The Arab Canadian Identity

Interculturalism, Trauma, and Identity Metamorphosis in *Cockroach* and *Sabah*

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Abstract

This essay compares Rawi Hage's novel about the struggle against cultural integration to Rubba Nadda's film about cultural hybridity. I argue that Hage's protagonist falls victim to cultural in-betweenness, thereby evoking his cockroach metamorphosis. This is due to the effects of migrant trauma on the unnamed narrator and his lack of an empathetic listener. In Nadda's film, Souhaire is equipped with empathetic listeners and is therefore able to cope with her in-betweenness and mitigate its traumatic effects. Sabah, her 40 year old aunt, learns from Souhaire and transforms her in-betweenness into cultural hybridity. In addition to tracing both stories' depictions of metamorphic identity transformations, this essay dedicates itself to evaluating and analysing the effects of migrant trauma on first and second generation Arab Canadians.

Introduction

The first Arab settlers arrived to the New World in 1883. Since then, the Arab inflow to Canada has added social, cultural, and political diversity that contribute to the nation's variegated fabric. In 1970 and 1974, two Arab families emigrated from Palestine and Lebanon, respectively, to the Greater Toronto Area in search of new opportunities to freely express their cultural identity. Many years later, the families' paths crossed and my own search began. As a half Palestinian and half Lebanese second generation Arab Canadian, this study is geared towards bridging the gap between Canadian cultural groups, as well as my own self-discovery. Arab Canadians are those whose ancestral origins are in Arab countries and who are now living in Canada. This includes new immigrants and people born in Canada of Arab descent. New settlers are thus referred to as first generation Arab Canadians. Those who are born in Canada from first generation Arab settlers are considered to be second generation Arab Canadians. This process can continue on into the third and fourth generation, but this project focuses on the first and second generations. There have been two major periods of influxes of Arab immigrants into Canada. The first influx dates from 1882-1945, and is dubbed "the early period" in Baha Abu-Laban's 1980 study (54). By 1941, an established Arab population of 3,577 had immerged on Canadian soil. Abu-Laban defines the second influx as "the post-war period" (56), marked by the end of World War II, during which Canada received its highest numbers of Arab-origin immigrants. On average, up until 1965, 3,000 Arab immigrants were admitted to Canada annually (Abu-Laban 57).

Arab Canadians of all generations are making important contributions to the arts. People like Rawi Hage and Ruba Nadda incorporate elements of their Arab-Canadian identity into their art. These works, and others of similar nature, need to be celebrated and recognized as valuable contributions to Canada's mosaic culture. My focus is on literature and film made by the

aforementioned Arab Canadian artists and my goal is to expand the academic literature of this field. Arab Canadian studies is currently an underdeveloped branch of cultural studies. My research focus is to analyse cultural in-betweenness among Arab Canadian immigrants, as portrayed in literature and film, by hypothesizing means to overcome this engulfing state of identity. Cultural hybridity is possible to achieve with the proper tools and social environments, which I will address in relation to my chosen corpuses.

The term 'Arab Canadian' insinuates two cultural identities, which can sometimes have conflicting ideologies. Often, a cultural conflict or a cultural clash of this sort can leave the individual feeling uncertain of their cultural identity. They are thus susceptible to an in-between identification, that is, half Canadian and half Arab, and therefore in-between both. This can lead to a sense of loneliness or even homelessness that pushes the individual to feel as though they have no place to truly call home. In this case, the individual cannot identify with his or her social environment in Canada and is physically distanced from their social environment in Arab countries. An internal homelessness can be observed in both first and second generation Arab Canadians, despite the various Arab diasporas around the country. On the other hand, some individuals are able to create cultural hybridity; instead of experiencing cultural conflicts between their Canadian selves and their Arab selves, the two cultures can blend to establish a new identity altogether. This can occur in all generations, and on a wider spectrum, it can also apply to immigrants of all cultural backgrounds and their descendants. Literature and film are useful tools to communicate and express one's struggle to retain cultural identity and shed light on the immigrant experience.

My research thus pertains to the Arab Canadian identity portrayed in Rawi Hage's novel *Cockroach* and in Ruba Nadda's film *Sabah* to find out how migrant trauma and in-betweenness

influence the protagonists' negotiations of their identities. A comparison between Rawi Hage's unnamed narrator and protagonist, as a first generation Arab Canadian, and Ruba Nadda's second generation Arab Canadian character Souhaire, reveals that Souhaire is able to transform her sense of in-betweenness into cultural hybridity, while the unnamed protagonist falls victim to his split identity and loses his cultural identity all together. I argue that this is due to the effects of migrant trauma on the unnamed narrator and his lack of an empathetic listener. Souhaire, on the other hand, is equipped with empathetic listeners and is therefore able to cope with her in-betweenness, thereby mitigating its traumatic effects. Moreover, she does not experience the same migrant trauma as does Hage's narrator, since she is born in Canada. Furthermore, I will address the impossibility of retaining one's cultural identity amidst an intercultural society and compare this aspect of Hage's novel to Nadda's film. In *Sabah,* the main character, Sabah, with her niece Souhaire's help, retains and reforms her cultural identities by developing cultural hybridity. The film acts as a coming of age story for Sabah, despite her age. I will prove that her delayed coming of age story occurs while she learns to turn her in-betweenness into cultural hybridity with help from her second generation Arab Canadian niece. Therefore, with the influence of Souhaire's cultural hybridity, Sabah embraces womanhood as an Arab Canadian and avoids the trauma that comes of identity in-betweenness. Hage's protagonist, on the other hand, has no one to guide him out of his identity limbo, and thus becomes engulfed by cultural in-betweenness, as a result of untreated trauma. This analysis will help to better understand the differences between first and second generation Arab Canadians within intercultural social environments, while highlighting the importance of treating and working through identity trauma.

I expect to identify two scenarios throughout my research and close reading of the novel and film. The first is treated in-betweenness that leads to cultural hybridity. This relates to

Souhaire's experience as a second generation Arab Canadian in Nadda's film. The second scenario is untreated in-betweenness that leads to the physical embodiment of trauma due to a complete loss of identity. I will highlight instances in which this is obvious in Hage's novel in relation to the unnamed narrator, who doubles as the protagonist. The latter scenario sheds light on migrant trauma as a whole, and how difficult it is to escape when there is no empathetic listener to heal one's trauma. The former presents a more positive situation. A comparison of the two scenarios will reveal the differences and similarities between the two characters' identities as Arab Canadians.

Chapter 1: Rawi Hage and *Cockroach*

Rawi Hage is a world renowned Arab Canadian author and winner of several literary awards including the Dublin IMPAC Literary Award. His 2008 novel *Cockroach* follows the story of an unnamed narrator as he struggles to retain his cultural identity in an intercultural society. Set in Montreal's Middle Eastern diaspora, the novel comments on the impossibility of healing one's traumatic wounds in an inhospitable environment where there is no empathetic listener. It exhibits the Arab Canadian struggle to retain cultural identity from the perspective of a first generation immigrant, as he deals with the past trauma of his sister's death in the old country, and the migrant trauma he experiences in Canada. At the beginning of the plot, he is forced into therapy sessions after he is stopped from attempting suicide in the park. This seems to have been a cry for help due to his distressing identity loss. Therapy proves ineffective to the protagonist, yet insightful for the reader's understanding of his past.

The plot introduces his diasporic friends, Shohreh and Faroud who emigrated from Iran as refugees of government imprisonment. Imprisonment is a reoccurring theme throughout the novel. The protagonist's friends were physically imprisoned in the Middle East, while he is metaphorically imprisoned by his cockroach identity. In relation to other Arab Canadian authors, Hage can be considered an Arab-Quebecois "writer of exile" (Dahab 1), according to Mary Dahab's study on Arab Canadian writing in her book *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature.* She localizes exilic writing to Quebec because her research has proved that traditional Quebecois poetry and other literatures incorporate the themes of "exile/madness, alienation, and a sense of loss, as well as the feeling of an absent or incomplete country" (Dahab 4). She draws an important comparison between Arab Canadian/Quebecois writers and Quebecois-born writers; both groups document their feelings of exile and alienation from an incomplete

country. Her study demonstrates the commonality between the Arab Canadian and the Quebecois struggles over identity. In Dahab's framework it is possible to place Hage in a larger spectrum of exilic Canadian writers. Her book lists approximately forty Arab-Canadian writers, most of whom have written on similar themes of exile and alienation. Hage is not mentioned, but is certainly part of this group of exilic writers in Canada because thematically, imprisonment lends to the theme of exile. Through Dahab's study, it is possible to bridge the gap between diasporic and non-diasporic cultures in Montreal by tracing thematic parallels between their struggles. Despite this commonality, Hage's novel presents the reality of division between Montreal's diasporic and non-diasporic communities. I will analyze how this social division directly contributes to the protagonist's feelings of in-betweenness.

Chapter 2: Ruba Nadda and *Sabah: A Love Story*

Ruba Nadda is an Arab Canadian female filmmaker. She was born in Canada and is of Syrian descent. As a second generation Arab Canadian, Nadda sheds insight on common cultural tensions between Middle Eastern and Western culture. In her debut feature film, *Sabah: A love story* (2005), these tensions are traced through a Syrian immigrant family living in Toronto, Ontario. Nadda's film production style is categorized as a *Film D'auteur.* The term was coined by François Truffaut, a 1960's film critic, and refers to filmmakers "who have developed an aesthetic signature equivalent to that of an author of a novel" (Telmissany 331). The colloquial Egyptian expression for this film category, *aflam mahraganat,* translates to "films destined for festivals" (332). It follows that films of these aesthetic qualities are packed with symbolism and metaphors for the viewer to decipher. Nadda's film *Sabah* is unique in that she incorporates mainstream cinema romance into her *aflam mahraganat* aesthetic, thereby creating a hybrid film genre.

The film depicts the struggle of Sabah, a 40-year-old immigrant woman from Syria, as she navigates through her familial pressure to conform to tradition in Toronto. As a second generation Arab Canadian, the director interjects common cultural identity conflicts between tradition and Western culture in the film through the female protagonist's niece, Souhaire. Souhaire's identity as a second generation Arab Canadian is often at odds with her uncle's views. Despite her family conflicts, her role as a guide is significant as she helps Sabah to overcome her fear of breaking tradition. After the death of Sabah's father, Majid, the eldest son, takes over as the family's patriarch. He manages the women's finances, and provides for them in true patriarchal fashion. Despite her micromanaged life, Sabah undergoes an identity metamorphosis of her own, comparable, yet different to that of Hage's protagonist. Imprisonment is thus a prominent theme in the film through Sabah's forced compliance to her brother's orders and expectations. Viewers

witness Sabah's transformation from culturally imprisoned, to cultural in-betweenness as she sparks a love-affair with a Canadian man, until she finally establishes cultural hybridity. As a first generation Arab Canadian, she leans on her teenage niece Souhaire, a second generation Arab Canadian, to establish her "hyphenated identity" (Telmissany 337). Nadda uses Souhaire's already-established hybrid identity as a guide to navigate Sabah's struggle with in-betweenness, thereby overcoming socio-cultural tensions and redefining the meaning of Home.

Chapter 3: Literature Review

The study of Arab Canadian arts and culture often addresses issues of stereotypical Arab identity markers, which have become harmful to the individual's self-perspective. In Nouri Gana's article "Everyday Arabness" (2009), she introduces the idea of negative identity markers based on a 2003 quote from Maher Arar's statement upon his release from a Syrian prison. Arar defends and explains his Arabness through disidentification with al-Qaeda groups, rather than proclaiming what Arabness is to him. Gana interprets his use of the word "not" as a "marker of an identity-in-negation" (22). The North American fear of Arab terrorism has thus instilled the need within Arab individuals to disidentify with terror in the public sector, which impedes on Arab self-identification. In response to this, according to Gana's reading of Ruba Nadda's film, *Sabah* practices resignifying stereotypes by deliberately leaving some out of the film and adding new meaning to those that are included.

A transnational cinematic study of Nadda's film by May Telmissany in her chapter on "Women Filmmakers of the Arab Diaspora", deems the work as thematically expectational to the normative rule which divides mainstream cinema and *cinema d'auteur* into separate categories. Moreover, Telmissany advocates for Nadda's contribution to film history as a woman filmmaker. As an Arab diasporic filmmaker, she participates in decolonization discourse in relation to Arab culture in the West, all while challenging women's representation in film by dismantling "the male gaze on women" (Telmissany 327). Nadda is thus portrayed in Telmissany's chapter, among her contemporaries, as a fighter against the tensions between the post-colonial West, and the homeland. As an Arab Canadian woman filmmaker, Nadda belongs to "both sides of the colonial divide", which fuels her ability to contest to mainstream social and political discourse in relation to culture and nationality (Telmissany 328).

Hage's novel has generated much scholarly attention. Wisam Abdul-Jabbar (2017) argues that the main character's feeling of estrangement stems from his loss of home, which leads to his metaphoric vagabond resistance to Montreal's intercultural society. In line with Abdul-Jabbar, I will grapple with the notion of exile throughout the novel to illustrate the protagonist's transforming sense of identity. Syrine Hout (2011) proposes that while the main character exhibits identity duality, it is not one of cultural hybridity; instead it stems from "his self-perception" as half human and half cockroach (Hout 338). I agree that the main character never adapts to Canadian culture, and therefore cannot be analysed through the lens of cultural hybridity. Indeed, the narrator presents a duality of self-perception. To Hout, the protagonist's cockroach identity acts as a freeing mechanism from his trauma (Hout 338-339). In contrast, my analysis reveals the opposite; I argue that his cockroach persona further enslaves him to the identity of the Other in both the diasporic community and the non-diasporic community. Both his human identity and his cockroach identity deny him any kind of escapism from his trauma.

In her article titled "Sabah: Writer/Director Ruba Nadda's Timely Success in Connecting Canada", Nancy Nanney explains that Sohaire's experience as a second generation Arab Canadian provides the film's sub-plot, wherein she battles against cultural norms, most notably, an arranged marriage. Nanney argues that Sohaire's love for the dance club she often goes to is symbolic of her need to feel free of her Arab heritage. In contrast, I argue that the dance club represents her ability to embrace in-betweenness by transforming it into cultural hybridity as she does not conform entirely to Canadian nor to Middle Eastern culture. My comparison of Sohaire's experience to the protagonist in Hage's novel will reveal that she, as a second generation Arab Canadian, is better equipped to adapt culturally and incorporate aspects of both cultures into her own. Moreover, Nanney argues that Sabah is a character in transition, as her compliancy to her

brother's cultural and religious dogmatism decreases throughout the plot. Sabah's identity metamorphosis stems from her "growing need for independence" (Nanney), and can be traced, according to Nanney, through cultural markers, including Sabah's head scarf, and her familial duties. From Nanney's perspective, Sabah's identity metamorphosis is a positive one, as she learns to take ownership of her own life, unlike Hage's protagonist, whose identity is increasingly compromised.

Lisa Marchi, in her article "From the Dark Territories of Pain and Exclusion to Bright Futures? Rawi Hage's *Cockroach*", argues that the narrator "refuses to concur with the majority that multiculturalism is inherently good and cheerful" (1). While it is true that the narrator does not concur with the mainstream Montreal society, the novel does debate or reflect on multiculturalism. Contrary to Marchi, I will argue that it is in fact Montreal's and Quebec's interculturalism that the narrator battles, which hinders him from finding cultural hybridity through his sense of in-betweenness, unlike Sohaire. This will prove that the narrator, as the protagonist, is in opposition with society and its intercultural aspirations, which is Hage's antagonist.

Some critics of the novel have analysed Montreal's Middle Eastern diaspora as a representation of Canada's multiculturalist politics, while others focus on the protagonist's role and his experience within the diaspora, most notably Justyna Poray-Wybranowska in her 2014 account of the novel. Poray- Wybranowska focuses on the protagonist's experience with food and hygiene throughout the novel, with little attention given to the region's multicultural politics. My analysis of Hage's novel accepts Poray-Wybranowska's notion of food, hunger, and consumption as "central to the text's configuration of the protagonist's relation to the urban centre and the non-human beings that inhabit it" (191) and that a metaphoric reading of food and eating in the novel is limiting for the analysis of "human social hierarchies" (191). I argue alongside Poray-

Wybranowska's literal analysis of contaminated food and its consumption to prove the impossibility of healing in Montreal's marginalized and impoverished Middle Eastern diaspora due to a lack of sufficient welfare funds.

Maude Lapierre (2014), on the other hand, combines the protagonist's experience with the analysis of Canadian multiculturalism: she argues for the protagonist's complicit role in the racial discrimination of his diasporic peers. Moreover, she suggests that he adopts his host country's latent hostility towards immigrants, and hides behind his cockroach persona to escape both the oppressive Montreal locals and the diasporic community (Lapierre 560-561). This will be a crucial component to understanding the differences between Montreal's and Toronto's diasporic conditions, as shown in the novel and the film, respectively. Though Lapierre presents an accurate depiction of the plot's secondary characters, I argue that her criticism of the protagonist falls short. He never truly escapes. While the novel ends with the narrator fleeing from the murder scene of his love interest's rapist, it is not to be interpreted as an escape, but rather as a further self-absorption of the Otherness imposed upon him. The opposite is true of Sabah, who, with the help of Souhaire, overcomes migrant trauma by, as Nanney argues, moving away from traditional aspects of her cultural identity.

Chapter 4: Framing the Analysis – Theoretical Approach and Methodology

My approach to the work at hand is a comparative literary analysis. I will apply theoretic tools from narratology, sociology, and Freudian psychoanalysis to unveil and analyze issues of cultural identity as a part of the Arab Canadian experience. According to Jonathan Culler (1997), stories "are the main way we make sense of things, whether in thinking of our lives as a progression leading somewhere or in telling ourselves what is happening in the world" (82). I will use this definition of storytelling in relation to narrative theory throughoout my analysis. This will help to understand the way the self-identifications of *Cockroach*'s narrator and of Sabah contribute to their view of the worlds around them. Moreover, narrative theory will inform my comparison of the first-person narration in the novel to the film's second-person narration.

In conjunction with narratology, Elizabeth Dahab's book *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature* adds to the storytelling analysis by viewing Arab Canadian literature as an important platform of expression; one that allows the marriage of one's thoughts in one's mother tongue to their written expression in another, as Dahab quotes from Antonio D'alfonso (Dahab 21). For the purpose of this analysis, I will extend Dahab's insights on literature to Nadda's film as a cultural text to be analyzed using the same theoretical frame as Hage's novel. In the film *Sabah*, Arabic and English are used interchangeably, thus portraying the marriage of language that Dahab speaks of. In the case of Hage's *Cockroach*, the thoughts occur in Arabic and the written expression assumes its form in English and French. When Arabic is used, though it is infrequent, it is spelled phonetically using the Latin alphabet (Hage 15). French and English are used more frequently than Arabic; the French is mainly used in interactions with Quebec French Canadians and English is used during all other conversations. This represents a class distinction between Quebec French Canadian society and Middle Eastern diasporic society within Montreal.

Nadda and Hage use a mix of languages to depict the kind of "dislocated, and disjointed … language that will mirror internal distance… and a sense of estrangement" expressed by the protagonists living in diaspora (Dahab 22).

While Hage's novel has received substantial academic attention, Nada's film has generated less interest on the academic level, except for Gana's and Telmissany's articles, which were introduced earlier. My task is thus to bring attention to *Sabah* by drawing on its second generation Arab Canadian character, Souhaire, through a comparison of her experience with cultural hybridity and Hage's protagonist's lack thereof, as a first generation Arab Canadian. Specifically, I will be comparing their experiences with in-betweenness to argue that Souhaire, as a second generation Arab Canadian, has the tools to transform her in-betweenness into cultural hybridity, whereas Hage's protagonist does not. Moreover, I will address the ways in which migrant trauma is dealt with in both stories and how cultural hybridity mitigates this. To do so I will borrow from LaCapra's ideas on trauma healing.

The terms 'acting out' and 'working through' will be applied to analyze the portrayal of trauma in Hage's novel and Nadda's film. First, it is important to clarify the meaning of trauma in the context of this essay, which will serve as the guiding definition throughout. Trauma is to be understood as damage to the mind due to an excess of stress. This stress can be a product of a situation, event, or a hostile environment. The aftermath of this excessive stress is psychological trauma, or trauma to the mind. According to LaCapra, acting out is a symptomatic expression of one's repressed trauma, i.e. it is a repetitive compulsion that comes from trauma (LaCapra 142). Working through is the process of understanding one's trauma and accepting it as part of one's past (LaCapra 144). The two can occur simultaneously and the working through does not necessarily eliminate the acting out, but it can provide explanation and allow the trauma victim to

recognize moments of compulsive behaviour as such. I will also borrow from the notion of the empathetic listener in trauma healing. This refers to someone who receives another's trauma narrative in a hospitable environment, which allows the trauma victim to work through the issues at hand. Moreover, following Renee Linklater's beliefs, Western ideologies of mental health care are too narrow and focus only on the "mind and behaviour" (Linklater 21), which leaves no space for cultural healing. Things like traditional rituals and practices, the comfort of one's native tongue, and the overall immigrant experience are lost in the dominant paradigm of Western mental health practices. Hage's protagonist makes this distinction clear through his lack of progress in his therapeutic program. This essay will also use the notion of diaspora as defined in Ben-Rafael's article and apply it to my comparison of *Cockroach* and *Sabah*. He explains that diaspora "designates the dispersal throughout the world of people with the same origin" (Ben-Rafael 842) who often wish to retain loyalty to their cultural roots despite their displacement from their milieu of origin.

Finally, an important distinction that informs my analysis is between the concepts of interculturalism and multiculturalism. I argue that the presence of multiculturalism does not exist in Hage's novel. Instead, the author presents an intercultural society. In "Interculturalism or Multiculturalism?", Charles Taylor distinguishes the two by looking at their prefixes. 'Multi'-culturalism gives a greater attention to the acknowledgment of diversity while 'inter'-culturalism focuses more on integration. This difference, Taylor suggests, is visible through the comparison of Quebec immigrants to immigrants in the rest of Canada. Those who settle in Quebec are not only expected to find jobs and in general find their place in society, they are also expected to do so in French, thereby fully integrating themselves into Quebec society and adapting their culture (Taylor 417). On the other hand, the rest of Canada focuses on the development away from an

'Anglo-normative' society and towards a multiculturalist society which acknowledges all cultures as part of the Canadian identity, without forced immigrant integration into a set cultural identity (Taylor 417). Since Hage's novel takes place in Montreal, and Nadda's film is set in Toronto, I will compare the social environments in *Cockroach* and *Sabah* to discover whether Taylor's separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada holds true in these cases.

Chapter 5: Therapy and the Imposed Interculturality

Cockroach's main character attempts suicide in the middle of the park. The novel opens with this dramatic scene as a way of explaining how he ended up in therapy sessions. I argue that part of the underlying reason he is pushed into therapy, aside from the obvious mental health benefits, is so society can better integrate him into Montreal's culture. By portraying this process, Hage presents the functional aspect of an intercultural rather than multicultural society. The therapist, Doctor Genevieve, proves to be unsuccessful at helping the protagonist work through his traumatic past. He confesses to her that his suicide attempt was "kind of out of curiosity, or maybe a challenge to nature… [because he] felt oppressed by it all" (Hage 4). The protagonist opens up to readers from the start of the narration, which is partly due to the effect of a first-person account. He admits that he feels oppressed by the society in which he lives. It is already clear that Montreal's mainstream society has been neglecting his cultural identity prior to the start of the novel's narration, and that it has led him to defy "the majority" through a kind of suicidal test (Marchi 1).

He reveals to his therapist about these thoughts, which is a difficult task since it is a delicate subject and he is in an unstable mental state. The therapist's "laconic behaviour" simply annoys the protagonist, as it shows a cold and impersonal approach to their whole encounter (Hage 4). She interrupts his stories with generic questions like "and how do you feel about that," which sterilize their exchange as a routine procedure (Hage 4). Her robotic attitude here symbolizes society's systematic approach to integrating immigrants into mainstream culture. The protagonist's story is analogous to an integration assembly line. The new immigrant is unsatisfied living in Montreal's Middle Eastern diaspora; this dissatisfaction breeds an overall curiosity to escape existence, as it did for Hage's narrator. To follow, some social power, in this case that of the park police, intervenes and stops the suicidal attempt (Hage 5); the individual is thus sent to mandatory therapy

sessions where the therapist attempts to convert the patient by deeming his old way of life as misguided. This is certainly the case for the novel's protagonist. Instead of helping him understand why he partook in criminal activity in his homeland, which for the record, was a means to survive in a war-stricken country, Doctor Genevieve tries to assimilate him into Montreal's mainstream society by using Western methods of therapeutic processes and questioning.

Moreover, the therapy sessions are conducted in English, which speaks to the interculturality of Montreal's society. The novel illustrates a relatively large Middle Eastern diaspora; therefore, there must be Middle Eastern professionals who could conduct the therapy sessions in Arabic. This would create a more welcoming healing environment for the protagonist. However, it is not healing that the mandated therapy sessions aim to achieve, otherwise, he would might have been accommodated. Instead, the English dialect acts as an integration tool to conform to Montreal's intercultural rather than multicultural society. Marchi suggests that the narrator opposes the joyfulness of multiculturalism. She believes that he refuses the "gift of happiness offered by multiculturalism" (7). This is a problematic way to think of his struggles with identity as it negates the pressure of society and ignores the traumatic past that many immigrants experience. It suggests that he, the victim, is at fault for not conforming to society's expectations and for not being resilient to his migrant circumstance. In a society where people ignore him when he asks to borrow a lighter for his cigarette (Hage 260), in a country where an unsubstantial welfare system does not provide enough assistance for its population to acquire boots (Hage 9), he is somehow supposed to feel "grateful" (Hage 65) for the "multicultural" nation in which he has settled (Marchi 7).

Perhaps if Montreal's society was truly multicultural, he would have more opportunities to be an active participant, which would create a sense of gratitude to the nation-state. On the

contrary, the interculturalist society oppresses his cultural identity through mainstream society's general lack of cultural diversity recognition and a fear of losing its own cultural identity (Taylor 419). The society Hage depicts cannot be considered multicultural because the therapist's attitude towards the protagonist represents society's rejection of cultural individuality. When her Western therapy methods fail, Doctor Genevieve blatantly states that the protagonist is using up the "taxpayers'" money (Hage 60). I interpret this is a direct reference to the social 'assembly line' of integration that I referred to earlier. She suggests that the mainstream Montreal population pays for these services to convert outsider cultural behaviours into their own. Out of frustration over the protagonist's lack of cooperation, she accidentally reveals the social fear of losing Montreal's identity to multiculturalism, and shows how the rest of the citizens pay to impose and enforce their intercultural society.

At this beginning stage of his transformation, the protagonist has not yet completely morphed into his cockroach persona. He has instances of cockroach self-identification, for example when he attempts to explain to his therapist that he is half cockroach (Hage 5). These instances are infrequent at the start of the novel, and are associated with the underground. They occur mainly when he breaks into people's homes (80, 90); thus, the metaphoric underground fosters his criminal activity. It does so by paralleling the physicality of the underground, which is dirty, cold, and untamed, to criminal activity, which can be described with the same terms. Thus, criminal activity belongs to the underground where social rules are easily broken and go undiscovered.

5.1 Migrant Trauma in First Generation Arab Canadians

While his meetings with his therapist, Doctor Genevieve, should have been helpful according to Western therapeutic principles, they ultimately prove ineffective. However, these

sessions provide readers with important information about his traumatic past in a war-stricken homeland. Doctor Genevieve attempts to begin the process of working through the trauma of his sister's death and the trauma as a consequence of his past criminal activities. Despite his relocation to Canada, he does not relinquish his identity as a criminal. In addition to his past trauma, he experiences migrant trauma in his diasporic environment. He breaks into several of the characters' homes, steals their food and oddly selective personal items all while slipping into what I can only appropriately describe as 'cockroach mode', wherein he crawls through metaphoric drains and grows imaginary antennae. I argue that these instances of felony are linked to his inability to escape the imposed identity of the Other in his new country as a diasporic dweller. He is thus faced with moments of acting out, linked to his supressed trauma, both from the old country, and the new.

The plot highlights similar moments for its secondary characters, Shohreh the protagonist's Iranian love interest, and their homosexual friend Faroud, a Persian. The reader also encounters Reza, the protagonist's Persian musician friend, and the Algerian professor, who falls victim to one of the narrator's home invasions. The diasporic diversity in the novel is clear; within Montreal's Middle Eastern diaspora there are social and cultural differences, such as language, food, and traditions, which should complicate the diaspora's relation to the urban culture. However, the characters belonging to this group are simply categorized in the general box of the exotic, which is shown through the protagonist's encounters with the native Montrealer Sylvie, who cannot "resist anything foreign" (Hage 196). This Orientalist misinterpretation that all things foreign are desirable for the same reason – simply because they are foreign – and that because they are foreign, they are similar, contributes to migrant trauma as it collapses cultural identity into one vague term: the exotic. This essay will elucidate the ways in which migrant trauma is represented

through the main character's inability to work through his trauma due to the impossibility of escaping his identity as an exotic foreigner, or the Other.

This desperation to find one's place is an expression of migrant trauma. Stigmatization of this kind creates a sense of in-betweenness for the marginalized groups living in diasporic communities. A hostile strain between diasporic and non-diasporic communities can be observed because "although they are physically situated within the borders of a nation-state, they are simultaneously located outside the boundaries of the nation-state through their symbolic relationship with the homeland or a mythic past" (Terzian 4). Thus, when the narrator enters the spaces outside the confines of diaspora, he is instantly viewed as an outsider, or as a source of entertainment, because of his in-betweenness. He is not a visitor to the country, nor is he fully accepted into Montreal society as a permanent resident. He is either watched or completely ignored by Montrealers. The people he encounters on the streets speed up their pace, protect "their change, their hidden wealth" even before he can ask for a light for his cigarette (Hage 260). To strangers, he is immediately perceived as a thief, as someone to fear. It is only natural that one would adopt this identity when it is constantly presented as one's only truth. The stigmatization here encourages migrant trauma because the narrator lacks a sense of authentic identity; he is defined by his in-betweenness and given no space to exist beyond the threshold of diaspora. Therefore, mainstream society rejects him.

Similar to the way one represses trauma into the unconscious mind, society represses the protagonist into the diaspora. Readers can observe a chain reaction through this interpretation of Hage's diasporic community: the exclusion of Middle Eastern immigrants from mainstream Quebec society forces the development of diasporic communities. As a resident of what can appropriately be called the reject community, the narrator's impoverished lifestyle makes for an

inhospitable living environment. His trauma is not welcome outside the diaspora, as shown through the therapist's rejection of him as a patient and Montrealers' attitudes towards him, but it also has no space to be worked through within the diaspora because of the daily struggles he faces. Although he allocates a safe space for discussion within his friend group, he never works through his own issues among them. This is possibly due to his feeling of being an outsider to society that transcends into his interactions with his own friends. Therefore, his trauma is repressed even further. The only space left for his trauma to exist is in the underground. Since his human form cannot reach these hidden spaces, the narrator develops a second persona – the cockroach. One way to understand the cockroach persona is through LaCapra's notion of acting out. The trauma has been expelled from mainstream society into the diaspora which creates a second kind of trauma, migrant trauma, which is then repressed into the underground. Therefore, the cockroach represents the traumatic acting out of this chain of repression. It is a symptom of not working through one's trauma in an inhospitable environment.

Within the underground, the main character is able to hide from the world and embrace the darkness he seeks. I say hide and not escape because I will further demonstrate how the narrator is trapped by the underground and the cockroach identity. Therefore, it is a temporary hide out and a representation of traumatic acting out. These moments are not always associated with theft. Although 'cockroach moments' are usually associated to his thieving and home invasions (Hage 80, 90), he experiences bodily manifestations of his trauma through hallucinatory moments where "whiskers" (Hage 118) seem to grow from his forehead. At this stage of traumatic repression, the protagonist has internalized his trauma to the point of feeling "paralyzed" while cockroach features manifest themselves on his body (Hage 118). Traumatic acting out often occurs in waves of compulsion. In this paralyzing moment, his mind compulsively acts out in a fit of hallucination.

Another instance of compulsion can be seen when the protagonist compulsively breaks in to his therapist's house. This is a traumatic acting out of his experience as a misunderstood immigrant. He breaks into her house after talking about his sister during therapy, who was killed by her husband in the homeland. This is a traumatic memory for the narrator, for which he has no coping mechanisms. The talking cure provides him with no tools to deal with moments of rememory when traumatic experiences resurface to the conscious mind. Therefore, he acts out by breaking in to the therapist's house, since she instigated his moment of rememory. He steals her slippers and leaves "down the drain" (Hage 84). Of course, he cannot leave through the door because he has taken up his cockroach persona in this scene. The drains lead underground, which is the cockroach's natural habitat. Therefore, migrant trauma forces him down the drain, beneath the confines of diaspora where his cockroach identity manifests.

5.2 Migrant Trauma as Transferable Between Generations

While migrant trauma is mitigated throughout Nadda's film, Sabah and Souhaire exhibit examples of its transferability between generations. There are several kinds of migrant trauma transferences; however, that which is observed within Nadda's film pertains to Souhaire's intergenerational conflict with most members of her family. A study on "Intergenerational Conflict Management in Immigrant Arab Canadian Families" analyses the ways in which Western-born families and immigrant Arab families living in the West handle their youths reaching the age of adolescence, and how their processes differ. In Western practices, as adolescents begin forming value systems of their own and re-evaluating their identities, family members respond by allocating them more autonomy and including them in decision-making processes (Rasmi et al. 1126). In contrast, the age at which immigrant youths request autonomy and more independence is earlier than the parents are willing to accepts. This often creates intergenerational conflict; in

other words, the younger and older generations do not agree to the same terms of independence. This has much to do with the family's desire to maintain reputation. The adolescents are thus tasked with upholding family honour. In Souhaire's case, this is evident through her uncle Majid's expectations of her. He thrusts her into the prospects of an arranged marriage because "Arab girls don't fall in love. Arab girls love who their brothers and their fathers and their uncles tell them they can", thereby keeping with what Majid believes to be honourable. This is not to say that Arab men living in the West throw their daughters into arranged marriages, rather, it is an example of intergenerational conflict due to varying value systems.

By pushing his cultural agenda onto his niece, Majid instills migrant trauma within Souhaire based on his cultural demands and expectations. The more insistent Majid is with Souhaire's marital fate, the more she resists, thereby creating intergenerational conflict. I argue that this kind of conflict transfers migrant trauma from one generation to another. Majid, whose predominant concern is to "hold on to our culture", exhibits a form of migrant trauma that comes from culture shock in the Western world. While the Syrian born family moved to Canada during what Baha Abu-Laban deems the second wave of Arab immigration to Canada, it is evident that his need to retain culture is a compulsive one. His mother acknowledges that the family, mainly under Majid's control, has become "much more traditional" after the death of Majid and Sabah's father. He therefore experiences instances of traumatic acting out due to the untreated trauma caused by his father's death. It is clear that upon the loss of their father, Majid felt as though his Arabness was threatened by the new world they live in without his father to guide him. This results in his dogmatic approach to cultural retention, as seen through Souhaire's forced marriage arrangement. Moreover, Majid's disapproval of Western culture is symbolic of his lack of cultural hybridity. He refuses to accept anything 'foreign' – meaning Western, in this case – into the family,

which I shall revisit in the coming paragraphs. I argue that his view of the West as foreign is related to his sense of homelessness following the death of his father. It is then possible to assume that Majid links his father to their cultural heritage, which is Majid's idea of Home. Despite his lack of cultural hybridity, Majid's in-betweenness does not take over all aspects of his life, like it does for Hage's protagonist. While he does show signs of traumatic acting out towards his family, he manages to work through his trauma by finally accepting Toronto as his Home.

Before he is fully capable of working through his sense of homelessness, Majid's trauma transfers onto Souhaire, as she is victimized by his enforced patriarchal traditions. Not only does this cause potential harm to her cultural identity – by instilling the sense of resistance to what Majid portrays as Arabness – but it is also harmful to her femininity, which is repressed through her uncle's repetitive attempt to arrange her marriage, and establish a life as an obedient Arab-Muslim wife. In retaliation to the imposed tradition, and with Sabah's help, Souhaire sabotages her meeting with her suitor, Moustafa. She dresses in a traditional hijab scarf, accompanied by a long black dress. Souhaire makes it clear to Moustafa that she will be a devoted wife, and will not pursue any passions outside of her familial duties, which shocks the young progressive man. She then proceeds to interrupt the meeting with her call to prayer. In figure 1, the scene portrays Souhaire on her knees in prayer, as Majid escorts Moustafa out of the house after he declines the marriage proposal. The plan's success only furthers the intergenerational conflict between Majid and Souhaire, which, I argue acts as second generation migrant trauma; the disconnect Souhaire feels from her uncle is partially a disconnect to her Arab roots. This could have traumatic effects on her idea of her Arab identity if she allows her uncle's repressive actions to dictate what Arabness means and where it fits in her identity. Luckily, her uncle's trauma does not influence Souhaire's willingness to identify as an Arab due to Sabah's reciprocated role as an empathetic

listener to Souhaire's struggles. Sabah fosters a trustful environment in which she encourages her to embrace whatever combination of Arab Canadian identity she desires.

Chapter 6: Overcoming the Characters' In-betweenness

The concept of foreignness guides both Hage's novel and Nadda's film and is a contributing factor to Hage's protagonist's and Sabah's feelings of in-betweenness. Sabah's family – Majid in particular – refers to Stephen, her Canadian boyfriend, as a foreigner when she reveals her secret affaire. The irony at play here deliberately comments on the term's ludicrous nature. It is obvious that Sabah's immigrant family members are the foreigners to their host-country, yet they view Stephen as a foreigner to them. In one way, this is justified through their cultural and religious variations; Stephen's beliefs and social practices are not the same as theirs, and are therefore foreign in this regard. This then begs the question: what is it to be foreign? Nadda's paradoxical use of the word foreigner in Sabah's reveal scene (see figure 2) reverses the roles of the Canadian immigrant and the Canadian born. By allocating foreignness to Western society through Stephen, Majid reveals his disidentification with his host-country's culture, despite having an established life in Toronto for several years. His use of the word 'foreigner' is similar to Mahar Arar's "negative marker[s]" (Gana 22) in his 2003 statement in that he uses it to separate himself from a group that he cannot and does not belong to – that being Canadian mainstream society. It is also evident that his strict and patriarchal governing of his family does not align with their authentic ideologies, which were different while their father was still alive. He thus battles cultural identity in-betweenness; he sees himself as neither Canadian, nor as the Syrian he strives to be. Nadda, therefore, deconstructs the meaning of foreignness in this scene to insinuate that the individual experiencing in-betweenness is ultimately only a foreigner to themselves. Furthermore, a so called 'foreigner' is merely a social construct meant to ostracize an individual or a group of individuals from another. Majid ostracizes Stephen as a repercussion of mainstream society's ostracization of him and his family.

While Nadda does not deeply indulge the societal implications of the family's feelings of in-betweenness, there are subtle indications of the plot's underlying cultural tensions in Toronto, which extend beyond Sabah and Stephen's relationship. The film's first scene, for example, depicts Sabah at a bus stop with other non-Muslim women. She does not interact with them, nor do they acknowledge her (see figure 3). I argue that Sabah's lack of communication with anyone outside her family, until she meets Stephen, is indicative of a two-fold societal issue. The surface fold here is lack of immigrant acceptance within mainstream society, which then breeds an interpellated rejection of the immigrant's self-identity, as the second fold. Thus, Sabah has been conditioned to avoid interactions with Canadian born Torontonians because of mainstream society's rejection of 'foreigners'. She knows that she is an outsider, and therefore acts as such. Figure 3 depicts this through the difference between Sabah's attire and the other two women. The woman wearing a sundress in this scene clearly receives the most attention from by-passers. I argue that this is representative of society's inclination to encourage what is perceived as 'normal' in order to avoid discomfort while facing the social construct of what is 'foreign'. Having lived in Toronto for several years, this has become Sabah's experience with everyday Arabness, as Gana calls it. She is consistently reminded of her 'foreignness' and has, therefore, been interpellated into believing that she is indeed an outsider. In other words, her social surroundings have taught her that she is perceived as different, and she has accepted that as her personal truth. The social environments in *Cockroach* and *Sabah* are arguably paralleled. Perhaps the cultural communities in Quebec are more outwardly divided, seeing as *Sabah* does not portray any physical divisions within Toronto as a whole. However, the cultural tensions between Arab and non-Arab Canadians are still prominent throughout the film. Taylor's separation of Quebec from the rest of Canada does not

seem to apply to these cases, as both stories deal with the negative effects of interculturality upon one's cultural identity.

Another indication of intercultural attitude among Canadian born citizens, as Gana points out, is through Stephen's lack of any real concessions to ensure the success of his and Sabah's relationship (36). This shows how immigrants are expected to integrate into society, thereby relinquishing any former cultural identify as a result of interculturalism. Stephen reveals his mild "imperative white-ism or the Eurocentric ethos of Canadian society" through an almost ignorant reluctancy to learn about Syria and Islam, aside from the music and introductory book he bought (Gana 36). He shows little interest in adapting to Sabah's culture, yet throughout their relationship, Sabah sacrifices much of her religious and cultural beliefs. She drinks wine on their date and removes her head scarf in front of him. Indeed, these can be perceived as Sabah's first steps towards cultural hybridity, however, the situation's one-sidedness cannot be overlooked. Sabah's accommodations here and Stephen's lack thereof reflect "that she, not him, has been wittingly or unwittingly shamed into conversion – escape or flight – to his cultural norms" (Gana 36). Stephen shows little effort to try fitting in to Sabah's family norms, while he openly encourages her to adapt into his. This is problematic because it impedes on Sabah's ability to retain her cultural identity in full. I argue that while Stephen is an important part of Sabah's identity development in that he provides a safe space for her to explore romantic intimacy and her sexuality, without Souhaire as a guide, Sabah might have succumbed to cultural identity repression within her relationship. This is not to say that Stephen is an unsuitable match for Sabah, but it goes to show how the problematic mentality foreignness has infiltrated the actions of the cultural majority in Canada.

Interculturalism is at the centre of conflict for both Nadda and Hage's works. Hage, however, tackles the issue through a more obvious and direct portrayal of the protagonist's

relationship with foreignness. He uses the physical metamorphosis of his character to illustrate the interpellation of the outsider identity. In this case, the protagonist has become a foreigner to himself as a result of the constant reminders from his friends and strangers in society that he does not belong to the mainstream. At the same time, he has been away from his home land for so long that, internally, he feels a disconnect from his heritage. These factors impede on his ability to find cultural hybridity, like Sabah eventually does, and evade in-betweenness because of his split identity, which is only half grounded in reality.

6.1 Cultural Hybridity

Cultural hybridity in *Sabah* is paralleled with the main character's coming of age story. Sabah begins the film as a victim of in-betweenness as she navigates through her daily responsibilities to her family and culture. She is her mother's care giver, she cooks for the family, and she maintains the household. The film opens on the day of Sabah's fortieth birthday. Regardless of the occasion, these responsibilities are made obvious as she is pictured cooking and preparing the house for her family's arrival (see figure 4). Her life is guided by routine and tradition, which has made it difficult for her to reform her identity and value system, separate from that of her brother. As Rasmi explains in her article on intergenerational conflict, this reshaping of values typically occurs during adolescence (1125). Sabah and Souhaire seem to be going through this developmental phase at the same time, which indicates that Sabah's identity development has been stunted for several years. While there is no direct explanation as to why she did not experience a coming of age identity reform in her youth, it is arguably due to her experience with migrant trauma. Similar to Hage's protagonist, Sabah has repressed aspects of her identity due to mainstream society's rejection of her culture, which justifies her delayed coming of age. Since I

am arguing that Souhaire acts as Sabah's guide towards cultural hybridity, it makes sense that Sabah's coming of age development occurs simultaneously with Souhaire's.

The adolescent niece shows signs of identity development as she rejects the idea of an arranged marriage, thereby opposing her uncle's orders. She develops her own value system that excludes oppressive traditions, and embraces Canadian culture, while retaining aspects of her Syrian culture such as belly dancing and shisha smoking. Her and her Canadian friends are pictured waiting in line for a nightclub when Souhaire attention lands on a teenage boy with a tattoo. "He's cute", she tells her friend, only to find out that it is Moustafa from their mosque. This scene reveals that second generation Arab Canadian youth are culturally hybrid; Souhaire is an active participant in her cultural-religious social scene, which she reveals through her recognition of Moustafa, as well as her mainstream Canadian social environment. She proves that there is no need to abandon one for the other and dichotomize the two worlds when both identities can exist in harmony. Further on that point, it is clear that Souhaire has a group of young people around her that support and encourage her Arab and her Canadian cultures, which evades cultural in-betweenness. Sabah, on the other hand, has been excluded from this comradery, as her main support system is comprised solely of her conservative family members. She, therefore, relies on Souhaire to guide her into her new identity.

The map towards Sabah's cultural hybridity begins when she first steps into the public swimming pool. Not because she meets Stephen here, but on a personal level, the swimming pool connects her to an identity that she has repressed in her adulthood. The steps she takes towards developing her new identity grant her the ability to connect romantically with Stephen; however, I believe that their relationship is a product of her new found identity, rather than a component which leads her to cultural hybridity. The film portrays a symbolic moment upon her first visit to

the pool (see figure 5). Sabah looks herself in the mirror as she contemplates undressing into her bathing suit. As mentioned, she has always sported traditional Muslim attire. Therefore, exposing her body at the pool shows how she has allowed some Canadian cultural influence into her daily activities, thereby learning to "self-regulate" her life (Rasmi et al. 1125). This pivotal moment is representative of Sabah's active resistance to in-betweenness. By shedding her clothes in the changeroom, she is symbolically shedding her previous identity – one that has been manipulated by old traditions and repressed by the intercultural society around her.

Her current social environment has a clear impact on her lack of self-understanding. A clear example of this comes from the analysis of belly dancing throughout the film. In the Western world, this cultural practice is often wrongly valued because it is seen as a representation of the exotic Other. It is thus extrinsically appreciated due to its so-called 'exotic' allure. Throughout her film, Nadda engages in resignifying certain practices to infuse them with new meaning, and fight against the stereotypical social constructs that surround them, such as belly dancing (Gana 37). Nadda expresses that she deliberately leaves out "the Arab who must deal with constant suspicion of being a terrorist" from her film, because this persona has also become a stereotype (Gana 37). Instead, she focuses on Arab identity markers that are true to Arab culture and that are in need of cultural reclaim, rather than that which has been constructed by North American media. Therefore, she focuses on resignifying the traditional practice of belly dancing by attaching new and truthful meaning to it. Souhaire becomes Sabah's belly dancing teacher. Initially, Sabah is hesitant to participating in the dance when asked to join. But, when Sabah learns to self-regulate and embrace both her Arab and Canadian cultures, she welcomes the dance into her life as a form of artistic and sexual expression. The dance remains sexualized, yet it acts as Arab female empowerment. Sabah learns that she can be a Muslim Arab and still access her sexuality, which she expresses through

belly dancing. Moreover, she brings this new understanding of herself to her relationship with Stephen. Therefore, belly dancing enables her to connect with her body without relinquishing her Arab identity.

Furthermore, Nadda's resignifying of belly dancing to cultural identity gives way to the evasion of the male gaze on women. As mentioned, the allure to Arab and Middle Eastern culture in the West is guided by an extrinsic appreciation of the exotic Other. In a patriarchal society, Arab women belly dancers are thus reduced to objects of exotic sexual desire. Nadda's challenge of these norms "shift[s] the focus from the central male (and oftentimes orientalist) gaze on women to the study of film production as a site of female empowerment" (Telmissany 327). The film's opening scene is packed with symbolic and subtly placed messages. In this scene, Nadda inserts a reference to the gaze through a small encounter between the woman in the sun dress at the bus stop and a male biker. She introduces the male gaze to viewers at the start of the film to elucidate the social reality that she wishes to oppose through resignifying cultural practices and their meanings which have been victimized and altered by the patriarchal perception. In the mentioned scene, the woman at the bus stop wearing a sundress is victim of the socially normalised male gaze. A biker passes by and openly gawks at the woman. She responds with a smile, knowing that her body has been sexualized yet accepting the imposed social normalcy of the encounter. The male gaze received by the woman at the bus stop is the same gaze that draws Western male attention to Arab women belly dancers. Therefore, I argue that part of Sabah's initial resistance to belly dancing is a symbolic resistance to Western patriarchal appropriation of the cultural tradition. She does not wish to partake in something that enables the male gaze on Arab women. Once belly dancing has been resignified to be a representation of her identity growth and cultural hybridity, Sabah reclaims the practice and uses it as a form of female empowerment. This highlights the importance of

recognizing and praising the work of Arab Canadian women filmmakers. Through Nadda's film, new contesting perspectives on social and political power discourses can be heard as she demonstrates the positive effects of deconstruction harmful patriarchal norms.

6.2 Inhospitable Environments

The main character in Hage's novel is never given the right means to work through his trauma, unlike Sabah, who finds the support system she requires. As mentioned, he is forced to attend therapy sessions "by the court" after a suicide attempt (Hage 5). His plan was to hang himself from a tree in the park. Seeing as it was the middle of the day, he was immediately noticed by a jogger who notified the police. The first issue to consider here is the lead up to his suicide attempt: why does he do it? Early in his narrative, he shows clear signs of anxiety and depression through his constant need to "hide from the sun and not see anyone" (Hage 11). He presents a contrast between the light and the dark; the former is what he seeks to avoid, and represents the world outside diaspora. The latter is where he feels most comfortable; in the dark, he can "exist underneath it all.. seal the sky and [his] window, and turn the world into an insect's play" (Hage 11-12). He cannot work through his trauma, so instead, he dwells within it. This longing for darkness is an instance of traumatic acting out. LaCapra explains traumatic acting out as "related to repetition, and even the repetition compulsion – the tendency to repeat something compulsively" (142). This is certainly the case for the protagonist, as shown through his compulsive sinking into the void. This space represents his subconscious mind, where repressed trauma dwells. Therefore, by succumbing to darkness he allows a complete internalization of his trauma. From a psychoanalytical lens, the protagonist's compulsive need to tap into his subconscious is his mind's attempt to work through his trauma. But the subconscious mind cannot be accessed by the individual alone. The trauma, which is trapped in the darkness of his subconscious, then manifests

itself in moments of inescapable acting out. He is so consumed by his traumatic acting out that he resorts to a failed suicidal attempt as a cry for help.

Though it is only a minor detail, the jogger in the situation represents the social dichotomy between Montreal's Arab diaspora and Montreal's native community. The jogger does not approach the "dirty Arab" on the verge of committing suicide (Hage 15). Instead, he avoids interacting with the Other and calls the police to mitigate the situation, which traps the narrator into unhelpful therapy sessions. This is a prime example of the non-diasporic community's unwillingness to help the diasporic community work through trauma. Moreover, it solidifies the dominance host countries have over their diasporic communities because the protagonist is forced into unhelpful therapy sessions. The jogger acts as an initial affirmation of the attitude of non-interaction between diasporic and non-diasporic communities and the therapist reaffirms it through her unwillingness to approach the protagonist's trauma cultural sensitivity.

When therapy proves unsuccessful, the therapist reaffirms his identity as a thief upon learning of his break-in to her home (Hage 259). She declares the therapy "is over" (Hage 259) and she "can't help him anymore" (Hage 260). She cannot help him because her trauma-healing practices are too rigid in their Western ideologies of mental health healing. As Linklater discusses in relation to Indigenous healing, therapists need to understand their patients' historical hardships "to comprehend the context of healing" (Linklater 34). The therapist tries the talking cure on a victim who believes "talking about your mother when she is gone is not a decent thing to do" (Hage 231). Thus, this approach does not align with his cultural values, and proves unsuccessful as he continues to act out without acknowledging why he feels such compulsive desires. The context of Middle Eastern Canadian trauma here is two-fold. There is no space to talk about his experience "during the war" (Hage 56) in the Middle East where "everyone is used to gunshots"

(Hage 64), nor is there an empathetic listener to hear the struggles of impoverishment as part of the diasporic experience. This struggle pushes the narrator to "orchestrate elaborate schemes to gain access to the homes and refrigerators of his white Montrealer acquaintances" (Poray-Wybranowska 194) including his therapist (Hage 83-84). These instances of home invasion are marked by the protagonist's 'cockroach moments', where he crawls "along the pipes" and springs from "kitchen drain[s]" (Hage 80). Similar to his longing for darkness, these are moments of traumatic acting out. This is the context that the therapist fails to understand, which results in a failed attempt to work through the narrator's trauma. Moreover, the therapist's abandonment of him as a patient further justifies the narrator's feeling of Otherness, as it proves that, according to Western standards, he is unworthy of help.

Lapierre claims that the reader's expectations of refugee narratives are challenged "by the narrator's refusal to tell the truth" (Lapierre 652). While this might be true of the reader's experience, it has less to do with the narrator's deliberate withholding of information and more to do with his inability to accurately articulate his story because Western therapy does not understand the cultural and historical context of his trauma. Hage's protagonist admittedly proves to be untrustworthy, yet it is clear that his inability to be truthful stems from a lack of working through his trauma. Lapierre insists that "while Hage argues that the narrator's therapist, Genevieve, violates the narrator's silence when she asks him about his past, the narrator enacts the same violation here" (Lapierre 562). My counter argument is two-fold. First, the narrator proves that cultural elements of hospitability are necessary to work through one's trauma when he acts as a pseudo therapist to his friends Shohreh and Faroud (Hage 245, 107). The protagonist's friends do not object to sharing their stories with him (Hage 245, 107). Second, Lapierre's argument misses the importance of cultural healing. Despite the therapist's attempts, her approach to help the

narrator fails because of her lack of empathy. She does not foster a hospitable environment. While the narrator mimics the therapist's role in the scene where his friends need him as an empathetic listener, he does not violate his 'patients'' comfort zones. Rather, he acts within cultural procedures that Shohreh and Farhoud recognize and can relate to. Ultimately this is a comment on the hypocrisy of the immigration systems in place, which shows a double-faced message: on one hand there are some services available to diasporic communities such as psychiatrists, but on the other hand the people living in diaspora are unwelcomed and misunderstood by the rest of the society. The limited services in place are provided with reluctancy and superficiality.

In contrast, Faroud and the narrator share wine while he explains his traumatic arrival to Canada (Hage 107-110). This sense of hospitality allows Faroud to feel comfortable sharing his story with him. Similarly, Shohreh tells him the story of her "jailor" who tortured and raped her in Iran, while they cuddle up in bed (Hage 247). It is the element of comfort that allows Shohreh's and Faroud's openness with the narrator. Both comfort and hospitality are missing from the protagonist's experience with his therapist. Doctor Genevieve does not hesitate to remind him that she has more of a responsibility to honour "taxpayers'" money than she does to his healing (Hage 60). She institutionalizes his mental health care, thereby proving that his well-being as a member of the diaspora's welfare system is less important than putting the taxpayers' money to good use. Where there should be peace and comfort, there is pressure and judgement in the therapy sessions, which fosters an inhospitable environment. Therefore, the therapist cannot be considered as an empathetic listener to the protagonist's trauma, which is a crucial requirement for working through trauma.

Moreover, the three exiles share similar traumatic experiences. Lapierre suggests that the narrator's willingness to help Shohreh seek revenge on her rapist is an "appropriation of Shohreh's

pain" (Lapierre 562). However, her interpretation excludes the effects of cultural memory. Cultural memory does not necessitate the "embodied experience" of trauma (Hirsch 32). Instead, traumatic memories can be shared through "symbolic systems" (Hirsch 33). Therefore, the narrator does not appropriate Shohreh's pain because he shares her pain through cultural memory. Again, this is the exact context that the therapist fails to understand. Although the three friends have not experienced the same situations, their experiences have led to similar trauma, which is shared throughout the Middle Eastern diaspora in Montreal.

Given that the narrator is Othered both by the jogger and by his therapist, this finally transcends into a self-identification of Otherness. In addition to his social restraints, the narrator faces some physical restraints living in the impoverished Middle Eastern diaspora that encourages his sense of Otherness, thereby evoking his cockroach persona. For one, the always "hungry" narrator must decide between personal hygiene or clean dishes, which is also a hygiene issue, in "fear" that his hot water might run out (Hage 36). In terms of food, when in need of a snack, he steals chocolate bars from corner shops and heats them in back alleys from exhaust air pipes (Hage 58). Even though he recognizes the health risks that could come of this, his impoverished state necessitates that he sees "edible potential of even the most 'contaminated' spaces" (Poray-Wybranowska 191). Like an insect, he feels only worthy of scraps and contaminated food in Montreal's Middle Eastern diaspora, which contributes to his self-identification as a cockroach. He, therefore, adopts the Otherness expected of him through these abnormal behaviours in order to sustain himself.

A study conducted by BMC public health, which evaluates the health of international Arab migrants, states that "the health needs of migrant population are tremendous because of their suboptimal living conditions" (Sweileh 2). Hage's protagonist shows that his lack of hygiene, his

contaminated food, and his lack of appropriate mental health services contribute to his identity duality and leads to his cockroach lifestyle, even prior to his complete metamorphosis. His health needs are not appropriately met and leave no space for "overcoming the psychological trauma of war and difficult journey to safer places", as the character's main focus is to nourish himself day by day (Sweileh 2). Through the criticism of a hypocritical society, Hage points out the irony of the situation: the narrator leaves one inhospitable environment to seek refuge in another where he is hungry, impoverished, and unequipped for the harsh Canadian winter. As a "constantly shivering carcass" (Hage 9, 223), he is somehow supposed to be "grateful" (Hage 65) for all the opportunities Canada offers. This clearly proves to be nearly impossible a task as he struggles with the lingering trauma of war which is exacerbated because of poverty. Thus, his trauma is met with the harsh and inhospitable environment of Montreal's Middle Eastern diaspora, which gives him no space to work through his past experiences.

In fact, his lack of appropriate mental health care, his lack of hygiene, his contaminated food, and his difficulty protecting himself from Canadian winters, all contribute to a second kind of trauma, known as migrant trauma. The aforementioned study concludes that the lack of basic health needs is not the only contributing factor to migrant trauma. Middle Eastern Canadian migrants also face "rejection and stigma", which contribute to their migrant trauma. This is certainly the case of Hage's protagonist (Sweileh 2). As an impoverished immigrant, the narrator cannot afford to shop at high end stores or restaurants. This also acts as a comment on class issues as a whole. Those who cannot afford to enter high end locations, are marginalized regardless of their ethnicity. Hage illustrates the narrator watching the people inside the fancy restaurant from a distance to highlight a further social issue of class. When asked to leave from his people-watching post, the Montrealers in the exclusive establishments watch him as if he were "some reality show"

as he is confronted by the police (Hage 87). The use of foreigner behaviour as a source of entertainment is problematic and contributes to further stigmatization. As he notices the stares, the protagonist puts on even more of a show by claiming to be looking at his own reflection in the window. Though this is a voluntary act, it exemplifies that the only way to gain some kind of acceptance is to embrace the 'foreigner identity' that the Montrealers expect of him. He is stigmatized as a foreigner, and voluntarily accepts this status to acquire his designated place in society, regardless of its negative connotations.

Chapter 7: The Arab Canadian Identity

Through my analysis of *Sabah*, it is possible to decipher the differences between first and second generation Arab Canadians, as portrayed in the film. Sabah, as a first generation Arab Canadian, has suffered from cultural in-betweenness most of her life as an immigrant. Her niece, Souhaire, who is a second generation Arab Canadian, has developed a culturally hybrid identity that fully captures what it means to be an Arab Canadian woman. For that reason, she has not experienced in-betweenness like Sabah. My findings reveal that Souhaire's social group enables her to form her own version of cultural identity with both Arab and Canadian influence. She is therefore able to guide Sabah out of in-betweenness by creating a hospitable environment, where Sabah's longing for self-discovery is encouraged. The influence of a second generation Arab Canadian in this situation is a necessary part of trauma healing for the first generation immigrant. However, the weight of Sabah's trauma healing and self-discovery process takes its toll on Souhaire, thereby fostering post-generational trauma. Souhaire is already scolded and shamed by her family for expressing her Canadian identity, which has traumatic effects of their own. On top of that, she deals with the pressure of keeping Sabah's secret, and is again criticized and shamed for encouraging cultural diversity. The message she receives here is to accept in-betweenness rather than adopt any Canadian cultural influences. It is clear that Souhaire has already embraced her hybrid identity. Therefore, her family's rejection of Canadian culture translates to a rejection of her identity. Moreover, their behaviour mimics that of the mainstream society; they are rejected by society, and in turn they reject any trace of Canadian culture in their lives. This is especially noticeable in Majid, as previously discussed. Souhaire and Sabah, the two rebels of the family, ban together despite their identity repressions in society and on the familial level to create a hospitable environment for them to work through their trauma and overcome cultural in-betweenness. My

analysis therefore reveals that migrant trauma is transmittable between generations and manifests itself through intergenerational conflict within second generation Arab Canadians.

In *Cockroach*, the Arab Canadian identity is tried by the divided self. Hage's protagonist reveals that untreated migrant trauma breeds an eternal state of cultural in-betweenness. He does not have the support system that Sabah and Souhaire have created for themselves, and, therefore, never attains cultural hybridity. Both works reveal that the Arab Canadian identity, due to its hybrid nature, is one that the individual must learn to balance. With the right social tools and the proper healing tactics, it is possible to incorporate Canadian culture into the Arab identity, without sacrificing the latter. Hage's protagonist is unfortunately never equipped with these tools. He therefore represents cultural in-betweenness through his eventual, and inevitable, cockroach metamorphosis. Both works present their own versions of what it means and how it feels to be an Arab immigrant living in Canada's metropolitan cities. While they are similar in that they exhibit the harmful effects of migrant trauma on one's identity, the characters' understandings of themselves vary drastically. Hage's character sees himself as undeserving of happiness – as a "dirty Arab", because he has been interpellated as such, whereas Sabah and Souhaire celebrate their culture by openly expressing their hybrid identities. This shows how the Arab Canadian identity is subject to social repression, but this repression can be combatted.

Conclusion

I have examined Hage's protagonist's metaphoric transformation into a cockroach, which I have shown symbolizes his liminal condition in Montreal's intercultural society. The scenes portraying his interactions with the therapist enables readers to view Montreal's mainstream interculturality, which is the underlying cause for the protagonist's feelings of in-betweenness. This experience renders a multicultural Arab Canadian identity unviable, as it is a form of cultural integration, and thus he transforms into a cockroach. Overall, the novel speaks to the importance of retaining one's cultural identity, but it presents the impossibility of doing so if one's society imposes interculturality, which entails a form of assimilation or the erasure of one's cultural identity. Hage highlights the difficulty of existing in Montreal not only as Arab Canadians and Middle Easterners but any other culture because the cultural identity of outsiders, or deemed outsiders, is constantly opposed by an intercultural society. Therefore, as I have demonstrated, outsider culture is the true antagonist of the novel; this outsider is antagonized by mainstream Montreal culture to the point of a dramatic transformation.

This environment breeds a second kind of trauma – migrant trauma, which is repressed into the novel's metaphoric underground. The narrator remains unnamed throughout the entire novel and his homeland is never explicitly mentioned. Though some critics believe there have been indirect references to Lebanon, it is not an obvious fact. It is arguable that Hage's intention was to create a metaphoric character who, instead of representing the struggles of one particular diasporic culture, illustrates the universality of trauma within Middle Eastern diasporas and acts a symbol for exilic and migrant trauma. Regardless of the narrator's fictionality within the plot, Hage's message is clear: Middle Eastern Canadian diasporas are marginalized by society and seen as both an exotic and rejected Other.

I have compared Hage's protagonist's experience to Sabah and Souhaire's in Nadda's film. While they all deal with migrant trauma, Sabah and Souhaire's everyday Arabness transforms into positive experiences, thereby creating a "classical *dénouement heureux"* (Gana 35). Some critics have voiced their dissatisfaction with Sabah's authenticity and the film's happily-ever-after ending. However, its mix of mainstream romantic comedy with the *film d'auteur* model the kind of hybridity Nadda's characters strive for. She illustrates the beauty that comes of bending genre and thematic rules, which translates into her characters' happy endings. Sabah and her family's behaviour might not be as authentic as the critical audience would have wished, but the intention here is not necessarily to portray authenticity; rather, it is the resignification of cultural practices. She succeeds in doing so, thereby deconstructing problematic and identity-harming Arab stereotypes. Moreover, these successes help Sabah work through her migrant trauma by establishing the cultural healing that is required to foster a hospitable environment.

Films like Nadda's *Sabah* and Hage's novel *Cockroach* are motions towards reclaiming our Arab Canadian identity in a society that has heavily romanticized our culture. Extrinsic value of Arab cultural practices in Canada has hindered many immigrants from developing cultural hybridity. The identity in-betweenness experienced by Hage's protagonist can be mitigated, as Nadda proves. The 1883 Arab Canadian pioneers established the first Arab communities in Montreal. Their hard work as peddlers, and other trade careers has paved the path for today's immigrants. They shamelessly spread their culture through Middle Eastern merchandise sales, thereby introducing themselves to the New World. Since then, some cultural practices have been altered by the Western gaze. Thus, the combat against interculturalism persists. The examined works are therefore calling for social action to help Arab Canadian communities and others like

them to work through their trauma and bridge the gap between diasporic and mainstream communities in Canada.

Appendix

Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

Figure 4

Figure 5

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