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Literary Codeswitching: Emphasising a Hybrid Identity in Diana Abu-Jaber's Arabian Jazz

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Abstract
Codeswitching has been quite prevalent in the literature of multicultural communities (Lipski, 1982, p.192). However, it does not seem to be widely used in the literature of Arab-Americans living in the USA. Despite this fact, it has recently been an important literary aesthetic tool of Arab-American fiction. This study focuses on the use of codeswitching in Arab-American fiction that reflects not only the mingling of two languages, but also the blending of two opposed cultures one from the East the other from the West. It introduces how the use of Arabic words in English texts announces a bicultural identity and how such technique has recently become the sine qua non of some Arab-American fiction. Hence, this paper explores the use of codeswitching in the major literary work of one prominent Arab-American writer, Diana Abu-Jaber, in the novel *Arabian Jazz* (1993). It illustrates how Abu-Jaber, who is an Arab-American pioneer in her use of codeswitching, represents the Arab-American hybrid identity and how, through it, she breaks genre boundaries and aesthetic norms to create her own race's hybrid space of bicultural interaction.
Keywords: Arab-American Literature, Diana Abu-Jaber, Literary Codeswitching, Identity, Hybridity.

1. Introduction

Since the beginning of the twentieth century, the United States has become an increasingly attractive destination for immigrants from around the world. The changes happening in the US in the twentieth century particularly the acceptance of immigration helped in the process building migrant communities. The consequent transformation of the US's demographic and political realms have been well discussed and analyzed in the fields of sociology and politics.[1] However, despite a significant increase in interest in immigration over the last few decades, evolving developments in Arab-American matters are still rarely discussed compared to other minority groups in the country, such as Latino/Chicano/Hispanic American and Asian-American.[2] For example, while multicultural literature is a rapidly growing field in the US, the analysis of biculturalism in Arab-American literature is a more recent and less comprehensive area.[3] Arab-American writer Lisa Majaj in her article entitled "The Hyphenated Author" gives a simple definition of Arab-American literature. She asserts, "Arab American texts are part of Arab culture, part of American culture, and part of something still in the process of being created". She nonetheless concludes, "Arab-American writers write out of their Arab identity, out of their American identity and out of the identity produced when these cultures come together."[4] Arab-American literature is a literature conceived and executed in English by writers of Arab descent, who are living in America. It is qualitatively different from Arabic literature and Arabic literature translated into English (Nash, 2012, p.11). Thus, the emergence of an Arab-American literature written in English by the children and the grandchildren of Arab immigrants can be studied in order to better understand the language used in this contemporary genre: The Arab-American literature.

This paper serves to highlight this new innovative minority literature. Like many minority literatures, Arab-American literature deserves recognition because it is significant from both literary and sociological perspectives and provides a means for Arab-Americans to speak and engage with American society. Many Arab-American writers, such as Mohja Khaf, Soheir Khashoggi, Laila Halaby, Diana Abu-Jaber and others, use their literature as a means to enter into a dialogue with the majority culture, in other words, American culture. They also use it to occupy a niche area from which to explore the issue of biculturalism from the perspective of a hybrid group, in this case Arab-Americans. The effects of biculturalism is evident in the bilingual context of literary texts through

[1] See Lee, T., Ramakrishnan, S., & Ramírez, R. (Eds.). (2006) *Transforming Politics, Transforming America: The Political and Civic Incorporation of Immigrants in the United States*. Charlottesville: University of Virginia Press.
[2] A major example of Latino-American literature is the works of Gloria Anzaldua. One of her popular works *is Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* (1987). As for Asian-American literature, the works of Maxine Hong Kinston *The Woman Warrior* (1976), Amy Tan *The Joy Luck Club* (1993), and David Henry Hwang *FOB* (1980).
[3]See *Multicultural Literature of the United States: A Finding Guide* at http://guides.library.cornell.edu/multiculturalwriters. This guide is a research guide and bibliography compiled by Fred Muratori, Olin & Uris Libraries Research & Learning Services. It contains tips and strategies for locating biographical and critical information on American writers grouped by ethnicity (e.g., African-American, Jewish-American, etc.), as well a bibliography of resources, both in print and online.
[4] Majaj, L. (1999). *The Hyphenated Author: Emerging Genre of 'Arab-American Literature' Poses Questions of Definition, Ethnicity and Art"*. Al Jadid Magazine 5:26. Available at: <http://www.aljadid.com/content/hyphenated-author-emerging-genre-arab-american-literature-poses-questionsdefinition-ethnici>. [Accessed 29 Apr. 2018].

the writers' choice of words.[1] The sociolinguistic situation of many Arab-Americans living in the US has led to the emergence of an Arab-American discourse and to the creation of a significant Arab-American literature. The experiences of Arab-American writers and the language used in their works have become increasingly relevant since citizenship has been given to Arab-Americans and their presence in the US has become unavoidable. Hence, the late twentieth century has marked the birth of a vibrant and enduring Arab-American literature in the country. Majaj (2006) writes, "[i]n the late 1960s and 1970s, […], the emergence in the U.S. of pan-ethnic Arab American identity bridging different national and religious background helped set the stage for new kind of literature affirming and engaging Arab and Arab American identity" (p.125). A key feature is the growing confidence and diversity of expression among Arab-American writers since the 1980s. However, as mentioned earlier, few of these texts received any widespread attention. They are often being labeled as "minor literature", despite the fact that they are written in English.[2]

At times, this type of literature uses the technique of codeswitching between two different languages, Arabic and English, a bicultural and bilingual experience of an innovative hybrid experience, which correlates between two worlds. Codeswitching "is the use of more than one language, variety, or style by a speaker within an utterance or discourse or between different interlocutors or situations" (Romaine, 1992, p.110). Despite the fact that codeswitching has been quite prevalent in literature and exists in many cultures, it does not seem to be widely used in fiction (Lipski, 1982, p.192). Codeswitching, in general, is widespread throughout the Arab-American community in the United States, however, it has recently been an important literary aesthetic tool of Arab-American literature that reflects not only the mingling of two languages , but also the blending of two opposed cultures one from the East the other from the West. The use of Arabic words in English texts to introduce a bicultural identity has recently become the sine qua non of some Arab-American literature. Hence, this paper seeks to explore the use of codeswitching in the major literary work of one prominent Arab-American writer, Diana Abu-Jaber, in the novel *Arabian Jazz* (1993).[3]

1.1 Why Diana Abu-Jaber and why *Arabian Jazz*?

A daughter of an Arab-American immigrant and an American mother, Abu-Jaber was one of the first Arab-American female novelist who chose to produce and personalise her literary works in English, at times resorting to codeswitching to use the full richness of her two languages while drawing heavily on her own background.[4] She expresses her bilingual creativity by using this technique, which was not found in the written mode in the Arab-American literature at the time of the production of *Arabian Jazz*. "Choosing to write in a foreign language like English is, for Anglophone women writers of Arab descent, either a deliberate choice that satisfies their literary needs or a natural choice as English is for some writers a mother tongue" (Sarnou, 2014, p.71). Abu-Jaber writes in English to satisfy her literary needs, since she desires that her story be heard. One can also claim that it is a natural choice, since her mother is American, and she was born and raised in America. She asserts, "I began writing in order to constitute myself—as the child of Arab immigrants—as a 'whole' person. Writing is wonderfully healing" ("Abu-Jaber, Diana 1959—"). This paper illustrates how Abu-Jaber's hybrid identity is represented through her use of codeswitching and how, through it, she breaks genre boundaries and aesthetic norms to create her own race's hybrid space of bicultural interaction. This novelist is an interesting borderline case due to the fact that her novel *Arabian Jazz* is one of the first Arab-American novels that used the written mode of codeswitching and one of the first books that represented the Arabs in America. *Arabian Jazz* won the Oregon Book Award for Literary Fiction and was a finalist for the PEN Hemingway Award. The significance of *Arabian Jazz* originates in its rarity in concern with its new issues and representations. Abu-Jaber asserts, "Part of the problem is that there are so few representations of Arabs in America, so the book got looked at under a microscope" (cited. in Curiel 2004). Highlighting the in-between status of Arab-Americans, Abu-Jaber through *Arabian Jazz* invents a bicultural narrative by introducing issues of cultural hybridity through a bilingual discourse. She offers many interesting perspectives on a range of cultural issues that revolve around bilingualism. In fact, the way Abu-Jaber portrays growing up in two languages, or living a dual life, she is actually introducing how Arab-Americans are positioned in contemporary US society. For some of her characters, English is the primary language, but they maintain a relationship to Arabic (her father's mother tongue). Abu-Jaber's narratives have stood out on the national stage, introducing the birth of a new bicultural identity, which is well expressed

[1] For more information on the relationship between biculturalism and bilingualism, see Mackey, William Francis. *Literary biculturalism and the thought-language-culture relation*. Washington, D.C: ERIC Clearinghouse, 1971.

[2] For more information, see the Voice of Shuttle. The VoS started in 1994 as a suite of static Web pages, which has now been rebuilt as a database. It is woven by Alan Liu and a development team in the U. California, Santa Barbara, English Department. Its database provides general resources in minority literatures. See http://vos.ucsb.edu/browse.asp?id=1167

[3] Diana Abu-Jaber (born in 1959) is an Arab-American professor at Portland State University. She was born in Syracuse, New York, to a Jordanian father and an American mother. She is a bilingual speaker.

[4] *Arabian Jazz* draws heavily on Abu-Jaber's own background. The protagonists emigrated with their father from Jordan to Syracuse (USA) after their mother's death. After so much struggle to find their identity, which is being torn between two worlds, the American and the Arab worlds, the protagonists finally come to a resolution.

through language. Abu-Jaber received several awards for her best-selling novels *Crescent* (2003) and Origin (2007), and for her memoir *The Language of Baklava* (2005).

Despite the fact that many Arab-American novelists have used English as their primary language, only some began to use the codeswitching technique as a means of expression. For these writers like Abu-Jaber, it has become important as a means to express Arab-American dualism and biculturalism. Using Arabic words in English texts punctuates the Arab-American text and confirms not only the novelists' putative bilingual skills, but also her bicultural identity. This is due perhaps because the novelist longings to receive acknowledgement and appreciation from Arab, American, and Arab-American readers. What her works have in common is namely their origins in both Western and Eastern cultures. The key to the bicultural aspect of *Arabian Jazz* lies in its unique ability to represent the technique of codeswitching between two different languages of lived experiences, one language as the dominant one, that is, English, and the other as the flavor, the minor language, Arabic. The notion of major/minor highlights the relationship with the "other", in this case between the West and the East, in particular, the American and the Arab. It must be noted that, in the case of Arab-American literature, English is a major language when compared to Arabic in the American context. As Deleuze and Guattari (1993) explain, "a minor literature doesn't come from a minor language" but is rather a literature constructed by a minority "within a major language" (p.152). In other words, it is a nessissaty for Arab-American writers, such as Abu-Jaber to use English in order to communicate with the major group: the American society, in which Arab-Americans are desperate to fit in with.

1.1.1 General Reasons for Using the Codeswitching Technique:

There are various reasons why some Arab-American writers use the codeswitching technique when writing in English, flavoring it with particular Arabic terms here and there. One major reason is that Arab-American writers acknowledge that English is a language with a universal and civil vocation, which allows direct contact with the dominant American audience, into which many Arab-Americans are trying to blend. In addition, they also acknowledge that by using English combined with a little Arabic, they are introducing an identity marker of a shared group ethnicity and are also reaching the Arabs of America, to whom they are trying to stir some kind of consciousness of the duality of their identity. Consequently, it has been necessary for some Arab-American writers to use codeswitching as a vehicle to express a bicultural identity, both Arab and American. Thus, through their stories, some of these writers narrate their hybrid experience. This issue of hybrid experience is a conception related with the work of Homi K. Bhabha, who in *The Location of Culture* claims that there is a space "in-between the designation of identity" and that "this interstitial passage between fixed identifications opens up the possibility of a cultural hybridity that entertains difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy" (p.4). In other words, it is an experience that reconstruct a new formation of a new third space. This means that codeswitching is a means that helps define the bicultural identity, whether of the writer or of his/her characters. This leads to another major reason for using codeswitching. While shaping the readers' perceptions of the Arab-American identity, through their codeswitching, Arab-American authors are, in fact, announcing a loud response to marginalization and segregation. Majaj (1999) in her advice to Arab-American writers asserts, "We need to explore experiences not just of ethnic familial warmth and of entry into white middle class America, but of marginalization, poverty, and exclusion, not only from American society but from Arab communities as well" (p.73). Codeswitching, therefore, highlights, emphasises, and helps construct a third space for Arab and American worlds to combine as a means to identify the Arab-American. Through it, some Arab-American writers, such as Abu-Jaber, write extensively in English about the experiences of assimilation into American culture. Abu-Jaber's creative tensions derive from feeling in-between worlds and the division caused by the dualities of biculturalism.

1.1.2 Codeswitching as a Tool to Affirm a Hybrid Identity;

As a tool to affirm her bicultural identity, Abu-Jaber often uses codeswitching in *Arabian Jazz* when referring to two main interrelated subjects: culture and food. Food in the Arab world goes beyond just nourishment. It is all about "culture, resistance and home". In the Middle East Institute's Art and Culture Program, Raneem Alkhatib (2017) explains,

"It is a vital characteristic of Arab culture and is heavily incorporated in traditional and even religious ceremonies and events. Preserving culinary traditions can be a form of resistance in times of loss and war. Arabs living abroad, especially, look to food as a way to get a taste of home. In many ways, food represents home to Arabs who have been displaced."[1]

MEI coined the event as a conversation "about the political, emotional and symbolic significance of food for displaced and diaspora communities." The following examples from *Arabian Jazz* will serve to illustrate the use

[1] Alkhatib, R. (2017). *Arabic Food is Culture, Resistance and Home*. [online] Arab American Institute. Available at: <http://www.aaiusa.org/arabic_food_is_culture_resistance_and_home> [Accessed 20 Apr. 2018].

of codeswitching in relation to food and culture. By referring to such issue, Abu-Jaber writes extensively about experiences of assimilation into American culture. For example, every now and then, Abu-Jaber blends descriptions of American and Arabic food. She writes, “Somebody bring me cheeseburger and baklawa” (AJ 125), “Back in the reception hall, the long tables were filled to capacity as servers brought out vats of stuffed grape leaves, squash, *tabouli*, rice, roast lamb, and loaves of Arabic bread. There were bottles of *arak*, which the men called for over and over” (AJ 59). The significance of these quotes is not simply to describe certain types of food or a banquet, it is to relate the characters with their bicultural experience and identity. However, this type of blending and codeswitching may perhaps pose a problem for the American reader due to the fact that some terms and expressions are not translated, such as, *baklawa*, *tabouli* and *arak*. Accordingly, one can argue that Abu-Jaber’s texts are meant for those who are living in-between the Arab and English languages and culture, that is, the Arab-Americans. Her interest focus on the blending of food introduces readers to a shared common experience of many Arab-Americans. Due to this interest, Arabic retains a strong presence in her works. This is evident through the repetitive use of some Arabic terms for specific foods, such as *tabouli* (*AJ* 59), grabia (*AJ* 3), *meglube* and *mjeddra* (*AJ* 53), *lebnah*, (*AJ* 82) and *Koosa mashie* (*AJ* 305). These specific foods are considered as identity markers for Arabs, in particular, Middle Easterners. Alkhatib (2017) explains such correlation. She asserts, "Arab dishes are not only delicious, but aim to preserve Arab identity, tradition and a window to home.” In other words, Arabic food reminds the taster of home. In addition, Abu-Jaber also uses other Arabic terms that identify the speaker with Arab culture and traditions, such as using expression like *Inshallah* (*AJ* 3) *ya'Allah!* (*AJ* 149), and *y aba ya! Yakelbe*! (*AJ* 42), and sometimes uses words related to Arab myths and beliefs, such as *ghoul* (*AJ* 37) and demon-*ifrit* (*AJ* 64), or with religious terminologies such as *Sheikh* (*AJ* 45) and *khaffiyea* (*AJ* 70). Not used in the American culture, these terms help keep the speaker in touch with his or her parentage and Arab identity. However, some would disagree with this idea and argue that there is no equivalent meaning or expression for these terms, and therefore they are better expressed in the original language. Using such words from the Arabic language allows the writer to be more precise in her expressions than trying to find an equivalent in English. That is to say that the Arabic words are interspersed in order to name notions that are definitely Arabic and, thus, cannot be named in English, which in fact might be true.

Abu-Jaber is well aware of the fact that she as a writer has the freedom to write outside the traditional conventions of Arabic and American literature. What she did in her texts, such *Arabian Jazz*, is establish a bilingual dialogue that emphasises both cultural backgrounds in order to announce an innovative hybrid identity. Following the growing sentiment among Arab-Americans that they have a hybrid identity, the novelist introduces the experience of growing up in two languages. Codeswitching, thus, becomes a means to assert the Arab-American position as bicultural subjects. Consequently, with the help of codeswitching in *Arabian Jazz*, Abu-Jaber creates her own space of textual and cultural hybridity. This technique of writing is like having spices. Spices cannot be added without thought to flavor, in the same way that codeswitching is not done simply for effect. Hence, by switching between English and Arabic, Abu-Jaber creates and shapes the readers’ perspective of what the Arab-American identity and culture is like, while legitimizing this identity by giving it a voice. Interrupting the major language with a minor one is one technique used for emphasising an existence that is, in fact, not totally recognized in the United States. Acknowledging the marginalized position of Arab-Americans in the American society, Abu-Jaber, thus, through *Arabian Jazz* emphasises a hybrid presence. In other words, Abu-Jaber uses bilingual dialogue in a manner that facilitates cultural co-existence. Responding to this stimulus, *Arabian Jazz* contributes in creating what Homi Bhabha calls "a Third Space" for the Arab-American living in US.

Post-colonial critic Bhabha shapes this conception of “cultural hybridity”. He claims that any cultural identity that interacts with intercultural relations is constructed in a hybrid space called the “Third Space of enunciation” (1994, p.37-38). In this “Third Space” the notion of the “in-betweeness” crystalizes, which “carries the burden of the meaning of culture” (Bhabha, 1995, p.206). According to Bhabha’s definition, the aim of living in this “Third Space” is to create new cultural forms (206). Many minority writers, including Abu-Jaber, occupy what Bhabha calls the “Third Space” and use language to bring meaning into their hybrid world. Using the bilingual discourse in *Arabian Jazz*, Abu-Jaber tends to inject familiar Arabic words into her English texts. For those words that are not familiar, she sometimes includes a translation so that her readers will not feel alienated. Abu-Jaber writes, “Jem had assumed her mother had known only women like these, laughing and athletic. Matussem called Portia TherabitEyn, Evil Eye” (AJ 292). The language here is used as a tool in creating the third space described by Bhabha and includes attention to Abu-Jaber’s role in using Arab-Americans’ bilingual form of communication to emphasise their hybridity. Therefore, one can claim that Abu Jaber uses language as a code and as a means of cultural identification, in which in her situation is highlighting the third space she and other Arab-American occupy.

2.1 Codeswitching as Represented by Three Bilingual Models:

Reflecting the bicultural social life of many Arab-Americans, Abu-Jaber’s characters in *Arabian Jazz* embody

their fate of being caught between languages. She introduces how codeswitching is used by portraying three bilingual models: the bilingual migrant parent, who is trapped in the dilemma of navigating between old and new languages; the fluent and self-assured bilingual adult; and the dormant bilingual child, who has lost his/her mother tongue.

2.1.1 The Bilingual Migrant Parent:

Beginning with the bilingual migrant parents, particularly those who are first-generation Arab-American, Abu-Jaber introduces characters, in *Arabian Jazz*, who struggle between their new language and their old one. This is evident in the characters of Matussem, Fatima, Rima, Fouad and Aunt Sally. These first-generation bilinguals speak in broken English and occasionally use a word or phrase in Arabic. For example, Abu-Jaber writes,

> "Sister!" Matussem said and hurried to her. He touched her and kissed both
> cheeks over and over. "*Ah'lanwasah'lankeefha'lick*![1] Long time no see. This is a really a day and a half!" …
> "Oldest sister of mine, how many year has been?" Matussem said. "I don't believe these is you in my own house"
> "Enough of bullshit, Matussem," Rima said. "I come get husband back before you murders finish him" (*AJ* 254).

These characters' broken English represents that of Arab-American immigrants who are physically and psychologically displaced. Such discourse stresses the fact that the speaker and the listener all belonged to the same community, with shared experiences and values. They are neither from America nor from the Arab world, and the pressure and difficulties to assimilate in the American melting pot is evident in the fragmented bilingual discourse. This fragmented discourse and the use of codeswitching suggest that language not only represents the distressed culture, but the traumatised personality, too. In other words, codeswitching is used here as the testimony of a disturbed identity, which is evident in the personalities of the previously mentioned characters. Such a portrayal emphasises the Arab-American struggle with the idea of conformity. Working hard to fit in America, Arab-Americans are determined to soften the Arab language while reinforcing English by using codeswitching. This somehow not only personalizes a message but also emphasises a point, which is the assertion of a particular group identity.

2.1.2 The Fluent and Self-assured Bilingual:

Arabian Jazz introduces the fluent and self-assured bilingual, who is confident and proud of his or her bicultural identity. This is evident in the language of Nassir, a graduate in "science and anthropology at Cambridge and Oxford [and who is] working on a post-doc at Harvard" (*AJ* 327).[2] His dialogue with the other characters moves at quick pace. His use of codeswitching between languages is smooth and agile, which reassures his stable status in what Bhabha calls the "Third Space". In other words, it highlights his feelings of empowerment regarding his uniqueness and distinctiveness. This response reflects the research of linguist Vivian Cook (2002), who declares, "Given the appropriate environment, two languages are as normal as two lungs" (23). Such claims highlight a liberating experience, in which a bilingual can go outside the box whenever he/she chooses, which also applies to the female Arab-American bilingual writer, such as Abu-Jaber. Dalal Sarnou (2014), a specialist on Arab women writers, explains this issue of going out of the box. She asserts, "The particularity of these women [writers] is not only that they write in a universal language—English, and that most of them are women of two worlds—the mother country and the Diaspora, but also that they may find more liberty in dealing with controversial issues and taboo themes when writing in English" (p.79). Despite potentially feeling more liberty to write in English, these writers still struggle as they straddle two cultures. Hence, the use of codeswitching in *Arabian Jazz* draws attention to major problems that many, if not all, Arab-Americans face, namely that of being recognized as part of America and finding space in-between Arab and American cultures.

2.1.3 The Dormant Bilingual:

The final and third bilingual model portrayed in *Arabian Jazz* is the dormant bilingual child. This is represented in the characters of Jem and Mel, the daughters of an Arab father and an American mother. Psycholinguist Francois Grosjean (1982) describes the dormant bilingual as someone who has forgotten one of his or her languages (p.239). These two characters, who are described by their Arab aunts as "Amrekani", never use codeswitching (*AJ* 78). This could mean that the characters either are losing their original language (Arabic) or want to lose it. They represent Arab-American nationalism and a sense of patriotism towards the US, a country where identity is correlated with language. In a recent survey by the Pew Research Center reveals this type of correlation. The survey, described in *What It Takes to Truly Be 'One of Us'*, was designed in 14 countries to statistically represent people's perceptions of the relationship between language and identity. The majority of respondents declared that it was important to speak the native language to be considered a true member of a nation. In the United States, 70% of respondents declared that speaking English was essential to be a true American.[3] Revealing the conception that English proficiency matters in America, this survey reveals that

[1] This means "Hello. How are you?"
[2] *(AJ)* is an abbreviation for *Arabian Jazz*.
[3] For more information see: Stokes, B. (2017) "What It Takes to Truly Be 'One of Us'". *Pew Research Center: Global Attitudes and Trends.*

language is a more significant trait of national identity than birthplace, which is evident throughout *Arabian Jazz*.

3.1 Conclusion

Whatever bilingual model Abu-Jaber is portraying—whether first-generation, fluent, or dormant—the novelist succeeded in making a standpoint in her representation of a particular group identity. Abu-Jaber has become one of the most notable Arab authors in the United States today. She writes in English, adding some Arabic expressions and terms in such a way that Americans can understand the Arab-American position (a bicultural identity). By doing so, she achieved in emphasizing the fact that she, herself, is an Arab-American and that her characters belong to the same community, with shared values and experiences.[1] Using codeswitching helped her to address her message to Arab-American readers, who are able to understand such switching from a more intimate perspective. Thus, such technique was a way that supported her to attract the attention of both Americans, who are curious about the culture and Arab-Americans, who feel alienated and estranged.

Participating in a national literature using an international language helps Abu-Jaber carry her voice further towards the empowerment of the Arab-American diaspora. Codeswitching is one of the literary styles used to carry out such a message. In fact, one can declare that by noticing Abu-Jaber's use of codeswitching in *Arabian Jazz,* one can assert that the traditional concepts of literature have changed since the late twentieth century and are in a "continuous process of transformation and hybridization" (Milz, 2000). Hence, Abu-Jaber uses codeswitching through her narratives to assert an identity and belonging in a space of literary-cultural hybridity, which is composed of an Arab and an American cultural, linguistic, and literary mix. These bilingual contexts introduce many aspects about the writer, in particular, and Arab-Americans in general. First, Arab-Americans have a keener awareness of the two different languages. Second, they are able to appreciate new perspectives that enable them to understand, compare, and contrast between two different worlds.

The production of the English literary works by contemporary Arab-American writers, such as Abu-Jaber's *Arabian Jazz*, originates in the identity of their writers. What is unique about such works is the fact that they are written by writers of dual identities, in which their distinctiveness and individuality is evident in their use of language, specifically in their technique of codeswitching, which is particularly useful to Arab-American writers. Using two different languages to assert and represent an honorable hybrid identity is a difficult challenge and therefore it can resemble the challenge many Arab-Americans experience in their daily life. Allowing a direct contact with the dominant society (the American), the technique of codeswitching is a way to emphasise an argument, in the Arab-American case it is emphasising what Bhabha calls the "Third Space". In addition, it can also be a way of emphasising the complexity of the duality of the Arab-American identity or it can be a liberating experience, in which the Arabs in America can exist outside of linguistic norms. To conclude, narratives such as *Arabian Jazz* highlight the idea of honouring minority identities, set an emphasis on the Arab-American individual in a unique new third space, and introduce a future for bilingual persons in the US. It is clear that Abu-Jaber's use of codeswitching as a literary technique succeeded in creating her own race's hybrid space of bicultural interaction. In short, her use of codeswitching in *Arabian Jazz* succeeded in honouring, celebrating, and accentuating the Arab-American hybrid identity.

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[1] For more information see online article "An Arab American writer seeks her identity" at: https://www.sfgate.com/entertainment/article/An-Arab-American-writer-seeks-her-identity-2773799.php.

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