

# Creating Space of Identification: The Arab-American Rhizomic Search of Visibility.

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**Abstract**— Arab-American literature is an emerging literature that is searching a space of recognition and the present article reads it in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'Minor literature' in an attempt to create a space for its identification. This article examines the rhizomic nature of the Arab-American search of recognition. Moreover, it explores how Arab-American women writings are explained in terms of the political events in the Arab world. They are producing literature from a cramped space building a connection between the exiled, refugee and immigrant selves and the extended social, cultural and political relations seeking new possibilities of life. A literature that frees up language and creatively deterritorializes it from its dominated usage to provide unique modes of expressions that is countering the prevailing cultural and sociopolitical norms integrating the private and the collective, the personal and the political and creating an assemblage of enunciation. In particular, Etel Adnan's poem *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* (2005), is investigated as representing a minor use of a major language and supporting the argument that Arab-American literature is minor literature.

**Keywords**— *Minor Literature, Rhizome, Arab-Americans, Etel Adnan.*

## I. INTRODUCTION

“ It is too late because for ten years we will be invisible... we will be invisible for another decade in our country” ; in this quote, Arab-American Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib expressed her displeasure of rejecting the (MENA) category from the US 2020 Census while questioning Census Bureau director Steven Dillingham on Capitol Hill in February 2020<sup>i</sup>. “The most invisible of the invisibles”<sup>ii</sup>, the Arab-Americans, are pushing since decades for a MENA category, ensuring both Middle Eastern and North African people. They were having great hope in the US 2020 Census to include MENA option. However, despite of the many years of advocacy work the Census nixed the option shattering the efforts of Arab-Americans to be identified with more accuracy. Arab-Americans are being classified as belonging to the ‘White’ race. However, such identification is no more fitting the reality of Arab-American situation in the United States. More especially post 9/11 when Arabs in America become increasingly self-conscious about their identity, do not feel ‘Whites’, perceive themselves as people of color and feel that the white category is enhancing their lack of recognition.

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In 2017, the Census Bureau recommended the MENA box after years of research and advocacy. While, in January 2018, the Trump administration had other considerations and officially decided not to include the MENA category. It is worth noting that the 2020 Census is launched on the first of April 2020 coinciding with the outbreak of the Corona Virus Pandemic as well as the ‘Black Lives Matter’ campaign that is worldly lunched after the murder of Jorge Floyed by a white police officer in Minneapolis. Moreover, the 2020 Census asks people who identify as "White" to expand on their ethnic origins. In this sense, the Arab-Americans could write their ethnic belonging such as Lebanese, Egyptian, Iranian, Yemeni, somalin, in the ‘Other’ category box, though they remain unlisted as an identified ethnic group in the Census. The Census form includes many different ethnic and racial groups (Whites, African Americans, Hispanics, Mexicans, Latinos, Asians, American Indians, etc.), but it has never included a category for Arabs though the Arab American Institutes’ data on demographics shows there are a great number of Arabs in the different States<sup>iii</sup>.

The 2020 Census matters a lot to Arab-Americans and their communities since fair and accurate Census means fair distribution of their share of federal funding. The decennial Census in the US does not only count the population number living in America but also identifies their national origins, determines how more than \$600 million in federal funding is dispersed to communities to address their concerns as well as ensures equal representation and treatment in government and much more<sup>iv</sup>. Furthermore, the different recruitment programs and scholarships for minority students mostly depend on the Census definitions of race and accordingly it excludes the MENA applicants depriving them of getting better social services.

Thus, for Arab-Americans, the matter is so crucial for achieving political strength and success that will enable them to ensure their American inclusion and Arab identification in front of the constant process of 'Othering' that is targeting them in political and popular discourses. In addition, it will help Arab-Americans in fighting the stereotyping of their identities and their lack of recognition.

## II. ARAB-AMERICAN RHIZOMIC SEARCH OF IDENTIFICATION

The privileged tenor in mainstream America is that, Arabs look or act in a certain way which is mostly connected to extremism and terrorism with a belief that 'all Arabs are Muslims, all Muslims are Arabs, and all Muslims are terrorists'. Since the first wave of Arab immigrants to the US in the early 20th century following the fall of the Ottoman Empire till this time<sup>v</sup>, Arab-Americans are seeking a space of recognition for their community whose origins, faith, languages and cultures are diverse which makes the task more complicated. Edward Said, in his memoir,<sup>vi</sup> describes the dilemma of Arab-Americans within the tissue of mainstream America as being 'out of place'. Noteworthy, it is about a century that Arab-Americans were fighting for acknowledgement, recognition and visibility in front of the complex history of racism in the United States. Though they are classified as whites, many Arab Americans do not identify as such nor do they look so for most Americans (Shouhayib, 60-61). They are being unofficially grouped, stereotyped and associated with terrorism and considered threats to national security more especially post 9/11. Steven Salaita argues that 9/11 created for Arab Americans a series of ambiguous states of being and he has attributed that to a number of issues including,

racism, demographic trends, discriminatory legislation, corporate avarice, religious fundamentalism, foreign policy, and some phenomena more specific to Arab America such as debates over assimilation and acculturation, the ascendance in recent years of Arab American literature, intraethnic diversities, and laboratory counter narratives (19).

Thus, it is a fight to bring about two irreconcilable identities that seems to be a never-ending struggle like a 'rhizome', to borrow Deleuze and Guattari's concept. Deleuze and Guattari adopted the term 'rhizome' to refer to a powerful image of thought in their book, *A Thousand Plateaus* (1987) where they suggested that rhizomes could be used as a metaphor to describe how thought and work can extend in all directions and have multiple entryways. Felicity Colman explains, "To think in terms of the rhizome is to reveal the multiple ways that you might approach any thought, activity, or a concept – what you always bring with you are the many and various ways of entering any body, of assembling thought and action through the world" (235).

Accordingly, this lack of representation of Arabs and Middle Easterners on the U.S Census inspired this article which argues that Arab-American literature can be read as minor literature through Deleuze and Guattari's theory of Minor Literature and that their lobbying for recognition and identification can be informed as a new possibility of a rhizomic becoming. Arab-Americans are trying to create a collective assemblage of enunciation motivating a revolutionary force to trace lines of flight, resist and break the stable relations creating new forms of becoming in the rhizome. Moreover, the literature that is produced by the Arab-American writers carries such revolutionary force which indicates a coming of 'minor literature' by itself.

Furthermore, the article contributes, literarily, to the demand that Arab-Americans should have their own minority classification in the US Census, as long as their 'White' classification does not reflect the reality of their identification and acceptance in mainstream America. The article also argues that Arab-American women writers are minor writers who are producing different works creating new possibilities of life through variables of enunciation that are constantly countering the dominant language. More particularly the article investigates in Etel Adnan's poem *In The Heart Of The Heart Of Another Country* and reads it as a representation of minor literature.

Deleuze and Guattari have identified three main characteristics for a literature to be minor: 'the deterritorialization of language, the connection of the individual to a political immediacy, and the collective assemblage of enunciation' (1986,18). According to Deleuze and Guattari, the matter of minority here is not that of major and minor in quantity but that of becoming, the capacity to become and cross the status of being the weak 'Other'. It is the revolutionary power, which enforces a step further within the heart of the major (or established) literature. It is, according to Verena Conley, the ability of the minority to draw for itself lines of fluctuation that open up a gap and separate it from the axiom constituting a redundant majority (166-8).

Adrian Parr reads Deleuze and Guattari's deterritorialization of language as that movement which produces change as far as it operates as a line of flight indicating the creative potential of an assemblage (69). Thus, 'minor literature' is a revolutionary call for new becoming. It is as Selden, Widdowson and Brooker note "becomes, by implication, a description of great literature which is 'creative' of meaning and identity – it is a literature of 'becoming' – rather than an 'expression' of a pre-existing world and assumed common human identity", linking literature with "difference" where the latter has an alternative or opposing influential force that affects prevailing modes and mentalities (173). Thus, minor literature is a form of becoming that is associated with social change and a people-to-come. It is as Deleuze and Guattari demonstrated, a minor use of a language and this minor language is "characterized not by overload and poverty in relation to a standard or major language, but by a sobriety and variation that are like a minor treatment of the standard language, a becoming-minor of the major language" (1987-104).

For Deleuze and Guattari, it is not a matter of differentiating the major and minor language but that of becoming. It is a matter of redefining the major language and transforming it for the purpose of making it minor, designing a new power that makes it a language of search, of inventing new identities and becoming rather than expressing and representing a pre-existing and old ready-made identity or position. Deleuze and Guattari also noted that,

Minor languages do not exist in themselves; they exist only in relation to a major language and are also investments of that language for the purpose of making it minor. ... That is the strength of authors termed "minor," who are in fact the greatest,

the only greats; having to conquer one's own language, in other words, to attain that sobriety in the use of a major language, in order to place it in a state of continuous variation (the opposite of regionalism). (1987, 104-5)

'Minor Literature' is then that which have no unified or definitive identity, rather it focuses on escape, flows, deterritorialization, unfinalizability and becoming. It studies differences, deviations, variations and possibilities rather than fixed and stable identities. It is a literature that motivates revolution and does not have to be 'by and about' minorities. It is also unconventional in form, style, sources and it creates disruptive images.

Hence, the capability of literature to extend its power of being literature is what marks the minor literature. Minor literary discourse transcends the concomitant assumptions of representing the aesthetic aspects and essential human values to be a voice of the voiceless, a power of change and a movement forward. It constantly conceives new steps toward creating new possibilities of social interactions through language expressions. Zekiye Antakyalioglu confirms this approach of Deleuze in her article, '*A Deleuzian Approach to Contemporary Fiction: Some Questions*', where she states that for Deleuze "the question of true literature is not linked to the question of its textuality or its historicity, but to its vitality, that is, its tenor of life.... Every literary work implies a way of living, a form of life, and must be evaluated not only critically but also clinically" (257). Thus, serving life becomes more important than merely the textual and theoretical analysis in this Deleuzegauattarian approach.

Based on that, in '*Immigrant Narratives: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in Arab American and Arab British Literature*' (2011), academic Wail Hassan argues that Arab immigrant literature is minor literature and could be informed by Deleuze and Guattari's theory of the minor literature. Scholar Dalal Sarnou has also supported Hassan's argument and emphasizes that Arab Anglophone women's handling of the English language, who are not natives of the language, is a main key of categorizing their works into the minor literature (53). She has also noticed that Anglophone women writers are introducing writings that are, "linguistically and culturally hybrid, discursively multidimensional and literarily heterogeneous" (70). Accordingly, Arab-American writing comes to represent the specificity of the Arab-American milieu producing multidimensional literary works surpassing all the boundaries of marginality, displacement, alienation and dehumanization. Arab-American writers are providing a

minor use of a major language while including political and collective value which counters the dominant cultural, political and societal norms prevailing in mainstream American literature.

Arab-American writing has also indulged in politics in a way that cannot be denied. Throughout the Arab-American writings, a connection between the exiled, refugee and immigrant selves is directly and necessarily linked to the extended social, cultural and political relations whether internally or outwardly. Being that branded 'Other' makes the Arab-American individuality subject to the different political dimensions and more especially with the increasing tensioned relations between the Middle East and America's foreigner policies as well as the constant re-emergence of the issues of immigrants and refugees. Their position as the targeted community, 'the enemies within' constitutes what Deleuze and Guattari refer to as 'the cramped space' which "forces each individual intrigue to connect immediately to politics (1986, 17).

Furthermore, the different solitarily produced writings are reflections of the Arab-American community as a whole in a way or another considering the diverse and complex relations this minority is representing. Sarnou emphasizes that Arab-American diversity, "must submit to a finite convergence that bring the difference of these works to a common commitment vis-à-vis the nation, the home, the culture, the religion and above all the gender" (54). Such wholeness is countering mainstream assumptions, which sees all Arabs are the same in a way that neglects the Arab-American diverse background.

The Arab-American voices are lines of flight towards achieving social justice, resisting denudation and valuing the self within a variety of positions by producing literary works from their cramped space. In *Writing in cramped spaces*, Marcelina Piotrowski noted that in Deleuze and Guattari's approach the term minor literature refers to writing that eliminates disciplinary conventions because of an experience of being cramped. He added, "minor literature does not necessarily refer to literature written by someone from an ethnic or racial minority (though it could) but to one that aims at dismantling major ontological or epistemological categories with the aims of, as well as through, becoming-imperceptible" (83). In the hands of Arab-American writers, a minor language becomes "potential agents of the major language's entering into a becoming-minoritarian of all of its dimensions and elements" (Deleuze and Guattari, 1987, 106). They refuse to accept identities that were readily available for them and work on creating new forms of expressions that would invent new identities such as Arab, Muslim, Eastern, MENA, marginal, ethnic, etc.

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Minor literature is then the process by which a minority expresses its becoming. Rather than a representation of minority, it expresses and simultaneously constitutes the becoming-minor. Selden has noted that Deleuze and Guattari characterize 'minor' literature as non-conformist, innovatory and interrogative opposing to 'majoritarian' literature that aims to 'represent' a predetermined world and to match established models, (173). Accordingly, Arab-American women literature is minor literature that is raised from their 'cramped space' of being Americans of Arab descent. They are producing different literature that works as a revolutionary force of change and becoming. They are writing with no fixed identities but about the world, a people to come somewhere in the future and those who are in their process to define themselves, rather than those of previously defined identities. Their voices are rejections of oppressive norms and standards and of all forms of stereotyping.

### III. ETEL ADNAN'S IN THE HEART OF THE HEART OF ANOTHER COUNTRY: A CREATION OF NEW POSSIBILITIES OF LIFE.

Etel Adnan, the Lebanese-American poet, has been described by Hirschman as "a daring nomad poet who understands that homelessness is not simply a physical condition for millions but a destiny for all in these alienated ( and, for the Arab world doubly alienated) times"( 98). A poet with numerous identities who stands at a crossroad between East and West, Arab and European, Muslim and Christian, Lebanese, French and American (Handal, 48). She manifests her experiences to let us emerge in raising our consciousness and motivating our actions towards new becoming. She accepts contradictions when it happens and seeks new connections. Reja-e Busaila noted that Adnan's poetry focuses on the cruelty of our world which manifests itself in various respects such as the abuse of nature, the fate of Indians and the Palestinians, war, male-female relationship, the abuse of children and the abuse of religion which are recurrent themes in her poetry (304-5). Adnan's poetry, as well as paintings, are geographical and psychological travelling which is very difficult to be captured by any borders or identity definitions. She has accommodated herself to nomadism and otherness and has never given up discovering her constantly new becoming.

Adnan's creative and unconventional writing could be well informed by the Deleuzoguattarian concept of 'minor literature'. Adnan uses the English language masterly to deal with sensitive issues that are essentially countering the majoritarian perspective and provides different modes

and visions as her mode of existence. Adnan's minor use of the English language is put into challenge with the major use of the language negotiating the dominant social, cultural, political and human norms creating different voices that make her a foreigner to the domain. Conley notes that,

Major and minor are two different usages of the same language. A minor language opens a passage in the order-word that constitutes any of the operative redundancies of the major language. The problem is not the distinction between major and minor language but one of becoming. A person (a subject, but also a creative and active individual) has to deterritorialise the major language rather than reterritorialize herself within an inherited dialect. Recourse to a minor language puts the major language into flight. Minoritarian authors are those who are foreigners in their own tongue. (167).

Adnan is such a minoritarian author whose unique treatment of the English language deterritorialized it into contexts that counter the prevailed voices. Adnan's philosophical contemplations on world politics, love and nature reflect her spiritual fragmentation and her rhizomatic search of the self.

Adnan prose poem, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* (2005), was written in seven parts which constitute an assemblage creating different effects and thoughts about the 'self' and the world. It is devised from her multiple experiences and her never-ending quest of identity inspiring the readers to take action towards creating new possibilities of life. The biographical poem is articulated while being in a cramped space of turmoil, displacements, exile and war connecting it to an infinite possibility of new life and thought. In the poem, Adnan never settles a place but restlessly follows a journey of exploring her identity, the type of her continuous exile and displacement, her vast experiences of war, her conflicting feelings of belonging and her new possibilities of becoming. The fragmented nature of the poem enters into conversation with the different realities of our life establishing a tangible connection between Adnan's private experiences and the global chaos resisting the categorization of knowledge and providing better understanding for new purposes of life.

The poem is Adnan's uninterrupted flow of little experiences, observations, disturbances, small ecstasies, or barely perceptible discouragements that make up day-to-day living<sup>vii</sup>. She blends the past with the present to digest

her vast experiences in seven affiliated but separate sections that "communicates a feeling of rootlessness and spiritual fragmentation, moving rapidly between the physical and the abstract, facts and hallucinations, dairy-like observations and dark formative memories"(Liz Countryman). Adnan's book is like a rhizome can be entered from many different points forming new connections that emerge elsewhere. Her past and present are moving in a cycle way bending space and time which are constantly dissolving in her works. The poem explores Adnan's insistency to free herself from those cramped times and spaces she caught in to cross all boundaries and create new becoming and thoughts as 'the past mixing with the present, each distorting the other, opening into the tensions of repetition' (2005, xiv). The poem opens,

#### PLACE

So I have sailed the seas and come ...

to B...

a city by the sea, in Lebanon. It is seventeen years later. My absence has been an exile from an exile... No house for shelter, but a bed, from house to house, and clothes crumpled on a single shelf. I am searching for love.

Adnan titles her first paragraph 'PLACE' and concludes it with the word 'love' as if the whole coming is a search of a place where she can find real love and feel the warmth of belonging to that place which she strongly hoped to be Beirut. Adnan first section of the poem holds the title of the poem itself, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*, which she writes responding to William Gass's city (B) in the collection of his stories *In the Heart of the Heart of the Country* (1968) where he wrote paragraph after paragraph building "a kind of provincial city that gradually acquires the quality of a quasi-mythical place" (Adnan, 2005, xi). But, Adnan's city 'Beirut' is no more so, it is totally exhausted and its reality 'was of a complexity defying definition' that Adnan dares not to write its full name and suffices with its first letter 'B' (2005, xi). Beirut alienates itself from the hope of the poet due to the continuous conflict and violence it is experiencing, "like a salmon I came back here to die" (7).

Gass has structured his book into recurrent headings and followed it with paragraphs. So does Adnan who comments, "I began by taking over his headings and 'answering' them. They became magic keys, no longer to the B . . . that was his city in his country, but to the city of Beirut, .... And so I went about telling my side of the story, entering into the heart of the heart of another country" (xiv). Adnan facilitates Gass's keywords to explore her experiences and becoming in different stages of her search of the self, where Beirut is at the core of its

definition. Etel writes, "I was returning again and again to the heart of the matter, and each time the heart was changing, had changed" (xiv). She has returned to her wasteland 'Beirut' from California after about seventeen years of self-exile, however, she still caught within the rhizomatic state of unrest and uncertainty, "I was used to a world now remote and, at the same time, getting used to a new one that was also my old world, and somewhere, deep inside, I was alien to both" (xii).

The book is an adventure and a journey of discovery in seven sections, which was written from 1977-2004. In five of which the following titles "Place, Weather, Wires, My House, A Person, People, Politics, Education, Vital Data, The Church" can be traced and investigated. While Adnan has changed the form in the fourth and last sections of the book. Whenever Adnan uses these repeated titles, they carry different illusions according to the time of their writing. The stable titles and their unstable nature reflect the poet's own identity and her strong desire to belong. It is an exploration of the restless dislocations of contemporary identity. A conflict between the insider and outsider forces which are in constant search of conciliation. Adnan writes,

#### FINAL VITAL DATA

There is a secret about me: my mobility. I go always faster than I go. This is why I am such a stranger to myself. (14)

This conflict makes Adnan stranger to herself and urges her to go faster escaping her insider forces towards the outsider self where she feels much more freer. Adnan herself is aware of such friction of her identity and says, "I am both an American and an Arab and these identities are sometimes at odds with each other, not every day, not even often, but once in a great while I become a mountain that some terrifying earthquake has split" (71). Adnan's positionalities as insider/outsider constitute her crisis of belonging and leave in her such feeling of a split-self despite her attempts to cross all the boundaries and borders and to balance her existence by indulging herself in the heart of the heart of another country trying to be both insider and outsider at ones.

Furthermore, throughout these headings, Adnan managed to show the readers her never-ending search of peace and safety, her willingness of a place with no borders or boundaries. Adnan believes in flexible physical boundaries and she is much more concerned about "the void, emptiness, framed spaces, passages, I mean doors and windows. Walls usually disappear from my memory, or, if they linger, turn into wavery surfaces, moving patches of pale colors" (68). One of Adnan's heading is 'WIRES' which she regards, 'The thread of this century' when she

modelled and shaped the borders and boundaries in the 'wire image' to mean a sense of isolation, imprisonment and silencing. While the notion of 'Home' is depicted as insecure place, it is "a cage, a monument" and "it makes one feel insecure" that Adnan is escaping being at home as she is "afraid of houses as tombs".

Moreover, the so many hints brought about under Adnan's recurrent headings shake our notions, challenge permanency and normalization of life and evoke a revolutionary sense of resisting our mistakable understanding of life purposes. In Adnan's memoir, all lives matter and there is no space for gender-oppression, racism, social unjust or political exploitation. It is the poet's constant redefining of new becoming and life purposes. She never identifies herself with one place or a specific cultural identity, instead, an exilic sense of belonging is constantly presented configuring her perpetual and rhizomic search of the self.

The poem is "A mosaic of lyrical vignettes, at once deeply personal and political, set against the turbulent backdrop of Arab/Western relations"<sup>viii</sup>. Adnan's poem has indulged into politics in a way that portrays the mini details of the absurdity of our modern concerns and the triviality of the political decisions which has nothing to do with humanity. She writes,

This is the cruelest place. A man in a motorboat hit a swimmer and sped away. The skull was broken. A large space of blood covered the sea. Painters rushed to the scene to make a painting for sale (5).

This sense of inhumanity is scattered throughout the images of the poem in the different jumps of the book which reflect Adnan's disgust with all the forms of violence and oppression. Adnan has touched so many issues that concern her both worlds producing literature that is really minor or genuine and that which had to "have a social function and a revolutionizing effect by producing lines of flight, rupturing life, breaking our habitual perceptions, creating new possibilities of expression in language" (Antakyalioglu, 236). Adnan's memoir contemplates her fragmented self and search a conciliation with the outside world in an attempt of building "a new identity in both cultures based on a dialectical relationship of cooperation and resistance" (90).

Her conflicting self that is felt in the last section of the poem, "TO BE IN A TIME OF WAR", shows Adnan's struggle to survive as an Arab-American persona during a wartime between her people of origin and her host country. Filled with the hurricanic sense of self-distraction, war-destruction and the surrounding indifference, Adnan screamed her disappointment regarding the 2003 American

invasion of Iraq. She was raged and infuriated by the triumphant tone of the news in the American media and felt she is alien and a stranger who could not express her anger and scorch regarding the killing and devastation in Iraq to her American fellows who would never understand her feelings, “fewer were those ready to consider the destruction of Iraq in terms of human and cultural loss”(Xvi). In seventeen pages, Adnan produces a deep countering consideration of the war in Iraq criticizing the American glorification of the war. The poem engages in contemplations engrossing all parties of war: its perpetrators, victims and bystanders using infinitives and detailed mundane pictures of the poet’s day-to-day activities in California and New York City to resist indulging in acts of violence, depression and self-destruction.

This section opens,

To look at the watch, the clock, the alarm clock,  
to listen to the ticking, to think about it, to look  
again, to go to the tap, to open the refrigerator,  
to close it, to open the door, to feel the cold, to  
close the door, to feel hungry, to wait, to wait  
for dinner time, to go to the kitchen, to reopen  
the fridge, to take out the cheese, to open the  
drawer, to take out a knife, to carry the cheese  
and enter the dining room .... to wipe one’s  
mouth, to wash one’s hands, to dry them, to put  
the cheese back into the refrigerator, to close the  
door, to let go of the day. ( 99)

Adnan introduces a series of sustained fragments which shows her inability to express herself in such turmoil times and, at the same time, her urgent need to say something. Whenever she starts an action, she undoes it which as Ljudmila Mila Popovich notes reflects Adnan’s struggle as an Arab-American writer, “the opposite significations of the verbs used ; action/non-action, doing/non-doing are reflecting Adnan’s apprehension of the inability to write and at the same time the necessity to write” (121). In an interview, Adnan says, “when it comes to a crisis somewhere back home, or near home, then you realize that you lead a double life. You can carry on with your everyday routines, but something is hurting you that is totally without interest for other people”.<sup>ix</sup> It is this double life that troubles Arab-Americans creating a cramped space which constitutes lines of flight towards breaking the fixed perceptions and creating new possibilities of life. Adnan’s memoir is a way of living with new understanding of life that crosses all boundaries creating people to come.

The stream of do/undo actions constitute the voice of a writer who knows well what it means to live in a devastated world, “I grew up with people whose worlds, whose lives, had been destroyed. So I understand devastation, I understand refugees, I understand defeat” (interview with Gabriel Coxhead). Adnan commentary on the dishonest discourse of war stems from an honest poet who suffers the sequences of wars and grows as a product of its calamities. Adnan’s tension of the Iraqi invasion urges her ‘to look for help within oneself, to know helplessness’ and to escape thinking about war, ‘To want to forget about it and not be capable of so doing. To wrap oneself with death’. It is the voice of a diasporic entity that squeezes the pain of being estranged from the two halves of its hyphenated identity at the time of war. Adnan short infinitives are deep negotiations with the self about breaking the silence and voicing disability while being in a constant escape from the inner context of the self. Adnan’s contemplations led her to wonder about ‘the necessity of God’ if the world is being led to ‘the slaughterhouse’. A pure apocalyptic view that keeps on resurrecting to remind of the forgetful humanity which is the only rescue of such a miserable world.

The minoritarian becoming of the ‘politically nonviolent’<sup>x</sup> poet is well supported through the lines of the poem where she articulates a voice that is beyond the dominated articulations and one that challenges the established lines of race, ethnicity, gender, and class. A voice of redefining the world with no boundaries for discovering the righteous road which never leads to the ‘slaughterhouse’. Adnan voice is in a continuous process of discovering the self and questioning the nature of ‘identity’ and ‘difference’ in relation to the inner and external borders and the necessity of crossing it,

Where are we? In the middle, at the beginning,  
the end? Who is we, is it you plus me, or  
something else expandable, explosive, the salt  
and pepper of our thoughts, the something that  
may outlast our divinities? (1997, 9).

Such questions of Adnan are searching conciliation with the self, the borders and boundaries that are shaping modern identity and modern world which are built with such sad binaries of self and other, male and female, wealthy and starving, nation and enemy...etc. Adnan’s treatment of the different critical social subjects in her book from an Arab-American perspective evokes the readers’ attention to neglected aspects which are really the core of the mess of the world.

#### IV. CONCLUSION

The article explores Arab-American literature through Deleuze and Guattari's theory of 'Minor Literature', and creates new possibilities of becoming for the Arab-American literature. It shows that though Arab-Americans are minority group without official minority status, the literature produced by them is minor literature. Arab-American's minor literature frees up language and creatively deterritorializes it from its dominated usage to provide unique modes of expressions that is countering the prevailing cultural and sociopolitical norms integrating the private and the collective, the personal and the political and creating an assemblage of enunciation. The paper, mainly, examines Adnan's poem "In The Heart of The Heart Of Another Country" in light of Deleuze and Guattari's theory of minor literature, and shows her fragmented self as reflecting the restlessness and invisibility of Arab-Americans as whole. Though the poem is full of allusions to Adnan's biography, it works like a stretched scream from Beirut 1970 up to the war on Iraq 2003 and to the present times where the most of the Arab region is indulged in bloody wars scattering refugees all around the world leaving their hearts in their countries and their bodies in other ones. Adnan's expressions are explaining well the Deleuzegauattarian concept of the *rhizome* through its never-ending and multi-directional search of defining the self in relation to time, place, nation, and humanity. The poem with its seven parts constitutes an assemblage that creates new effects, new concepts, new bodies, and new thoughts and motivates new reactions. The poem represents a minor literature that is meant to meet the specificity of being American of Arab descent and where Arab-American women writers originate a space for their voices to become.

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#### Notes

<sup>i</sup>In February 2020, *the Now This News* channel on YouTube shows Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib challenged the erasure of Middle Eastern and North African communities on the 2020 Census. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=qUQNzziXd1Y>

<sup>ii</sup> Joanna Kadi in *Food for our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab American and Arab Canadian Feminists (1994)* has adopted this phrase to refer to the Arab-American community condemning the American racist policies that attributed invisibility to Arab-descent Americans.

<sup>iii</sup> According to the Arab American Institute's data on demographics, Arab Americans live in all 50 states, but two

thirds are concentrated in 10 states; one third of the total live in California, New York, and Michigan. There are more than 324,000 Arabs in California, 223,000 in Michigan, 152,000 in New York, 124,000 in Texas, 112,000 in Florida, 111,000 in Illinois and 108,000 in New Jersey, with smaller populations in Ohio, Massachusetts and Pennsylvania.  
<https://www.aaiusa.org/demographics>.

<sup>iv</sup> Refer to <https://www.aaiusa.org/2020census>

<sup>v</sup> For brief details, regarding the history of the inclusion and classification of Arab-American in the US Census refer to Randa Kayyali article: US Census Classifications and Arab Americans: Contestations and Definitions of Identity Markers, *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*.

<sup>vi</sup> 'Out of Place' is Edward Said's memoir where he wrote about his experiences of dislocation and exile documenting not only his own life but also a history of time and place related to Palestine in the 1930s and '40s. Said reflected on his fragmented and divided identity.

<sup>vii</sup> Adnan describes her poem as such in the introductory of the book, *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country* (Xii).

<sup>viii</sup> The Amazon review of the book.  
<https://www.amazon.in/Heart-Another-Country-POCKET-POETS/dp/0872864464>

<sup>ix</sup> In her interview with David Hornsby and Jane Clark. "An Artisan of Beauty and Truth." *Beshara Magazine*, 2017.

<sup>x</sup> Adnan describes herself in most of her interviews.