

Culinary Cartographies: Mapping Cultural Identity through Foodways in Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*

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Abstract

This paper delves into the confluence of cultural identity and foodways in the diaspora, using Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*, as its object of study. It investigates the role of food, as a vibrant site of cultural expression and exchange for the Palestinian-Egyptian protagonist and her family, who strive for charting their transnational identity across different locations and cultures. Against the background of Anita Mannur's insights on "Culinary Fictions", this study examines the significance of food preferences and eating habits as a tool for affirming cultural identity, negotiating belonging, and resisting hegemonic narratives of cultural authenticity and assimilation. By analyzing the significance and symbolism of food in the diaspora, this research foregrounds the complexities of cultural identity. It does so through exploring culinary practices as part of the "defence and coping mechanisms" adopted by diasporic communities to maintain a connection to their homelands while attempting to render their experience of belonging tangible and fully lived. In this sense, food acts as more than a nourishment for the body as it equally functions as a vital source of sustenance for the diasporic consciousness, contributing significantly to the preservation of cultural identity and the maintenance of connections to ancestral homelands.

Keywords: Assimilation, belonging, Culinary Fiction, cultural identity, foodways, Randa Jarrar's *A Map of Home*, resistance

ملخص

يتناول هذا البحث التقاطع بين الهوية الثقافية ورمزية الطعام في الشتات، باستخدام رواية *A Map of Home* لراندا جرار كموضوع للدراسة. يبحث العمل في دور الطعام كوسيلة للتعبير الثقافي والتبادل بين الشخصية الفلسطينية المصرية والبطلة وعائلتها، الذين يسعون لرسم هويتهم عبر الحدود الوطنية وبين الثقافات المختلفة. في ضوء رؤى أنيتا مانور حول "Culinary Fictions"، يفحص هذا البحث رمزية الطعام وممارسات الطهو كأداة لتأكيد الهوية الثقافية، وتفاوض الانتماء، ومقاومة الهيمنة الثقافية. من خلال تحليل رمزية ودلالة الطعام في الشتات تبين هذه الدراسة التداخلات التي تشكل الهوية الثقافية. الطعام داخل الشتات يتحول إلى واحدة من "الآليات الدفاعية" التي تعتمدها المجتمعات الاغترابية للحفاظ على اتصالها بأوطانها بينما تحاول تجسيد تجربتها بالانتماء بشكل ملموس ومكتمل العيش. في هذا السياق، يعمل الطعام كأكثر من مجرد تغذية للجسم؛ إذ يغذي ويشكل الوعي الاغترابي بالدرجة نفسها.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التفاوض الثقافي، المقاومة، الانتماء، الاندماج

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It took forever to explain to them why we had war, food, and religion—especially since I didn't even know. (Jarrar, p. 113)

Introduction

The intersection of food and culture has long been recognized as a rich and complex terrain for scholarly inquiry, offering insights into how gastronomic habits and culinary preferences shape the individuals' sense of personal and collective self. Particularly, the diaspora presents an interesting field to explore the intricate relationship between foodways and cultural identity. In her seminal work, *Culinary Fictions: Food in South Asian Diasporic Culture*, Anita Mannur explores how food functions as a narrative device that shapes and is shaped by diasporic identities. This study draws on Mannur's insights to examine the role of food in Randa Jarrar's novel, *A Map of Home*.

In the novel under examination, Jarrar traces the transnational journey of the Palestinian-Egyptian Nidali Ammar, a young girl who is navigating her cultural identity and sense of belonging across different countries and cultural landscapes. Central to Nidali's journey is the role of food, which serves as a reflection of the process of her identity formation. Set against the backdrop of the Ammars' experience of mobility and constant movement across Kuwait, Egypt, Palestine, and the USA under the impacts of the Gulf and Palestine wars, the novel offers a vivid description of the ways food serves as a site of memory, cultural negotiation, and resistance for diasporic individuals.

In alignment with Anita Mannur's *Culinary Fictions*, this study takes part in the academic discussion on diasporic foodways to elucidate the complex and dynamic interplay between food and identity in the diaspora. Through a textual analysis of the food-related scenes and their symbolic meanings within the novel, this research aims to offer an exploration of how these elements contribute to the broader themes of identity and belonging. By exploring the connections between food and identity in the selected novel, this work underscores the function of food as a dynamic site for the construction and negotiation of diasporic identities, emphasizing its profound impacts on individual and collective experiences of belonging. It, therefore, analyses the significance of food in the process of identity formation undergone by Nidali and her family, highlighting its function as a powerful cultural marker, a site for cultural negotiation, and a resistance mechanism against the assimilation discourse.

Literature Review

A Map of Home has triggered different critical responses as a multi-layered narrative addressing entangled issues of cultural identity, sexuality, and belonging within the transnational realm of the diaspora. Through multiple and various theoretical lenses and analytical approaches, researchers have offered ramified insights into the complex interplay of identity, belonging, and power dynamics imbued within Jarrar's narrative. Cariello (2014) approached the novel as a semi-autobiographical narrative, pointing to its defiance and deviation from conventional autobiographical forms and its exploration of the process of identity formation within the Arab-American diaspora. From a different angle, El Gendy (2016) addressed the novel's subversive use of trickster humor as a counter-discursive tool to dominant narratives surrounding Muslim female identity. Meanwhile, Marta Bosch Villarubias (2014) extends the discussion to examine the transnational configurations of Arab-American

masculinity in post-9/11 diasporic novels, such as *A Map of Home*. She emphasizes the intersection of gender, ethnicity, and migration in shaping cultural identity. Darwich and Harb (2018) suggested a novel analytical model grounded in Arab and Arab-American feminisms foregrounding the novel's depiction of gendered and classed racialization as a site of resistance. Jameel Ahmed Alghaberi delves into the concepts of home, cultural identity, and transnationalism within Jarrar's fiction, exploring the author's engagement with counter-narratives to orientalist stereotypes (Darwish & Harb, 2018). In a similar vein, Maloul (2019) seemed to build on this discussion by exploring representations of Palestinian masculinity, challenging monolithic and orientalist stereotypes about the Arab-Muslim identity. Ogunyemi (2020) broadened the scope to consider themes of feminism, sexualities, and masculinities in Islamic literature while locating *A Map of Home* within a wider discourse on gender constructions and performative identities within Islamic societies.

While the existing scholarship on Randa Jarrar's novel is rich and diverse interweaving the themes of identity, belonging, and sexuality as the central axes of the narrative, there remains a notable gap in the exploration of the interplay between food, as a leitmotif in the novel, and the diasporic experience of its characters. Despite the centrality of foodways to cultural practices and identity formation, specifically in the diaspora, no study addressing the role of food in shaping the characters' identity and relation to home in *A Map of Home* has been published yet. This study addresses this gap to put in the limelight the ways food plays a cultural role in the diaspora by contributing to expressing and molding its identity.

Analysis

Food as a Cultural Marker in the Diaspora

Food as an important factor intervening in the construction of cultural and social identities has garnered significant attention from scholars across various disciplines (Barthes, Mannur, Appadurai, etc.). In the diaspora, however, food seems to acquire a more profound significance as a symbol of cultural distinctiveness and alterity, contributing to the expression and assertion of the diasporic identity. As it "is a central part of the cultural imagination of diasporic populations," food plays a considerable role in shaping the collective self of diasporic members, by creating a familiar sense of home in foreign environments (Mannur, 2007, p. 8). In *A Map of Home*, Jarrar shows how preparing and eating traditional dishes in the diaspora is turned into an act of cultural expression and identity affirmation. The novel is imbued with many instances, where the author vividly describes the food consumed by Nidali and her family like the *Za'atar*, the medjool date, the roomi cheese and tea, etc. These culinary elements, which evoke the special flavors and aromas of the Middle East, function as compensation and a powerful reminder of the lost home. In this sense, the highly sensory experience of eating which involves the tactile, olfactory, taste, and sight senses serves to feed the diasporic "homing desire", while rendering tangible a cherished connection with home (Brah, 1996, p. 180). In *Culinary Tales in Exile: Food as More than Sustenance*, Shamshiri (2021) noted that:

Cuisine is an expression of culture as much as literature, poetry, folktales, art, and history. As migrants, exiled people, and children of diaspora, food goes beyond mere sustenance. Whether we have decided to migrate, or forces beyond our powers have pushed us into other geographies, the rituals of sourcing ingredients, preparing, cooking, and eating are ways that migrants tie their heritage to the sense of 'home' (the physical space as well as the abstract emotional concept). (para. 4)

The eating experience, for the displaced, becomes an occasion to evoke and recall certain aspects of the left home while providing him/her with a temporary feeling of familiarity and security in his/her foreign space. Food, therefore, is turned into a powerful site of memory stimulating nostalgia and evoking the lost ties to the homeland. In this respect, in “Counter Narratives: Cooking Up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye’s Poetry and Diana Abu Jaber’s *Crescent*,” (2007) Mercer and Strom celebrate “culinary remembrances” as a way of comfort and solace that momentarily transports the exile to his/her homeland. Food as a tangible link to one’s sense of home, encompassing both the physical space and the abstract emotional concept, becomes a crucial element for cultural preservation and identity reaffirmation while fostering a sense of continuity and connection to the homeland.

Functioning as a “metonymy” for the concept of home, the significance of foodways, in the diaspora, stems from their function as repositories of memory and nostalgia. In this respect, Mannur (2010) emphasized the intricate relationship between food, memory, and identity, stating that

the desire to remember home by fondly recreating culinary memories cannot be understood merely as reflectively nostalgic gestures; rather such nostalgically framed narratives must also be read as meta-critiques of what it means to route memory and nostalgia for a homeland through one’s relationship to seemingly intricate culinary practices which yoke national identity with culinary taste and practices. (p. 185)

Within this framework, Nidali’s father’s attachment to Za’atar, especially in moments of deception, tension, and frustration, is highly significant. Amidst the upheavals of the Gulf and Palestinian wars, Za’atar, as a cultural symbol associated with the Palestinian land and steadfastness, becomes the only means of solace and comfort facing his condition of exile; “a tool to articulate tensions that emerge through the chaffing of identity vectors of “home” and “diaspora” (Mannur, 2010, p. 13). Not only the father but also Nidali and the family’s Palestinian friends turn to Za’atar burgers to satisfy their hunger. They even entertain the idea of launching a fast-food eatery named ‘Za’atar Burger’ in their space of settlement. Accordingly, the Za’atar presence in the Palestinian diaspora becomes emblematic of the struggle to reconcile the disparate facets of identity and navigate the shifting terrain between the familiar and the foreign. Borrowing from Judith Butler’s theory of performativity, the repetitive act of eating Za’atar is turned into a communal ritual through which members of the Palestinian diaspora perform and affirm their identity. Relatedly, the portrayal of Za’atar in the narrative becomes a striking illustration of the multifaceted ways in which food operates as a medium for asserting cultural belonging. In a similar vein, in his article “Sumud and Food: Remembering Palestine Through Cuisine in Chile,” which is based on the testimonies of Palestinian chefs, storeowners, and residents of Chilean regions, Bascunan-Wiley (2019) affirmed that

Food and memory have long played a fundamental role in the construction and maintenance of Palestinian national identity within the homeland and in the global diaspora. Given the ongoing Israeli occupation and territorial contestation for a Palestinian state, Palestinian cuisine and collective memory—and the intersection of the two—are central to the ongoing struggles for statehood and symbolic Palestinian intimacy. (p. 100)

Regarding its role as an expression of the collective and national identity of the diaspora, the reference to food, in Jararr's novel, is significantly made in moments of family gatherings to further foreground its uniting role and collective significance. Food, as a central element in family and friend meetings, helps to re-invent what Pierre Bourdieu terms the "habitus" to provide the immigrants with a sense of intimacy and security outside the homeland. Food practices in the diaspora, hence, become a significant occasion for setting and enforcing the diasporic groups' rituals and traditions, which in turn contribute to the creation and preservation of a "cultural capital" (qtd in Huang, 2019, p. 45). By implementing food habits, diasporic groups strive to re-invent the lost home. Through the enactment of culinary customs, they endeavor to recreate and maintain connections to their lost homeland, thereby engaging in a process of collective memory and identity formation.

Food's cultural significance also stems from its role as a metaphorical cultural discourse across generations. As a powerful "unit of signification" (Barthes, 2017, p. 30), food helps to reconstruct community bonds through intergenerational transmission of culture passed through certain preparations of traditional dishes, which act as a tangible emblem of cultural continuity and connection across generations. In this respect, the scene of Nidali rolling cabbage leaves with her Sitto is highly significant. Nidali vividly describes this scene, stating:

We rolled the red meat, rice, cumin, and oil mixture into triangles of boiled cabbage leaves, placed them in a big pot, and dropped whole cloves of garlic in. When I looked into the pot, the rolls and the cloves reminded me of dashes and commas rolls and the cloves reminded me of dashes and commas. I wanted to tell Sitto this but I remembered that she couldn't read or write. (Jarrar, 2018, p. 101)

Nidali's description of the cabbage rolling process highlights the sensory richness of the experience, evoking memories and associations that bridge the generational divide. The symbolism of the cabbage rolls, resembling punctuation marks in Nidali's eyes, underscores the fluidity of cultural expression and the interplay between tradition and innovation. Despite Nidali's realization that Sitto cannot read or write, the act of cooking becomes a language in itself, transcending literacy to convey stories and traditions ingrained in culinary practices. Relatedly, scholars like Gardaphé and Xu (2007) emphasized the pivotal role of eating occasions and gatherings as "training grounds" for the younger generation, where they absorb cultural knowledge and etiquette through participation (p. 8). Food thus serves as a medium of cultural transmission, bridging the gap between generations and preserving heritage in the face of societal changes and modernization. Through shared meals and culinary traditions, families and communities defy the passage of time, reaffirming their collective identity and fostering a sense of belonging that transcends individual lifespans.

Negotiating Belonging through Food in the Diaspora

Away from their homelands, diasporic communities are forced to redefine their sense of identification and belonging in an attempt to forge a space they could call 'home'. Food, as a significant cultural element, does not only serve as "a placeholder for marking cultural distinctiveness, [but also] as a palliative for dislocation" (Mannur, 2007, p. 13). *A Map of Home* displays how diasporic communities strive to carve out a middle space of belonging through their gastronomic choices and culinary practices. For instance, the protagonist's endeavors to blend local dishes with traditional ones, such as blending the American burger with the quintessentially Palestinian Za'atar or infusing the Italian pizza with olives and meat as her "favorite ingredients," holds significant meaning (Jarrar, 2018, p. 69). It tells of the

protagonist's attempt to reconcile her Oriental heritage with her Western environment. The hybridity of Nidali's dishes mirrors the hybridity of an evolving sense of belonging acquired from the experience of inhabiting different locations and absorbing aspects of various cultures. Her gastronomic choices, rooted in mixture and fusion, parallel her ongoing process of negotiating identity and hybridization. They allow her to forge a liminal space that simultaneously connects her to her current locale and distant homeland. At the heart of Nidali's culinary fusion is the recognition that identity is not static but rather "a production, which is never complete, always in process" (Hall, 1989, p. 36). She embraces the idea that she does not have to choose between her Palestinian roots and her experiences in the Western world. Instead, she sees her identity as a mosaic, composed of diverse cultural fragments that come together to form a unique and multifaceted whole.

Moreover, the protagonist's imaginative approach to blending cultural influences symbolizes her dynamic negotiation of identity throughout her journey of translocality. This is exemplified by her playful experimentation and reinterpretation of her culinary heritage: "I stuffed peppers and zucchinis, and thanks to some imagination and lack of sleep, the pepper became Gautier, the zucchini, Fromentin" (Jarrar, 2018, p. 232). The act of stuffing peppers and zucchinis reflects Nidali's engagement with her culinary heritage. By preparing these dishes, she connects with her Palestinian roots and expresses her cultural identity through food. However, The transformation of the pepper into "Gautier" and the zucchini into "Fromentin" highlights Nidali's creative and imaginative approach to her cultural identity. Gautier and Fromentin as references to famous French writers, suggest a blending of Palestinian and Western influences on Nidali's identity. By naming the vegetables after these literary figures, Nidali reinterprets her cultural heritage through the lens of art and literature, showcasing her ability to navigate the complexities of her identity in a creative and nuanced way. Accordingly, The process of stuffing becomes a metaphor for the negotiation of identity, as Nidali embraces and integrates different aspects of her heritage to create a unique and multifaceted sense of self.

Nidali and her family's culinary experimentation reflects their position within the middle ground, straddling the Western and Oriental facets of their Arab-American identity. This is most obvious in the scene at a restaurant in America. Nidali recounts this experience: "We ordered sea urchins whose spines moved rapidly when we squeezed lime juice over them. I ate a grilled fish and choked on its bones. Gamal ate pita bread and tahini sauce: he hated fish. And Mama ate two dozen oysters back to back like they were watermelon seeds" (Jarrar, 2018, p. 194). This scene reflects a blend of tradition and adaptation, as the Ammars navigate cultural expectations and personal preferences through their eating habits. Although in America, the Ammars seem to retain their eating manners as a means to feel at home. Sayed (2022) emphasizes this postulation, asserting that "food not only sustains ties to the home left behind but also helps to create a new home space in adopted lands, triggering memories of people, places, and cultures" (p. 277). Beyond merely nourishing the body, food serves to nourish the displaced subject's sense of belonging through sustaining connections to the homeland by offering a space where home habits could be practiced and maintained. Incorporating eating rituals and habits into the new landscape allows the immigrants to weave their eating experiences into their evolving sense of identity and belonging. By incorporating usual eating habits from their homeland into their new environment, the dislocated groups can maintain a connection to their roots and weave their cultural identity as an integral part of their everyday lives.

Nourishing resistance against the American “Melting Pot”

Alongside languages, traditions, values, etc., food functions as a significant cultural symbol signaling difference and alterity. Despite their willingness to negotiate their sense of belonging outside their homelands, the Ammars exhibit resistance to completely assimilating into the American melting pot, in part, through their food preferences and habits. By retaining certain food choices, they assert acts of resistance against the mainstream culture, which threatens to overshadow their cultural uniqueness. For instance, when confronted with the choice between tea or coffee at an American restaurant, Waheed, the protagonist’s father, insists on having both, citing cultural traditions from their homeland where tea is consumed with breakfast and coffee afterwards.

And I said, tea and coffee. And the waitress said, sir? Would you like tea or coffee? And I said tea and coffee, and she said, no, tea or coffee, and I said, both: tea and coffee, and she said, you cannot have tea and coffee, you can have either tea . . . or coffee, and I said, I would like tea and coffee, miss, and she said, well, it’s either tea or coffee, and I said, in my country we have tea with breakfast and coffee after breakfast, so I want tea . . . and coffee! (Jarrar, 2018, p. 69)

This quote from *A Map of Home* reflects a cultural clash regarding food preferences and identity. Waheed’s insistence on having both tea and coffee is not merely about beverage choices but signifies a deeper connection to his cultural background and habits. His insistence on having both tea and coffee reflects his attempt to maintain his cultural identity in a different context. In Oriental culture, having both tea and coffee may be a common practice, perhaps representing a blend of different cultural influences or simply personal preference. However, the waitress’s insistence on choosing only one beverage reflects a clash of cultural norms and expectations. This interaction highlights Waheed’s struggle to assert his cultural identity in a foreign environment where his communal customs may not be understood or accommodated. Hence, his resistance to performing certain food practices casts him as an abnormal offending outsider, a lonely and unique person as indicated by his name (Reverso, n.d.). His refusal to conform to the American eating norms, despite the waitress’s insistence, reflects a challenge to the regulatory power of social norms, which constitute the basis of identity construction, as postulated by Butler (1990). Hence, his commitment to preserving the culinary practices of his homeland reflects a refusal to conform to hegemonic discourses and assimilate into dominant cultural norms while struggling to preserve his cultural identity in unfamiliar settings.

Not only Waheed but also his wife displays signs of resistance to the mainstream American culture through her relationship with the traditional cuisine of her Oriental background. The narrator vividly describes her mother, preparing a traditional Eastern dish after moving to America while contemplating the idea of having a mobile house :

MAMA DOESN’T LIKE the idea of a mobile anything. She wants a place with a foundation and the only wheels she wants should be on her car and her son’s skateboard. And when did he become such a little punk skater? She fries potatoes and eggplant and zucchini and puts them in a colander. The colander is plastic and it melts. She throws it away and takes out a back issue of *Awake!* She doesn’t want the mobile home. She never again wants to hitch her home onto a car and drive away and flee. Mama wants to stay in one place. She arranges the potatoes in the glass baking dish. She layers lamb meat and tomato sauce on top. She arranges the eggplant. She pours more

red sauce. Zucchini. Lamb. She sautés flour in oil, adds milk and cheese, boils the béchamel sauce, and ladles it on top of the layers. (Jarrar, 2018, p. 250)

In this passage, the mother's attachment to her homeland is evident in her rejection of modern conveniences and her preference for stability and rootedness. Her action of frying potatoes, eggplant, and zucchini and putting them in a plastic colander, which ultimately melts, serves as a metaphor for the challenges and complexities of her diasporic position, as an Oriental woman in a Western environment. The act of frying these vegetables could be read as the mother's attempt to recreate a familiar dish from her homeland in her quest for a tangible connection to her cultural roots in her new space. Nevertheless, the melting of the plastic colander disrupts her attempt at reconnection and highlights the challenges and difficulties of maintaining cultural traditions and practices in an unfamiliar setting. The colander, a typically functional and useful kitchen tool, becomes a symbol of the fragility and vulnerability of the diasporic identity in the face of external pressures. The mother's subsequent action of taking out a back issue of *Awake* may suggest a coping mechanism in response to the failure of her culinary endeavor. Furthermore, the mother's use of a traditional cooking method with a glass baking dish signifies her resistance to assimilation and her commitment to preserving her cultural identity through adopting "usual" cooking practices. Additionally, the combination of the mother's cooking act and the idea of a mobile home is highly significant in this passage. Her reluctance to embrace the idea of a mobile home reflects her desire for stability and permanence. Hence, through her culinary endeavors, she seeks to create a sense of home and belonging that transcends physical boundaries, anchoring herself and her family in their cultural identity and heritage. Cooking becomes a form of cultural expression for Nidali's mother, offering comfort and continuity amidst the uncertainties of life and the challenges of adapting to a new environment.

Together with Waheed and his wife, the protagonist Nidali shows some signs of detachment from the American culture which threatens to swallow their cultural uniqueness. Despite her willingness to negotiate and reshape her ancestral identity, Nidali is not totally open to the American culture, as she displays a distinct reluctance to fully embrace it. Her reservation is most obvious in her pointed critique: "TV is full of commercials and your family goes to McDonald's too often. The first few times you're excited to be eating hamburgers and then a few months later you realize that it's a nasty fast-food restaurant" (Jarrar, 2018, p. 232). This statement reflects a sense of disillusionment and deception stemming from the failure of the American culture to satisfy the Ammars' "homing desire" and nourish their need for belonging. The American food, which looks appealing and exciting, turns out to be no more than "nasty fast food". Likewise, the American promise to host the Ammars' difference and provide them with the stability and satisfaction they cherish is no more than an illusion, offering a temporary and fast-fading sense of relief and comfort. The stability and satisfaction they seek remain elusive, overshadowed by the transient allure of American ideals and comforts. In this way, the Ammars' experience serves as a strong reflection of the complexities and contradictions inherent in the immigrant experience, where the quest for belonging and cultural identity is met with the harsh reality of disillusionment and impermanence.

Conclusion

This paper investigated the intricate interplay between cultural identity and foodways in the diaspora. Relying on *A Map of Home*, as a lens to examine these dynamics, it used the Palestinian-Egyptian family of the novel's protagonist as its case study. This work focused

predominantly on the Ammars' liminal position between their Oriental background and the Western space they inhabit which speaks to the tension between preserving their uniqueness and assimilating into the mainstream culture surrounding them. The novel vividly captures the dynamic experience of the Egyptian-Palestinian family, who is looking for a lost home through mobility and translocality. It strongly reflects the enduring quest for identity for diasporic members whose sense of belonging is intertwined with a perpetual journey of mobility and displacement.

The novel uses food as a leitmotif to trace the evolution of the characters' sense of belonging and identity awareness. The characters' food preferences and practices served as a lens to probe the significance of diasporic foodways in the construction of cultural identity. Concerning Anita Mannur's insights on culinary fiction, this study has underscored the significance of food preferences and culinary practices as powerful tools for affirming cultural identity, negotiating belonging, and resisting assimilation. Through observation of the Ammars' relationship to food and the ways they experiment with their culinary heritage and norms, this work emphasized the multi-faceted relationship between food, culture, and identity in diasporic literature. This multi-faceted relationship mirrors an ambivalent relationship to the original culture, which oscillates between attachment and negotiation. Through this dichotomy, Jarrar conveys the diasporic readiness to map new routes across geographical, political, and cultural boundaries, while maintaining a connection to ancestral roots. This complex blend between routes and roots, which marks the diasporic journey of identification and belonging, is translated through the diasporic adoption, adaptation, or rejection of certain food elements and norms as cultural signifiers.

The exploration of foodways and identity in *A Map of Home* provides a springboard for broader research into the multifaceted experiences of Palestinian diasporic communities. While *A Map of Home* offers rich insights into the interplay between identity and foodways, specifically in the Palestinian diaspora, it provides only one perspective within the broader landscape of diasporic literature by Palestinian writers, which may not capture the full diversity of the Palestinian diasporic experiences. Hence, future research could consider a comparative analysis of multiple diasporic novels by different Palestinian writers to explore the various coping, defence and integration mechanisms adopted by the Palestinian diaspora in the face of constant displacement and uprootedness. Moreover, under the current waves of globalization and transnationalism, specific dishes are no longer restricted to one location and traditional food risks losing its particularity, in an increasingly connected world. This could inspire more research on the symbolism and significance of food as a cultural marker under the reign of globalization and its constant processes of cultural hybridization, transnational flows, and culinary commodification.

About the Author

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