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TRAVEL, RELATIONALITY, AND PRIVILEGE IN
PALESTINIAN AMERICAN POETRY

Abstract

Negotiating location, identity, and class, the poetry of Palestinian American writers Nathalie Handal and Naomi Shihab Nye projects relational models of travel to fashion forms of resistance to colonialism, imperialism, and systemic violence. As such, the poets' travel experiences mediate a revaluation of identity away from discourses of essentialism and in terms of struggle. On a first level, the depiction of travel reflects an agential literary practice in its elaboration of a poetics of relationality with colonized communities. This poetics challenges hegemonic modes of being and compartmentalization informing mainstream politics and narratives of modernity and progress. Travel also functions on a different level: it serves as a vehicle to complicate modes of relationality and problematize their interaction with class and privilege. This representational gesture tests the limits of coalitional practices and emphasizes the importance of examining issues of privilege as they relate to cross-ethnic relations.



INTRODUCTION

The poems of Palestinian American Nathalie Handal and Naomi Shihab Nye negotiate problems associated with the conflation of community with space and location, identity with kinship. Their travel experiences and encounters allow a revaluation of identity, which breaks from discourses of essentialism and reframes identity in terms of struggle and resistance. This article argues that, through travel and political comparativity, the articulation of personal and collective identities becomes a never-ending journey and an act of resistance against racism, colonial regimes, and imperial and interstate violence.

The travel trope functions in a twofold mode in the poetic works at hand. On the first level, the depiction of travel reflects an

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agential literary practice in its elaboration of a poetics of relationality between colonized communities. This poetics challenges the hegemonic modes of being and compartmentalization, which inform Western mainstream politics and narratives of modernity and progress. Handal and Nye's poetry, in this respect, shares this agential contestation with the literary production of a number of Arab American poets such as Suheir Hammad and David Williams. Travel, however, functions on a second level in the works discussed; it serves as a vehicle through which readers are pushed to interrogate modes of relationality to problematize their interaction with class and privilege. This representational gesture, which adds a significant layer of complexity to the poems discussed, tests the limits of coalition building and emphasizes the importance of examining issues of privilege as they relate to cross-ethnic relations. Through this strategy, the depiction of travel in Handal's and Nye's poetry is uniquely positioned to examine what Doreen Massey terms the "geography of social relations;" this focus sheds light, as she explains, on ways in which "[e]conomic, political and cultural social relations, each full of power and with internal structures of domination and subordination, [are] stretched out over the planet at every different level."¹

This article looks at two collections by Nye, *Words Under the Words*, published in 1995, and *19 Varieties of Gazelle*, published in 2002, and one collection by Handal, *The Lives of Rain*, published in 2005. Nye's 1995 collection depicts travels in Mexico, Latin American, and Palestine, while her 2002 collection depicts travels in the Middle East only. A poet and a novelist, Nye has a Palestinian father and an American mother; she grew up between San Antonio, Texas, and Jerusalem. Arab and Palestinian content were not explicitly present in Nye's earlier poetry published in the 1980s and early 1990s, but increased after the 1993/95 Oslo accords, the Second Intifada, and the September 11, 2001 attacks. The content of Nye's earlier work centered more on the Hispanic Southwest and Latin America, yet the travels and solidarities Nye made with the people of this land are directly linked to her understanding and embracing of her Arab half; as she states: "I had to live in a mostly Mexican American city to feel what it meant to be part Arab."² In her later work, and more specifically in her introduction to *19 Varieties of Gazelle*, Nye contextualizes this collection in the political turmoil in the Middle East and the events of September 11, asserting

that her poetry is a space for representation and vehicle for peace in response to both terrorism and prejudice.³

Born in Haiti, Handal is a French-American poet, playwright, and translator of Palestinian descent. Handal's *The Lives of Rain* ventures into the lives and experiences of Palestinians, exiles, and indigenous people with more urgency than her 1999, pre-Second Intifada epic poem *The Neverfield*. Part I of *The Lives of Rain* tours the war-stricken Palestinian political terrain, including Gaza, Jenin, Ramallah, and Jerusalem. Handal contextualizes her poems in relation to the Israeli occupation and the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians, claiming that the "poem-portraits" she creates are a way to represent the humanity of violated people and make their suffering "daunting" to her readers.⁴ Part II takes the reader farther, depicting Handal's travels in the United States, Mexico, Latin America, Europe, Palestine, and North Africa. While these are seemingly unrelated geographies, Handal poetically makes links between shared political struggles relating to these places and with occupied Palestine. Part III is a travel epic that gives a fresh, self-reflective manifesto of travel, immigration, and exile.

The discussion of the poems in this article relies on theories of travel perceived mainly through the lens of "cultural comparison" as theorized by historian and anthropologist James Clifford.⁵ When applied to literature—as well as anthropology—Clifford's approach produces important interventions in both modern narrations of ethnic identity and theorizations about the question of travel. Using travel as a category of comparative analysis challenges the common association between travel and leisure and elitism; additionally, it challenges associations between the travel trope and individualized and romantic representations of exile. Through its emphasis on travel as a tool for cultural comparison, this discussion engages with the material, historical, and political circumstances of travel and investigates neglected spaces of travel. Probing identity, race, and marginalization in the poems through a framework of travel allows for an aberration from essentialist definitions and localized or place/nation-related formulations of identity. This makes possible the reconfiguration of identities across national borders; these changes are nuanced by various: modes of travel such as buses, planes, and roads; spaces of travel, such as hotels, streets, and ghettos; and encounters during travel.

Traditional anthropology has tended to localize its objects of study within a “field” or bounded site of study, such as a village or church; this achieves nothing more than “representational essentializing” of people.⁶ By contrast, Clifford proposes a negotiation of identity and cultural experience through mediations between “native” experiences and traveling experiences of research subjects.⁷ Replacing the term “native,” as Clifford uses it, with the signifier ‘Palestinian’ formulates important questions for the purposes of this article: How does a ‘Palestinian’ perspective influence the traveling experiences of the poets and their poetic subjects? How does the amalgamation of Palestinian experience and traveling experiences help create what Benedict Anderson calls an ‘imagined community’ of minorities?⁸ How does an imagined community of minorities mediate the construction of a Palestinian American identity?

Scholarship that specifically discusses travel and travel experiences in Arab American poetry is scarce. Nevertheless, travel is a very common theme in Arab American writing, including autobiographical narratives, fiction, and poetry.⁹ Travel experiences of Arab Americans, though, are usually conflated without differentiating between origins, which range from Lebanese American, Iraqi American, Palestinian American, and more. The Palestinian American approach to travel and community is nevertheless distinct, harboring an “extra dimension of exile” rooted in a long history of violence and oppression.¹⁰ Unlike other Arab traveling experiences, Palestinians do not have a safe home – possibly no home at all – to return to. Travel in their writing exceeds being a quest for selfhood or alliances; it is a search for, and possibly the creation of, a home.¹¹ And since it is impossible for Palestinian American poets to claim a material home, language and poetry become their hope for an imagined home.¹² Poetic elements used in their poems can also assume a different role than in other Arab American poetry in light of their diasporic reality: code-switching, for example, is representative of diasporic displacement; mobility in the poems represents the multiplicity of exile experiences; and imagery is representative of historical erasure:

A politics of comparison is key to the employment of travel theories in the study of culture, identity, and community. Clifford identifies travel as a “translation term,”¹³ explaining

that [b]y translation term I mean a word of apparently general application used for comparison in a strategic and contingent way. "Travel" has an inextinguishable taint of location by class, gender, race, and a certain literariness [. . .] In the kind of translation that interests me most, you learn a lot about peoples, cultures, and histories different from your own, enough to begin to know what you're missing.¹⁴

Clifford's explanation identifies two layers relating to travel as a means for comparison or translation. The first layer uses travel as a medium for comparison, whereby *through* travel, a traveler can explore and learn about other people and places. According to Clifford, traveled places are sites of encounter as much as they are sites of residence, and they are encounters, which induce knowledge, transformation, and affiliation.

This component of travel – the "transforming encounter" – is paramount for the discussion of the poems at hand since through travel and encounters with others, the poets' understanding of self and articulation of identity are transformed and nuanced. Clifford names sites of culture and encounter "historicitities," which are geographic sites infused with history.¹⁵ As such, visiting a location is also visiting its history. Travel encounters and historicities in the poems at hand are in dialogue with the poets' Palestinian identity, whereby the poets draw on their Palestinian experiences to form connections with the histories of the countries and cities they visit and the ethnic and minoritized people they encounter. This border-crossing creates connections between people and places, which lead to the formation of a struggle-based imagined community of ethnic minorities built on analogous experiences of war violence, exile, and racialization. Yet, travel as a translation term goes beyond an exclusive emphasis on this interethnic "horizontal comradeship" whereby class differences between members of the same community pass unaccounted for.¹⁶ In fact, Clifford's assertions that travel "has an inextinguishable taint of location by class" is a reminder of the impact material conditions have on travelers, particularly immigrants.¹⁷ Clifford argues that travel is affected by strong cultural, political and economic factors. While some travelers are "materially privileged," others are "oppressed."¹⁸ This brings forth the second layer on which travel as a tool for cultural comparison functions in the poems: travel as the object of

comparison. A comparison of the modes, destinations, and facilities of travel in the poems gives insight into the material conditions of the travelers, in this case the poets.

Nye and Handal's poetry projects relational models of identity by reflecting negotiations between these layers of travel, thereby effecting external and internal journeys into self and history to fashion forms of resistance to colonialism, imperialism, and systemic violence. Such models are fashioned through the projection of belonging to an imagined community of US ethnic minorities. They also depend on the articulation of collective and personal histories using a logic of comparativity, away from simplifying claims of sameness but also with a deep awareness of the silencing repercussions of separatism and isolationism. In this context, the articulation of a coalitional identity challenges the kinship trope and extends configurations of self and community beyond familial, national, and ethnic borders. Such a coalitional identity, as Carol Fadda-Conrey argues, engages in "antiassimilationist and transnational modes [. . .] of belonging that ultimately transform dominant and exclusionary US understandings of national membership and citizenship."¹⁹ Nevertheless, the creation of such modes of belonging grapples with the power dynamics related to issues of race, class, and representation.

TRAVEL AND THE MOVEMENT TOWARDS WHOLENESS

The encounters and experiences engendered by travel facilitate the attainment of wholeness and the articulation of a relational ethnic identity that challenges essentialized visions of self and others. Handal's articulation of self and identity through her poetry presents a clear example of this process. Handal has lived in the Arab World, Europe, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the United States, and her literary work clearly reflects her connection to these places and the people that inhabit them. Her literary interest has gone beyond the English canon: she has studied contemporary literature in Russia, Spain, France, Latin America, and the Middle East.²⁰ In her poem "Strangers inside me," Handal acknowledges the different fragments that constitute her global identity. She refers to these fragments as the "[s]trangers inside me that understand/ the strangeness of strange things."²¹ This cosmopolitan nature of Handal's identity is discussed by Elmaz Abinader: "To call Handal

an immigrant poet, an ethnic poet, or even a Palestinian, European, American, or Dominican [. . .] erase[s] the range of identities that exist within the poet. A resident of four continents, fluent in several languages, Handal is a classic border crosser."²² As such, Handal refers to her components of self as "strangers" because, proliferating from her global travels and affiliations, these components are foreign to her. Handal emphasizes, however, that the multiple components of her identity "understand they are not strangers/ to each other."²³ In other words, they are neither separate nor independent; rather, as Handal declares, "they belong together."²⁴ Handal synthesizes the components of her identity to understand herself as a whole; none of these components can be left out since, as Handal declares, "we can[not] refuse ourselves ourselves."²⁵

The question remains, however, what will help Handal reconcile the different fragments of her identity into a whole? Handal ends her poem with the following lines: "I travel and move/ from one continent to the next,/ move, to be whole," asserting that it is through travel that she can bring together fragments of her experiences and different parts of her identity to attain wholeness.²⁶ This connection between travel and wholeness is formally emphasized through the gradual, visual movement that these verses trace, as they open with the "T" and conclude with "whole." The structure of these verses thus makes clear that this progression is rendered possible through geographical movement between continents, whose importance is conveyed through the repetition of the verb "move" catalyzing the attainment of wholeness.

The connection Handal draws between travel and the development of the whole self in "Strangers inside me" echoes Clifford's theorization of travel as a "term of cultural comparison" or "translation term."²⁷ This link is also depicted in Handal's poem "Amrika," a poem that chronologically reflects Handal's various relocations as she grew up. Reading travel in the context of comparativity highlights the politics of comparison in the poems-engaging with the material, historical, and political contexts of travel and probing neglected spaces of travel. Such focus thus emphasizes the role travel plays in projecting transnational figurations of identity, away from essentialist and localized or nation-related models. In the poem "Amrika," the different phases of Handal's maturation are contemporaneous with her geographic

movements, illustrated in the poem through various geographic spaces. Thus, Handal reinvents her selfhood through a translocal experience that connects her to these different geographies, which she enters and exits transformed. In this process, she is not just learning and building but also unlearning and deconstructing narratives of being and belonging. Her experience configures what Fadda-Conrey describes in her analysis of translocality as an “interrogative, counterhegemonic, and transnational . . . identity.”²⁸ Such an interrogative stance mediates Handal’s gradual understanding of her identity in relation to her encounters with the peoples, history, and struggles of the countries she visits.

This component of travel – the “transforming encounter” – is one level on which travel can be used for political comparison since it is *through* travel and encounters with others that the poets’ understanding of self and articulation of identity are transformed and nuanced.²⁹ Encounters and historicities in the poems are in dialogue with the poets’ Palestinian identity: both poets draw on their Palestinian experiences to form connections with the histories of the countries and cities they visit and the ethnic and minoritized people they encounter. The first city Handal visits after leaving Jaffa is Marseille. At this stage, the poet is still confused by the changes induced by displacement; she asks: “How does one begin to understand the difference/ between *Sabaah el khayr* and *bonjour*, I the difference between the city of lights and black-outs.”³⁰ Starting this section with a question illustrates Handal’s disorientation upon being displaced from her homeland. Breaking her lines at the words “difference,” “*bonjour*,” and “black-outs” forces a link between displacement, violence, shock, and forced assimilation into another culture. She roams the streets of Paris “uncertain, looking for what I am most certain of.”³¹ At this early stage of her displacement, Handal’s thinking is still nostalgic and self-centered. Her next stops are different parts of the Antilles islands. Handal declares her arrival at the Antilles in French: “*Et Maintenant, les Antilles*,” her adoption of this language reveals yet another framing of her identity.³²

Handal’s arrival at the Antilles islands coincides with the beginning of a new section of the poem, marking the beginning of a new stage of development in Handal’s self-understanding and identity formation. At the islands, Handal encounters victims of slavery, poverty, and colonization. She refers to the Antilles as the

“island of Boukrnan,” marking the Antilles islands as a “historicity:” it is the history of the Antilles which is significant for Handal in this poem.³³ In this context, “Boukrnan” refers to Dutty Boukrnan, a Jamaican-born, self-educated slave who played a significant role in inducing the Haitian Revolution against French colonizers, leading to the elimination of slavery and the establishment of Haiti as a republic.³⁴ Handal also encounters the residents of Cite Soleil, a poor area in Haiti, “where the sun forgets.”³⁵ After that, Handal writes: “I leave with the Kreyol-/ *tioul, zonbi, refijye.*”³⁶ Kreyol, a word in the Haitian Creole language, carries two meanings: it refers to the Creole people, born and naturalized in the West Indies or America; but it also signifies the Creole language. Handal, however, provides her own definition of Creole: “*tioul, zonbi, refijye.*” To translate, she defines the Creole as “slave, ghost, refugee,” connecting past to present whereby the past of present Creoles is a past of violence and injustice manifested in slavery and colonial narratives.

By providing her own definition of Creole using the Haitian Creole language, Handal makes Creole operate in a double-voiced fashion. While the linguistic specificity of the definition anchors it in the cultural history of the colonized populations who use Creole, Handal’s expanded definition operates beyond this specificity to configure a community of slaves, ghosts, and refugees, brought together through a shared history of trauma, repression and displacement. Although the terms “slave, ghost, refugee” significantly refer to different conditions, they arguably result from comparable systems of oppression that practice historical silencing and erasure. Such systems of oppression are anchored in forms of devaluation of the “barbarian” subject that modernity defines itself against.³⁷ As such, Handal poetically projects a historical, struggle-based imagined community of minoritized subjects/Creoles.

Handal’s stress on the struggles of the Creoles and her declaration that she “leave[s] with the Kreyol” reveal her affiliation with the Creoles. In “leav[ing] with the Kreyol,” Handal is claiming that she has acquired the language, which she uses in the next line, articulating the words “*tioul,*” “*zonbi,*” and “*refijye.*” This code-switch to the Haitian Creole language and the emphasis on the particular three terms show Handal’s affiliation with the minoritized Creoles of the Antilles. This linguistic mobility and polyglossia also contribute, as Marta Cariello argues, to the

construction of a “panethnic narrative of a transnational . . . exilic condition.”³⁸ Once again, Handal leaving the Antilles coincides with the end of the section, denoting progress in Handal’s quest for wholeness.

Towards the end of “Amrika,” Handal continues to record her travels to the Dominican Republic and then the United States; as she does so, she continues to contextualize her identity in colonial history. Drawing on her own historical experiences as a Palestinian, Handal constructs her ethnic identity in relation to struggling communities, as evident in another poem, “The Blue Jacket.” In this poem, the speaker wears a blue jacket and claims to “live by . . . [its] rules.”³⁹ While the blue jacket might seem a mere article of clothing, it connotes a war chief of a Native American tribe, the Shawnee, who was nicknamed Blue Jacket. He helped his tribe defend present-day Ohio against European colonizers in the eighteenth century.⁴⁰

In Handal’s poem, the blue jacket functions as an extended metaphor for inter-ethnic political and historical connections in other ways. The poem, which begins and ends with allusions to the blue jacket, is ripe with references to a martyr, without any specific signifiers pertaining to the identity or nationality of this martyr. This strategy of poetic representation, anchored in a localized American context but also made to function symbolically, bridges local and global processes of victimization resulting from expansionist imperial and colonial projects. By depicting her poetic self-clad in the blue jacket, Handal creates a triangular relationship between herself, the martyr, and Chief Blue Jacket. This poetic representation implies a correlation between present-day warfare in Palestine, imperial wars all over the world, and manifest destiny-driven violence in the New World. Wearing the blue jacket thus aligns Handal with the Shawnee tribe; it asserts forms of understanding of the historical experience as well as repercussions of dispossession and displacement. This act configures forms of belonging with minoritized and victimized communities that have imperial histories comparable to Handal’s.

TRAVEL, DIFFERENCE AND RELATIONALITY

While travel in Handal’s work allows this poet to affirm her ethnic identity by drawing connections to other historically marginalized groups, travel in Nye’s poems, by contract, functions as a tool for

the construction of identity in relation to difference.⁴¹ Nye adopts a self-reflective style in her poems, particularly conveyed through her ordinary, everyday language, free-verse, and lyric pace and structure. Nye's poetry is heavily influenced by her cultural experiences, as she grew up between Jerusalem and Texas, observing the difference between the cultures of these places and absorbing the ethnic diversity of her own Texan home. These cultural differences fuel most of Nye's work. Difference, in this context, operates at two levels: difference relating to the multiple facets of Nye's identity, and the difference between Nye's experiences and the experiences of communities and people she encounters in her travels. Difference as such challenges totalizing discourses resulting from reductive ideologies and visions of identity. This form of difference facilitates the coexistence of "shifting notion[s] of self and belonging" and challenges ideologies of exclusion working against multiplicity and relationality.⁴²

In this context, Nye's statement about home reflects the poet's awareness of the imperative need for embracing this multiplicity. As she puts it, because of her travels, "[h]ome had grown different forever. Home had doubled. Back home in my own country, it seemed impossible to forget the place we had just left."⁴³ This form of difference resulting from new, defamiliarizing experiences "leav[es] nothing out" as it legitimizes all aspects of belonging represented by the coming together of multiple components to form a whole. This is echoed in Nye's poem "Half and Half," where she paints an image of a woman making soup: "She is making a soup from what she has left/ in the bowl, the shriveled garlic and the bent bean./ She is leaving nothing out."⁴⁴

In "The Whole Self," Nye illustrates the multiple and scattered facets of herself as "a map of lost organs, the scrambled liver/ the misplaced brain."⁴⁵ This image of scattered organs signifies the numerous components of Nye's identity, which is "lost" and "scrambled" because of her different experiences, origins, and forms of belonging. Nye sees the attainment of wholeness as a journey in both the physical and metaphorical sense: "I think of the long history of the self/ on its journey to becoming the whole self."⁴⁶ Journey and travel expose the poetic self to many experiences and encounters beyond residential borders, thus the different components of the self are constantly negotiated and reshaped – to be "packed and repacked" just like the "bag you pack

and repack” as a traveler.⁴⁷ This packing and repacking results in the incorporation of new experiences, memories, and perspectives into the poet’s identity. As a person who spent thirty-three years traveling Asia, Europe, Canada, Mexico, Central and South America, and the Middle East, Nye has a multitude of experiences to assimilate into her articulation of selfhood. Through the repetition of terms such as “self” and “pack” in the above-quoted examples, Nye poetically configures forms of *progression* of memories coinciding with a progressing construction of self.

Once synthesized, however, the different parts of self cannot be seen as separate any longer. In this respect, Nye is better capable of constructing her identity in relation to marginalized people she meets once the multiple fragments of her self “[meet] up with one another” – when the fragments are assimilated into a whole.⁴⁸ Nye illustrates this development using the example of her interaction with a waitress: “How suddenly/ the face of the harried waitress made sense. I gave my order/ in a new voice.”⁴⁹ The term “suddenly” marks an epiphany, achieved through the shift in Nye’s perception of the waitress before and after she experiences wholeness. The waitress in this poem symbolizes a position marked by poverty and exhaustion. Before Nye’s multiple fragments of self assimilate into a whole, Nye does not relate to the waitress nor does she notice her struggles. Yet, the amalgamation of Nye’s different aspects of self, among which is a careworn Palestinian identity, allows her to understand the waitress as a struggling person, as connoted by her “harried face.” The italicization of the term “made sense” allows it to jump off the page as the climax in the situation. This understanding is a form of recognition and marks a different perception of the waitress. While readers may expect the line to break here, Nye continues with “I gave my order” to create a direct link between her sudden understanding of the waitress and her order. The line breaks here creating a sense of suspense—has Nye been authentically affected? How will she give her order? The answer comes: “in a new way;” Nye’s “new voice” signifies newness in Nye herself as well as in Nye’s perception of the waitress. As such, the intimate relationship between attaining wholeness and achieving a more nuanced understanding of the Other’s experiences becomes clearer.

This breaking and making of bridges between self and other communities is reiterated in many of Nye’s poems, including “No One Thinks of Tegucigalpa.” In this poem, Nye critiques the spatial

and cultural borders that separate Americans from other communities in an attempt to promote the creation of transnational connections. She laments:

No one thinks of Tegucigalpa[...]

[...]

They don't want to hear about Tegucigalpa because it makes them feel like a catalogue of omissions. Where is it?

Now who? As if Houston were everything, the sun comes up because commerce exists.⁵⁰

In these lines, Nye identifies multiple dividing borders between Americans and the people of Tegucigalpa: lack of empathy, willful ignorance, racial exclusion, and feelings of superiority due to financial privilege. The colloquial, everyday language she uses and the sarcasm in her tone reveal Nye's fury at the construction of borders. Challenging such American exceptionalist mapping, Nye sarcastically declares that Houston is not everything in order to emphasize the need to break out of local concerns and confinement to one's residential borders.

Nye calls for the adoption of a wider, relational perception of selfhood. As the statement "the sun comes up because commerce exists" shows, she also criticizes the overvaluation of money and commerce, which has the effect of diminishing respect for human concerns. The way Nye manipulates pronouns in the verses is intriguing. In reference to powerful nations and peoples, Nye uses pronouns "they" and "them," managing her line breaks in such a way to begin her lines with these pronouns for emphasis. Through this use of pronouns to refer to subjects whom Nye neglects to identify (the reader can understand that they are privileged American citizens from the poetic context rather than through direct identification), Nye shuns these peoples as "others." Through this strategy, she formally mimics the exclusionary ideologies that powerful groups subscribe to on the economic and political levels. In contrast, Nye honors the "girl coming early, little hum and bucket,/ to polish [the tiles of the plaza],"⁵¹ "a toothless man [who keeps]/ parrots and monkeys in his yard,"⁵² and "[a] boy stand[ing] all day skewering/ lean squares of beef."⁵³ She focuses in her selection of such details on the poor, the working class, and the

underrepresented and ascribes value to the indigenous and economically disadvantaged people she is representing.

Towards the end of "No One Thinks of Tegucigalpa," Nye writes: "Where is it? At the end of the arm, so close I tap the/ red roofs with my finger, the basket seller weaves a/ crib for my heart."⁵⁴ In these lines, she portrays Tegucigalpa, the capital of the Republic of Honduras, to be very close, dissolving the borders between the city and the reader. Through the use of the imagery of the "crib for her heart," she claims an emotional connection with the country, articulating a sense of belonging with the communities of Tegucigalpa. Tegucigalpa becomes part of Nye's whole self. Informing Nye's connection with Tegucigalpa and solidarity with the local Hondurans are not basic feelings of pity or kindness, but comparable histories of struggle against devaluation, invisibility, and historical erasure.

For Nye, the significance of Tegucigalpa, as well as other South American countries she visits, such as Bolivia, Peru, and Chile, does not lie in their geographic location or tourist sites, but in their histories; for the purposes of the poem, these countries function as historicities. Tegucigalpa, for example, was founded by Spanish colonizers and built on existing Native American settlements. It can be added to a list Nye makes in another of her poems, "Shrines," of nations whose common struggles help her better nuance her experience as a Palestinian American. In this poem, which was written in response to the Sabra and Shatila massacres in Lebanon in 1982, Nye states: "We cannot build enough shrines/ [. . .]/ If we light candles, we must light a million./ Lebanon, Salvador, Palestine, here."⁵⁵ In these verses, Nye expresses her inability to view her Palestinian experience and identity in isolation from other countries and struggles. Lebanon, Palestine, Salvador, and the United States in these verses all function as historicities, whereby Nye draws connections between them based on their historical tragedies. This analogy is intriguing as it shatters spatial linkages, physical borders, and temporal boundaries, which confine and localize identity, creating a new criterion for determining identity and belonging.

In this configuration of belonging, Nye's ability to connect with Tegucigalpa manifests itself through the invocation of senses and the personification of this place's geographical features. The invocation of senses through personification is crucial as it weaves

the sensory experience of travelers and dwellers together with the sociopolitical conditions lived and experienced by the dwellers, evoking potential connections between both groups. In particular, Nye takes the reader through an imaginary journey to emotionally experience the conditions lived by people in this part of the world. She writes, addressing possible tourists and readers: "if you keep driving south,/ past Mexico's pointed peaks, the grieving villages of/ Guatemala, you would reach the city that climbs hills, opening its pink-lidded eye while the Peace Monument/ draws a quiet breath."⁵⁶ Layering the landscape, and more specifically villages and the city, with personified emotions of anguish, emphasizes the human aspect in the makeup of geography and redirects tourism from a mere aesthetic enjoyment of nature to a political experience marked by embodiment. Tourists and readers are thus invited to empathize with the inhabitants of these villages and cities. Feelings become the primary vehicle to make sense of the world and connect with other people. Along with personification, feelings help expose the violence and inequalities, which reside behind sorrows; they also stress the fragility of the grieving people.

Nye uses embodied experience as a starting point to stimulate tourists and readers to think about their own fragilities, moving them out of their comfort zone and creating a space for possible connections and empathy with the grieving people. In particular, Nye asks "How bad is it to dress in a cold room? How small your own/ wish for a parcel of children? How remarkably invisible/this tear?"⁵⁷ In these questions, Nye aims to mobilize people, stimulating an imagined uncomfortable sensory experience within them. This experience echoes, in reduced form, the suffering of the dispossessed, especially the children who despite their tears and pains are invisible to many. Though imaginary, such embodiment, as Theri Alyce Pickens argues, "opens up the possibility for cross cultural conversation based on fundamental human sameness."⁵⁸ Moreover, embodied experience not only aims at drawing connections between people but also underscores the politics of invisibility and violence manifested at their heights in neoliberal capitalism and militarism.

In Nye's poems, imagined communities associated with reconfigured spaces of belonging project alternative modes of being. They also allow the poet to bridge her own experiences as a Palestinian and Palestinian American with those of other marginalized communities. This poetic gesture is based on the

unearthing of what Handal terms “the visible and invisible, the loud and silent”⁵⁹ in order to reimagine and rewrite personal and collective histories and place them within a transnational narrative of solidarity and resistance. In fact, it is arguable that the historically specific locations of Nye and Handal and their experience of Palestinian exile and dispossession make them particularly aware of the dimensions pertaining to the oppressions they witness. In an interview with Lisa Suhair Majaj, Handal underlines the impact of her Palestinian history on her perception of homeland and struggle: “I am Palestinian and permanent transience has been my reality. I cannot escape the trauma of losing my ‘homeland’ and all that it represents for me, for the history of my people.”⁶⁰ The fragmentation of Palestine and the displacement of Palestinians have also greatly impacted Nye and her sense of place and personal history. As she puts it, “I think about place obsessively, maybe because part of my own family was made refugees by the state of Israel in 1948. I carry their sense of exile. Many of my cousins, who live in Texas now, and my dad, of course, really bear a profound ache of exile as Palestinian refugees. I think my awareness of displacement and diaspora has marked a certain way that I think about place.”⁶¹

READING LOCATION AND CLASS IN REPRESENTATIONS OF TRAVEL

Nye’s and Handal’s stress on ways of “thinking about place” does not only serve as a starting point for what Shailaja Paik terms “margin-to-margin” frameworks of dialogue and solidarity; it also calls for the examination of the role of place in mediating “the geography of social relations.”⁶² Arguably, reading place in relation to travel through this “margin-to-margin” focus complicates articulations of solidarity among the marginalized not to negate its possibility but rather to elucidate its interaction with questions of privilege and the specifics of class. Looking at both poets’ work through this lens helps clarify how these subjects negotiate, albeit in a limited fashion, questions of power and class privilege.

Reading travel through the dynamics of place, class and power is also an essential critical gesture in that it illustrates the possibilities as well as limitations of the process of knowledge production, as reflected in the poetic works under discussion. This reading results in situated knowledges based on an agential reading

of the object of knowledge, rather than its passive framing as a screen on which to inscribe discursive formations.⁶³ This approach works against the silencing of sites of difference and inequality resulting from the disingenuous appropriation of the experiences of subaltern subjects. This silencing underlies reductive approaches to solidarity based on the homogenization of the experiences of marginalized subjects and on totalizing claims of similarity along a broad range of experience.⁶⁴ On another level, this practice acknowledges that the limitations of representation should not act as a tool to silence its generative spaces, despite or maybe because of the fact that it calls for a clearer awareness of its shortcomings. To illustrate this complex interaction between vectors of power, experience, and representation, the next section analyzes travel and class in poems by Handal and Nye.

Nye's poem "Bolivia," for example, depicts a trip and includes the poet/speaker's description of the "brown" women she sees. Nye is riding a truck into Bolivia "calling *Donde esta Bolivia/* to the brown women perched on curbs."⁶⁵ It is worth noting that this poem does not stage an "encounter" between Nye and the Bolivian women; rather, it emphasizes sites of difference and divergence. Nye is riding in the truck, the women are "perched on curbs;" the truck does not stop and the travelers, including Nye, do not dismount.

Sites of privilege are equally reflected in Handal's depiction of her travel between countries. In her journeys, Handal moves between hotels and cafes, which are undoubtedly sites of class privilege. In this representation of sites of travel, the hotel chronotope presents a major problematic due to its implications of "class, race, and socio-cultural 'location'."⁶⁶ According to Clifford, "[t]he hotel image suggests an older form of gentlemanly, Occidental travel, when home and abroad, city and country, East and West, metropole and antipodes, were more clearly fixed."⁶⁷ Thus, while Handal's description of hotel stays signifies her distance from home, both the hotel and cafe chronotopes in the poems mark her upper-class status, signifying forms of class privilege which complicate her identification with underprivileged communities.

In "Une Suele [sic] Nuit a Marrakech," for example, Handal writes: "It's springtime but I return to my hotel room,/ turn on my lantern, eat honey pastry, *kab el ghzal*,! drink mint tea, later *arak*."⁶⁸

If the hotel room is supposed to symbolize homelessness, and the *kab el ghzal* (honey pastry), mint tea, and *arak* (an Arabian alcoholic beverage) are supposed to signify culture, it is worth noting that in the context of violence, injustice, and affiliation with struggle-based communities, they connote privilege. In another poem, "Orphans of Night," Handal describes her encounter with a Palestinian in Paris: "It was Paris seven o'clock./ Cafe des Etats-Unis./ [...]/ You give me a glass of red wine/ ask me who killed my father."⁶⁹ While these images are meant to represent Handal's displacement from Palestine, they contradict sharply with more common illustrations of exiled minorities living in ghettos (in contrast with a cafe) and in poverty (in contrast with the red wine).⁷⁰

While affiliation, connections, and agency are negotiated in Handal's and Nye's poems, tourist buses, cafes, and hotels—all places which reify class discrepancy—are certainly not the best locations in which coalitions can be made. This contradiction evokes an important question raised by Clifford: "What are the settings that could realistically configure the cultural relations of these [minority] 'travelers'?"⁷¹ After all, as Clifford explains, "A West African can get to a Paris *banlieu* without even staying in a hotel."⁷² In "The Indian in the Kitchen," Nye exposes one such setting: the kitchen. In this poem, Nye is visiting a home where a Native American housekeeper brings her tea and works in the kitchen. Social hierarchy sets Nye and the Native American woman apart. The poem begins with a clear lack of connection between Nye and the Native American housekeeper: "Always your gaze misses me,/ you are looking somewhere else,/ the couch, the wall."⁷³ Various types of barriers set the two women apart: first, spatial barriers, whereby Nye is sitting in the sitting room and the housekeeper is confined to the kitchen, and second, financial barriers: "The days — small coins given in exchange/ for an egg, a broom."⁷⁴ The third type of barrier is represented by the discourse of human value confining the Native American woman to a racist, essential category: "The days which say you are a simple woman,/ there is no story larger than the mashed black bean,/ the bird's clean cage."⁷⁵ Nevertheless, Nye strives to establish connections across these various divisions.

While aware of the social and racial separation between herself and the Native American woman, Nye weaves her poem in a form which echoes Paik's description of "social dreaming" in her

study of the importance of constructing a “margin-to-margin framework” to articulate forms of solidarity among minority groups. Paik notes:

[M]argin-to-margin framework will invite different social actors, including scholars and activists, inside a region, nation, or even transnationally to construct shared goals and new bonds of sentiment as well as bodies of knowledge among the most exploited, excluded, or pushed aside . . . These bonds may dissolve the distance between . . . two groups of women . . . and encourage them as liminal travelers to create an arch of social dreaming. It will allow them to share their pains and potentialities, fears, despairs, anxieties, exhilarations, and enthusiasms in their fight for social justice.⁷⁶

Nye’s “arch of social dreaming” is represented, for instance, in the way she redefines the purpose of her visit to her hosts’ house. Against the anonymous nature of her encounter with this woman, Nye communicates silently and secretly with her and thus attempts to poetically reinscribe this woman’s invisibility and absence-presence into a broader context of dialogue and subjectivity. Noting but also working against this woman’s objectification, Nye addresses this woman to tell her, “Listen, no one introduces us,/ 9 yet all evening it is you I am visiting.”⁷⁷

Nye’s use of second person perspective and colloquial language in the free-verse structure reflects her desire to define the terms of this visit through a common context of experience. Her common language marks Nye’s attempts to configure a different discursive community through a context of empathy and listening. Nye and the Native American woman are joined by a historical understanding of struggle; as the poem says:

To this one I would say, Tell me the story you have not told
anyone,
the tale braided into your skull and tied with a string.
Describe the sky on the night you wandered out into the
village, calling for your father left Huehuetenango

and never returned.

The shift in your mother's eyes —

how suddenly there was a rock ledge no one could climb.

Tell me of the brothers dancing in piglets the day before they
were sold⁷⁸

In these lines, Nye imagines the Native American woman's scars originating from militarism, violence, and loss. However, this process of imaginative recreation does not mean that the gap of inequality created by class difference is bridged. Nye's awareness of this gap is reflected in her use of a poetics of embodied intimacy to humbly express a desire to learn the craft of the Native American community the woman belongs to: "My hands would learn the colors your hands know, / blue and purple, threaded together on the loom."⁷⁹ She also would like to secretly communicate with this woman—"I try to catch you, the brown valleys of your eyes"⁸⁰—and move into her space—"I hear you dry the plates."⁸¹ In this poem, Nye redefines her location in her hosts' house and vis-a-vis this Native American woman, albeit in a limited fashion, to "socially dream" affiliation and communication with this woman's struggles. In her poetic insistence on the story and on the Native American woman's right to tell it in her own voice, she distances herself from the possibility of directly asking this woman about her story in order to transcribe it in her poem. As such, Nye makes it clear that her poem only projects what this story could be. This poetic strategy works against the appropriation of the otherness of this woman and her narrative authority. It also marks an intense awareness of the politics of the poet's location, to use Adrienne Rich's term, and voice as it moves between dreams of solidarity/communication and the deeply intimate spaces of personal experience.⁸²

For Handal, such awareness of the politics of location is reflected in her insistence on representing the ghetto, a setting which informs the poet's experience of specific parts of Santo Domingo in the Dominican Republic. Significantly, and away from the eyes of tourists, the dysfunctional character and the dilapidated state of the ghetto is hidden behind gigantic buildings, markers of progress and of the country's superficial "mastery" of the grammar of capitalism. Such buildings, in many ways, also hide forms of war

and fragmentation, represented in the poem “Amrika” as an essential part of the daily life of the inhabitants of the ghetto. The poet notes:

and behind *edificios* [skyscrapers] and *torres* [towers]
are *barrios* [ghettoes], a world of *blakao* [blackout], *apagón* [
blackout] stillness splitting, portraits of a daily war,
the stains of ashes, of dust between lips⁸³

These verses bypass touristic attractions and settings of the white and the privileged to stress the lived experience of the poor and the violent life in ghettoes. The structure of these verses, in which the reader’s knowledge of what is behind these *edificios* is delayed because of the inversion of the regular subject-verb sequence, produces a shock effect. It also creates a dramatic, theatrical impact, whose intensity is reproduced through the haunting sharpness of the alliterative effects produced by the repetition of terms such as “stillness,” “splitting,” and “stains.” In this context, it is worth noting that Handal’s representation of the space of the ghetto is not only marked by realism; it is also informed by a poetics of loss signified through the images of ashes and dust.

Interestingly, this loss is echoed by another form of death, the death of the traces of innocence that the poet had preserved in her travel. She sadly and ironically notes in the next stanza:

We leave mosquitos and mamajuana, pack our pictures
the sweet taste of sugar cane,
the caress of coconut in our mouth,
as if we can hold on to everything we pass through, as if we
can remember our past,
think of our future as if it is sure to come.
Why do we insist
on disappointing ourselves — past or future
suspense or dream
instead of hoping the present.⁸⁴

The anaphoric repetition of the expression “as if” underlines ways in which the happiness of travelling subjects, including the poet, is based on illusions of control over time and the subject’s inscription in history. This illusion of control is ironic since it is not unlike the *edificios* and *torres*: it provides fake reassurance and the impression of “mastery” over time. Illusions of institutional order represented by the space of the ghetto and of control over memory and time represented by the travel pictures – and the belief that they provide a way of “hold[ing] on to everything we pass through” – are criticized by the poet as infantile.⁸⁵ The critique of such manifestations of power offers a new way of thinking about the poet’s perspective on class in relation to her travel. Her stress on the space of the ghetto, which is directly followed by her expression of bitter disappointment with possibilities of controlling past and future, reflects a gradually developing consciousness associated not only with experiences of travel but also with *philosophical* reflections on how these experiences modify the traveling subject’s relationship to space, time and privilege. Such reflections are sharply contrasted with the earlier stages of innocence in which Handal and other travelers carry “pictures/ the sweet taste of sugar cane,/ the caress of coconut in . . . [their] mouth.”⁸⁶

Leaving Santo Domingo with this realization about control over space and time echoes earlier instances in the poem where Handal leaves the countries she visits transformed, such as when she departed from the ghettos of Cite Soleil with the Haitian Creole language. In fact, Handal’s entire poetry collection is quite mobile, depicting her as constantly coming and leaving, traveling from continent to continent. Towards the end of the poem “Amrika,” Handal still has not found “home,” yet she is able to synthesize the culture and memory repertoires which she has interiorized; she writes: “a small muse in London/ where I came to know/ the silent rain inside of me.”⁸⁷ This reference to the “rain inside of her” echoes the title of Handal’s poetry collection *The Lives of Rain* as well as one of Handal’s poems, which carries the same title. As such, this reference connects various experiences to reflect multiple levels of awareness and forms of consciousness, marking Handal’s production of situated knowledge and her rearticulation of complex dimensions of subjectivity.

By emphasizing their complex location vis-a-vis different structures of oppression and privilege, both poets stress how personal spaces are informed by the interaction between

geographical travel, historicities, and internal landscapes. Throughout this process, their poems negotiate traditional boundaries, which result in the conflation of community with location and kinship. These poems also challenge the hegemony of sameness by revealing the “limitations of modes of categorization that overlook differences along multiple lines of being. Such categorization . . . thus forgets to attend to the ways in which forms of discrimination/dispossession . . . might result in differing opportunities for specific groups, or even within the same group.”⁸⁸ As such, these poems do not only redefine the contours of social struggle through the projection of comparable systems of oppression, but they offer, through the representation of travel, a critique of discourses of essentialism and “modes of identification whose self-consistency is only made possible through omissions and erasures of differentials of power and worth.”⁸⁹

In this context, the articulation of personal and collective identities is presented as an organic process whose constantly changing contours destabilize structures of oppression based on race, ethnicity, colonial othering, and imperial abuses. The relational models informing the poets’ approach intervene in hegemonic cartographies and discursive formations to stress the political function of poetry in creating affiliations based on political affinities and situated knowledge. Throughout this process, Handal and Nye show an acute awareness of the complexity of economic and cultural social relations and their role in mediating processes of domination and addressing power structures. Such awareness, however, is articulated in a spirit of resistance to the silencing power of rarefied sensibilities of difference, which become paralyzing if they are not inscribed in a broader context of political and social action. While Handal’s and Nye’s poetry does not claim to have a definitive answer or articulate unfaltering paradigms, their strategies straddle various polarities in order to discover embryonic spaces of solidarity, empathy, and engagement.

NOTES

¹ Doreen Massey, “Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place,” in *Mapping the Futures: Local Cultures, Global Change*, eds. Barry Curtis Bird, Tim Putnam, George Robertson, and Lisa Tickner (London and New York: Routledge, 1993), 60–70.

² Naomi Shihab Nye, "Introduction," in *19 Varieties of Gazelle* (New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 2002), x-xviii.

³ Naomi Shihab Nye, *Never in a Hurry: Essays on People and Places* (Columbia, SC: University of South Carolina, 1996), 148.

⁴ Nathalie Handal, interview by Lisa Suhair Majaj, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no. 4 (December 2006): 612-17.

⁵ Clifford distinguishes between positive and negative conceptions of travel. According to him, travel can be "positively conceived as exploration, research, escape, transforming encounter" (105). In contrast, a negative narrative of travel is characterized by violence, compulsion, exile, and rootlessness. James Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," in *Cultural Studies*, ed. Lawrence Grossberg, Cary Nelson, and Paula Treichler (New York: Routledge, 1992), 96-112.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 99-100.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 101.

⁸ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, 2nd ed. (London: Verso, 2006), 4.

⁹ For more on this, see Wail S. Hassan, "The Rise of Arab American Literature: Orientalism and Cultural Translation in the Work of Ameen Rihani," *American Literary History* 20, no. 1-2 (2008): 245-75. Examples of such works include Ameen Rihani, *The Book of Khalid* (New York: Dodd, Mead and Company, 1911); Abraham Mitrie Rihbany, *A Far Journey* (Boston: Houghton, 1914); Salom Rizk, *Syrian Yankee* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1943); Diana Abu-Jaber, *Crescent* (New York: Norton, 2003); Edward Said, *Out of Place* (New York: Knopf, 1999); and Suheir Hammad, *Breaking Poems* (New York: Cypher Books; 2008).

¹⁰ Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Arab American Literature: Origins and Developments," *Arab Studies Journal* 52 (2008): 1-23.

¹¹ Majaj, "Arab American Literature," 9; Keith Feldman, "Poetic Geographies: Interracial Insurgency in Arab American Geographical Spaces," in *Arab Women's Lives Retold: Exploring Identity Through Writing*, ed. Nawwar Al-Hassan Golley (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 2007), 51-70.

¹² Majaj, "Arab American Literature," 10.

¹³ Clifford, "Traveling Cultures" 110.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 101.

¹⁶ Majaj, "Arab-American Ethnicity: Locations, Coalitions, and Cultural Negotiations," in *Arabs in America: Building a New Future*, ed. Michael W. Suleiman (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1999), 321-36.

¹⁷ Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," 110.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 108.

¹⁹ Carol Fadda-Conrey, *Introduction to Contemporary Arab-American Literature* (New York: New York University Press, 2014), 1-27.

²⁰ "Biography," Nathalie Handal, accessed 15 January 2016, <http://www.nathaliehandal.com/biographyExtended.htm>

²¹ Handal, "Strangers Inside Me," in *The Lives of Rain* (Northampton: Interlink Books, 2005), lines 9-10, 36.

²² Elmaz Abinader, "Letters from Home: Stories of Fathers and Sons," (PhD diss., University of Michigan, 1989), 256.

²³ Handal, "Strangers Inside Me," lines 11-12, 36.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, line 13, 36.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, line 1, 36.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 18-20, 36.

²⁷ Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," 110.

²⁸ Fadda-Conrey, in *Contemporary Arab-American Literature*, 128.

²⁹ Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," 110.

³⁰ Handal, "Amrika," lines 35-37, in *The Lives of Rain*, 58.

³¹ *Ibid.*, line 43, 58.

³² *Ibid.*, line 69, 59.

³³ *Ibid.*, line 75, 59.

³⁴ Richard M. Juang, "Dutty, Boukman C?-1791," in *Africa and the Americas: Culture, Politics, and History* (Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO, 2008), 390-91.

³⁵ Handal, "Amrika," line 79, 60.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 87-88, 60.

³⁷ Ali Mirsepassi, "New Geographies of Modernity," *Comparative Studies of South Asia, Africa and the Middle East* 26, no. 1 (2006): 1-15. Describing this model, Ali Mirsepassi states, "[t]he dominant paradigm of modernity, in its fundamental self-identity, is conceived as being in a binary relation to its other. The overall identity of the system is sustained by the imparting of essentialized identities, ontologically separate yet dialectically relational, to modernity and its other in a negative dialectic of recognition" (2).

³⁸ Marta Cariello, "Footsteps and the Space Between: The Path of Refuge and Exile in Nathalie Handal's Poetry," in *On the Move: The Journey of Refugees in New Literatures in English*, ed. Geetha Ganapathy-Dore and Helga Ramsey-Kurz (Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2012), 45-56.

³⁹ Handal, "The Blue Jacket," line 15, in *The Lives of Rain*, 10.

- ⁴⁰ Encyclopedia Britannica Online Academic Edition, "Shawnee," Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., 2012, accessed 29 July 2012, <http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/539132/Shawnee>.
- ⁴¹ Majaj, "Arab-American Ethnicity," 328.
- ⁴² Nye quoted in Deema Hilal, "Bordering on the Borderless: The Poetry of Naomi Shihab Nye," *Al Jadid* (Spring 2002), 7, 17.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7.
- ⁴⁴ Nye, "Half and Half," lines 23–25, in *19 Varieties of Gazelle*, (US: HarperCollins Publishers, 2002), 96–97.
- ⁴⁵ Nye, "The Whole Self," lines 10–11, in *Words Under the Words*, (Portland: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1995), 8–9.
- ⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, lines 1–2, 8.
- ⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, line 4, 8.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, line 10, 8.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, lines 13–15, 8.
- ⁵⁰ Nye, "No One Thinks of Tegucigalpa," Lines 1, 9–12, in *Words Under the Words*, 138.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, lines 6–7.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, lines 7–8.
- ⁵³ *Ibid.*, lines 16–17.
- ⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, lines 18–20.
- ⁵⁵ Nye, "Shrines," lines 1, 17–18, in *Anthology of Modern Palestinian Literature*, ed. Salma Khadra Jayyusi (New York: Columbia University Press, 1992), 357.
- ⁵⁶ Nye, "No One Thinks of Tegucigalpa," lines 12–16, 138.
- ⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, lines 22–24.
- ⁵⁸ Theri Alyce Pickens, *New Body Politics: Narrating Arab and Black Identity in the Contemporary United States* (New York, NY: Routledge, 2014), 2.
- ⁵⁹ Handal, interview by Lisa Suhair Majaj, *International Feminist Journal of Politics* 8, no.4 (December 2006): 612–17.
- ⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 613.
- ⁶¹ Nye, interview by W.T. Pfefferle, *Poets on Place: Tales and Interviews From the Road* (Logan, Utah: Utah State University Press, 2005), 143–46.
- ⁶² Massey, "Power-Geometry and a Progressive Sense of Place," 65.
- ⁶³ Donna J. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs, and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
- ⁶⁴ Although class is mentioned by Lisa Suhair Majaj in "Arab American Ethnicity" and by Frank D. Rashid in "Transparent Eye," class as an

analytic category has not been given adequate theoretical attention in critical studies of Arab American literature. Issues of class, however, permeate this literature; the poetry of Suheir Hammad and David Williams, for instance, deals with notions of poverty and class in open and complex ways. In "Directing My Pen Inward," Hammad writes of how poverty has shaped her life and her poetry. As a young girl she would "read by the light of the street lamp" "after the lights were out" in 1980s Sunset Park, Brooklyn (81). Out of such circumstances, she became determined "to write [her] way out of poverty, oppression, solitude and all the isms. . ." (ibid). Hammad, in an interview with Marcy Jane Knopf-Newman, stresses her belonging to "a working-class, multicultural, of color community" (75). This background, she notes, has provided her with a wide range of excluded stories of "the urban, lower class experience" which other Arab and Arab American writers, such as Etel Adnan, Naomi Shihab Nye, and Mahmoud Darwish, have not expressed in their writings (97). Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Arab-American Ethnicity" 326, 330. Frank D. Rashid, "Transparent Eye, Voice Howling Within: Codes of violence in Lawrence Joseph's poetry," *Publication of the Modern Language Association* 123, no. 5 (2008), 1611-620. Suheir Hammad, "Directing My Pen Inward" *Scheherazade's Legacy: Arab and Arab American Women on Writing*, eds. Barbara Nimri Aziz and Susan Muaddi Darraj (Westport, CT: Praeger Publishers, 2004), 80-82. Hammad, interview by Marcy-Jane Knopf-Newman, *Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States* 31, no. 4, (Winter 2006), 71-91.

⁶⁵ Nye, "Bolivia," lines 15-16, in *Words Under the Words* (Portland: The Eighth Mountain Press, 1995), 44.

⁶⁶ Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," 106.

⁶⁷ Ibid., 105.

⁶⁸ Handal "Une Suele [sic] Nuit a Marrakech," lines 13-15, in *The Lives of Rain*, 29.

⁶⁹ Handal, "Orphans of Night," lines 4-5, 13-14, 30.

⁷⁰ Discourses of exile have produced various binary and non-binary categorizations informed by varying material conditions between traveling subjects. These discourses oppose the conflation of the political exile with other forms of displacement as well as the romanticization of the exile in Euro-American modernist and post-structuralist discourses. Categorizations in this context include, but are not limited to, the exile versus the expatriate, the cosmopolitan subject or border intellectual, and the refugee. While they introduce important nuances in relation to exile, such categories do not resolve the problematic of elitism and conflation. For more on these nuances and categories, see Caren Kaplan's *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1998) and Hamid Nacify's *The Making of Exile Cultures: Iranian*

Television in Los Angeles (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993).

⁷¹ Clifford, "Traveling Cultures," 106.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Nye, "The Indian in the Kitchen," lines 28-30, in *Words Under the Word*, 4-5.

⁷⁴ Ibid., lines 32-33.

⁷⁵ Ibid., lines 34-36, 5.

⁷⁶ Shailaja Paik, "Building Bridges: Articulating Dalit and African American Women's Solidarity," *Women's Studies Quarterly* 42, no. 3-4 (Fall 2014): 74-96.

⁷⁷ Nye, "The Indian in the Kitchen," lines 22-23, 4-5.

⁷⁸ Ibid., lines 5-14.

⁷⁹ Ibid., lines 18-19.

⁸⁰ Ibid., line 25.

⁸¹ Ibid., line 27.

⁸² Rich discusses this term in her essay "Notes toward a Politics of Location" in *Blood, Bread, and Poetry: Selected Prose 1979-1985* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1986), 210-31.

⁸³ Handal, "Amrika," lines 145-148, 62.

⁸⁴ Ibid., lines 149-160, 62-63.

⁸⁵ Historically, the ghetto is a space where the poor and "othered" live; inhabitants of the ghetto are immigrants who will not assimilate into the mainstream culture (Ward 260). Louis Wirth discusses implications the ghetto can have on its residents' identity. First, according to Wirth, the ghetto is a space of isolation and subordination where "a minority has effectually been subordinated to a dominant group" (58). Furthermore, Wirth explains that the ghetto "exhibits [. . .] one historical form of dealing with a dissenting minority within a larger population, and as such has served as an instrument of control" (58). David Ward, "The Ethnic Ghetto in the United States: Past and Present," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 7, no. 3 (1982): 257-275. Louis Wirth, "The Ghetto," *The American Journal of Sociology* 33 (July 1927): 57-71.

⁸⁶ Handal, "Amrika," lines 150-152, 62.

⁸⁷ Ibid., lines 170-172, 63.

⁸⁸ Sirene Harb, "Naming Oppressions, Representing Empowerment: June Jordan's and Suheir Hammad's Poetic Projects," *Feminist Formations* 26, no. 3 (2014): 71-99.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 83.