

**Food as a Language of Cultural Expression and Revitalization in
Arab-American Women's Writing**

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In "Still Hot: Great Food Moments in Children's Literature," the Korean-American writer Linda Sue Park writes: "When people immigrate to a new country, there are four things about their original culture that they lose, one by one. First to go is the mode of dress [...] Next is language [...] Third on the list is religion [...] Finally, there is food. The second and third generations may consume a more eclectic menu but still remain fiercely loyal to the food of their ancestral homeland" (231). This fierce loyalty to ancestral homeland foods suggests that food is closely linked to identity. However, prepared and consumed mainly in the private space of the family, it is also a cultural signifier which does not add to the visibility which might expose the immigrant to prejudice. Deborah Lupton investigates the relationship between food, memory, identity, and social and cultural practices, and contends that "the taste, smell and texture of food can serve to trigger memories of previous food events and experiences around food." She asserts that memories "are not always individual, but have a social nature," and are "part of a shared cultural experience" (668). It is thus understandable that for immigrants, who are distanced from their physical, linguistic and cultural signifiers in a new environment and reality, food and food memories may become "the ultimate consumable commodity, which not only serves biological needs, but also acts symbolically to define boundaries between Self and Other and construct a cosmology" (Lupton 666). However, the fact that ethnic food outlets have grown in popularity in the mainstream suggests that food might also be a medium of connection that breaks boundaries. Knut Oyangen argues that "the act of allowing food into the body, potentially involves an anxious encounter between self and the world, or the known and the unknown" (323); even if that encounter might initially be "anxious," our human capacity for "food learning' [...]"

reverses an old adage” (326). As we learn to savor the food of the Other, we may in time also comprehend and accept that Other.

This article seeks to show how this process works through a case-study of the writings of Arab-Americans. Despite the fact that many writers have different national and religious affiliations, they share a similar cultural and linguistic background as well as the immigrant’s sense of exile. They use food both as a language of cultural expression and a medium of group solidarity, and as a cross-cultural medium which reaches out to make their experiences palatable to their readers.

As the Arab-American writer and scholar Lisa Suhair Majaj explains, various ideological, racial and legal obstacles have sometimes prevented the integration of Arab-Americans into mainstream society (“Arab-Americans” 321). Nonetheless they remained “adamant about blending in” by distancing themselves from their ancestral cultural signifiers and language, and even sometimes by adopting English names, while at the same time upholding certain traditions within their own households because it was what they believed Arabs did (Kaldas and Mattawa xv-xvi). Second and third generation immigrants thus grew up as hybrid individuals; and for some of them being Arab became embarrassing, especially in the aftermath of the Six Day War of 1967. On the positive side, however, the Civil Rights Movement prompted some people of Arab descent to reassert their ancestral background (Kaldas and Mattawa xvi). However, the reclamation of heritage and the invalidating of the demonized image were not an easy task. Barbara Nimri Aziz writes: “[G]iven the heap of misrepresentations and the patronizing tales of Arabs penned by generations of Orientalists, politicians, and reporters [...] [there was] a great deal of sorting out to do,” before Arab-Americans could answer the vital questions “what am I? Who was my sitti, my grandmother? What about her made her larger and more real than an American granny? I need to find out and then imprint her Arabness on everyone” (xii-xiii).

Many Arab-American writers found that their knowledge of their heritage and culture has become “wordless knowledge,” as Majaj puts it in her poem “Recognized Futures” (5); and thus sought other forms of cultural expression to reaffirm and reclaim their heritage, such as food and cooking. Oyangen draws a theoretical and historical framework for the social, psychological, and symbolic meaning of food; following

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Levi-Strauss, he asserts that cooking and eating are similar to linguistic phenomena in the sense that they are based on general but implicit (unconscious) laws expressed in symbolic systems. Food and food items “become cultural items through the workings of a set of rules (a language or grammar) that are unconsciously adopted by individuals within a physical and social space” (327-328). Arab-American women writers fall back on the symbolic food activities traditionally practiced in their households as an alternative means of connecting to their history. They embrace the African-American Nobel Laureate Toni Morrison’s dictum that “when you kill the ancestor you kill yourself” (344), as they attempt to regain a sense of self through the invocation of the spirit of their ancestors, particularly grandmothers, the Sitti described by Aziz.¹ In their reconstruction of self, Arab-American women writers often employ autobiographical or semi-autobiographical genres, both of which are “at the same time narrative and essayistic, descriptive and imagistic, factually testimonial and anecdotally fictive [...] [They] bridge [...] the typical strategies of historical and literary discourse in order to establish necessary connections between the private and the public, the personal and the political” (Buss 2-3). Though they may come from different national origins and belong to different generations of immigrants, Arab-American writers share a culture and, like many other immigrants, share also a sense of exile and alienation stemming from identity crises. One of the first anthologies of Arab-American women’s writing, *Food for Our Grandmothers* (1994), is a testimony to the significance of food as a cultural language and the role of grandmothers as touchstones of identity and connection. In the introduction, the Lebanese-American writer and editor Joanna Kadi explores her sense of marginality and alienation: “Lebanese. Not Black. Not White. Never quite fitting in. Always on the edge” (xvi). “Sorting” through her experiences to make sense of her existence, she discovers that there are many things that she had taken for granted and that she now needs to revisit and reevaluate – for example, her *Sittee*, or grandmother, “whose beauty, endurance, and

1 The word ‘Sitti’ in colloquial Arabic literally means ‘my lady’ and is used to refer to a grandmother as a sign of respect and veneration. The standard Arabic word for grandmother is ‘Jaddah’, and ‘Jaddati’ is ‘my grandmother’. ‘Sitti’, however, is more commonly used in almost all Arab countries, but it is spelled differently in English, as will appear in this article, depending on the way it is pronounced by the writers of different national origins.

usefulness now astound me” (xv).² Another thing she had taken for granted was her marginal position and stigmatized image in her old high school, where learners had dubbed her “Oil slick.’ ‘Arab whore.’ ‘Greasy Arab,’” (xvi). Kadi finds in the memories of her grandmother a source of strength for survival and continuity. It is significant that such memories center on cooking activities:

Gram had small, strong, gnarled hands. Work-worn hands, busy hands. I watched them kneading dough for Syrian bread. I watched them wrap a new bowl of *laban* in several towels to sit overnight. I watched them roll out spinach pies. I watched them cut freshly-baked *kibbah* into diamond-shaped pieces (xiv).

Her grandmother’s hands are involved in the business of sustaining and nurturing, which, for Kadi, is associated with her sense of identity. Kadi “grew up tasting Lebanon and hearing its music, but not speaking and only rarely hearing its language” (xv). It is the absence of the language that needs to be compensated for; hence Kadi uses Arabic food and her grandmother’s recipes not only as thematic connectives, but as a mutual language of reclamation through which she can establish a connection to and continuity with her heritage. One of the significant contributions to *Food for Our Grandmothers* is Therese Saliba’s autobiographical article “*Sittee* (or Phantom Appearances of a Lebanese Grandmother).” Kadi explains in the introduction that “Olive trees in various parts of the Arab world date back thousands of years, and many still bear fruit. [...] Olive trees represent our long connection to our land and culture” (3). Saliba finds a link to her heritage in her evocation of the “phantom” of her *Sittee*. However this was a difficult process; while growing up she had taken her “*Sittee* [...] for granted”:

I knew *Sittee*’s history only in the confused and convoluted ways of a child. By the time I was old

2 The importance of the ancestor is also evident in other cultures, especially in African-American writing. See Toni Morrison, “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation.” For more details on Morrison’s ideas about the function of the ancestor figure in African-American literature, see her article, “City Limits, Village Values: Concepts of the Neighborhood in Black Fiction.” *Literature and the American Urban Experience: Essays on the City and Literature*. Eds. Michael C. Jaye and Ann Chalmers Watts. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1981, 35-43.

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enough to understand her Old World ways and decipher the language of her movements when I couldn't understand her speech, I was a teenager. Because I wanted to forget my Arabness and to be like everybody else, I didn't have much time for *Sittee* (14).

A third generation Arab-American of Lebanese origins, Saliba could not master the Arabic language and food provided the principal link between herself and her grandmother: "On weekdays I lived in an American world. But on weekends I lived in a world of foreign foods, strange language, incense, ritual, bazaar and bizarre. *Sittee* embodied this difference" (9). It is interesting to note Saliba's choice of words as she distinguishes the two worlds she lived in, the "American world," and the "bizarre" world of her grandmother, suggesting that it was her Americanized self which dominated her early childhood. However her attitudes changed when her grandmother passed away, when Saliba was twenty. The only thing that remained for the granddaughter to evoke the "sacred and human" culture of her grandmother was the "remembrances of Saturday afternoons in the kitchen" (9). Her grandmother "spoke little of her old way of life" (8); and even when she did, "she lapsed into sounds [the Arabic language]" which her Americanized granddaughter "could not decipher, as if a country could not be translated to any other language except that which is native to it" (11). However, her way of life and her Old Country "bled through everything she did," particularly "her cooking, seasoned with foreign flavors," which "was the source of her pride" (8). Whenever *Sittee* went to visit her son (Saliba's father), "she came bearing *Fistu* (Pistachio nuts), pomegranates, *Kibbee* (pressed lamb), Syrian bread, and holy bread" (9). Her food gifts emphasized her ethnicity, making Saliba reflect that "if a woman could be a land, *Sittee* was Lebanon to me" (10).

Enoch Padolsky contends that "the connection between family members and their links to their historical culture are forged in the traditional collective, food-oriented activities they share" (23). Sharing in the preparation of traditional food, cutting dough for meat pies, stuffing *koosah* (zucchini) with lamb and rice or cutting tomatoes for *tabouleh*, provided a means by which the child Saliba could be enculturated, even if unconsciously, in the ethnic identity of her grandmother. She was

internalizing cultural beliefs when she picked up and chewed on the pine nuts spilled across the kitchen counter: “this was all part of the process of tasting and testing. In Arabic tradition, it is said that you eat as much as you love the cook. Every seed, every appetizer counted as part of that love” (11). Encouraged by her grandmother’s words (“*Suhtein*, *Suhtein*” (eat, eat)),³ Saliba always ate well, as well as experiencing something that went “beyond the mere biological notion of feeding,” because “food and food habits occasion some of the ways in which people understand themselves, identify with others, and communicate their desires, beliefs, and claims to status” (Oyangen 325). Saliba’s *Sittee* was transplanted to the US as a young woman, and she had suffered during her life the “accumulation of loss – of homeland, of husband, of heart” (15). Nonetheless she “maintained notions of her nobility from her Lebanese village even as she rolled grapeleaves in the tiny kitchen of her Hollywood apartment” (9). Like many immigrants who found that “food helped to locate them in time and place and to create a ‘home’ in a land not their ‘own’” (Oyangen 330), she used cooking and food to create her own cultural space and to reaffirm her identity. She understood how “cooking [is] a truly universal form of human activity” (Oyangen 327), and thereby used it to replace the Arabic language (which Saliba could not understand) to pass on her heritage to her granddaughter. The memories of her grandmother are the lifeline that keeps Saliba connected to her heritage: when the ‘phantom’ of her *Sittee* comes to visit her at night, she writes: “I walk [...] toward her, calling her name. [...] I reach for her hand and we stand together beneath the domed archway of the night, speaking Arabic, her language I have come to know” (17). What Saliba says here recalls the African-American writer bell hooks whose references to her grandmother reproduce an ancestral ritual not only to “establish kinship and connection,” but to resist historical “erasure” (116).⁴ Saliba, as Rosilia Baena puts it, uses food as a metaphor that “invites

3 The word *Suhtein* in the Lebanese and other dialects of Arabic literally translates as “double health,” thus signifying a prayer that the food consumed may grant the eater both physical and spiritual nourishment and health.

4 hooks describes the ritualistic greeting which her grandmother insisted her grandchildren performed when they came to visit her: “upon entering we were to look at her, call her name, acknowledge her presence. Then once that was done we were to state our ‘particulars’ – who we were and/or what we were about. We were to name our-selves – our history. This ritualistic naming was frightening. It felt as though this prolonged moment of greeting was an interrogation. To her it was a way we could learn ourselves, establish kinship and connection, the way we could know and acknowledge our ancestors” (116).

the reader to read beyond the possibly 'exotic' representation of food to more complex versions of positionality, affiliation, and selfhood" (105).⁵ Her grandmother is transformed from an exotic Other into a human being with a particular history who had experienced loss, had been scarred and Othered, yet had also managed to sustain a particular nobility.

The Syrian-American writer Mohja Kahf's story "Manar of Hama" takes readers back to the beginning to experience the "accumulation of loss – of homeland [...] of heart" experienced by Saliba's grandmother.⁶ Manar, the protagonist of the story, escapes to the US with her husband and children after she had lost all her family in the Hama Massacre, committed by Hafez Al-Assad's regime in Syria in 1982. Living in a small town in Illinois, she finds herself among people whose "blank stares and nervous shifting eyes," emphasize their lack of understanding of her plight, coming from a country whose "government [...] [that] would gun down twenty thousand of its own citizens" (112). She feels reduced to "a ghost from a nonexistent place" who has "left behind the people and the landscape and the things we knew, all that had ever given our life its taste" (113).

Written from the first person point of view, the story begins with the lines: "the food here is terrible. The meat smells disgusting. There is no real bread, or coffee, or olives, or cheese. [...] I have lost five kilos already in the months since I left Syria" (111). The physical deprivation and hunger implied in these first sentences are intertwined with spiritual and cultural deprivation. In the second and third paragraphs Manar reflects on her marginal position and alienation:

Back home I was a smart, capable woman who could make her way around in the world. I am Manar Abdaqader Sharbakly of Hama. [...] the ground knew my feet. Here I get lost if Khalid isn't with me on every little errand. [...] back home I was top of my class. Here I'm queen of the

5 Baena's article investigates "the use of food as a metaphor in culinary memoirs by ethnic Canadian authors Fred Wah [...] and Austin Clarke." However, though she focuses her study on Canadian authors, her argument is also relevant to ethnic American authors since she investigates the authors' explorations of their "cultural backgrounds and inscription of subjectivity" (105).

6 The story is published in *Dinarzad's Children*, the first edition of which appeared in 2004, ten years after *Food for Our Grandmothers*.

dunces. I have not been able to learn more than ten words of their miserable chaotic language.

Manar takes pride in an identity which she asserts according to Arabic tradition by stating her full name and national origins. However, her confidence is undermined by a sense of hopelessness as she struggles with a culture that perceived herself as an “ignoramus” because of the kind of dress she wears, even though in Syria it was considered “the dignified thing for a woman to wear” (112). Manar’s failure to fit in embarrasses her children and alienates her from them for they “are already [fitting] in another world, one I don’t understand” (111). Her sense of loss is expressed through an intense craving for the food of her home country, prompting her to follow a strange woman who smelled of allspice because “here was a scent of home” (114). Following the stranger to a camp out of town, Manar hears the Sufi chant “*la illaha illa allah, illa allah*” (there is no god but God) and cries out “madly in love and pain” (114). The woman, whom Manar calls “Allspice,” turns out to be a member of a hippie group who offend her sense of propriety with their scanty clothing and free relationships. When she tells them that she comes from Syria, they ask her to enjoy her “first filling meal in this country” (115-116). Her immediate response is to invite them to her house because this “is the way you behave as a guest, drummed in me for too long to do anything about it.” But she cuts herself off in the middle of her invitation because her cultural prejudices are still as strong as her cultural politeness and hospitality. The end of the story suggests that Manar must first come to terms with her own pain and loss, as well as learning to accept her new environment and finding ways to cook her own food, an act of innovation, assertion, and transformation. The story strips Manar of her stereotypical covering, and exposes her individual subjectivity, while inviting the reader to hear her voice and to feel her hunger.

The Jordanian-American Diana Abu-Jaber’s novel *Crescent* (2003), expands both Saliba’s and Kahf’s thematic preoccupations. It is to some extent autobiographical; like the author the protagonist has an American mother and an Arab father, and she uses food as a language of connection and love. Abu-Jaber writes:

Another way my father taught us about our culture was through preparing the dishes of our ancestry. Every time Dad made us *mansaff*, or

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stuffed grape leaves, it brought us a little closer
to the child he had been, and brought us closer
as a family (123-24).

Sirine, an orphan who lost both parents at the age of nine, cooks the Arabic food recipes she had learnt from them to invoke their memory and connect to their history. Cooking is her strategy to deal with her loss and the identity crisis resulting from it.

Crescent offers the reader two parallel narratives: the first being Sirine's story, and the second focusing on Abdelrahman Salahadin, Sirine's ancestor whose fantastic story is told by her paternal uncle. The latter functions as a meta-narrative shedding light on the life, dreams and yearnings of the characters in the novel. Abdelrahman Salahadin sells and resells himself into slavery, roams the world, and ends up in the US, where he tries to become a Hollywood movie star, only to realize that being "Jordanian, Syrian, Lebanese, Egyptian, Iraqi, Palestinian, drowned Bedouin of an Arab" precludes the possibility of him becoming a star (337). Growing old and tired of this futile aim, he "craved the comforts of home and family" (382). And one day, happening to see the crescent, he realizes that he has to go home.

The crescent is a powerful religious and cultural symbol, the significance of which informs the theme and message of the novel. In Muslim tradition, the appearance of the crescent moon on the evening of the last day of the fasting month of Ramadan heralds the beginning of the three-day fast-breaking feast. For Abdelrahman Salahadin, the crescent signifies "new clothes," and going "visiting and eating"; it symbolizes the promise of a new hope and a new beginning, a "reward to the patient, the watchful, those who are willing to wait" (382). He returns to Egypt where he had begun his journey to be reunited with his mother who had gone half way around the world to find him. Abdelrahman Salahadin's fantastic story is an allegorical journey of an individual in search of self and in pursuit of a dream, an individual who is on a cultural "fast" who does not find stability until he returns home. Abu-Jaber's other characters are also fasting and "starved" in their different ways, seeking through food and cooking to find what they understand by "home." Sirine, the Iraqi-American cook turns Um-Nadia's café into a center of gravity; the exchange students and immigrants gravitate there because "they love her food – flavors that remind

them of their homes – but they also love to watch Sirine, with her skin so pale it has the bluish cast of skim milk, and her sea-green eyes” (20). She is the half-Arab, half-American who embodies in herself the reconciliation of the American Dream with yearnings for the homeland. She can understand “how painful it is to be an immigrant – even if it was what he’d wanted all his life – sometimes especially if it was what he’d wanted all his life” (22). Sirine’s cooking even reconciles enemies. The Iranian owner of a market in the neighborhood of the café “was ready to forgive the Iraqis on behalf of all Iranians” when Sirine promises to cook him his favorite Persian dish; two white and black American police officers, who have become regulars, come to the café to eat fava beans and fried lentils and watch Bedouin soap operas which have completely “entranced” them (23).

The art of cooking for Sirine recalls the memories which not only help her find and understand herself, but also help her heal and become a healer. Her earliest memories of her parents are those in which cooking and food are a symbolic language of love and hope. Her mother had learned to cook Arabic food “to keep her husband close to her, attached to a delicate golden thread of scent” (56). And when they cooked together, “their concerted movements” in preparing the dishes were “like a dance; they swam together through the round arcs of her mother’s arms and her father’s tender strokes” (66). Sharing in the activities, Sirine unconsciously internalizes the “larger secrets” that those preparations are “mediations on hope and devotion” (68). Probably this is the reason when she heard about her parents’ death as a child, she went into the kitchen and prepared “an entire tray of stuffed grape leaves all by herself” and sat down to eat it with her uncle with her eyes “watching the back door” (56). The tray of grape leaves was a symbolic offering of hope and devotion – ‘a delicate golden thread of scent’ that may bring them back.

In “Counter Narratives: Cooking Up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye’s *Poetry* and Diana Abu-Jaber’s *Crescent*,” Lorraine Mercer and Linda Strom discuss the ways in which food functions as a language of connection and communication which mediates love, memory and exile. They suggest that cooking for Sirine “becomes agency: when all else fails in her life, when she is confronted with uncertainty, confusion and identity conflict, she goes to the kitchen and cooks herself and her history into existence” (40). Nonetheless she remains somehow dissatisfied: having lost the father from whom she suspects she inherited her deeper nature,

she has also lost the opportunity of knowing and connecting with the larger history and heritage which shaped his (and her) nature. Cooking, for Sirine, is agency, but it functions on a paradoxical praxis of connection and escape. She has trained herself “to stop thinking, to work, and simply to exist inside the simplest actions, like chopping an onion or stirring a pot” (22). Her emotions begin to change when she meets Hanif, and discovers that both of them can, like her parents, “make baklava together” (67). Her yearnings are satisfied, and she comes to the conclusion that “as long as she can cook, she would be loved” (218). By coming to know Hanif, the Iraqi exile who hungers for his family and country, Sirine comes also to know herself. She seems to have always known that she has “rushing in her own blood”; what Um-Nadia calls the all-consuming “loneliness of the Arab” which “swallows him [sic] whole when he leaves his country” (21). Hanif reciprocates her cooking by feeding her with his own hands, saying “*Min eedi.*’ From my hand,” (the Arabic words which “intimate friends say to express the greatest of care” (8)) which her father used to say when he fed her. She also awakens Hanif’s dormant memories of his homeland and thereby opens up her cultural heritage. When Hanif tells her about his family and his escape from Iraq through the desert, Sirine feels that “the two of them are in the story together. It feels like something unraveling.” She tells him about her family and the loss of her parents: “it wasn’t the same thing as crossing the desert’ [...] But in a way that’s sort of how it felt. Waiting for them to come home” (162). For Hanif, “a shift of ingredients” in cooking American food for Sirine resembles “a move from native tongue into a foreign language” (77), and this allows him to share his childhood memories with her: “I never much wanted to be up in my father’s orchard. I liked this. I liked the kitchen. [...] Where the women were always telling stories. My mother and my aunts and the neighbors and – my sister” (67-68). Just as Hanif becomes reminiscent of the lost father for Sirine, she becomes reminiscent of the lost female figures of his family. They find and become “the opposite of exile” (152), as he tells her.

In the introduction of *Food for Our Grandmothers* Kadi declares the manifold purpose of the book; not only does it seek to reclaim and establish connections with Arab ancestral heritage and identity, but it tries to offer “appropriate food” for the Arab community in the West who, like herself, try to find answers for so many questions:

Do transplants ever find home? Are we weakened by the ever present feeling of not belonging in the west or the east, of having one foot in both worlds but no solid roots in either? Or are we stronger, more innovative and creative, able to make home in odd sites, able to survive in small, hard places, plants growing out of rocks? (xv)

However, the book also enables the contributors to break the stereotypical “social construction of ‘the Arabs’ that has cast us as the enemy, other, fanatical terrorist, crazy Muslim [...] veiled Woman and exotic whore.” They place before the reader their thoughts, concerns and experiences, along with the recipes and foods of their grandmothers, hoping that by doing so they would help effect “radical change” and “chart new ground” (xvi-xvii). Readers are invited to savor the food as they listen to the stories and the voices which would break the boundaries and humanize the Other.

Abu-Jaber’s work fulfills a similar purpose: using food as a language of contact and connection, the novel builds bridges that extend into two directions, simultaneously connecting them and their Arab audience to their heritage, and connecting them to their present environment and Western audience. Food functions as a language that is not only private for Hanif and Sirine (299), but is also a familial, communal and cultural language which connects them to their families, histories and homeland. Um-Nadia’s café is a new cultural space which accommodates hybridity and diversity, accommodating a Lebanese owner, an Iraqi-American chef, a custodian from Central America, a Mexican in love with the owner’s daughter, and Iranian, Turkish, Arab, and American patrons and regulars. Presiding over this space of reconciliation, Um-Nadia believes that “life on earth is paradise, if only we knew it” (20).

In this cultural space new familial ties are forged; and it is these familial ties that Sirine’s uncle celebrates at Thanksgiving dinner: “Here’s to sweet, unusual families, pleasant dogs who behave, food of this nature, the seven types of smiles, the crescent moon, and a nice cup of tea with mint every day. Sahtain. Good luck and God bless us everyone” (217). The mixture of Thanksgiving with the crescent moon, the reference to Abdulrahman Salahadin, the mixed American and Arabic dishes on the table, and finally the mixed Arabic and American blessings all testify to

the “unusualness” of this family gathering, and, interestingly, prefigure the ending of Abdulrahman Salahadin’s story where “the dogs and the mermaids and the mothers and the sons lived together forever” (391).

The work of Saliba, Kahf and Abu-Jaber charts new ground, paving the way for new possibilities of cross-cultural connections and understanding. Their collective work itself becomes a new cultural space which testifies to the possibility of surviving in small, hard places and making home in odd sites without losing touch with one’s origins. Readers are invited to enter new cultural spaces shared with the “unusual family” of the stories, where barriers dissolve and the Other is transformed into a individual subject whose yearnings, losses, desires and fears are no longer incomprehensible.

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