

ترومان والذاكرة والمنفى في رواية الباريسي لإيزابيلا حماد

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The Truman, Memory and Exile in *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad

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المخلص

عنوان البحث الحالي: ترومان والذاكرة والمنفى في رواية الباريسي لإيزابيلا حماد وتتناول هذه الورقة البحثية موضوعات الذاكرة، المنفى، والهجنة في ضوء نظرية ما بعد الاستعمار في رواية إيزابيلا حماد الباريسي (2019)، مع التركيز بشكل خاص على أعمال هومي بابا وإدوارد سعيد لاستخلاص الرؤى النظرية. تبحث المقالة في الطرق التي ينتقل بها بطل الرواية، مدحت كمال، عبر هذا السؤال المعقد عن هويته، والذي يتجلى في صراع بين حياة المنفى التي لا جذور لها، وفقدان أي جوهر ثابت، وبين تقاطعات الهوية الفلسطينية العرقية وفرنسا الاستعمارية، ستناقش هذه الدراسة كيف تتغير هوية مدحت وفقاً للقوى الثقافية التي تؤثر عليه في مواجهاته مع كل من الفضاءات الفلسطينية والغربية، مستندة إلى أفكار بابا حول الهجنة و"الفضاء الثالث". كما تعزز هذه الورقة حجة سعيد بأن المنفى حالة مؤلمة ومشكلة للذات من خلال استكشاف الطريقة التي تؤثر بها ذكريات فلسطين وتُعدّ اندماج مدحت في المجتمع الاستعماري الفرنسي ويُظهر هذا

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البحث كيف تُساهم رواية الباريسي في خطاب ما بعد الاستعمار من خلال تمثيل تعقيدات الهوية الفلسطينية في الشتات، إلى جانب تقديم رؤى حول الديناميكيات الأوسع للاستعمار، الذاكرة الثقافية، والانتماء. من خلال تحليل الأبعاد النفسية والثقافية لرحلة مدحت، تُبرز الرواية التوترات بين الهوية الفردية والجماعية، مما يعكس تجارب العديد من الفلسطينيين في الشتات.

Abstract

This paper discusses themes of memory, exile, and hybridity in the light of postcolonial theory in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019), drawing particular attention to the works of Homi Bhabha and Edward Said for theoretical insight. The essay investigates the ways in which the novel's protagonist, Midhat Kamal, navigates this labyrinthine question about his identity, which was unshackled in tussles between a never-rooted life of exile, the loss of any core, and crossfires between the Palestinian ethnic being and colonial France. This article will look at how Midhat's identity is modified according to the cultural forces at play in his confrontations with both Palestinian and Western spaces, drawing on Bhabha's ideas of hybridity and the "Third Space.". This paper further furthers Said's argument of exile as traumatic and formative in exploring the way in which memories of Palestine frame and complicate Midhat's integration into France's colonial society. The presentation represents how *The Parisian* contributes to the postcolonial discourse in the perspective of representing the complexity of Palestinian identity in diaspora, together with insight into larger dynamics of colonialism, cultural memory, and belonging.

Introduction

Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* (2019) is a deep historical novel of geography, culture, and inner landscapes, braiding individual stories with political struggles of greater magnitude. Set in the early 20th century, the novel narrates the story of Midhat Kamal, a young Palestinian whose life was touched by the experiences he had while living first in colonial France and then returning to a homeland under occupation. *The Parisian* does more than an account of the life of Midhat; it ventures into the crossings, crossroads, and intersections-well, tangles-of memory, identity, and exile that he is the figure at the center of, epitomizing the fragmentariness of identity within the colonial as much as the postcolonial condition. His story is a metaphor for larger historical and





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political displacements, colonization, and acts of resistance, while being deeply personal in the account of one man wrestling with the personal and collective memories of belonging (Hammad, 2019).

The relevance of *The Parisian* within postcolonial literature lies precisely in how he treads with care the juncture between the personal and the political, from the perspective of memory and exile. Within a postcolonial framework, the story talks to the problematics of living in a world configured by colonialism where the subject is often fragmented and caught between competing identities, cultures, and histories. Drawing on the work of postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha, this novel is illustrative of the hybridity of the colonial and postcolonial subject. Thus, for Bhabha the colonial subject inevitably occupies a space of hybridity—a liminal zone of pull between different and often conflicting cultural identities (1994, p. 112). The life of Midhat in France as a colonial power and back in Palestine as a colonial occupied land epitomizes such hybridity. It is the life of negotiating being an outsider within French society while trying to belong once more to the Palestinian homeland. Midhat never feels at home in either world, reflecting Bhabha's theory of hybridity, where identity is neither fixed nor static but continuously in evolution according to the complex play of cultures involved.

Midhat's hybridity is not just cultural; it is deeply psychological. The experiences he has in France make him confront European values and ideals that go against his Palestinian upbringing and identity. The resultant dynamics, thus, create a disjointedness of belonging and further complicate Midhat's quest for identity. It is a fragmentation not only limited to the level of cultural difference but also perpetuated internally in so far as he strives to find a way between the parts of himself fabricated both by the colonizer and the colonized. In Bhabha's words, Midhat lives in the "third space," an area of negotiation and transformation when multiple identities collide with tension and self-questioning. It is an in-between identity, neither purely Palestinian nor fully European; it speaks to the postcolonial condition of one who is perpetually in transit, always negotiating one's sense of self in relation to tugging cultural pulls (Bhabha 1994, P. 39).

Besides, exile and displacement are the themes the novel deals with and hence find a deep resonance within the postcolonial context. The condition of exile as both loss and site of resistance, as coined by Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, (2001, pp. 173–186), is an important motif in *The Parisian*. Midhat's exile is not a physical displacement from his homeland but an emotional and psychic rupture.

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His life is marked by an elusiveness of belongingness. His exile from Palestine and the cultural dislocation he faces in France reflect the broader experiences of the colonized subject, out of place between worlds, forced to grapple with the dislocations of imperialism. As Said himself has said, exile is not the eradication of physical space alone but that of identity—a disconnection from one's earlier self. For Midhat, more than anything else, exile is that one space of abysmal alienation, an outpost where belonging is a promise that never fulfills. Yet the memory of Palestine, for all of that sharpness of recall, distinguishes it as an entity unto itself overtures with longings and loss in store; those no longer constituted his realities. In that vein, exile becomes a wound but at the same time one more resistance—a way Midhat is constantly asserting himself, linking back to a homeland that colonial powers have tried to delete (Said 2001,p.181)

Along with exile, the novel questions the function of memory in identity construction. Memory is at once personal and collective in shaping Midhat's understanding of his place in the world. Midhat's memories of Palestine—of family, home, the land—are the vital link to his heritage, a heritage that has been diminished or erased by colonial forces. Memory, therefore, becomes an instrument of resistance, a method by which Midhat is able to retain his cultural identity against the colonizing powers (Bhabha, 1994, p. 12). According to Said (2001), memory is that which enables the colonized subject to regain agency and deny colonial erasure (*Reflections on Exile and Other Essays*, p. 179). In *The Parisian*, memory is used as a form of self-assertion, which helps Midhat preserve continuity and self through the dislocations of exile (Said, 1993, p. 336). His memories of Palestine are inconstant; they keep on changing, as he undergoes several experiences in France and ponders returning to his homeland. The fluidity of memory thus points toward the manner in which identity does not denote some fixed essence but represents an ongoing process shaped from both the past and the present (Nash, 2012, pp. 87)

Through the lens of memory, identity, exile, and hybridity, *The Parisian* contributes to a bigger view of the colonial and postcolonial experience: how individual lives have been disrupted by colonialism, making complex the processes of identity after imperialism. Most of all, by engaging with postcolonial theory, especially the works of Bhabha on hybridity, mimicry, and the "third space," Hammad's novel refuses the colonial discourse that would erase or repress the identity of the





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colonized people. Midhat's journey is emblematic of the postcolonial condition: a condition of fragmentation, negotiation, and in constant pursuit of belonging. His struggles with exile and hybridity reflect the larger struggles of colonized subjects caught between multiple, often conflicting, cultural and political forces. In *The Parisian*, Hammad raises critical questions regarding the nature of identity, memory, and resistance in colonial and postcolonial histories. It is a novel that tells in a very sensitive way how legacies of colonialism continue to be part of individual life, identity, and history; hence, it also contributes so importantly to the body of postcolonial literature (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007, p. 195).

In other words, in Isabella Hammad's version, *The Parisian* is not only a personal tale of one man's exile and hybridity but also an incisive investigation into the broad-based political and cultural forces shaping the lives of colonized people. Through Midhat's story, Hammad explores the twists and turns of memory, identity, and belonging that colonial oppression has wrought. The novel testifies to the fact that colonialism does indeed change individual lives and collective history irrevocably, while at the same time, it forms a critique of how continuous and unwavering the grip of the colonial powers keeps the identity of the colonized (Hammad, 2019, p. 315).

2. Statement of the Problem

The point where identity, memory, and exile meet in postcolonial literature is a meeting that allows for an abundant exploration of the psychic and cultural consequences of colonialism. In Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*, one finds an equally vivid image of the same theme—identity, memory, exile—painted through the life of its protagonist, Midhat Kamal, a Palestinian negotiating the turmoil of colonial rule and personal upheaval in the early years of the 20th century. This critically acclaimed novel is understudied in respect to postcolonial theory insofar as it pertains to Bhabha's definitions of hybridity and mimicry.

According to Bhabha's (1994), the colonized subject is in a state of liminality, between compliance and resistance, within the structures of colonialism (Bhabha, 1994, pp. 115–120). In the case of Midhat, liminality materializes in his attempt to balance his experiences in France with returning to Palestine, with expectations set upon him by his cultural and national identity. Such duality gives rise to the problem of fragmented identity, wherein Midhat becomes a figure emblematic of colonial hybridity—neither fully assimilated nor entirely detached.

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The most significant issue remains, however, the way in which memory and its use in defining the consciousness of the colonized is portrayed. According to Edward Said, memory becomes a critical site of resistance against colonial narratives (Said, 2001, pp. 180–185). In *The Parisian*, personal and collective memories meet and reveal tensions between individual agency and broad historical forces. It is within this dynamic that Midhat's exile is a reflection of the greater struggles colonized peoples face in the recovery of their histories and identities.

The exile issue represented in the novel is both physical and emotional, a problem of the intellect as well. Midhat's displacement in space echoes Said's claims that exile begets alienation and fragmentation. On the other hand, exile is also a space for critical reflection, a possibility breaking hegemonic discourses. This duality raises significant questions regarding the degree in which exile can be truly transformative rather than alienating in postcolonial settings (2001, pp. 173–186).

With these complexities in mind, this research seeks to answer the following problem: How does *The Parisian* articulate the themes of identity, memory, and exile within a postcolonial framework? This research, informed by the theories of hybridity and mimicry proposed by Bhabha and other postcolonial insights, will seek to examine the ways in which Hammad's novel critiques the legacies of colonialism that extend into the present and negotiates the tensions of the postcolonial condition.

3. Significance of the Study

The research into Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* is outstandingly relevant to the literatures of postcolonial research, cultural studies, and identity theory. It is informed by the themes of identity, memory, and exile in a manner that allows for an increase in the nuance with which one can gain insight into how colonial legacies continue to shape individual and collective experiences.

The first contribution of the present study is to the sphere of postcolonial criticism, extending the theories of Homi Bhabha (1994) on hybridity, mimicry, and the "Third Space" with regard to Hammad's work. Bhabha's sense of hybridity explains a liminal space which the colonized subject inhabits between cultures, often decentering colonial authority (1994, pp. 1–39). *The Parisian* enacts just this hybridity through its protagonist, Midhat Kamal, negotiating his Palestinian heritage with exposure to European education and culture. Such a perspective develops our insight into complex identities forged in colonialism and contributes to wider discussions of cultural hybridity in literature.





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This second, through this emphasis, the research elucidates that memory plays an important role in the making of postcolonial identities. As Edward Said points out, memory acts like a kind of resistance against the annihilating effect on indigenous memories by colonial remembering (2001, pp. 176–179). This research investigates how personal and collective memories shape the identity and belonging of Midhat and, by doing so, brings to the fore the transformative power of memory as a tool for reclaiming agency in postcolonial settings. It is thus an imperative need for insights into how literature preserves and articulates these marginalized histories.

Thirdly, the theme of exile in *The Parisian* offers a highly critical insight into displacement, alienation, and resilience. According to Said (2001), exile is a condition that is as much disempowering as it is enlightening and thus opens up opportunities for critical self-reflection (2001, pp. 173–176). In this regard, Midhat's exile mirrors that of many colonized subjects who are grappling with feelings of estrangement while trying to reconcile multiple identities. This paper contributes to the larger academic discussions of exile, taking up its doubleness, both as a site of loss and a space of transformation, in more depth (Massad, 2006, pp. 28–32).

Lastly, this research has important contributions to contemporary debates regarding Palestinian identity and history within the literary context. In that sense, *The Parisian* situates personal narratives into broader historical and political contexts, providing insight into the colonial and postcolonial experiences of the Palestinians. Analyzing the novel from postcolonial theory provides deeper insights into the interlinks of literature, history, and identity through fiction in a manner that could possibly improve our understanding of the possibilities by which fiction might interact with contemporary issues in social and political thought.

4. Literature Review

It has remained a subject of significant interest to scholars for studying the intersection of memory, identity, and exile, especially in relation to how such themes are produced in narratives of displacement and cultural hybridity. Here, *The Parisian* by Isabella Hammad makes an important contribution, blending the personal with the political in the presentation of the experiences of the exile of the protagonist Midhat Kamal in exile. This literature review examines the major theories and past works that give context to these themes in Hammad's novel, primarily through postcolonial theory and Homi Bhabha's conceptualization of hybridity (Said, 2001, pp. 180–185).

4.1 Postcolonial Theory and Exile

The concept of exile appears centrally in postcolonial theory, and scholars such as Edward Said and Homi Bhabha have contributed profoundly important insights into the emotional and intellectual implications of displacement. An initial understanding of exile, as a condition of loss and alienation, is grounded in the work of Said (2001). Said speaks about exile not only as a physical state but also as an emotional and intellectual condition that forces individuals to confront their own fragmented identities while negotiating the colonial and postcolonial worlds (Said, 2001, pp. 173–186). This duality of loss and possibility is mirrored in the narrative of Midhat's journey in *The Parisian*, where he negotiates his Palestinian identity and experiences in colonial France (Ashcroft, Griffiths, & Tiffin, 2007, pp. 91–93). Bhabha's (1994, pp. 1–39) work on hybridity and the "Third Space" further adds to the exposition of the theme of exile by emphasizing the liminal nature of the colonial self. Bhabha puts forth in *The Location of Culture* that colonized others are caught between two and more cultures, hence between cultures and identities, and are constantly in a state of not belonging to any particular sphere. This liminality complicates the dichotomy colonizer/colonized so that it becomes more inclusive of identity formation. In *The Parisian*, Midhat's identity fragments into parts as he grapples with his Palestinian roots and his exposure to Western culture, embodying the hybridity Bhabha describes. His experiences of exile in both France and Palestine complicate his sense of belonging, making his identity a site of constant negotiation (Kanafani, 1999, pp. 15–18).

4.2 Memory and Identity in Postcolonial Literature

Memory is another very important theme within postcolonial literature; more so, how the process of memory impacts and molds the identities of the colonized subjects. In his novel, Hammad makes use of the interaction of personal and collective memory in an attempt to recover one's agency from the imposition of colonialism. To Paul Ricoeur (2004), "memory is not merely a collection of past but rather the process by which people negotiate their present identity." (p. 90). Memory works in postcolonial contexts to resist colonial narratives and conserve subaltern histories. In several postcolonial texts, the relationship between memory and identity is explored, as is the case with *The Parisian*. The battle that





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Midhat is undergoing in his mind regarding memory, formed in both Palestine and France, parallels the greater postcolonial battle: to reclaim a narrative of selfhood in a history that has frequently been either silenced or distorted by the colonial powers (Khalidi, 1997, p. 132).

The importance of collective memory to the creation of postcolonial identity is put into context in the research of scholars such as Ania Loomba (2005), in which, for example, colonialism imposes an official history where the indigenous is erased and distorted. With *The Parisian*, Hammad himself illustrates how personal and collective memory functions within a discursive framework: one more resistant to cultural erasure, with the micro of Midhat echoing outward. In its exploration of postcolonial theories of memory, the novel reveals how the past exists as a living force which defines the identity and the future of those people living in exile (Loomba, 2005, p. 98).

4.3 Hybridity and Mimicry in *The Parisian*

The theory of hybridity, as presented by Bhabha (1994), helps one understand the psychological and cultural dislocation that Midhat faces. Bhabha's concept of mimicry—the act by colonized people of appropriating a little bit of the language of the colonizer in order to resist fully adopting it—is also helpful for understanding Midhat's story. His French education and exposure to the ideas of the West are sources of difficulty for him as he appropriates a little bit of the ways of the West in thinking but cannot really give up the whole to completely belong to it. Adaptation and resistance go side by side with the portrayal of the colonial subjectivity as found in the novel.

Hybridity is a concept further analyzed by Homi Bhabha on "*Third Space*" (1994), providing an understanding framework of complex negotiations between the colonized individual and colonial power. Such space does not constitute a space of cultural struggle but one of contestation where identities are in permanent formation, deformation, and reformulation. In the novel *The Parisian*, Midhat's life occurs through this process of self-identification through his time in France and eventual return to Palestine, always in the process of becoming, never stable or fixed, as Bhabha claims for identity within postcolonial contexts (Bhabha, 1994, p. 37).

The analysis of *The Parisian* is informed by the literature on postcolonial theory, memory, exile, and hybridity. It does so through the protagonist, Midhat Kamal, who was born in Palestine but then taken to

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France for his university education, thus reflecting the above-mentioned themes in a variety of ways. Drawing on the work of Bhabha (1994) and Said (2001), among other scholars of postcolonial work, this paper will explore how Hammad's novel reflects and critiques legacies of colonialism through memory and exile as vehicles of identity and resistance (Harlow, 1986).

5. Methodology

This paper will be offering a qualitative, theoretical exposition of Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* using the framework of postcolonial theory, especially with regard to aspects of memory, exile, and hybridity. Its central concern is to highlight how these themes interrelate in the novel and how they have been nurtured by postcolonial discourse, especially based on Homi Bhabha's theories on hybridity and mimicry. This will be an analysis that draws upon a combination of literary criticism, theoretical frameworks, and textual analysis, providing deeper insight into the manner in which Hammad's narrative interrogates the legacies of colonialism.

5.1 Textual Analysis

This research is centrally designed to make use of textual analysis through close reading of *The Parisian* for better understanding the themes of memory, exile, and hybridity through the life experiences of the protagonist, Midhat Kamal. Textual analysis remains the most common method within the framework of literary studies, particularly when it comes to postcolonial literature, wherein a core text is read for symbolic meanings, narrative structure, and thematic content. According to McLeod (2000), postcolonial criticism tends to read texts in order to see how they have represented the struggle of the colonial and postcolonial subjects, issues concerning identity, resistance, and power. In this study, textual analysis will be used in the ways Midhat's identity is fragmented and reconstructed through his memories and experiences in exile, both in France and Palestine.

Coupled with analyzing Midhat's personal journey, this research does also investigate how Hammad employs the narrative to critique the colonial and post-colonial realities. Specifically anchored in discrete passages and how these interlink character-character relations, the study points to a critical analysis regarding the experiences of Midhat emanating from broader historical and cultural tensions within the Palestinian context, and equally about the manner in which the said





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hybrid identity resists and complies with such playing field colonial powers.

5.2 Theoretical Framework

It follows the postcolonial perspective inspired particularly by the works of Homi Bhabha (1994) and Edward Said (2001). Specific conceptual tools from Bhabha, such as hybridity, mimicry, and the "Third Space," will be crucial in trying to understand the fluidity of identity in *The Parisian*. Hybridity, according to Bhabha (1994), is a process whereby colonized individuals negotiate across a number of often conflicting influences. It is a hybrid space wherein identity is fluid, dynamic, and transforming rather than fixed or static. In the frame of this structure, this can be especially useful in considering the experience of Midhat: He travels between Palestine and France, trying to work through his cultural heritage within Western ideals.

Said, (2001) about exile and memory will come quite helpful in analyzing the protagonists in their sense of dislocation: according to Said exile proves traumatic and formative on postcolonial subject said to be usually made or compelled to initiate process in remembering and re-estimating their histories by States of physical and emotional dislocation. The concept of memory in postcolonial literature is important, as scholars such as Loomba (2005) have argued, because it lets the voices of the marginalized resist colonial erasure and reclaim agency in the construction of their identities. The current study will apply Said's ideas (2001) to analyze how Midhat's personal memories interact with collective histories of displacement and resistance, complicating his sense of self.

5.3 Comparative Analysis

Apart from the necessary textual analysis, the comparative approach will be utilized because it relates the experiences of Midhat in *The Parisian* to other protagonists in postcolonial literature. This study contextualizes the themes of *The Parisian* within the wider postcolonial discourse through a comparative reading of the representation of exile, memory, and hybridity with *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih and *The Buddha of Suburbia* by Hanif Kureishi. This comparative analysis will, no doubt, enable a better understanding of how the portrayal in Hammad's work of Palestinian exile identity aligns or digresses from other post-colonial narratives.

5.4 Data Collection and Analysis



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Since the research deals with a single novel, the nature of data for this work will be qualitative and directly obtained from the text of the novel, *The Parisian*. The in-depth reading of the novel will serve as the basis for this analysis, complemented by secondary sources in the forms of critical essays, reviews, and theoretical works which inform postcolonial studies. These secondary sources will further help in developing the themes of exile, hybridity, and memory that will be discussed in relation to Hammad's text.

Through analyzing this data, the key thematic elements in *The Parisian* on Midhat's encounters with colonialism, his memory and loss, and negotiations of hybrid identities will emerge. These themes will then be explored through a postcolonial theoretical perspective to argue how Hammad's novel critiques colonial histories and locates the complexity of Palestinian identity in a postcolonial world.

5.5 Ethical Considerations

This research will follow the standard ethical considerations in literary analysis, taking care that the interpretation of the text remains faithful to the original intentions of the author while engaging critically with the themes and ideas advanced in the novel. This research does not involve any human participants, and all analysis will be confined strictly to the text of *The Parisian* and scholarly work related to it.

5.6 Limitations

Although the methodology that has been applied within this research has a sound framework for approaching *The Parisian* through a postcolonial theoretical perspective, one clear limitation is a reliance upon a single principal text. Though this research aims to place the novel within broader postcolonial literature through comparative analysis, findings derived from such may be relegated to an inimitable historical and cultural context represented by the Palestinian experience specific to Hammad's contribution. Further research could explore additional texts to broaden the scope of postcolonial identity, memory, and exile in literature.

6. Quotations and Analysis

"Midhat had to live with this absence, this irreparable loss, this thing that could never be undone, but it had become part of him, lodged in him like a wound that would never heal." (Hammad, 2019, p. 132).





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Explanation: This quote illustrates the internalization of loss and exile within the protagonist, Midhat Kamal. The "*irreparable loss*" refers to his displacement from Palestine and the permanent absence of his homeland. In postcolonial theory, the concept of loss is central, particularly in the forced displacement of colonized peoples. Exile, as Said (2001) discusses, is an existential condition wherein the individual is torn between memory and actuality, the homeland and displacement. A "*wound that would never heal*" suggests a deep psychological scar of colonialism and a long-lasting effect on identity. Exile is not merely a physical dislocation; it is a psychological rupture which can never be reconciled. In this sense, Midhat's experience of loss parallels the postcolonial subject's negotiation of identity within the trauma of colonialism. As Bhabha (1994) indicates, memory is integral in the formation of identity within the "Third Space," where the colonized subject is forced to exist in-between spaces of belonging. This continued loss and lack of Palestine form the core of Midhat's identity, reinforcing, at the same time, his hybrid postcolonial self, whose past is indelibly etched in and shapes the present.

"He thought about how in Paris he was not completely alien, not completely at home. He had become something else, not quite French, not quite Palestinian, but something in between. It was this in-between space that defined him now." (Hammad, 2019, p. 174)

Explanation: This quotation sums up the central theme of hybridity in *The Parisian*. Midhat's identity is moulded by his experience in France, where he occupies a space of cultural in-betweenness. Hybridity, as Bhabha (1994) states, is a critical postcolonial concept that reflects the ways in which colonized subjects negotiate their identity in response to both their heritage and the colonizing culture. Midhat's being "*neither quite French, nor quite Palestinian*" exemplifies that liminality described by Bhabha, "Third Space" where the cultural identity is neither fixed nor rigid, but fluid, always recreated by the constant inter-action between the colonizing and colonized worlds. The in-between space helps Midhat to resist assimilation in France, and to refuse return to Palestine and the ideal past. Hybridity, Bhabha says, presents the possibility of new forms of cultural expression and resistance. However, it also reveals the complexities of postcolonial identity, in which the subject must constantly negotiate and mediate between conflicting cultural forces.

"He had forgotten the sound of the sea, the smell of the olive trees, the texture of the soil beneath his feet, but he remembered what it was like to yearn for it, the unbearable weight of that yearning." (Hammad, 2019, p. 88)

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Explanation: It thus highlights how memory and nostalgia can become a source of strength for an individual in the face of exile. Midhat's recollections of Palestine are not just factual reminiscence but are emotional feelings of longing and yearning. Memory is, therefore, a site of resistance in postcolonial theory. As Said (2001) observes, exiles must often rebuild their identities by reconstructing their memories. These memories are painful, but they also constitute the only available means of maintaining a sense of cultural continuity. The "*unbearable weight*" of yearning suggests an almost impossible emotional burden in being an exile, which has been the theme in many postcolonial studies as they seek to show how colonized people are often caught between two worlds. It's precisely the fact that Midhat "*remembers what it was like to yearn*" rather than remembering concrete images of Palestine that reinforces exile's emotional dislocation. Memory functions to safeguard a lost homeland, yet it is also an act of resistance against colonial erasure. Through his desire for Palestine, Midhat resists colonial narratives designed to make his homeland, along with his identity, become irrelevant or, in its way, nonexistent.

"He would always be the outsider, never fully accepted, never completely a part of either world." (Hammad, 2019, p. 225)

Explanation: This quote reflects Midhat's perpetual outsider status—a salient feature of the postcolonial identity. He is an exile, alienated both from his home and the metropolitan colonial culture of France. According to Said (2001), exile creates a liminal condition where one is neither a full member of the colonized community nor accepted within the colonial society. The acknowledgment of his position as an outsider by Midhat points toward the systemic boundary imposed by colonialism to prevent full integration. The concept of the "Third Space" by Bhabha (1994) will also help in explaining the situation of Midhat; even though he is physically present in France, he cannot belong to it, emotionally and culturally. The space in between then becomes symbolic of the postcolonial subject's hybrid identity, condemned to marginalities in both cultures. The condition of exile being "*never fully accepted*" is a common theme that keeps echoing in postcolonial literature, depicting an impossible position of belonging in the wake of colonialism.

"The world had changed, but the past refused to let go, clinging to him like a shadow, reminding him that nothing was ever truly forgotten, and the pain was always there, just beneath the surface." (Hammad, 2019, p. 291)

Explanation: This quote speaks to the insistent persistence of the past into the postcolonial subject's identity. As an idea in postcolonial theory, the



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past is never really past; it always already informs and shapes the present (Said, 2001). Midhat's experience is exemplary of how such colonial histories and personal traumas stick around to haunt one long after the formal end of colonial rule. It "*clings to him like a shadow*" and represents the futility of any effort by a postcolonial individual to be completely relieved from the after-effects of colonialism. This corroborates with Said's (2001) notion of exile as permanent displacement, where the past continues to resurface at unwholesome moments in an attempt to interfere with the individual's assimilation into a new identity. Midhat's pain, "always there, just beneath the surface," is a reflection of the postcolonial condition of living with unresolved histories and the emotional toll of exile. The persistence of memory, especially traumatic memory, is at the core of the postcolonial self, as it refuses closure and cries for recognition.

7. Discussion

This paper will discuss in detail, within the framing of postcolonial theory, the themes of memory, exile, and hybridity within Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*. Drawing from the work of Homi Bhabha, most especially his writings on hybridity, mimicry, and the "unhomely," and the work of Edward Said regarding exile and memory, this paper proves that Hammad does indeed make use of the inheritance of colonialism as well as the convolutions of Palestinian identity as critical coordinates where the character Midhat Kamal should be known by.

7.1 Hybridity and Identity

The concept of hybridity, theorized by Homi Bhabha, provides a serious key to understanding Midhat Kamal's character. Hybridity is the existence of a "third space" where cultures meet, interact, and change. For Midhat, the time he spent in France, a colonial power, had a profound effect on his sense of self, locating him in continuous oscillation between his Palestinian origins and the European culture he encountered. His efforts at getting assimilated into the mainstream French society are personified in his affair with a French woman, Jeanette, and the way he puts on Western clothes and manners. These are symbolic ways of trying to integrate into a culture, yet they actually highlight the deep internal tension and contradictions which such a venture is sure to expose. Midhat's identity remains far from settled. He is caught within the liminal space, always having to negotiate between imitation and resistance, stuck within tugging cultures, as Bhabha so succinctly puts it with his idea of mimicry. The notion of mimicry in general stands for ways of imitation

whereby the colonized come closer to the culture of the colonizer without their ever being integrated into them while hailing a difference. This tension is perhaps articulated most succinctly in *The Parisian* by Midhat: "*They think because I dress like this I've left myself behind. But I am not what they see*" (Hammad, 2019, p. 126). This indicates a tension between the outer adjusting of self to the colonizer and the inner denial of true adaptation. Midhat's hybridity is both cultural and psychological, marked by a fragmented sense of belonging that complicates his self-concept. It is in this respect that Midhat's hybrid identity most explicitly reveals itself on his return to Palestine-feeling estranged from the community he had left behind, just as much as from the Westernized identity he tried to take up. This dislocation underlines the inherent contradiction in his condition: he is too Western for Palestinian society and will always be an outsider in France. His duality of estrangement brings to life Bhabha's theory of hybridity, which is a zone not of cultural resolution, but of constant negotiation and anxiety. It disrupts this binary opposition of colonizer and colonized; therefore, identity formation within the postcolonial contexts does not present a straight course.

7.2 The Unhomely Experience

In postcolonial theory, Bhabha's notion of the "unhomely" is a poignant expression of the alienation experienced by the colonized subject. The "unhomely" refers to the estrangement one feels within one's own culture, as if one is a stranger even in familiar surroundings. This concept is reflected in Midhat's experiences, both in France and upon his return to Palestine. He is never truly at home in either place. The memory of France haunts even the brutal realities that are life in Palestine and further heightens Midhat's sense of dislocation.

The unhomely feeling is clearly brought into light when Midhat says, "*I walk through Nablus as if I am a ghost, no longer part of the streets that once felt like home*" (Hammad, 2019, p. 315). These feelings of dislocation are deepened by his memories of France, further displacing him from his Palestinian past and present. The result is an emotional fragmentation whereby the past and present no longer cohere. According to Edward Said (2001), in a fashion illustrative of exile, Midhat's unhomely experience underlines the detachment between self and homeland so typical of the postcolonial condition. For Midhat, the experience of exile is not an incident of geographical dislocation but rather a disruption in his identity.

7.3 Exile and Alienation



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Exile has been one of the common tropes in postcolonial literature as a metaphor for the physical and psychological dislocation of colonized peoples. In the novel *The Parisian*, exile is not only a personal experience that Midhat has gone through but also a metaphor for the greater Palestinian struggle for identity and homeland. Exile places Midhat in some liminal space, a kind of "third space," where cultures and identities meet that do not resolve. His journeys between France and Palestine mirror this; he is kept in the middle, suspended between two worlds, each of which does not really accept him.

The musings of Midhat, "*France was never mine, yet it took something of me, and Palestine, which is mine, feels distant*" (Hammad, 2019, p. 401), epitomize the emotional and cultural dislocation that defines his identity. His exile is a double displacement: he is alienated from both the colonizer's world-the world of France-and the world of his native place, Palestine. This double alienation indicates something of the disjointedness of postcolonial identity, where the individual is torn between conflicting cultural influences and loyalties. The liminality of exile-as indeed Bhabha's related concept of the "third space" would suggest-speaks to the condition of being perennially in-between, unable to fully invest in either space.

Midhat's dislocation is personal, whereas the political dislocation for the Palestinian people is self-determination and sovereignty-well fraught with obstacles in their quest. The novel is thus indicative that the poles of exile, both political and personal, are interlinked; Midhat's personal struggle for an identity reflects the greater struggle of a colonized people. Focusing on the interconnections of space, affect, and identity in Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian*, the analysis mapped the protagonist's transnational movement from Palestine to France and back, as well as his metaphorical journey played out through various identity positions and performances from an immigrant through a postmodern flâneur to the Parisian in search of answers concerning how his bodily and lived experience are influenced by his emotional relationship with people and spaces/places and how the latter become spatially manifested embodied emotions, affecting his identity re-construction and sense of belonging, that is, his emotional geographies as "emotional spatialities of becoming". Midhat's affective human relationships are projected onto both his body and space/place, and thus influence his bodily and lived experience as embodied emotions, and heavily influence his sense of belonging, which leads to various identity performances and an identity crisis, experienced and manifested in the body through sensible and lived feelings, hallucinations, and, eventually, psychosis.

7.4 Colonial Power Dynamics

Midhat's interactions with the French intellectuals, his trying to fit into French society, become a microcosm of the power dynamics involved in colonialism. Also, his attempts to assume ways and education as French epitomize what Bhabha has theorized as mimicry: the colonized subject who imitates can never be fully assimilated into the colonizer. This mimicry underlines the constitutive inequality of the colonial system—in a system where the colonized is always at a low rank and never fully recognized by the colonizer.

For example, the French intellectuals dismiss Midhat for his opinions, which they see as no more than "*Eastern exoticism*" (Hammad, 2019, p. 189). This judgment essentially expresses the colonial stereotype of the "other" as inferior and exotic, in which the colonial mentality is deeply rooted. In such ways, the novel depicts the psychological influence of colonization on the colonized subject, who has to negotiate a system that dehumanizes and marginalizes him.

7.5 The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse

The novel fully engages with the ambivalence of colonial discourse, particularly via Midhat's relationship to greater geopolitical forces. Another force would be the metaphor of the Truman Doctrine—Western intervention in the Middle East and broader power dynamics within global politics—to which Midhat struggles to find a place. This internal struggle was reflective of postcolonial subjects who themselves struggled between resistance and the appeal of Western modernity.

As Bhabha (1994) argues, colonial discourse is marked by ambivalence—simultaneously enabling and subjugating the colonized subject. This ambivalence is embodied in Midhat, who is both a victim of colonial oppression and a participant in the systems of colonial power. His internal conflict reflects the larger postcolonial condition, where resistance to colonialism is often complicated by the desire for the benefits of modernity and progress that colonial powers promise.

7.6 Memory and Resistance

In *The Parisian*, memories act, at once psychic and political, as kinds of resistances. It is through memories of homeland that Midhat preserves, almost ontologically, his identity from dispersion by the colonization forces against his people and their cultures. As a matter of fact,





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remembering here acts somewhat as weapons of rebellion in combat against the dominant, and unlistening discourses of a world fashioning colonial imperatives for dominance. According to Said (2001), this kind of memory allows the colonized subject to reclaim a site of agency and to reaffirm their identity in the light of colonial erasure.

For example, Midhat remembers, "*My father's house smelled of olives and dust. It is the only place that feels real to me*" (Hammad, 2019, p. 267). These are his anchors to Palestinian identity, consistent with the sense of continuity that he feels amidst exile. While memory, on the other hand, is fluid, reshaped by current experiences, which equally makes the nature of identity formation in a continuous process in postcolonial contexts. Midhat has fluid memories that evolve as time goes by because of what he went through both in France and back home in Palestine. It is such fluidity that testifies to the dynamic character of identity, being continuously shaped by historical and cultural forces, plus personal experiences.

In other words, *The Parisian* develops an intense multilayered reflection on memory, exile, and hybridity within a perspective that is avowedly postcolonial. Through Midhat Kamal, Hammad highlights such psycho-emotional costs of colonialism and further continuous striving for identity and belonging that were brought about by their displacement. The novel dramatizes ambivalence and contradiction in postcolonial identity; it offers, at the same time, a powerful critique of colonial power dynamics and the role of memory in resistance.

8. Conclusion

It is in this context that this paper has attempted to explore, through the grid of postcolonial theory, the engagement of Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* with the legacy of colonialism and the complex interlacing of Palestinian identity in exile, facilitated by an integral understanding of memory, exile, and hybridity as crucial critical themes. Theoretically supported by Homi Bhabha (1994) and Edward Said (2001), this research thus places *The Parisian* within the frames of postcolonialist discourse. The discussion hereafter shall highlight the way cultural memory, displacement, and the identity formation within the protagonist's experiences show greater preoccupations in postcolonial literature belonging to the idea of resistance and psychological cost of colonization. This research into the personal journey of Midhat brings out how the theme of memory and dislocation complicates his self through fragmentary, selective memories of Palestine opposed to the exposition and partial assimilation into French culture; this underlines the tension

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between the past and present which marks his life. According to Edward Said (2001), exile disrupts the relationship between self and homeland, putting a person into a continuous liminal position. Yet, it is this very disruption that simultaneously enables resistance and reconstitution. In *The Parisian*, memory is used not just as a bridge to Midhat's Palestinian heritage but as an active process by which he navigates and resists the alienation imposed by colonialist narratives. It turns out to be a tool of cultural survival and identity preservation amidst the causes of displacement and cultural hegemony.

This paper also deconstructs Midhat's identity within the framework of Homi Bhabha's concept of hybridity (1994), emphasizing that a "third space" is created where cultural interaction occurs and allows for the subversion of colonial authority and dynamic, hybridized identities to form. These respects make Midhat's French sojourn the epitome of the fluidity and precariousness of identity in postcolonial contexts. Wearing Western attire, his habits, and his intellect are partial engagement with the colonizing culture even as the resistance of full assimilation undergirds the ambivalence so crucial in Bhabha's definition of mimicry. He finds himself in the liminal zone, neither fully Western nor thoroughly in touch with his Palestinian background. This hybridity, instead of signifying resolution, embodies negotiation of identity in process, subverting colonial power structures and challenging binary classifications of colonizer and colonized.

This analysis also shows that the politics of belonging is a common motif in postcolonial studies theorized by Loomba (2005). Midhat's fumbling notion of home, both within France, where he is perceived as an outsider, and Palestine, seen as too Westernized, represents the expanded experiences of the postcolonial subject. This sense of alienation and displacement expresses the emotive and political struggles negotiated in and against the very frames of colonial power. The exclusion that Midhat faces in both cultural spheres underline the problematics of belonging, pointing to those lineaments that colonialism engraves on individual and collective identities.

The paper also emphasizes the power of remembrance as a form of resistance against the erasure of cultural identity. In *The Parisian*, Midhat's memories, particularly of his father's house in his homeland, with all the smells that evoke it, serve as the anchor of his Palestinian identity while he experiences the disorienting realities of exile. According to Said (2001), memory, within a postcolonial framework, is a means toward regaining a degree of agency whereby self and culture could resist the hegemonic colonial discourses. At the same time, memory in the





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novel is fluid and relational, shaped by Midhat's present experiences and changing perception of his identity; hence, it reflects the dynamic process of identity construction in postcolonial contexts.

In conclusion, Isabella Hammad's *The Parisian* gives insight into the multi-dimensional nature of post-colonial experience by being attentive to the tropes of memory, exile, and hybridity. Through the theoretical positions of Bhabha and Said, this paper has sought to discuss how Hammad's narrative interrogates the legacies of colonialism and contributes to broader discussions related to the politics of identity, belonging, and cultural resistance. Midhat Kamal's life is paradigmatic of the dialectics of personal and political struggles in this novel, evidencing ways through which the displaced negotiate their identities within and against colonial structures. Ultimately, *The Parisian* turns out to be an important work of postcolonial literature—a vividly realized portrait of Palestinian identity in exile that takes part in global conversations on hybridity, cultural memory, and the ongoing impact of colonial histories.

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