the decentring effect of immigration and the resulting feeling of loss and alienation, there is a need to feel at home in the new space. In order to be effective, the strategies of remapping have to stem from a differentiation in one's conceptions of both home and space. Hence, home is not a concrete concept, and it is not space-bound either. Home is rather a feeling of belonging and ease in a certain environment.

My first concern is conceptual, as I attempt to do a brief review of what has been argued in relation to ethnic/ minority/ immigrant writings within the Canadian academic context. In doing so, I rely on the views of specific Canadian critics such as Linda Hutcheon, Joseph Pivato, Janice Kulyk Keefer and Enoch Padolsky. I then turn to the different works of fiction and discuss the problem of immigration, a major issue in the majority of the works

studied. Addressing the issue of immigration leads me to study that of in-betweeness. In fact, one of the first challenges facing any immigrant is to go beyond the situation of in-betweeness and the feeling of loss. I show that not all means of adaptation are effective or successful. Hence, strategies like introversion or ghettoization prove to be more of a refuge than a real solution to the problem.

Drawing upon the research of Michael Keith and Steve Pile on questions of space, I suggest that remapping constitutes a prerequisite for any possibility of settlement and belonging. I also argue that the notion of home is a complex one. In fact, home is not a concrete entity but rather an abstract one which is constructed through a whole range of values and codes. Hence, remapping proves to be a process of inscribing one's values on the space concerned in order to make it familiar and to belong to it.

Finally, I argue that the notion of home is intrinsically related to the notion of identity, in the sense that a flexible idea of one's identity facilitates the process of relocation and helps the subject to feel at home.

Résumé de Synthèse

Dans ce mémoire, j'étudie les œuvres de certains auteurs arabo-canadiens, qui, à mon sens, représente la communauté littéraire arabo-canadienne. Plus précisément, j'étudie *Le printemps Peut Attendre* d'Andrée Dahan, une romancière égyptienne, *Les Jardins de Cristal* et "L'Inconnue" de l'écrivaine algérienne Nadia Ghalem, *The Confusion of Stones* de l'écrivain d'origine libanaise Marwan Hassan, et *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* et *Chronicle of the Flying Egyptian in Canada* du romancier et critique égyptien Saad Elkhadem. Dans ce mémoire, je travaille sur les thèmes de délocalisation, lieu d'appartenance et reconfiguration territoriale. Par conséquent, mon choix d'auteurs s'est fait en fonction des thèmes en question.

Je maintiens que la notion de lieu d'appartenance est à la fois indispensable et flexible. En dépit de l'effet de la décentralisation et le sentiment d'aliénation qui en résulte, se sentir chez soi dans le nouvel espace est un besoin indéniable pour l'immigré. Afin d'être efficace, les stratégies de reconfiguration territoriales doivent être basées sur une différenciation conceptuelle entre la notion d'appartenance et celle de l'espace. Ainsi, le lieu d'appartenance n'est pas une entité concrète, ni reliée à l'espace. Ce lieu est un sentiment d'appartenance avant tout.

Mon premier intérêt est terminologique. En effet, je passe brièvement en revue les idées avancées dans le contexte académique canadien sur l'écriture ethnique/ minoritaire/ immigrante. En faisant cela, je me base sur les écrits de critiques canadiens tels que Linda Hutcheon, Joseph Pivato, Janice Kulyk Keefer et Enoch Padolsky.

Je me concentre ensuite sur les œuvres en questions et étudie le problème d'immigration qui constitue une problématique majeure dans la plupart des œuvres étudiées. Je passe ensuite à discuter du sentiment de tiraillement et d'aliénation. En effet, je maintiens que toutes les stratégies d'adaptation ne sont pas efficaces. Des stratégies comme l'introversion et la ghettoïsation relèvent plus du refuge que de vraie solution au problème.

M'inspirant des écrits de Michael Keith et Steve Pile sur les questions reliées à l'espace, je suggère que la reconfiguration du lieu d'appartenance constitue une condition préalable pour se sentir chez soi. Je soutiens aussi que la notion de lieu d'appartenance est abstraite, et qu'elle est fondée sur tout un ordre de codes et de valeurs. Pour appartenir à un lieu, cela devrait passer par inscrire ces codes et valeurs sur ce lieu afin de le rendre familier.

Enfin, je maintiens que la notion d'appartenance est reliée à celle de l'identité, dans le sens q'une idée flexible de l'identité facilite le processus de reconfiguration du chez soi.

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Introduction

The massive wave of immigrants to Canada between the fifties and sixties has irrevocably changed the Canadian human landscape into a multi-ethnic one. This has affected the cultural field, as well as the literary one. It goes without saying that any minority group has its own cultural, literary and linguistic traditions that it brings along and transposes onto the Canadian scene. Yet, the Canadian literary institutions took time to cope with the changing landscape of the Canadian literary scene, and to acknowledge the presence of minority or ethnic literature. In fact, Canadian literature has always been seen as either English or French. In his introduction to *Contrasts: Essays on Italian Canadian Writing,* Joseph Pivato argues that, as late as the 1970s, ethnic, or minority writing was not yet acknowledged as part of Canadian literature. In this context, he cites Raymond August who argues that "there is no place for ethnic writing in Canadian culture. The quaint folk writing of immigrant groups should not be encouraged because the results could be cultural ghettoes" (28).

In his article "Canadian Ethnic Minority Literature in English," Enoch Padolsky alludes to the same problem that marked the Canadian literary institutions for so long: "twenty or thirty years ago literature in English Canada consisted primarily of writings by British Canadian writers and a few individuals from a small number of Canadian ethnic minority groups (e.g. Icelandic, Jewish, Ukrainian)" (361). Unlike Pivato, Padolsky has the merit of addressing the issue without being categorical or simplistic. In fact, Padolsky goes on to say that the situation is changing now, as there is a rising interest on the part of Canadian literary institutions in the literature of minorities. He

adds that, "Today, Canadian literature reflects a much broader proportion of a changing Canadian society and both the number of writers and the group experiences represented have expanded dramatically" (361).

In fact, it is through the writings of critics like Pivato, Padolsky, Linda Hutcheon, and Smaro Kamboureli that there is a rising consciousness on the part of Canadian literary institutions about the presence of other voices on the Canadian literary scene, and about the necessity of giving them space for expression. It is in the same spirit that Linda Hutcheon publishes her work *Other Solitudes: Canadian Multicultural Fictions,* an anthology which includes a number of interviews and short stories by different minority writers. In her introduction to this volume, Hutcheon argues that there is a need to reconsider one's binary conceptions of Canadian literature and culture, meaning French and English. This is already alluded to in her choice of the title. By "Other solitudes," Hutcheon alludes to "McLennan's earlier designation of Canada as 'two solitudes' in 1945." Hutcheon argues that this designation is no longer valid given that as "the multiracial, pluri-ethnic nature of Canada is an undeniable reality" (2). Since then, several anthologies on multicultural Canadian literature have been published. I can cite *Echo: Essays on other Literatures,* published in 1994, where Joseph Pivato discusses the problem of multicultural writing in Canada, and more specifically, Italian Canadian writing. In 1996, Winfried Siemerling publishes *Writing Ethnicity,* an anthology of literary articles discussing minority writing. In the same year, Smaro Kamboureli publishes *Making a Difference*, an anthology of fiction and poetry by ethnic Canadian writers. In 1998, Christl Verduyn publishes

Literary Pluralities, and in 2001, Suzanne Giguère publishes *Passeurs Culturels,* an anthology of interviews by ethnic Canadian writers. Hence, there is a rising awareness about the multi-ethnic nature of the Canadian literary scene, and there is a clear willingness on the part of critics to render this reality, whether in the reviews or anthologies published. But when it comes to comparing the different literary communities among themselves, one notices a difference in the status acquired on the institutional literary scene, or within the reading public. For example, the status achieved by Italian Canadian writers is different from that achieved by the Arab Canadians. When I first thought of writing my thesis on Arab Canadian writing, the first question I heard on the part of colleagues was "Is there such a thing?". In fact, the Arab Canadian literary community is one of the least known and diffused in Canada. But this is not the only reason behind their inaudibility, and inaccessibility to the Canadian reading public.

In her article, "Arabic Canadian Writing: Overview and Preliminary Bibliography," Elizabeth Dahab addresses this inaudibility and inaccessibility. Dahab argues that there is a discrepancy between the qualitative and quantitative performances of Arab Canadian writers on the one hand, and the recognition accorded them by the literary institutions and the reading public on the other. As Dahab points out, "Arabic Canadian writing originated in the early 1970s" (100). As for the number of writers, she counts no less than thirty-five. Throughout her article, Dahab tries to understand why, after three decades of literary activity, Arab Canadian writers are still not known on a national scale. For example, she cites several conferences held at the national

level on minority writing and comparative literatures, from which Arab Canadian literature was simply absent. This was the case for example in 1988 during the "Literatures of Lesser Diffusion Conference" (100). She also refers to "the books commissioned in the 1980s by the Canadian government on literatures of national minorities, including Hungarian (1987), Australian (1992), Asian (1983), Urdu (1988), Hispanic (1988) . . ." (101). Dahab goes on to look at the critical reviews written about Arab Canadian literature, and comes to the same conclusion. Rarely has anything been written on this subject, apart from some reviews published here and there by "non-mainstream publishing houses", or "written by fellow Arabic scholars" (102).

Dahab raises a number of questions which she does not answer. For example, she does not provide her readers with a valid reason for the inaudibility of Arab Canadian writers. In my view, Dahab underestimates the recent settlement of the Arab community in Canada, which is, in my sense, one of the most important reasons behind the problems she discusses. In fact, compared to the Italians or Chinese, the Arabs represent a new community in Canada. This is important, since time is needed to settle and establish one's literary traditions in the country.

I think also that the situation is not as dramatic as Dahab suggests. In *Making a Difference: Canadian Multiethnic Literature*, published in 1996, Smaro Kamboureli includes two works by two Arab Canadian authors, Saad Elkhadem and Marwan Hassan. In the twelfth volume of *Tessera,* published in 1992, three short stories by three Arab Canadian women writers are published, plus a critical review written by Christl Verduyn on Nadine Ltaif. Last and not

least, in *Passeurs Culturels: une Littérature en Mutation,* Suzanne Giguère publishes three interviews done with three Arab Canadian writers: Nadia Ghalem, Mona Latif Ghattas and Naïm Kattan. This does not contradict the fact that there is a lot to be done for Arab Canadian literature to have a better status on the Canadian literary scene, but it shows that they are on their ways. On the academic level, Naïm Kattan and Hédi Bouraoui have been included in courses on French Canadian literature. To my knowledge, this has not been done yet in literature courses in English, but I think that it is by working on this literature in-depth that things will change.

Hence, my thesis studies Arab Canadian writing in order to participate in the effort done to promote this field and make it known on the literary and academic context, as well as among the reading public. My work will be different from the few reviews and anthologies published on Arab Canadian literature since I will go beyond the stage of introducing this field, and will attempt to do a critical exploration of the subject in terms of key problematics in specific literary texts. More precisely, I will deal with issues of immigration, relocation and the notions of home and identity. I will start by dealing with the reasons behind immigration in the different works studied. More often than not, immigration is seen as a refuge from the difficult economic and social situation marking the reality of many Arab countries. I will then move on to study the disparity between the dream of a better life associated with immigration, and the hard reality encountered in the host country as well as the feeling of alienation and in-betweeness resulting from this disparity. Different means of adaptation are thus adopted by the

by the immigrant in order to go beyond this tearing feeling of alienation. Some means, such as introversion or ghettoization, prove to be a failure, as they are more of a refuge than real solutions. I then study the notion of relocation. In fact, the process of remapping one's new space proves to be a necessity for the immigrant, as the notion of belonging is intrinsic to the psychological balance of the subject. Through this point, I attempt to argue that the notion of home is not static, as it is conventionally believed. Home is rather an idea of being at ease and establishing belonging to a certain space. Hence, the necessity of the notion of home is as important as its flexibility. Finally I argue that both notions of home and identity are interconnected, in the sense that a flexible and complex understanding of one's identity is helpful and even necessary to relocate oneself in a different environment and be able to establish a belonging towards that space. My choice of the works to study has been difficult, but ultimately it has been based on the concerns expressed in the works. In fact, Arab Canadian writing is diverse enough to include various human concerns, from immigration to love. Sometimes, the questions discussed have nothing to do with the origins of the authors. Hence, I choose works that speak to my thematic concerns discussed above. This does not limit the corpus of Arab Canadian writing to dealing with questions of immigration and identity.

My corpus will be as representative as possible in order to render the diversity of the field I am studying. I will focus on the works of four writers, Andrée Dahan, Saad Elkhadem, Nadia Ghalem and Marwan Hassan. Two are men and two are women. Two of these four writers, Andrée Dahan and Saad

Elkhadem are Egyptian; Nadia Ghalem is Algerian while Marwan Hassan is Lebanese. Whereas Elkhadem and Hassan write in English, Dahan and Ghalem write in French. I am aware of the heterogeneity of the field I study, but in my thesis, I choose not to address national, linguistic or gender differences and treat instead my corpus as a relatively homogeneous one. In fact, to address such issues is beyond the scope of my work at this level.

Andrée Dahan is an Egyptian female writer who comes to Canada to pursue her graduate studies in French literature at the end of the sixties. After obtaining her degree, she settles in Québec where she starts a career as a professor of literature. She is also a novelist and a book-reviewer for some Canadian and Egyptian journals. She has won the literary prize Le Signet d'Or in 1994 for her novel *L'Exil Aux Portes du Paradis.* In my thesis, I will study her earlier and equally important novel *Le Printemps Peut Attendre,* published in 1985. In this novel, Maya, the female protagonist, is a young Egyptian woman who leaves Egypt for Canada dreaming of a better life. Maya, who is a well-reputed biology teacher in Egypt, leaves success, stability and family and follows her sense of adventure, not doubting at all that, thanks to her competence, she will regain all this and even more in Canada. Upon her arrival in Canada, Maya is very rapidly disillusioned, as she realizes that the reality she has to face has nothing to do with her expectations or dreams. Maya is unable to find a job in her speciality and works as a substitute-teacher. Her pedagogical competences are questioned by her school principal and colleagues, while she has communication problems with her students. Maya's inability to adapt to her new environment is total, which pushes her to

opt for introversion and in-ward retreat. The end remains ambiguous, as readers are not sure whether Maya comes out of the tragic car accident alive, or dead.

Saad Elkhadem is also an Egyptian intellectual who immigrates to Canada in the sixties. Next to holding a professorship at the University of New Brunswick in German studies, Elkhadem is a literary critic, a short story writer and the author of several literary encyclopaedias. He writes in Arabic, English and German. In this thesis, I study *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* and *Chronicle of the Flying Egyptian in Canada,* published respectively in 1990 and 1991. In these short stories, or what Elkhadem calls "micronovels", the author traces the itinerary of Hassan Gum'a, an Egyptian intellectual who immigrates to Canada. In *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* the narrator addresses the internal problems that his protagonist faces while still in Egypt, mainly poverty, economic depression, social injustice and political bigotry. In *Chronicle of the Flying Egyptian in Canada,* which is a continuation of the previous work, the narrator relates the adventures and misadventures of Gum'a once in Canada. Once again, he encounters difficulties in adapting to his new environment. He also faces intolerance and realizes that injustice is everywhere, not only in Egypt.

The third author I include in my work is Nadia Ghalem, an Algerian woman writer who comes to settle in Canada. Ghalem works as a journalist, short film director and is also quite active as a novelist and short-story writer. In 1995, she wins the francophone prize Credif for her novel *La Rose des Sables.* In my paper, I study both *Les Jardins de Cristal* (1981), and

"L'Inconnue" (1992). In the first novel, Chafia, the female protagonist, struggles to go beyond her mental depression which affects her as a result of the trauma of war she witnessed in Algeria and the uprootedness she experiences after her immigration to Canada. Thanks to her force of character and especially to the help of her family, Chafia comes to love her new country and to accept her new life. In "L'Inconnue," the unnamed protagonist is an Algerian young woman who divides her dwelling between Alger, Paris and Montreal. Her open-mindedness as well as her flexibility makes her adopt a complex view of her self and identity, so that she feels at home wherever she goes.

Marwan Hassan is the only Canadian-born writer among the four. He is of Lebanese origin. He is a literary critic as well as a fiction writer. *The Confusion of Stones,* which I study in this thesis, is actually a collection of two short stories, "The Confusion of Stones" and "Intelligence". In the first short story, the narrator traces the itinerary of Falah Azlam, a young Lebanese peasant who is forced to flee war in Lebanon and to come to Canada. The narrator addresses Falah's problems before and after immigration: his attachment to his country, his sense of severance at leaving it, and the consequent alienation he faces in his host one. In "Intelligence", the protagonist is a Canadian-born surgeon of a Lebanese origin. On a visit to his parent's country, Lebanon, he realizes that he is caught in a situation of in-betweeness as far as his identity and belongings are concerned.

In this thesis, I will begin with the question of terminology. Thus far, I have been using terms like minority writing, ethnic writing and immigrant

writing relatively unproblematically. I will discuss these appellations from a theoretical point of view, examine their connotations and explain why I have chosen some terms over others. In doing so, I will rely on the works of Canadian critics such as Linda Hutcheon, Enoch Padolsky and Joseph Pivato who have worked on the issues of multiculturalism and minorities within the Canadian literary context. I will also address the reasons for immigration, that is to say I will look at the pre-immigration stages. In this context, I will study what I call the notion of "internal exile". In many of the works I study, for example, "The Confusion of Stones" or *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* there is a feeling of unease within one's native country which is tantamount to "internal exile" and which pushes subjects towards immigration. This alienation within familiar surroundings suggests, albeit partially, Bhabha's concept of the "unhomely", referred to in his article "The World and the Home." The notion of unhomeliness is relevant to my thesis in the sense that it disrupts the conventional binary understanding of "here" and "there", or "home" and "world" as distinct, separate and homogeneous entities. According to Bhabha, internal exile will be more complicated when the immigrant arrives in the host country only to reckon with the unhomely in the new setting.

In my second chapter, I deal with the shock of the immigrant upon arriving at his/ her destination. More often than not, the discrepancy between the dream and the reality proves traumatising for the immigrant. This is especially clear in Andrée Dahan's *Le Printemps Peut Attendre* as I mentioned earlier. I then study the situation of in-betweeness that the majority

of the protagonists find themselves caught in. In doing so, I use Bhabah's concept of "in-betweeness" and especially Martina Ghosh-Schellohorn take on it. In this context, I argue that this situation of in-betweeness engenders a feeling of loss within immigrant subjects which strengthens their alienation. Camilleri's social theories on immigration and immigrants explain the different strategies adopted by immigrants to come out of this situation of in-betweeness. Discussing these different strategies, like introversion, ghettoization and nostalgia, I also rely on the ideas of some Canadian writers, mainly Neil Bissoodath and Naim Kattan. In this part, I argue that such strategies prove to be inadequate as they do not solve the problem but tend to evade it.

In the third chapter, I deal with issues of home, space and remapping. In doing so, I use mainly Michael Keith and Steve Pile's theory on themes of space and remapping. I argue that there is a need for the process of remapping in order to feel at home and move beyond the stage of uneasiness and in-betweeness. I look at the different works studied in order to figure out how these strategies vary from one context to the other. I then address the notion of home from a theoretical perspective, and argue that home is not so much a fixed or concrete notion as an idea that can be reinvented and relocated in time and space. Home is the liminal zone that should not be confused for the dwelling space or the homeland. As Heidegger points out in "Building Dwelling Thinking", the only abode that one can be said to inhabit is the nomadism of thought, the idea of the home. In other words, while one builds homes, one does not necessarily dwell in them, but in the spacing between the

concept and its concretization. I finally argue that the notion of identity is indissociable from that of home, and that there is a need to have a complex and flexible idea of one's self and one's identity in order to be able to adapt to new contexts and situations.

Chapter One

Immigration

i

Arab Canadian writing falls within the larger field of hyphenated literature. I am using the term "hyphenated" provisionally, since it is, at this level, the only term encompassing all the different appellations assigned to the kind of literature I am studying. The notion of hyphenation is originally a political concept that is adopted within the Canadian context in order to define multicultural relations. In "Neither Here Nor There: Canadian Fiction by the Multicultural Generation", Carolyn Redl says that "hyphenated Canadians derive from the Multicultural Act and its subsidiary policies" (24). In fact, this policy is based on the notion of the tolerance and respect of the values and traditions of the countries of origin. Unlike in the United States, new comers to Canada are not asked to melt into the host society. They are defined and referred to both in terms of their "new Canadianness," as argues Redl, and of their origins. In her thesis entitled "The Question of Identity in Italian Canadian Fiction," Licia Canton argues:

> The hyphenated adjective best describes the individual whose specificity lies between two cultures. The adjective "Italian-Canadian" refers to that which is both Italian and Canadian, but more importantly to that which lies between these two terms . . . in this case, it is not a derogatory term, but merely the best available to describe that identity. (32)

Hence, the notion of hyphenation is enlarged. It is no longer restricted to the groups of people within the Canadian context who have double belongings,

but by extension, to everything that is relative to them, especially their literary productions, as it is the case in point here. Despite the fact that even the notion of hyphenation is largely controversial. I am using the term in its merely descriptive meaning, devoid of any connotation, as a temporary descriptive term alluding to the corpus of writing I am studying. In fact, Arab Canadian literature, much like Italian Canadian literature, or any other hyphenated Canadian literature, falls under a genre of literature that is subject to controversy in its appellation. This genre of literature is simultaneously called minority writing, ethnic writing and immigrant writing. I will try to discuss briefly these different appellations, and focus more precisely on the Canadian context, so that I can choose one appellation and justify its use.

In his book entitled *Echo: Essays on Other Literatures,* Joseph Pivato tries to trace the history of "minority writing" in Canada. In his book, he uses both the terms "minority" and "ethnic" interchangeably, and sometimes even accumulatively. He argues that "the writing of ethnic minorities has been with us for some time, but this literature has seldom been recognised as such" (56). From this, it becomes clear that the issue of appellation is a primary one, as naming creates the notion into existence. Pivato goes on to say that one of the first definitions of "ethnic" or "minority" writing is to define it as "the writing of new Canadians, that is distinct from that of French-Canadians and English-Canadians," and comments that "this is still our basic understanding of ethnic in Canada: a minority status in relation to English or French-Canadian societies" (57). In Pivato's analysis, the two terms are undifferentiated. I think that the notion "minority writing" differs from that

of "ethnic writing". I shall here start by defining the term minority in this context. In "Canadian Minority Writing and Acculturation Options," Enoch Padolsky starts his article by a quote about the connotations of the term minority.

> The terms majority/minority groups in the context of race relations are defined by unequal power rather than numeric differences. Minorities are groups which are in a subordinate position, dominated by groups which have the power to subjugate them to unequal treatment. Conversely, a majority group is the group that has the power to dominate (B. Singh Bolaria and Peter S. Li, *Racial Oppression in Canada,* 15). (600)

Hence, the word "minority" is a politically charged term, reminiscent of a long history of power struggle. Using this term to define a certain corpus of literature implies that there is a "majority literature" versus a "minority literature," and that they are classified in a hierarchical order, and marked by relations of supremacy and subordination.

"Ethnic literature" is also another term frequently used to name hyphenated literatures within the Canadian context. In her thesis, Licia Canton quotes Anthony Tamburri when he defines ethnic literature,

> By ethnic literature, I mean that type of writing which deals, contextually, with customs and behavioural patterns that the North American mindset may consider different from what it perceives as mainstream. The differences, I might add, may also manifest itself formalistically- the writer may not follow what has become accepted

> norms and conventions of literary creation, s/he may not produce what the dominant culture considers *good* literature (12-13). (19)

According to this definition, the term "ethnic" is also based on the notion of difference or otherness, which means that this kind of literature I am studying exists only dependently of the "norm," if norm there is, or of the conventional literature. In "Other Solitudes," Linda Hutcheon expresses her dissatisfaction with the term "ethnic", for the same reason. According to her, "the word 'ethnic' has always to do with the social positioning of the 'other' and is thus never free of relations of power and value" (Introduction 2). Linda Hutcheon also explains that "ethnic" comes from "nation or people," which should suggest that all Canadians are ethnic, including French and British, [and] that the fact that the word is not so used points to a "hierarchy of social and cultural privilege" (2). This leads me to exclude the term "ethnic writing" or "ethnic literature" from the range of possible appellations.

As for the term immigrant writing, it seems to be the most adequate appellation in this context, as it undermines the importance of the origin, or difference, or ethnic belonging, and stresses more the themes discussed as the common denominator between all these hyphenated literatures. In that case, immigrant writing becomes like travel literature, or science fiction, an independent genre standing by itself, not in need of being defined in terms of otherness or difference, or as a subordinate and inferior genre. But to do this, there is a need to understand the word "immigrant" or "immigration" in its large and metaphorical meaning. By immigrant, I do not mean literally someone who did the act of crossing the Canadian borders, but someone who

shares, for one reason or another, the interests of immigrants, someone who writes about immigrants and immigration, someone who, like Margaret Atwood, feels that, after all, "we are all immigrants to this place, even if we were born here" (Cited in Keefer 98). In "The Sacredness of Bridges: Writing Immigrant experience," Janice Kulyk Keefer says,

> What happens when the term immigrant is enlarged, or loosened from the borders imposed on it by too strict, too literal an application of factors of time and space? . . . To recognize that we are all immigrants, and that the term is a far more flexible, capacious, and ramiferous one than we have allowed it to be in the past is to de-stigmatize the word "immigrant", to valorize those to whom the term most insistently applies, to make of that status not something to be got through and forgotten, or hidden as quickly as possible, but rather something to be explored, its problematic features adumbrated. (99)

Hence, in this thesis, I will use the term "immigrant literature" or "immigrant writing" to speak about the corpus I am working on, that is Arab Canadian writing, and occasionally to any other hyphenated literature. This term, used in its loose and metaphorical meaning, will be free of the subordinated connotation associated with the terms "ethnic" or "minor" literatures. In this way, it will give me more freedom in dealing with my subject, as I will not be "on the defensive," a position that might be engendered by the use of the other terms mentioned. Finally, the term "immigrant" will allow me to explore the richness of the experience and the themes dealt with, and it will also be in direct link with the issues I will be studying in the different parts of

this paper. But the term immigration is sometimes cited interchangeably, and often confusingly, with the term exile. As these two terms are at the center of my focus in this paper, it becomes necessary to define them, and especially explain their different denotations and connotations.

One of the reasons for the confusion between these two terms comes from their relation to the ideas of movement and space. In the *Webster's Third International Dictionary,* immigration is defined as the act of "com[ing] into a country to dwell or settle . . . a country of which one is not a native for the purpose of permanent residence" (1130). The same dictionary defines the term exile as "a forced removal from one's native country, a banishment" (796). It is clear that in both definitions, we find terms related to the lexical fields of space and movement. But their importance as two key notions in this work goes beyond that. So, it becomes necessary to show the specificity of these two notions by comparing them to other, more neutral terms, related to the norms of space and movement. In *Migrancy, Culture, Identity*, Iain Chambers tries to establish a definition of the term immigration in relation to spatial mobility. For him, what differentiates immigration from travelling is that there is no possibility to return in the case of immigration, as it is "an impossible homecoming". He develops this idea when he states,

> To travel implies movement between two fixed positions, a site of departure, a point of arrival, the knowledge of an itinerary. It also intimates an eventual return, a potential homecoming. Migrancy, on the contrary, involves a movement in which neither the points of departure nor those of arrival are immutable or certain. (5)

When Chambers says that there is no homecoming, he means that it is impossible to go back to the native country and find it as it was left at a certain point in the past. Hallvard Dahlie shares Chambers' point of view in believing that, like immigration, exile denies any possibility of homecoming. In his book, *Varieties of Exile: The Canadian Experience*, he maintains that "the exile never goes home" (5). For Dahlie, exile represents a permanent situation, in the sense that, if ever there is a return, the whole notion of exile ceases to exist, and becomes a different notion. But the differences between the issues of immigration and exile, on the one hand, and any simple spatial movement, on the other, go beyond the speculative impossibility of homecoming.

A more important difference exists between the different notions of space discussed. To go back to the example used by Chambers, the space referred to in the idea of travel or tourism, is not the same space talked about in immigration or exile. The former is anonymous while the latter is familiar. In her article entitled "Space, Place, Land: Changing Concepts of territory in English and American Fiction," Aleida Assmann differentiates between these notions, and discusses the changing concepts of territory in American and English fiction. Assmann focuses on three major notions, that is space, place, and land. She explains,

> Spaces I take to be geographical and political domains that are created by boundaries: a wall, a fence, a frontier, a sea, a mountain range, and other delimiting and defining elements. The charting of such spaces is represented by maps, whose vocabulary consists of place names.

> Places, on the other hand, are marked by names and qualified by histories. In this respect, they are not unlike individuals. While place is invested with experience and history, *land* is invested with myth. The terms "land" and "place" both resonate with human aspirations, values, traditions and memories, whereas "space" is an abstract term used in contexts of warfare, construction, organization, administration, projection and negotiation. (58)

Despite the fact that Assmann implies a continuum between the three terms, she makes a clear distinction between place and land on the one hand, and space on the other. Assmann speaks about myth in relation to land. It is this mystification surrounding the idea of land that gives it its importance once it is a question of immigration or exile, as the left space is not *any* space, but is a land marked by its relation to time and history, and inscribed by certain codes and values. Thus, to immigrate is not only to move in space, but is primarily to leave one's own land, and move into a new space, marked by foreign and sometimes strange codes and values. It is this cultural change that gives immigration its connotations of displacement and disquiet.

ii

Before starting to discuss the different works of fiction in relation to the first theme of immigration, it is important to clarify that the experiences narrated in these different works of fiction correspond, to a great extent, to the personal experience of the authors. This is not to say that the works discussed are autobiographies, but they definitely bear autobiographical traits. Of course, I have in mind here Paul DeMan's "Autobiography as Defacement", in which he sees fiction as a potentially autobiographical adventure. Here, DeMan argues that there are always autobiographical elements behind any work of fiction. Likewise, any autobiographical work is definitely a work of fiction. This back and forth movement between fact and fiction is present in the works I study.

In *Subjectivity, Identity and the Body,* Sidonie Smith says that "autobiographical writing is always a gesture towards publicity, displaying before an impersonal public an individual interpretation of experience" (159). As I have mentioned earlier, Arab Canadian writing is a new and much unexplored field within the Canadian literary context. The aim of these writers in telling their stories, or any other stories, bearing traits of authenticity, goes beyond their private selves. The collective aim, lying ahead of the personal ones, is to represent and bring to focus, the existence of the Arab Canadian community. An attempt towards publicity, indeed, as Smith argues, but it is a communitarian one.

For her part, Thérèse Lesage- Vézina explores the issue of autobiographical writing from different perspectives, not necessarily the

literary ones, as she relies extensively on psychology to study the whereabouts of autobiography. Discussing the reasons pushing writers to write their autobiographies, she says, "le fait d'écrire son autobiographie permet à son auteur de se dépasser [et] d'avoir de la fierté pour ses origines" (25). In such a brief statement, Vézina condenses many interconnected ideas. In fact, autobiography enables the writers to look back to the past and review it in order to be able to move ahead and make a step into the future. It is also to establish a link between a former self and a desired self. In a sense, autobiographical writing permits one to write oneself into being. From this perspective, it allows the subject to go beyond himself/herself, as Vézina argues. But Vézina goes on to argue that autobiographical writing represents a way of dealing with, and coming to terms with a painful experience (28). And pain there is, indeed, in the works I am studying, especially in relation to the theme of immigration and its consequent feeling of loss and dislocation.

Immigration is also an inheritance, a legacy- you are born an immigrant even when born in Canada. To go back to Keefer's case, second generation immigrants are not officially seen as immigrants, but they, and do often, identify culturally, linguistically, and/or religiously with immigrants, among whom are their parents. Sometimes, they do not even have the choice, as they are often treated by society as immigrants because of their origins, and hence feel alienated. For example, in "The confusion of Stones", despite the fact that Marwan Hassan has not experienced immigration in the literal sense of the word, he relates the story of Falah Azlam, the Lebanese

immigrant to Canada, with amazing authenticity. In doing so, he draws on the experience of his parents, as they represent for him the first generation of immigrants. In fact, the story is situated in Baloul, the native village of his parents in Lebanon. This is reminiscent of Keefer's remark, when she says, "Why should the word 'immigrant' be applied to the experience of my mother, who left Poland in 1936, and not to myself, born sixteen years later in suburban Toronto?" (99). From this perspective, Marwan Hassan can be seen as a metaphorical immigrant.

The parallel between fact and fiction is much more obvious in the works of the other authors, as we notice the presence of several autobiographical elements marking these works of fiction. Despite the fact that none of them has declared his/her work to be an autobiography, Nadia Ghalem has acknowledges that she is narrating a personal experience. In all cases, readers with a minimum knowledge about the life and itinerary of these writers are able to discern and establish the link between the protagonists and their respective authors. For example, in *Les Jardins De Cristal*, Chafia, the protagonist, is largely reminiscent of Nadia Ghalem. Both are Algerian young women whose migratory itinerary takes them from Algeria to Paris, and from Paris to Montreal. Both are marked by the traumatising experience of war at home, and both struggle to find a meaning for female existence in a society where this is still not obvious. In *Passeurs Culturels: Une littérature en Mutation,* Nadia Ghalem says :

> J'ai essayé d'écrire un récit sur mon enfance avec pour toile de fond le contexte historique de la nuit coloniale, Je me suis appliquée à ne pas

> introduire de fiction, essayant d'être au plus près de la vérité. Une fois le récit terminé, je me suis rendu compte que j'avais écrit une fiction. Je venais de recréer, de réinventer, le pays de mon enfance. (83)

The same back and forth movement is present in Saad Elkhadem's work, introducing *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* Saad El-Gabalawi makes the same remark when he says:

> The protagonist's adventures in Canada reflect a strange mélange of fact and fiction; his actions and emotions are recurrently coloured and conditioned by the personal experiences of his creator, so that . . . it is sometimes almost impossible to draw a line of demarcation between them. (Introduction ii)

Hence, writers are drawing on their private lives to create these works of fiction. This may be due to my choice of the issues to discuss, which establishes a continuum between the writers' origins and their works.

iii

As immigration is a major focus in my thesis, around which the other themes revolve, I will deal, in the coming section, with the reasons behind immigration, or what I call, the pre-immigration state. I will start by discussing the works of Marwan Hassan, a Canadian-born writer from a Lebanese origin. In one of his short stories, "The confusion of Stones", Hassan relates the story of Fallah Azlam, a Lebanese peasant who immigrates to Canada. "The Confusion of Stones" is settled in Lebanon at the beginning of the eighties, a period highly marked by violence, as it coincides

with the Israeli invasion from without, while the civil war was tearing the country from within. Falah Azlam's village is not exempt from this violence. Falah's village is referred to as B***** in the novella, but most probably, it is Baloul, the native village of the writer's parents back in Lebanon, which is "a very old village" according to Hassan, who spends his summer vacations there (Hassan 1997: 68). In the novella, the village of Baloul is targeted by the Israeli aviation, as it undertakes a violent raid that kills a lot of civilians. Falah survives the raid, but his right hand is badly injured, and the whole of his family is dead. The raid creates in Falah a trauma that is reflected in his fragmented recollection of this violent event. The nurse who looks after him in the hospital gives a more coherent version of the raid, "there were many injured and killed in the bombing. It was a very heavy raid. They not only hit the village but the refugee camp. Hundreds have died or are injured" (14). Later, the nurse informs Falah of the death of his family members, "As I told you. They were all trapped in the house. And the house was bombed as you said. Your mother died in the hospital in Jezin. The others died in the house or were shot by Haddad's forces. It was a very heavy attack" (15). Wherever he turns, he is surrounded by violence, death and suffering.

As Falah tries to understand what happened to him, he looks at his hand which is "scarlet," and realizes that it "has been severed clean across the palm" (9). This amputation is symbolic of falah's forthcoming severance from his native land. After all this violence and horror, Falah no longer feels attached to his land, and feels alienated within his own homeland. Hence,

after such a traumatizing experience, and especially after the occupation of his village by the Israeli forces, Falah finds himself obliged to flee Baloul,

> Azlam thought to return to B***** for it was all the life he had known but this was an impossibility. Major Haddad's forces, backed by the Israelis, had occupied his village. Many of the peasants were dead, those who had survived were either injured or destitute, scattered about the Beka'a countryside or trapped in the bombed slums of the northern cities seeking aid from relatives in Lebanon or abroad. (18)

Falah's severance from his native place, foreshadowed by the severance of his hand, proves to be inevitable. Hence, he has no choice apart from leaving his village and seeking an elsewhere, away from war and violence.

Violence proves to be pervasive and far from being limited to one specific place. Upon his arrival to the city, Falah is immediately disillusioned about any hope of finding peace, as the same war and violence he fled in Baloul is also tearing Beirut apart,

> He arrived in the city of Beirut and squatted in a bombed-out building with fellow villagers. His own injury appeared minor among the multitude of mutilated refugees of the South and the Palestinians of the camps while the Beirutis continued their daily lives amid the Israeli bombings, explosions in a booby-trapped cars and endless sniper fire. (18-19)

War and violence are so persuasive in Falah's environment, so much so that it is the first subject of discussion between him and his colleagues at work.

Gathered around lunch, the discussion between Falah and his friends goes like this,

> Haddad's men had buried alive up to their necks the Palestinian children and women were left behind in a camp, hoping they would betray the whereabouts of the guerrillas . . . then one of the Israeli officers began to shout and threaten and said there are ways to open lips and unplug ears. Haddad's men then began to cut off ears slowly. (22-3)

Such tales of horror make Falah and his friends become more estranged in their environment. Hence, Falah is alienated in his own home country. His family killed, his home destroyed and his land occupied. Everything attaching him to the space surrounding him is erased. Thus, his native village, Baloul, as well as Beirut, the capital city, become strange and alienating places for him, where he is unable to find his landmarks. This alienation from one's own space, and the estrangement that Falah experiences while he is supposed to be in his homeland, will be the reason to make him consider immigration as a possible way out of this situation.

This pre-immigration experience has been common to a number of immigrants before they leave their homeland, and it has been one of the major causes leading them to leave. This situation is what Nasrin Rahimieh calls "internal exile" in her review of Naim Kattan's work. Being a Jewish Iraqi writer who immigrated to Canada during the sixties, Naim Kattan is one of the first Arab writers to produce in the Canadian context, and especially

one of the most prolific. In *Adieu Babylone,* Naim Kattan relates his personal experience through his protagonist; he speaks of his estrangement from his own country Iraq while still living in it, and of his experience of immigration. In this context, Nasrin Rahimieh in her article "Naim Kattan: Le discours Arabe and his Place in the Canadian Literary Discourse" says,

> Throughout *Adieu Babylone,* the protagonist speaks of linguistic exile in his homeland. To belong, he must imitate the accent of his Muslim compatriots. That is to say, for the protagonist, as for the young Kattan, the most conventional form of speech becomes a mark of internal exile (36).

Here, it is language that alienates the protagonist within his country, and makes him undergo this state of "internal exile." To go back to "The confusion of Stones", it is war and violence, and especially the occupation of his land by Israeli forces that makes Falah live in a situation of "internal exile". Whatever the reason, the result is the same, as this situation often leads to considering the prospect of immigration as an alternative to this alienation.

In Nadia Ghalem's *Les Jardins De Cristal,* it is once again war that forces Chafia, the female protagonist of the novel, to leave her native Algeria and come to Canada. Chafia recalls the traumatising experience of war and the atrocity of the French soldiers during the period of the resistance to the French occupation. She remembers how, when she was a child, soldiers terrorised the families in search of suspects,

> A Alger, ils sautaient par les balcons et défonçaient les portes. Ils me mettaient le canon du revolver sur la tempe. Je devais parler et garder mon calme . . . La maison était pleine d'enfants . . . Quand ils sont partis, j'ai ouvert la porte de la salle de bains où mon oncle s'était caché avec son ami . . . Si le soldat ouvre la porte, on est tous morts. On ne cache pas des suspects. (43)

This state of emergency has been the everyday life of Chafia and her family during her childhood in Algeria. She says that during that period, "la guerre jaillissait de partout en éclats de feu et de sang" (14). This life, marked by anxiety, horror and death becomes unbearable to Chafia, who dreams of freedom and security, "la liberté, sans la peur, sans l'angoisse" (20). Chafia's need for an elsewhere becomes vital. She says,

> Il me fallait un pays bien a moi et une vie aussi, comme une carte postale subtilement colorée, pastel, lumineuse, coincée quelque part derrière mon plexus, avec une face cachée plaquée sur mon cœur ouvert et l'autre face où s'inscrivent les milles morts que je n'ose pas encore déchiffrer à cause des clameurs et du bruit. (21)

Chafia's desire to have another country and another life is a desire to forget this present haunted by death and suffering, or to put it at bay, to hide it at the bottom of her memory and live as if it has never existed. Once again, we notice that, in this novel, the protagonist is alienated from her past and her homeland because of war and violence. But this is not the only reason for her alienation. She is also dissatisfied with the established patriarchal order that subjugates women in her native country. This is expressed throughout the

whole text, as the narrator goes back and forth between Chafia's past in Algeria, and present in Canada. For example, in an internal monologue, Chafia remembers her past, and addresses her mother in a sympathetic tone.

> Vos cris, mère . . . vos cris, vos histoires de vaisselle- cuisine- bébés- fatigue. Vos cris qui nous blessent les oreilles, parce que vous n'avez jamais eu le loisir de rêvasser. Vous faites partie des animaux domestiques de l'homme, de mon père. Vous êtes domestiquée. Vous ne vous révoltez même pas. J'espérais ne pas vous ressembler . . . Vous n'êtes jamais allée au bal ni au cinéma avec la conscience tranquille, et vous vous êtes privée de toutes les futilités qui adoucissent la vie laborieuse des femmes. (24-5)

Chafia disapproves this patriarchal order that subjugates women, and relegates them to a lower rank in society, where their whole existence is centred on family and the "domestic life" as she says. This disapproval makes her fearful of encountering the same fate as her mother, and of leading the same way of life as her. She says, "mon problème, c'est de continuer dans cette vie qui ressemble au destin de ma mère. Je ne voulais pas [d'une] vie de femme sans rime ni raison . . . séquestrée à l'amour maternel, conjugal, et autre devoir a propos desquels je n'avais pas été prévenue" (38), which is one of the reasons that led her to flee her life in Algeria and come to Canada, after the dream of a better life and a promising future.

In "L'inconnue", another short story by Nadia Ghalem, a first person narrator speaks about her migratory itinerary and her experiences as a female Arab immigrant from Algeria to Montreal, and passing by Paris. Khadidja,

one of the protagonist's friends, has the same problem as Chafia in *Les Jardins De Cristal,* for she fled Algeria because she refuses to obey the patriarchal order established and refused submission. In Canada, she works as a teacher to raise her only daughter, "elle avait eu cette enfant hors mariage, ce qui la condamnait a l'exil et la vindicte de tous les hommes de sa famille. Mais elle avait une belle assurance, cette assurance des gens qui arborent ostensiblement leur liberté si chèrement acquise (72). Khadidja has been forced into exile. In fact, with an illegitimate child, she had very little choice: either take her destiny in hand and try to seek her life elsewhere, or to face humiliation and be denied any form of social life for the rest of her existence.

In Saad Elkhadem's *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* we have no direct access to the protagonist's voice. His story is narrated after his death, and mediated through a supposed editor, who collects fragments and pieces related to Hassan Gumâ's life, writings and adventures in Egypt and Canada. Through this mediation, the protagonist's voice is stifled, as the editor allows himself on occasions to pass judgement on Hassan's way of life, behaviour and morals. From what the narrator says about Hassan, he was not happy with the way of life he was leading in Egypt. Addressing an Egyptian official at the embassy in Canada, Hassan tells him angrily, "We left the country because of your rudeness and came here to the land of courtesy and freedom to be relieved of your disgusting treatment" (Elkhadem 1990: 10). This statement reflects the protagonist's disgust with the political situation in the country. By "you", he means the government and the

officials. For example, "the Ministry of National guidance", which is in charge of all the media of communications in the country, is referred to as "the ministry of National Misguidance" (Elkhadem 1990: 3). In fact, the protagonist flees Egypt during the period of Nasser's regime, a period marked both by political oppression at the internal level, and national dishonour at the international one. Hassan calls Nasser "a self-serving impostor" (2), whose obsession with power makes him dare to treat his opponents in terrible ways. For example, he speaks about his brother who was incarcerated because of his political ideas, and then died in prison under mysterious circumstances (4). What added to this feeling of disillusion about any better future was the feeling of dishonour resulting from the defeat of the Egyptian army in 1967 by Israeli forces, a national defeat more commonly known as the "setback" or "naksah" in Arabic, which means more than setback, but depression, crisis, and catastrophe. This period is referred to in the text as a very bad and depressing one.

> What is the meaning of "setback", mother? . . . it means a disaster, my child! . . . Egypt passed through one of the most critical periods of its long, arduous, and wearisome history . . . it was the worst of epochs, and it was the hardest of ages . . . disgrace, ignominy, and chagrin; lies, falsehood, and slander, treachery, betrayal, and deception; perplexity, agitation, and perdition. (8)

The tone of the protagonist, as well as the accumulation of negative adjectives reflect his depression and his affected state of mind. The feeling of disillusion and dishonour are all the more bitter as Hassan thinks that this

defeat would not have happened if it had not been for Nasser's arrogance and tyranny. He holds him responsible for the "setback", as he abused his people's confidence, induced them into error and led them into an unbalanced war through arrogant and false propaganda (7).

In *Chronicle of The Flying Egyptian in Canada,* Hassan says that he was "raised in a house where women were degraded and children beaten, then grew up in a country whose cultured people were denied the freedom of speech and action, and whose intellectuals were chased away and thrown in jail" (Elkhadem 1991: 11). This statement shows that Hassan's reasons for being disillusioned with the country go beyond the political ones, to include even the social, as he is revolted against the social "narrow-mindedness", and the obsolete codes governing gender relations (3). Because of all these reasons, Hassan realizes that no choice is really left for him apart from considering immigration as an outlet, or as the translator and critic Saad El-Gabalawi says, he begins to develop "a desire to make a jump in the dark and seek greener pastures. In the midst of despair, he can descry a glimpse of hope, evoked by widespread stories about Egyptians who have achieved peace and prosperity in other parts of the world" (introduction 1990: iii). For Hassan, immigration becomes synonymous with life and hope, so much so that "when he receives the letter of provisional acceptance, the protagonist can hardly contain the joy that envelops his whole being, stimulated by the anticipation of freedom, the hope for luxury and the excitement of adventure" (Introduction 1990: iii).

Hence, as we notice through all these different examples, a feeling of an “internal exile” precedes every decision and movement on the part of the protagonists of the novels or short stories toward immigration. This situation of internal exile is marked by alienation from one’s own country and a feeling of estrangement. It is also marked, as we notice especially in Elkhadem’s work, by a sense of frustration. Immigration becomes seen as a refuge, a promise of hope and of better prospects for the future. In the second chapter of this thesis, I will look at immigration per se, that is, I will study the protagonists in the hosting country, and measure their degree of acceptance of their new home of residence. I will also study the disparity between their expectations and the reality, and what comes of it in terms of the situation of in-betweeness. Finally, I will focus on their strategies of remapping, that is, how they manage to make this country theirs.

Chapter Two

In-betweeness

i

As I suggested in the previous chapter, immigration constituted a refuge and a promise of hope for a better life for the protagonists of the different novels and short stories. In *Varieties of Exile: The Canadian Experience*, Hallvard Dalhie studies the idealization of the New World. For Dahlie, the perception of the "New World as a Paradise" goes back to the Renaissance period. At the same time, the "New World [was] celebrated in Utopian thought, it was seen as a potential paradise where one might live, if not as a noble savage, then even more advantageously as a gentleman in proper estate." He goes on to say "this perception of the New World as a paradise remains quite constant in the vision of most of the Old World exiles from the eighteenth century through to the twentieth century" (11). The reasons for this idealized vision may have varied throughout time, and the hopes and dreams nurtured may also have varied. This obsession with the New World remains the same, as well as its idealization, especially on the part of immigrants. But Dahlie continues his exploration of the idea, and argues that, more often than not, this New World has proved to be, experientially, "not paradise lost, but paradise manqué" (11).

This is the case for Maya, the female protagonist in *Le Printemps Peut Attendre.* Although a successful and well-reputed biology teacher in Egypt, Maya leaves everything behind her and decides to immigrate to Canada, taken by zeal for adventures and following the dream of a better life: "Avoir tout

quitté, Jean Lou, sa famille, tant d'amis, un pays, un poste; partir triomphalement en promettant aux uns et aux autres les détails de l'aventure, que, secrètement, on alliait à la réussite" (16). As this passage shows, for Maya, adventure in the New World is synonymous with success, especially since every detail points in this direction. Maya is so assured that a successful and brilliant future awaits her in Canada given the elitism of the selection process that she has to go through before being accepted into Canada (31). In fact, the high standards of selection are established by the immigration services in order to select the elite of the society. This pushes Maya to have ambitions and dreams about her career and life in Canada. All this proves to be illusory as soon as Maya arrives in Canada. First of all, her ego receives a shock, as she realizes that her past has no value or importance in the new country insofar as nobody acknowledges her experience and academic qualifications. She spends several months living with the hope of finding a job that corresponds to her training as a biology teacher. Maya has to accept the job of a substitute teacher not even in her field, but in commercial transactions, and continues at the same time to entertain the hope of finding a full time job as a biology teacher. Her hope fades slowly as time goes on, while she is unable to convince either the school director or her students or colleagues of her competence. The school director, Mrs Roy, is the most sceptical about her competence as a teacher : "Mme Roy la soupçonne de manquer d'autorité . . . lui dénie toutes qualités pédagogiques [et] la juge inapte a l'enseignement" (31). This makes Maya realize that she has to dissociate herself from her past, and start her life anew, and from nothing.

> Sait-elle seulement, Maya que son passé ne doit plus lui tenir de référence, qu'elle, l'immigrante trente ans, carrière réussie dans l'enseignement de la biologie, six ans d'expérience, ambitieuse, sélectionnée par le département d'immigration du Canada, triée sur le volet, enfin choisie en vertu de son passé, devait renoncer à son passé, mourir à une forme pour renaître à une autre. (31)

Despite her lucidity, Maya feels bitter and disillusioned, as she realizes the shocking disparity between the brilliant future she expected and the kind of problems she is encountering. Yet, her shock at her arrival to Canada is not only academic, it is also, and more importantly, a cultural shock that she receives and that is at the origin of her difficulties at school, as it hinders her communication with her students. She is unable to understand their vernacular Quebecois French so much so that she is accused of not speaking French by one of her students (83). Her inability to master her students stems also from their radical difference from her former students back in Egypt. One of Maya's students, Marielle, criticizes her and questions her teaching methods in the name of the whole class. Maya is intimidated by Marielle, a teenager in a woman's body, wearing sexy clothes and make-up, and having frivolous and seductive manners (37). Maya judges that such a woman might be acceptable in several other places, but absolutely not in a classroom, and cannot stop herself from comparing these students to her former students back in Egypt, whom she terribly misses.

Maya is visibly an immigrant for her students and colleagues, who notice her different accent, different colour of skin and different manners.

She does not feel at ease in this situation and wonders, "Comment peut-on ne pas paraître immigrant?" (82). Even the weather is not of much help for Maya, as she suffers from its extremity, and realizes that it has nothing to do with the romantic idea of the snow presented to tourists on calendars.

> Autour d'elle se déroulait le véritable scénario de l'hiver québécois. Au lieu des maisons, ça et là, joyeusement, tapies dans la neige, au lieu d'arbres ployant lourdement chargés, elle ne voyait que des blocs de briques, enveloppes par la nuit crayeuse et le vent sur les toits arrachant les derniers lambeaux de neige que la dernière averse avait laissée. Il y avait eu un rêve, il y a eu une réalité. (57)

Maya is all the more bitter as she realizes that this deduction about the disparity between the dream and the reality is extended to her whole existence in Canada. She is disillusioned about the weather, about her students, and her inability to have a successful career the way she had to in Egypt. With all these shocks, Maya loses her self-confidence, and starts doubting whether she made the right decision by coming, and whether she will succeed one day in adapting to this new society,

> Que deviens le vrai 'moi'? Où j'en suis? Où je vais? Je n'en sais rien. Je ne connais rien aux phases de l'adaptation . . . Il faut que je m'ajuste, car je me sens encore en dehors des autres avec pourtant la volonté . . . d'être récupérée et insérée dans le circuit. L'ultime effort de conciliation, dit-on, serait d'apprendre à rester riche de toute sa culture tout en s'ouvrant à celle des autres. La réalité est bien plus longue et plus pénible que cette phase en raccourci. (42)

In fact, the shocks that Maya receives upon her arrival in Canada shake her idea of herself. The different code of values adopted in her new environment, whether it is by her students, as we mentioned earlier, or even by her colleagues, who dare to search in her papers, under the pretext of "indirect inspection", deepen Maya's sense of dislocation and uprootedness. In this context, in "Relative(ly) Politic(al)s: Comparing (Examples) of Québec/ Canadian 'Ethnic' 'Immigrant' Writing," Christl Verduyn argues that in *Le Printemps Peut Attendre*,

> The school is a microcosm of Quebec society, and its norms and values. Maya is not given the chance to teach her speciality, biology, rather she is assigned a course on commercial transactions to be taught to a class of problem students. Symbolically, life (science), has been replaced by commerce for Maya. (215)

I think that Verduyn is right in understanding commerce from a symbolic perspective. Commerce, the metaphor for materialism par excellence, highlights the alienation that Maya encounters in the new society. As Verduyn argues, in Egypt, life for Maya had a humane side, which is symbolized by biology. The fact that she is assigned commercial transactions and is unable to fulfill herself while teaching this subject hints at her inability to accept the highly materialist side of the new culture.

Falah Azlam, Marwan Hassan's protagonist in "The Confusion of Stones" encounters the same crisis. Even before he leaves Lebanon, Falah is inculcated the ABC of the ideal behaviour on the part of an Arab immigrant

in Canada. Hytham, a learned Lebanese man who has apparently sojourned in Canada and is a friend of his uncle, tells him,

> There are only two things they hate more in Canada than Arab Muslims and that's Pakistanis and communists . . . and if you want one piece of advice: don't talk politics, Falah, especially Arab politics. It's the fastest way to lose a job. Before you know it everybody will be calling you camel-jockey and some foreman will have it in for you and you can kiss the job goodbye. Keep that farmer's nose of yours to the grindstone. (31)

In other words, Falah has to pass as an invisible man in Canada. Already, at the airport, Hytham's words are confirmed as Falah "endures an immigration check [resembling] an inquisitional search for heresy" (35). Falah's immediate reaction is to ask himself why he came to Canada in the first place, but he has no time to look for an answer as his uncle informs him that he has to start working "because the job he has secured for him as a janitor began the next day" (35). Falah faces the same fate at work. In fact, as his uncle takes him to the supervisor of maintenance, who will be his boss, this latter tells him as he gives him his uniform,

> Well, the uniform says Nick . . . he'll be working nights and won't be seeing much of anyone. The guy who had the uniform before was really Nicholas. . . Anyway, Nick is shorter and easier to say than Fa...Fa . . . Well, he won't mind if I call him nick. I can't say the other name anyway. Nobody'll know how to say it. (38)

Later, as Falah tries to protest, his uncle tells him, "your Arabic name is no use here . . . Don't worry about the name. Everybody calls me Joe. I let them now. I tried to get them to say Yusuf. They only laughed and called me useless in English" (39). This episode is symbolic enough, as it points to the dilemma confronting Arab immigrants. They have only two choices, either to accept an effacement of identity and fall into the anonymity of "Joe" and "Nick", or undergo the process of humiliation resulting from the prejudices and the stereotypes about Arabs, as the examples of the uncle and of Hytham previously show. Falah is also not at ease with the idea of wearing a uniform at work. Here again, his uncle tells him, "Everybody wears a uniform where they work. They like them . . . Why should you be any different" (39). The uniform is a metaphor for the uniformity of work, which is no more a space allowing for self-fulfillment and creativity, but rather a realm of mechanical production. Falah has to learn quickly that, unlike in his village, work in Toronto is far from being fulfilling or pleasurable, as its sole purpose is material gain. Falah learns from his uncle that "nothing else matters but work, [especially] when the winter comes. There is nothing else to do in this country but work and shovel snow" (40). Falah finds this idea hard to accept, given that he is used to establishing a human relation between himself and his space of work. Falah tells his uncle, "I never worked just for money, neither did you . . . It was our land. Our food. Our trees. I worked for us" (49). But the uncle thinks that money is the only food in Canada.

Falah, the peasant whose work in the open fields was more an opportunity to develop human relations with fellow peasants than anything else (22), is struck and even shocked as he discovers that, in his new environment, work is reduced to its quantitative value. Work is counted in hours. He has to make use of all his time and energy and have a second job in order to gain more money. Falah finds himself estranged from his previous self, transformed into an anonymous "Nick" and alienated from his work. He is also estranged from his uncle, whom he sees as a totally different person: "in Lebanon, the uncle had been generous with others, his feasts were always good and all welcome. He was without enemies or resentment. Falah found himself in the presence of a transformed person" (40). This change of attitude on the part of the uncle on the one hand, and Falah's refusal to follow his ideas on the other, leads to a number of clashes between uncle and nephew, one of the most important ones resulting from the uncle's insistence on taking Falah to a brothel. The experience proves to be traumatizing for Falah, who feels "repulsed by the glaring interior, humiliated and seized by an impulse for self-mutilation" (46). Falah reacts in this way, as he discovers another alienating dimension to his new life, a one he is not accustomed to when back in Lebanon. Falah is disgusted by these women, but also pities them, as their condition resembles his, in the sense that both undergo an alienation from their space of work, and are objectified and reduced to a marketable commodity. Falah refuses to embark in this process of objectification that people undergo in the city, when he tells his uncle, "I can only be with a woman I love" (46).

ii

In *Le Printemps Peut Attendre*, as in "The Confusion of Stones", feelings of alienation, estrangement and uprootedness are quasi-systematic consequences of exile. Immigrants find themselves in a situation of in-betweeness, torn between the country left behind and the longed-for and elusive host one. In *Migrancy, Culture, Identity,* Iain Chambers argues that "the migrant's sense of being rootless, of living between worlds, between a lost past and a non-integrated present, is perhaps the most fitting metaphor of this post-modern condition" (27). "Living between worlds" becomes an "acquired habit" for immigrants, according to Chambers. They are "simultaneously inside and outside, [living] at the intersections of histories and memories" (6).

Abourezk, Marwan Hassan's protagonist in "Intelligence" is the example par excellence of this post-modern condition of "in-betweeness". In fact, he is a Canadian-born citizen, but his parents are of Lebanese origin. Going on a visit to his parents' village back in Lebanon, the question about his origin or rather belonging becomes a leitmotif for Abourezk. Being asked constantly, "You are not from here?" (93/98), Abourezk's answers turn in cricles: "no, but . . . ," an answer as equivocal as his condition. When a porter asks Abourezk about his origins, he answers, "I'm from Canada, my parents are from here.

-Then, you are one of us.

-I suppose." (99)

Abourezk's belonging arouses so much curiosity that two secret agents are following him, trying to figure out his beliefs and loyalties. The situation is all the more aggravated as they mistake him for an American when he says that he is from North America, and for a Columbian when he says that he is from British Columbia (74). Abourezk's is intimidated by this attitude and decides to shorten his visit and go back to Canada. To his great shock, two agents stop him upon his arrival at Vancouver's airport and ask him to follow them for inspection, after he has cleared customs. Nobody cares when he argues that they are violating his rights (126). Hence, Abourezk's situation of in-betweeness puts him in an equivocal situation. It shakes his idea of himself, as he is never sure what to answer when asked about his origin, and it also affects his relation with others, as neither Canadians nor Lebanese accept to acknowledge him as fully belonging to them.

In her article "Spaced In-Between: Transitional Identity," Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn discusses this notion of "in-betweeness," and argues that this situation necessitates the pre-existence of two fixed and separate entities in time and space, that are different from each other (34). This idea may seem too obvious, and even redundant, but it is important so far as it calls our attention to a problematic which is inherent to the notion of in-betweeness. The subject "in-between" is literally suspended between these two fixed entities, and in this way he/ she threatens the sacrosanct notions of fixity and clarity. More specifically, he/ she threatens the conventional notion of

binarity, as argues Iain Chambers, when he says that the stranger, being an emblem for the in-between condition, "threatens the binary classification deployed in the construction of order, and introduces us to the uncanny displacement of ambiguity" (6).

Falah, in "The Confusion of Stones," is caught in-between, especially psychologically. This is reflected in the frequent use of flashbacks in the text. These flashbacks represent Falah's recollections and memories, which take him back to Lebanon. The opening scene of the novella is indeed a flashback, where falah's memory takes him back to his native country. While climbing up the steps at his work in Toronto, Falah remembers Lebanon.

> Climbing these steps, he ascends others…the double stairs in the hotel in Homs…the marble flight in the hotel off Marj Square in Damascus…the stone steps leading up to the communal fountain in his native village in the southern Latani valley…the series to the restaurants in Zahle where the water flow down the rocky cliffs…and the steps winding up from the souk to the road where the sheep and goats graze on the domes in Aleppo. (7-8)

The triggering act that led to this recollection is the climbing of steps, but the contrast between the two spaces where this act takes place is clear enough. Juxtaposed are the confining and claustrophobic space of his work on the one hand, and the open and natural space back in Lebanon on the other. This recollection not only establishes the contrast between these two spaces, but also reflects Falah's state of mind. It shows that, although he is in Toronto physically, spiritually and psychologically, he is in Latani, his native region.

This nostalgia is reflected not only in these recollections, but also in Falah's dreams. Falling asleep in a park, Falah dreams of Lebanon, "in a dream, he was in Lebanon tilling the fields with his uncle" (49). Here, it is the resemblance between the natural space of the park and that of the fields that triggers the dream, but it also shows that Falah's psyche is indelibly marked by his native space.

Even in his hopes and expectations, Falah is caught in between. He considers his stay in Toronto as temporary, a transitory period of exile that he is forced into and has to endure until war is over in Lebanon. Hence, he lives in the hope of going back home one day. When Tima proposes to teach him English, he refuses and says that he has no reason to do it, as he will go back to Lebanon, "as soon as the war is over in my country, I'll leave Canada. I'm not gonna be staying here" (47). This attitude stands in total contrast to that of the uncle, who has cut any link relating him to Lebanon, especially after Falah has joined him in Toronto. The uncle is also far from entertaining any nostalgia for his native country. On the contrary, Lebanon for him is associated with bitter experiences that he wants to erase from his mind. Explaining to Falah the reason for his anger, and apparently for his immigration, the uncle recollects in pain and bitterness how the woman he loved, Zainie, "was blown away like so much dust" in a bombing (43). If this traumatic experience severed Yusuf from his country, it also led to his loss of religious faith. In fact, Yusuf finds that life is too unjust and absurd for religion to have any meaning. Hence, in Canada, he lives totally disconnected from his native country, disillusioned with his religion and estranged from all

his past. Spending his life between his work during the day, and the bars and brothels during the night, the uncle has erased all the codes and values connecting him to his culture. Struck by this change in his uncle's behaviour, Falah realizes that the gap is widening between them, "the extremity of the uncle's loss of faith so exceeded Falah's own tense doubt that his homesickness and loneliness were compounded" (44). Falah is unable to follow his uncle in his radical attitude, and has no willingness to do so either. This makes him realize once more that he is torn between two realities.

iii

In-betweeness threatens not only the system, or the binary order of things, but more importantly, it threatens the exile, or the immigrant, as it is a condition that disrupts one's unified sense of self. Hence, different strategies are adopted by immigrants to cope with this situation of in-betweeness. In "Les Stratégies Identitaires Des Immigrés," Carmel Camilleri uses a sociological perspective to analyze the different strategies adopted by immigrants in order to cope with their new situation and the context in which they find themselves at their arrival in the host country. Camilleri divides immigrants into groups according to the strategy adopted. One of the first groups he discusses is the group which opts for total assimilation within the new culture, so that no difference, or at least no apparent one, can be discerned on the part of the host society. In this context, Camilleri says, "un

premier groupe de réactions consiste à éviter la mise en question." As he goes on to explain, "On peut se définir d'une manière permettant de ne pas se considérer comme étant la cible de la dépréciation . . . en abondonnant ses reférénces propres [et en adoptant] entièrement la culture de l'étranger" (34). This description applies perfectly to Falah's uncle, who, as we have just seen above, has severed any ties linking him to his native country. Yusuf is leading a life of an ordinary Canadian worker, spending his days between work and night clubs, and not seeking to mix with other members of his community. He has even lost his faith, which estranges him from his nephew and makes things harder for the latter. Yusuf is adopting the assimilationist attitude par excellence, as he sees that it is the only option left to him to survive, in front of the hostile attitude of his Canadian colleagues who mock his Arabic name, and of the horror associated with his past life in Lebanon.

In the case of Maya, for example, in *Le Prientemps Peut Attendre*, feeling uneasy and especially torn between her longed for Egypt on the one hand, and the dreamt about Canada on the other, she opts for nostalgia as a strategy of refuge. Whenever she has a problem, or encounters an obstacle in her new life in Canada, Maya retreats backward and digs into her past to find comfort and refuge in her memories of Egypt and her left behind country. Worn out after long days of looking for a job, and almost hopeless about any possibility of finding an adequate job in the near future, Maya longs for her native country, "Assise dans l'autobus, elle se prenait à son pays natal, en forme de pyramide sur la carte du monde, elle en ressentait si fortement l'éloignement, elle éprouvait un tel désir d'y retourner dans l'immédiat qu'elle

fermait les yeux parce que le sol se dérobait sous ses pieds, dangereusement, et qu'en elle s'emmêlaient les notions d'éspaces et de temps" (44). In another passage, again when she is depressed after a misunderstanding between her and Mrs. Roy, the school principal, Maya remembers once again Egypt, "Une porte s'ouvre sur le passé . . . un passé en carte postale, passé figé, passé figé, passé fixé mais somptueux, brodé d'or et de lumière, de cette lumière crue de midi qui flotte sur la mer. Voici la maison au bord des vacances. Son cœur bat au rythme des saisons" (33). This description goes on for several paragraphs, with the same oneiric dimension, for the description resembles more a dream than a real world. It is rather an idealized vision of the longed for country.

In *L'Ecrivain Migrant*, Naïm Kattan develops an idea that resembles Maya's case, for he says that exile and nostalgia can make the writer transform her native land into a mythic and oneiric land, and hence hinders the potential efforts at integration. This is indeed what happens to Maya, as she transforms Egypt, which becomes inaccessible in time and space, into a paradise from which she is severed. In *Imaginary Homelands,* Salman Rushdie acknowledges this, when he argues that, as an exile, he is always trying to recapture his lost past and recreate India in his writings. Once he has finished writing, Rushdie realizes that what he has created is "one version of India of all the hundreds of millions of possible versions" (10). Hence, this version of India is not the work of memory alone, but also of the imagination. In "Technologies of Ethnicity," Dawn Thompson discusses the notion of memory, and deconstructs its conventional meaning. She argues that "the

conventional understanding of memory as a storage place, focused on the past and providing coherence and continuity to a subject's identity, is the foundation for- and is thus subject to the same limitations as identity politics" (59). Thompson distinguishes between two types of memory, and quotes Nourbese Philip, who is her source for this differentiation. Both Thompson and Philip agree that there is, first, "nostalgic memory," which consists in reproducing the ethnic art in a new environment. This kind of memory, for these critics, "maintains tradition for tradition's sake" (59). The second type of memory is "performative memory." According to Philip and Thompson, this kind of memory impels to action". It is a memory that constitutes "the impetus for artists' attempts to build on what their individual cultures have passed on to them, in the possibility of creating something new" (16-17) (59).

In establishing this distinction, Thompson is addressing the notion of memory from its artistic manifestation. But I think that it applies to all memory in general. For example, in *Le Printemps Peut Attendre,* Maya opts for memory as a strategy of coping with her sense of dislocation and uprootedness. But the memory that is the matter of concern here is nostalgic memory and not performative memory. In fact, in remembering her past in Egypt, Maya is being nostalgic, in the sense that she regrets her left-behind Egypt and compares her happiness in Egypt to her misery and unease in Canada. I agree with Thompson on the fact that nostalgic memory is far from being helpful or productive. On the contrary, it keeps Maya in a static position, as it makes her look constantly backwards in terms of space and time. Hence, this nostalgia undermines Maya's possibilities at accepting her

new situation and integrating into her new environment. As I mentioned earlier, theoretically, Maya's educational and academic formation predisposes her to be the perfect kind of immigrant within Canada. With her advanced mastery of standard French and a good career as a teacher, Maya is not supposed to have major problems in accepting her new environment. It is her nostalgia that prevents her from going beyond her problems. The idealization of the lost country as explained by Naïm Kattan is not of much help for it keeps the immigrant caught in chimerical illusions of "paradise lost", as far as the native country is concerned.

Another strategy of coping with the sense of dislocation and loss, and the consequent situation of in-betweeness, is to opt for introversion. This is the case, for example, of Falah Azlam in "The Confusion of Stones". As we have noticed earlier, upon his arrival into Canada, Falah Azlam encounters a variety of problems that estrange him from his new environment, and even from himself and his uncle. Falah realizes that he has no choice but retreat inward and opt for introversion. Through this introversion, Falah tries to protect himself from the outside world that he finds threatening and alienating, but more importantly, through this introversion, he tries to create his own space, or rather to re-create his past native space. Ghettoization is the most direct manifestation of this introversion. Despite the fact that Falah does not choose to live in a ghetto-like area, he seems to be quite satisfied with his place of residence and does not try to move, even after his uncle's death. In fact, Falah lives with his uncle in "an older quarter of the city where many Italians and Portuguese lived" (36). Falah feels at ease within this milieu, and

between these people. Like him, they are all immigrants, poor and especially Mediterranean.

Mary Di Michele, in her article “Writers from Invisible Cities” discusses the notion of the ghetto. In this context, she says,

> What is a ghetto? Webster defines it in its secondary sense, as it has come to mean, as a quarter of a city in which members of a minority group live, especially because of social, legal, or economic pressure. To ghettoize, the verb, means to isolate in . . . a ghetto is not entirely bad- after all, it is a community, a support group. (38)

Despite the fact that Di Michele discusses this issue specifically in relation to minority writers, this quote is relevant to minorities in general. It is true that this Mediterranean group of immigrants acts as a community, especially towards the end of the novella, when Falah accepts Tima’s offer of company and friendship. This ghettoization is not only reflected in Falah’s place of residence, but also in the cafés and bars he frequents, like the Sicilian café or the Omar Khayyam bar (46).

Di Michele’s definition of ghettoization proves to be too positive when compared with Antonio Perotti’s definition. In “Y-t-Il Une Autre Issue Que L’Assimilation Ou La Ghettoisation?” Perotti studies the issue from a sociological perspective, and defines it in more negative terms : “La ghettoisation implique enferment sur soi, auto-défense et résistance face aux exclusions et divers rejets de la société environnante, marginalité et discrimination (échec social) et qui alimentent l’agressivité et l’hostilité

réciproque" (51). This is exactly what happens to Falah Azlam. Feeling alienated within the new Canadian context, and being forced into invisibility by his colleagues at work, as they are even unable to pronounce his name properly, introversion or ghettoization becomes for him a means of self-defense, as it is his only way of preserving his psychological integrity. In his book, entitled *Selling Illusions,* Neil Bissoondath criticizes this strategy, as he finds that it is much too facile a strategy to be of any help. It is rather far from bringing a solution to any given problem encountering an immigrant, or a minority. Bissoondath argues that it is not only the hosting culture that is responsible for this tendency toward introversion and ghettoization on the part of minority groups. On the contrary, he finds that these minority groups are much more responsible in "internalizing the categories established by dominant groups, and opting for a self-imposed "segregation" as a strategy of survival (Chanady 5). Bissoondath believes that this ghettoization, or introversion, is more of a constraint than a sign of cultural plurality. On the contrary, he sees it as hindering the possibility of social interaction and exchange, which he encourages, regardless of any origin or belonging. He makes it clear that, in saying so, he does not try to forget his origins and roots. On the contrary, he says, "what we never attempt to do is forget the homes of the past, for they too have shaped us" (27). What distinguishes Bissoondath from the other members of his community is not their attachment to their land or origin, as he is as proud of his origins as they. It is rather his flexibility and adaptability, which constitutes for him "a source of a

personal freedom that allows [him] to feel 'at home' in a variety of places and languages" (26).

Feeling at home for exiles and immigrants is a need that becomes more pressing with time. In fact, nostalgia, introversion and ghettoization prove to be a failure in terms of adaptation, at least as far as the protagonists in the works discussed are concerned. These tentative strategies turn out to be more constraints than tools of adaptation, as they block their subjects in the past and hinder their progress in the new society. In *L'Écrivain Migrant,* Naïm Kattan says that the appellation "immigrant" should only be transitory. It is a step that the new comer to the new society has to pass through and soon go beyond. This transitory step leads to a new start in life. In this sense, he says,

> Je crois, quant à moi, que le choix d'accepter une deuxième naissance libère, engage et permet un nouveau départ. L'écrivain commence alors par nommer le lieu premier, le dire, l'affirmer, pour qu'il ne devienne pas un arrière-plan . . . En ce qui me concerne, Montréal est ma ville. Elle comprend et intègre dans mon esprit Baghdad et Paris. (22)

Hence, Kattan stresses the need to make out of the new space a new home, or in other terms, to appropriate the new space, to re-map it and make it familiar, so that it becomes one's own.

In my next chapter, I will discuss the various strategies of remapping adopted by the different protagonists of the works studied. I will study the different ways of home-making, or more precisely, the means adopted by the immigrant subjects to appropriate their new spaces of immigration, so that

they make new homes out of them. I will also focus on the relationship between the notion of home and that of identity, and how they relate to each other, and especially how they affect each other.

Chapter Three

Remapping

i

As I argued at the end of my previous chapter, being an immigrant is a transitory status that places the concerned subjects in a situation of in-betweeness. There is need to go beyond that situation, feel at home and appropriate one's new space. In this chapter, I will study the responses of some of the protagonists of the novels studied in their new spaces and their means of remapping them.

In fact, notions of space and place have been the focus of several theorists who studied the notions from different perspectives. I will cite Michael Keith and Steve Pile, who focus on the notion of space in relation to the subject, and study their interaction. In *Place and the Politics of Identity,* they discuss the notion of mapping, and argue that,

> Unlike location, position and locality- which all refer to specific spaces- mapping is an active process whereby the locations, structures and internal relations of one space are deployed in another . . . There are many ways to map a given space- none automatic, all requiring a substantive translation from the mapped to the map . . . in so far as mapping involves exploration, selection, definition . . . the power to map can be closely entwined with the power of conquest and social control. (70)

Two of the ideas elaborated here are at the core of my discussion of the theme of space in this chapter. According to this definition, the notion of mapping is connoted with both action and control. In fact, mapping is related to action in

the sense that it is a process that entails a sort of interaction with one's space. From this perspective, space ceases to be a hazardous and given background. It is acted upon by a certain group of people so that it acquires meaning, and consequently gives meaning to their existence on that specific space. This appropriation of the space goes hand in hand with controlling the space and making it one's place. From here emerges the notion of control alluded to in Keith and Pile's definition. There is a necessity to control the space by the subjects acting upon it, so as to ensure one's belonging to it.

Although I am concerned with discussing the notion of remapping and identity in relation to immigration in this chapter, I will begin by defining the notion of mapping in order to show that the notion of a neutral space does not exist. What I mean, more precisely, is that the notion of space per se exists only theoretically. What exists concretely, on the other hand, is the notion of place. Here, I will have to go back to a duality alluded to in my first chapter, which is the duality of space/ place. In fact, a territory or a space bears always the identitary marks of a certain group of people, generally the people inhabiting it. It is this identity, inscribed on the space that makes of this territory *a place*.

In "Borders, Borderlands and Canadian Identity," Randy Williams Widdis says that, "Place is a space to which meaning has been ascribed (Carter, Donald and Squires, 1993: xii) and place [is] seen as the foundation of . . . identity (Eyles, 1985: 72). Widdis goes on to argue that "questions of identity are bound up with the spaces we inhabit and assign meaning to" (50). Widdis brings another key notion into focus here, which is the notion of

identity. In fact, the relation between space and identity is so strong that massacres have been carried out throughout the history of humanity in the name of space, or in some cases, because a certain space is, or has been inscribed at a certain point in time by the identity of a certain group of people, but is inhabited, at a later point in time, by a different one. Hence, a space is never neutral, or free from any signs of identity or the inscription of some specific codes. I will go back to discussing the notion of identity later in this chapter, but what I want to say now is that contrary to the conventional belief, a space is never mapped once and for all. On the contrary, a space can be mapped and remapped ad infinitum. Once again, I will be relying on Keith and Pile's work in relation to space, as I find it pertinent to my paper, and more precisely, to my discussion of the ideas of space. In fact, their theory is all the more interesting as they relate their discussion of space and place to the subjects concerned. In fact, Keith and Pile argue against the notion of a fixed space, with a homogeneous and fixed mapping, or what they call "the myth of spatial immanence". In refuting this belief, they say that there "is the notion, self evidently bizarre on close inspection, alarmingly common in much social description, that there is a *singular*, true reading of any specific landscape involved in the mediation of identity" (6). In arguing against one single "mapping," or what they call "reading of space," Keith and Pile follow the tracks of earlier theorists, especially in the field of feminism, postcolonial and diasporic studies, who have introduced this notion of remapping, and called for "rereading the space" in order to appropriate it, as it is a prerequisite for power and agency.

Remapping, then, refers to the different strategies employed by immigrants to appropriate their new space and make it their own, or more precisely, make it home. In the same article, Randy William Widdis defines remapping, or what he calls "place-making," as "the way all of us as human beings transform the places in which we live" (50).

From this perspective, the appropriation of the new space and remapping go through the inscription of one's codes and values upon this space, so that it becomes home. In discussing the notion of space, I rely also on Domenic Beneventi's research work in "Mapping Identity: Ethnic Self-Fashioning in Italian Canadian Literature." Beneventi's thesis speaks to my work, as we both address issues of Canadian immigrant writing. In his work, Beneventi addresses issues of remapping and explores the interaction between the subjects studied and their space. Drawing on Keith and Pile's work from a Canadian literary perspective in ways which I find both interesting and useful for my work, he discusses the notion of space in Italian Canadian literature, and argues that, for the dislocated subject, space is of primary importance. Hence, the Canadian space is marked by the ethnic imaginary, by "traces or memories of an absent space" (65). For Beneventi, present spaces become "marked with the traces of other spaces and other social realities" (60). Throughout his discussion, Beneventi asserts that the texts of these Italian Canadian writers engage in a continual "readings and re-readings of place" (62) as a way of appropriating the present space. Beneventi's discussion of space for immigrant subjects is both convincing and helpful, because the present space of the host culture remains foreign as long as it is not

appropriated. Appropriation suggests the inscription of one's own codes and values on this present space, namely the codes and values governing the space left behind.

ii

As I have already mentioned, one of the first and most direct manifestations of remapping is to inscribe one's codes and cultural signs upon the new space. Consider for example the strategies of remapping adopted by Falah Azlam in "The Confusion of Stones." One of the most remarkable cutural signs in this short story is the olive and the olive tree. The symbolism of the olive is quite relevant in this context. The coming scene is interesting from a symbolic point of view,

> [Falah] chewed slowly on the olive, then removed the stone from his mouth and stared at the waves on its brown surface. He wanted to step into the heart of this pit and be drowned, some jinn should trap him in the stone for a thousand years and when all this horror had passed he would be placed in the earth of the Latani and be reborn an olive tree that would live thousands of years. (41)

The olive acts here as a versatile symbol. The olive branch, for example, is internationally known to be a symbol for peace. Apart from that, the olive has a special significance for Mediterranean cultures, where it is a common plant that constitutes a basic ingredient in traditional food. But the olive is also, more importantly, a noble and sacred tree in Muslim culture. In this passage, the narrator plays on the peaceful connotation of the olive on the one hand,

and on its religious sacredness on the other. In fact, Falah gets a feeling of security that acts as a protection and refuge for him.

Nature serves also to procure Falah with the same feeling of security. Going on a walk to High Park, Falah feels comforted at the sight of a rock:

> The dusk was coming down. Azlam observed the right hand resting on a green and silver rock with the sensuous contours of a melon. His fingers ran across the surface searching out its features. He sat up on his haunches as if he were working in the vineyard, but remained motionless meditating on the sound of the woodpecker and contemplating the rock which reflected the hardness and symmetry of his own mind. The rock was a comfort. Possibly within it grew the image of the primordial plant from which all vegetation sprang. (49-50)

The stone acts here as a metonymy for nature. Falah's attraction to it and the sense of comfort it procures him stem from his close relation to nature. Falah seems to entertain a kind of umbilical relation to nature and soil, so much so that the severance of such a link shakes his inner psychological balance. The walk Falah undertakes to the park illustrates this relation. In fact, this walk is the first of its kind since Falah's arrival to Canada. Finding himself in a natural open space, Falah is at ease, his sense of harmony is restored, so much so that he falls asleep, "in the woods near a secluded brook, he lay down. The first red and yellow leaves of autumn crinkled under his leather jacket . . . He drifted into sleep while observing the outlines of the leaves" (49). It is clear here that Falah is at ease within nature, so much so that he feels at home. That

is why it is vital for him to inscribe the enclosed space of his room with things like the stone, or, as I will discuss later with flowers, so that it reminds him of home. In this context, in *Home Territories,* David Morley argues that,

> For the migrant in an alien environment the space of the domestic home carries a particularly strong affective change . . .their house often serves both as the focus of their emotional anxieties about the loss of their original homeland and as the idiom through which they try to articulate this sense of belonging to their new and old homes . . . Given their geographical displacement, the house comes to function particularly strongly as a sanctuary and nucleus of identity. (51)

Hence, for Falah, his house is the space that can be remodelled after the image of home. By inscribing his enclosed space in Canada with the natural elements, Falah is trying to re-create, even in an illusionary way, his lost village back in Lebanon.

Falah's attachment to the rural milieu he left behind unwillingly is reflected in his obsession with the land. After his uncle's death, Falah inherits a small amount of money that he wants to invest in buying land. This desire stems partly from a misconception about farming in Canada. As his lawyer tries to explain to him, "farming in this country is not like the Mediterranean" (57). But it is also an attempt on his part to compensate for the land he was deprived of. Despite the fact that Falah does not succeed in buying the land, I am quoting this passage to emphasize his attachment to nature. In fact, it is mainly through nature that Falah succeeds in remapping his urban space in Canada, and in making it "look like home." He becomes more attached to

natural landscapes, and feels at ease in going into nature. He uses natural elements to make of his inside space a familiar one. But he also uses traditional elements that act like codes and values from Lebanon in order to appropriate his new space in the new country.

After the death of his uncle, Tima, his neighbour, offers him flowers as a way of sympathizing with him and presenting her condolences and apologizes for doing so, as it is not the custom in his country (55). These flowers attract Falah's attention and turn it away from sorrow and mourning. Whenever a flower fades, he changes it so that he can keep the bouquet as long as possible. This becomes an amusing game for Falah, who looks at the bouquet and says, "Who is to say which is the first and eternal bloom and which are the new and dying ones" (58). These flowers acquire incredible significance for Falah, so much so that they become his sole concern. When at work, he is impatient to go back home, in order to "see the flowers' faces in the bedroom smiling out at him and sending the exploding fragrance . . . he longs to be in the presence of the daffodils" (59). These flowers pervade Falah's inner space, and become equated with home. For Falah, to go back home, is to go and smell the fragrance of the flowers and be in their presence. In "Home, Smell, Taste, Posture, Gleam," Margaret Morse discusses the relationship between the notion of home and the senses, and more precisely smell. In this context, she says,

> Feelings and memories linked to home are highly charged, if not with meaning, then with sense memories that began in childhood before the mastery of language. A fortuitous and fleeting smell, a spidery touch, a

> motion, a bitter taste- almost beyond our conscious ability to bid or concoct or recreate home is thus an evocation that is of this sensory world, ephemeral and potential in the least familiar. (63)

Morse goes on to comment specifically on the smell of flowers, "Pollen and flowers evoke long vanished smells that are in any case notoriously difficult to describe. For one thing . . . odour lacks an autonomous system of categorization: who can remember the smell of a rose without recalling the image" (64). Hence, senses, and more precisely, odour, establish a link between memory and home, in the sense that a smell, or a fragrance, becomes reminiscent of a lost and longed for home. This is the case of Falah Azlam, for whom the fragrance of the daffodils becomes associated with the feeling of security and belonging at home. Hence, the fragrance of the daffodils, once printed in Falah's memory, becomes an extension of home outside, and constitutes a protection and a source of security in the alienating milieu of work in which Falah finds himself. Through all these strategies, Falah succeeds in feeling at ease within his space, and in making it his own. He remodels it after the image of the desired home so that it becomes a marked place and a site of belonging.

iii

Nadia Ghalem's protagonist in "L'inconnue" attempts the same process of remapping. The unnamed protagonist's itinerary resembles that of

the writer who is always moving between Alger, Paris and Montreal. In order to feel at home in these three different places, the protagonist weaves a relationship with a group of women with whom she shares the same way of life and existence. Being established in Montreal, she goes on a visit to Paris and meets Khadija, a childhood friend with whom she shares a lot of childhood memories. Together, they go to visit a group of Algerian women who are pursuing their studies in Paris. It is the occasion to remember past memories and share present preoccupations. Together, they try to have fun and do some activities that, in spite of their simplicity, help them feel at home, since such activities are reminiscent of Algeria, their native country. Hence, acts like dancing and singing serve to make of the neutral space of the apartment in Paris a familiar space, a space suffused with cultural and identitary references. For example, together, the women sing a traditional song from the Algerian folklore,

> Doucement, la voix de khadija s'élève, nous lui répondons en choeur, c'est un chant ancien que nous modifions selon nos états d'âme. Mère, Ô mère dis-moi qui je suis . . . dis-moi pourquoi mon coeur et mon corps sont exilés de mon pays. Mère Ô ma douce mère, près de toi j'ai appris à filer et attendre mon bien aimé. Ô ma mère tu n'es pas révoltée et j'ai tout à faire, le sol se dérobe sous mes pieds. Mère, ma douce mère je n'ai plus de larmes pour pleurer. (78)

Such a traditional song serves to bring these women closer to each other by reminding them of their common experience. The fact of singing such a song

helps them exteriorize their suffering, which will make them later more open to share confidences.

Apart from dancing, singing and telling jokes, these women eat also together. Kheira, who is considered as a professional cook of traditional dishes, prepares dinner for the whole group. In "Les Nourritures de la Mémoire et de l'Identité," Estelle Masson discusses the role of food from a cultural perspective. She argues that eating does not only satisfy the biological need of nourishment. It has also a much more important symbolic function, as it relates people in time and space. In this context, she says,

> Les repas qui ponctuent la vie du groupe, qui lient les mangeurs entre eux, matérialisent aussi la continuité entre le passé et le présent. Ce lien entre individus et entre générations se dévoile par exemple dans l'attachement des individus à certains plats. Des plats qui sont la matérialisation de l'identité du groupe et sa mémoire réifiée. (279)

Kheira, Khadija and the rest of women meet around a table to savour traditional dishes that remind them of Algeria,

> Nous avons les mêmes goûts en ce qui concerne les côtelettes d'agneau au thym et à l'ail, la salade colorée, piments, concombres et tomates et surtout cette soupe si ancienne que nous appelons Harira et qui consiste a rôtir des cubes d'agneau avant d'y ajouter coriandre, carvi et tout ce que l'on veut de légumes frais ou secs. Puis enfin les gâteaux de semoules, dates, amandes et miel accompagnées de café à la vanille ou de thé à la menthe. (79)

This mint tea constitutes another occasion for the women to gather, discuss their preoccupations of immigrants, and share their laughter and difficulties. Through dancing, singing, eating and praying together, the group of women in "L'Inconnue" succeed in making out of their space of immigration in Paris a familiar one, and to feel at home. This feeling of being home stems from transcribing all theses codes and values upon this space, but, more importantly, it emanates from this solidarity that they succeed in establishing between them. In fact, in this short story, we notice that the protagonist has no problem in finding her anchorage and establishing a belonging in her space of immigration, whether it is Paris or Montreal.

In *Les Jardins de Cristal,* it is also affection and human bonding that help Chafia feel at home, with the difference that for Chafia, she takes really a long time to find her anchorage after a bitter and tearing feeling of loss. As soon as Chafia becomes reconciled with her mother and husband, she regains her self-confidence, gets reconciled to her space and environment and accepts her existence. Having gone through a period of psychological trouble due to war in Algeria, and the consequent traumatising experience of immigration, chafia realizes that it is due to love that she succeeds in moving beyond this crisis, "Luis et ma mère ont remplacé cette horrible pilule qui fabrique des nuages enivrants" (115). This reconciliation with her relatives, and especially her mother, gives Chafia a feeling of a new beginning in life. Speaking about her reconciliation with her mother, she says, "J'ai été lavée par son pardon, je m'y plonge comme dans le cours d'une eau sacrée, quand on croit qu'elle a la propriété de rendre la vue aux aveugles et de guérir les maladies" (115). This

passage is not the only one where Chafia establishes a link between her mother and water or, as the pun is more appealing in French, between "mer" and "mère". As soon as Chafia overcomes her crisis and regains her love of life, a moment that she calls "un retour à la vie [qui] ressemble à la naissance d'un nouvel amour" (89), she goes on a trip: "Je traverse la ville. Trop de bruit et de fumée. Je repars vers la mer . . . Le paysage et la mer sont rassurants" (80-81). The sight of the sea provides her with a sense of harmony and security that is reminiscent of her childhood harmony in the Mediterranean. Chafia compares both sensations, "Je me sens bien comme lorsque je me laissais couler dans l'eau tiède de la Méditerranée, et que mon corps se faisait bercer, délivrée de sa pesanteur" (121). In another passage, she describes the Mediterranean as "cette eau enveloppante, dans laquelle je pourrais presque dormir si je suis trop fatiguée" (123). For Chafia, sea is reminiscent of the mother-womb, which is the first and ultimate home, and which provides a sense of rooting, belonging and security. Her reconciliation with her mother permits her to recover, symbolically, the warmth of this lost womb, and by extension, that of the sea. Hence, Chafia succeeds in regaining her sense of home, and becomes reconciled to her space, mainly through her reconciliation with her mother and her relation to the sea.

In these different works of fiction, the protagonists succeed in making out of their inner space a familiar one by remapping it and remodelling it after the image of home. These strategies of remapping vary from one experience to the other. Place-making can be achieved through the inscription of certain codes and values upon the territory, as Falah Azlam does. But it can also be

achieved through human affection and group solidarity, as it is the case in "L'Inconnue" or *Les Jardins de Cristal.* In his thesis, Beneventi says that the space appropriated in the new society of the immigrant constitutes another dimension to his in-betweeness. In fact, he calls these spaces "spaces of contention or contested spaces" (62). I do not really share this view, as I believe that these strategies of remapping and appropriating the new space constitute a step beyond the situation of in-betweeness. It reflects a realization on the part of immigrants that there is a need to surpass the feeling of loss, and a serious attempt to feel at home. In the examples discussed, the protagonists succeed in remapping their new spaces after the image of home in order to feel at ease, and get a feeling of belonging and anchorage. I do not think that the concept of home has to fall into an either/or category, and be distinctively here or there, in order to be considered as a "real" home, that is a place which provides its subjects with feeling of rootedness and belonging.

The *OED* defines home as "a place, region or state to which one properly belongs, on which one's affections centre, or where one finds refuge, rest or satisfaction". In this definition, the physical location of home is not as much stressed as are feelings of belonging and ease derived from this idea of home. David Morley stresses this idea in *Home Territories,* when he argues that "home is not necessarily (or only) a physical place . . . the person (or character) is at home when he is at ease in the rhetoric of the people with whom he shares life" (17). This is reminiscent of Chafia's case, who derives her sense of home from the people with whom she shares life, as they provide her with a feeling of belonging. In *Migrancy, Culture, Identity,* Iain Chambers

discusses the perpetual and continual movement in space and time that governs the contemporary era. In this sense, he argues,

> [This] condition implies another sense of "home," of being in the world. It means to conceive of dwelling as a mobile habitat, as a mode of inhabiting time and space not as though they were fixed and closed structures, but as providing the critical provocation of an opening whose questioning presence reverberates in the movement of the languages that constitute our sense of identity, place and belonging. (4)

In fact, due to the back and forth movement of immigration, the sense of home has to be reviewed. Home should no more be thought of as a fixed or physical place, as this will lead to a feeling of loss and dislocation at every movement of immigration. Here, it becomes relevant to go back to Nadia Ghalem's "L'Inconnue." I have already mentioned the fact that the protagonist in this short story has no problem in finding her anchorage in any new space, whether it is Paris or Montreal. In fact, spatial mobility becomes for her an integral part of herself that she has to take into consideration and adapt herself to. One important prerequisite to this condition is to cease to consider home as a fixed and physical place. For the protagonist, home is wherever she goes, whether it is Alger, Paris or Montreal. The fact that the protagonist finds herself in cities helps her, as cities are more malleable. In *Soft City,* Jonathan Raban argues that the metropolis lends itself to cultural and personal inscriptions, as it is flexible by nature. In this context, he says,

> The city goes soft; it awaits the imprint of an identity. For better or for worse, it invites you to remake it, to consolidate it into a shape you can

> live in . . . Cities, unlike villages and small towns, are plastic by nature, we mould them in our images. (1-2).

This is exactly the case of the proatgonist in "L'Inconnue." I have already shown the different strategies she uses to remodel her different urban dwellings in a way that makes her belong to them.

Living in Montreal for a long number of years, she learns to love it and considers it as home, as she says,

> Montréal, c'est ma ville . . . Je connais et j'aime Montréal comme si c'était un lieu personnel, privé qui n'appartiendrait qu'à moi seule. Mais de temps à autres, j'ai besoin de quitter la ville pour mieux la voir, comme pour mieux l'aimer encore, je sais que même loin, elle habite mon inconscient et que je comparerais rue et maisons et humains à ce qui fait mon quotidien d'ici. (66)

Hence, her love for Montreal and sense of attachment to this city that she considers her home does not prevent her from wishing to leave it, in order "to feel it better". This is only conceivable when her idea of Montreal goes beyond the idea of a physical territory to think of it in more symbolic terms. Going to Paris, she does not lose time in finding her sense of belonging through her group of friends, as I have suggested earlier. This attachment to Montreal and Paris does not prevent her from feeling still attached to her native country. Thinking about Algeria, she says, "Mon pays d'origine . . . je m'en suis jamais détachée, c'est le lieu de mes rêves et mon enfance" (70).

This ability to feel at home in different spaces stems from a fluid understanding of home. In "Bounded Realms: Household, Family,

Community and Nation", David Morley does not agree with "the way of thinking about space and identity [which] is premised on the association of spatial penetration with impurity, whereby incoming elements represent "matter out of place" (157). Morley goes on to say,

> Massey argues for a "sense of place which is extroverted, which includes a consciousness of its links to the wider world, (1991, 28), where what gives a place its identity is not its separate or "pure" internalized history, but rather its uniqueness as a point of intersection in a wider network of relations. This is then not simply a bounded, self contained sense of place, constructed in antagonism to all that is outside (the threatening otherness of externality), but an understanding of its character which can be constructed by linking that place to places beyond. (157)

This spatial extroversion, or intersection between spaces, is what I mentioned earlier as "fluidity" in one's understanding of space. In fact, the "spatial purity" alluded to in this passage is an illusion. Even the spaces we think of as "culturally pure" have been remodelled and remapped by different cultures and civilizations. For example, in "L'Inconnue," the protagonist's fluid understanding of spatiality is not only in relation to her back and forth movement between Paris, Montreal and Alger, but also in relation to her native country as such. In fact, Algeria has witnessed the successive settlement of different cultures, among which the Romans, the Berbers, the Turks and the Arabs. Having in mind this rich history, the protagonist cannot but think of herself and of all Algerians as having multiple roots and

belongings. It is due to contact with different cultures that Nadia Ghalem's protagonist is able to have such a look of openness and flexibility at her country.

iv

In *L'Écrivain Migrant*, Naîm Kattan says, "la rencontre entre l'immigrant et son nouveau milieu, quand il a lieu, entraîne chez lui un examen de sa propre culture" (42). This review of one's own culture leads to modify and enlarge the understanding of one's sense of identity. It leads also, and more precisely, to a review of one's sense of identity. As immigration and the contact with a new culture leads to a reformulation of one's notion of home, a reconsideration of the notion of identity follows systematically, as both are interconnected. As we have seen earlier, home is part of the identity, and hence a review of the notion of home marks automatically identity. Marino Tuzi discusses the same idea in *The Power of Allegiances*, and argues also that the presence in a new environment leads to the questioning of one's sense of self,

> The questioning of dominant and ethnic group beliefs thwarts the development of a unitary ethnic identity. The ethnic sign is not socially fixed or predictable because its very position within the culture of the national map makes it peremptorily unstable . . . the ethnic subject participates in a continual process of resignification. (14-15)

Hence, as a consequence of immigration and relocation, the immigrant, or what Tuzi calls "the ethnic subject," undergoes a continual process of

questioning of one's identity, identity ceases to be a given and fixed notion and becomes a subject of discussion. This goes hand in hand with the discussion of the notion of home.

In fact, the notion of identity is a pivotal notion to my work, as it is related to the idea of home and exile. In *Stratégies Identitaires,* Carmel Camilleri defines identity as follows:

> L'identité est essentiellement un sentiment d'être, par lequel un individu éprouve qu'il est un "moi" différent des autres. Cette formule simple exprime la double appartenance théorique de l'identité: il s'agit d'un fait de conscience, subjectif donc individuel, et relevant du champ de la psychologie, amis il se situe aussi dans le rapport à l'autre. (43)

From this definition, we understand that identity, or this "sense of being," as Camilleri chooses to call it, is what makes the "I" and constitutes its limits in relation to the other. In "Identity and Cultural Studies: Is that All there Is?" Lawrence Grossberg stresses this need for the other in order to define the self:

> Any identity depends upon its difference from, its negation of, some other term even as the identity of the latter term depends upon its difference from, its negation of, the former. As Hall (1991: 21) puts it, identity is a structured representation which only achieves its positive through the narrow eye of the negative. It has to go through the eye of the needle of the other before it can construct itself. (89)

In these different definitions, the recurring idea is the need for the other in order to define the self. What is problematic about this sense of identity is not

its need for the other per se, but its use of the notion of the other. In this unitary and fixed understanding of the notion of identity, otherness is not an object of interaction or of negotiation. It is rather used to mark one's difference in relation to it. In other terms, otherness is used only to stress the need to keep it at bay, in order to maintain one's supposedly stable and fixed sense of self.

The understanding of the notion of personal identity is directly derived from the notion of collective, or as it is more commonly known, "cultural identity," which is also marked by a connotation of fixity and wholeness. In this context, in "Cultural Identity and Diaspora," Stuart Hall gives a definition of this idea of "cultural identity" from the common and popular point of view,

> [This] position defines "cultural identity" in terms of one, shared culture, a sort of collective "one true self", hiding inside the many other, more superficial or artificially imposed "selves", which people with a shared history and ancestry hold in common. Within the terms of this definition, our cultural identities reflect the common historical experiences and shared cultural codes which provide us, as "one people", with stable, unchanging and continuous frames of reference meaning, beneath the shifting divisions and vicissitudes of our actual history. (232)

From this definition, we understand that there is one fixed view of identity that is culturally and socially imposed on a given group of people, which excludes any other understanding that seeks to contest, review or even enlarge this fixed notion. This unitary view of identity is all the more controversial, as

it is based on the illusion of fixity. In *Migrancy, Culture, Identity,* Iain Chambers refutes this notion of fixed identity when he argues,

> We imagine ourselves to be whole, to be complete, to have a full identity and certainly not to be open or fragmented, we imagine ourselves to be the author, rather than the object, of the narratives that constitute our lives. It is this imaginary closure that permits us to act. (25)

According to Chambers, this illusory view of identity fulfills the sole function of surviving socially. More precisely, it is needed for the psychological balance of the subject, but in actual terms, it has no existence. In the context I am studying, that is, that of immigration and relocation, such a rigid and unitary understanding of identity is uninteresting, and even harmful, as it hinders the development of any feeling of belonging on the part of the relocated subjects. In fact, their rigid sense of identity implies a closure in one's difference and the refusal of establishing any continuity with the host culture, which is seen as other. Discussing the issue from the perspective of immigration, Chambers:

> I would suggest, we are now beginning to learn to act in the subjunctive mode, "as if we had" a full identity, while recognizing that such a fullness is a fiction, an inevitable failure. It is this recognition that permits us to acknowledge the limits of our selves, and with it the possibility of dialoguing across the subsequent differences . . . we are invariably reminded of the mutability of our construction, and with it, of the precariousness of our narrative and identity. It is to perceive in

> this interval not a rigid limit but the shadow line of a potential transit. (25-26)

Hence, an awareness about the falsity of any fixed notion of identity, and the willingness to modify, review and discuss one's understanding of identity is a prerequisite to any dialogue "across differences".

In *On Identity,* Amin Maalouf develops a very original idea which is pertinent to my subject in this chapter. Contrary to the common belief, Maalouf thinks that identity is what makes every single person unique compared to the rest of the people, as he says "My identity is what prevents me from being identical to anybody else" (10). In fact, Maalouf believes that identity is a combination of a multiplicity of variables that are so numerous that there are as many possible combinations as there are humans. For the writer, what is interesting in this regard is that every single identity is complex and unique; to try to simplify it is arbitrary as well as dangerous. The fact of proclaiming one's identity by simply saying that "[I am] Arab, or French, or Black, or a Serb, or a Muslim, or a Jew" is an arbitrary statement that takes into consideration one single element of identity to the detriment of the others, a thing that often has dangerous consequences. (17)

What Maalouf develops in his book is quite interesting, as it calls for a reviewing of all the stereotypes we accept as obvious and self-evident. Learning that every identity is complex and unique leads one to review the allegiances and loyalties that one takes for granted, while they turn out to be arbitrary. More importantly, the awareness of the complexity of the notion of identity makes people more apt to acknowledge similarities with people with

whom this is less obvious. To make things clearer, a complex identity is a multi-layered construct whose number of variables is so great that it is almost impossible to have the same combination twice, as Maalouf argues, but at the same time, the variables are numerous enough fro anyone to find a ground of convergence with any other individual. What remains to be done, on the contrary, is to have enough open-mindedness and flexibility to be able to adjust oneself to every new situation and context, by readjusting the order of importance among the traits marking one's identity. Hence, in the examples discussed, the ability on the part of the different protagonists to adjust themselves to the new environment, to develop strategies of adaptation and relocation is not an ability to go beyond oneself, as much as it is a knowledge of oneself, and an ability to explore one's inner complexities.

Hence, throughout this chapter, I have tried to show that a sense of belonging is necessary for the stability of the immigrant subjects. This sense of belonging cannot be reached without feeling at home. Thus, different strategies to remap and appropriate the new space are adopted by the subjects in order to move beyond their status of immigrants and make out of their environment new homes. The notion of home proves to be tightly linked to the notion of identity. Hence, a flexible and complex understanding of one's identity helps facilitate the process of relocation, while a unified and fixed understanding of one's identity blocks this process and strengthens the feeling of alienation within immigrants.

Conclusion

Throughout this thesis, I attempt an analytical study of the works of some Arab Canadian writers who deal with problems of adaptation and relocation experienced by immigrants. My aim is to study the evolution of the protagonists from being foreigners upon their arrival to establishing a sense of belonging to this country.

I study immigration, since it is the first contact with the host country, or more precisely, it is the dream of immigration which constitutes the first contact. As I have argued in the first chapter, the economic and social conditions in many Arab countries push people to dream about immigration as an outlet. In this context, I study the situation of "internal exile," as experienced by many of my protagonists. In fact, it is a feeling of alienation within one's own country that pushes people to flee. This is the case for Hassan Gum'a, Saad Elkhadem's protagonist in *Canadian Adventures of the Flying Egyptian,* who flees Egypt because of political tyranny, or also of Falah Azlam in *The Confusion of Stones,* who flees war and violence in Lebanon.

Most of the protagonists are rapidly disenchanted upon their arrival, as they realize that their expectations are in total contradiction with the difficult situation they encounter and have to deal with. Hence, in *Le Printemps Peut Attendre,* Maya is shocked as she realizes that she has to start her life anew, and that her prior success will not be of much help for her in the new context. This situation raises questions of in-betweeness and the feeling of loss engendered by this sense of disillusion. As I have showed, in a number of

cases, protagonists feel torn between a longed for country which they have left behind and the Canadian reality in which they find themselves. Hence, in order to overcome the feeling of loss that she experiences upon her arrival into Canada, Maya, in *Le Printemps Peut Attendre,* opts for introversion and nostalgia as a way of living in the longed for past and escape her hard reality in Canada. In my second chapter, I try to show how such means, like introversion, nostalgia, and ghettoization, do not constitute a solution to the problem, but are rather a way of evading it. More precisely, it is an evasion of the challenge of adaptation, which weighs on every new comer. As the different means adopted to go beyond the situation of in-betweeness prove to be a failure, and especially because of this challenge of adaptation, other ways are looked for in order to feel at home in the new environment.

In this context, I study the strategies of remapping. In fact, it is precisely this step that starts the process of accepting one's new life and choosing to belong to this country. In the different works studied, relocation goes through a process of inscribing one's traditional codes and values, in order to feel at home, or rather, to make out of the new environment a new home. In order to succeed in belonging to this new country and becoming part of it, a certain understanding of both the notions of home and identity are needed. Throughout my third chapter, I argue that the notions of home and identity are interconnected and interdependent, in the sense that a rigid and unitary understanding of one's identity affects the process of relocation by preventing the subject from feeling at home. On the other hand, a flexible and complex view of one's identity facilitates this process of home-making and

helps the subject in his attempts at belonging to his new country. Hence, Maya's inability to go beyond the shock she receives upon her arrival and her inability to adapt to the new context stems from her rigid sense of her self and her identity. Maya refuses to reimagine herself in order to cope with the different and unexpected situation in which she finds herself. She is also unable to feel at home. Her feeling of alienation grows, as well as her feeling of loss, and she starts regretting coming in the first place. This leads her to depression, which is symbolised by the terrible car accident she has at the end of the novel. On the other hand, Nadia Ghalem's protagonist in "L'Inconnue" has a flexible view of her identity. From the beginning of the short story, she alludes to the different civilisations that marked Algeria throughout history. Hence, she feels that she is a product of this crossing of cultures, and consequently has no problem feeling at home wherever she goes.

What I argue in my thesis is that in order to adapt to new and different contexts, especially in the case of immigration, there is no need to imitate the other, or adopt his codes and values. It is more interesting and more stable psychologically to explore oneself, and try to draw on one's own richness in order to establish a link with others and feel that, finally, there is no such difference.

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