

Voicing the Mediterranean: Home, Identity, and Diaspora in Abdulhamid Bajouki's *Uyūn al-Manfā Moro Jaime*¹

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Abstract

This article presents a postcolonial reading of Abdulhamid Bajouki's novel *Uyūn al-Manfā Moro Jaime* (2013) (*Eyes of Exile: Jaime the Moor*), part of his trilogy, exploring the narrative journey of Said, a Moroccan political activist who migrates to Spain seeking refuge. Employing a close reading methodology informed by postcolonial theory and diaspora studies, particularly the concepts of hybridity, conviviality, and the "third space", the analysis examines Said's experiences of migration, identity formation, and cultural negotiation. The study highlights how Said's interactions with Isabel, a Spanish woman, and other characters, reflect broader dynamics of integration and adaptation. Specifically, it demonstrates how Said navigates the tension between his Moroccan origins and his new Spanish environment, ultimately constructing a hybrid identity that transcends traditional notions of home and belonging. The analysis reveals that Bajouki's novel, through Said's journey and his relationship with Isabel and her mother, promotes a concept of conviviality, echoing the historical spirit of al-Andalus, as a model for intercultural understanding in the Mediterranean context. Through a thorough analysis of Said's experiences, this article contributes to diaspora studies by illustrating the complex negotiation of hybrid identity within a postcolonial framework, particularly highlighting the role of conviviality and the 'third space' in shaping diasporic experiences and challenging traditional narratives of alienation and exclusion often associated with diaspora. The article concludes that *Uyūn al-Manfā* contributes to diaspora studies by illustrating the complex, fluid, and often paradoxical nature of identity construction in exile.

1. INTRODUCTION

Abdulhamid Bajouki's novel *Uyūn al-Manfā Moro Jaime* (2013) offers a profound exploration of the Moroccan diaspora experience through the lens of Said, a young man driven by political activism and personal exile. Born in Martil, Morocco, in 1961, Bajouki himself experienced the tumultuous political landscape of Morocco during the 1980s, which led him to seek refuge in Spain. His firsthand experiences inform the richly textured narrative of *Eyes of Exile: Jaime the Moor*, where the protagonist Said navigates the challenges of adapting to a new cultural environment while grappling with his Moroccan roots. This literary work emphasizes a concept of commonality, which I refer to as "conviviality". This article, therefore, aims to provide a comprehensive analysis of the novel, focusing on its thematic depth and its relevance to contemporary discussions on migration, identity, and cultural integration.

2. CONTEXTUAL FRAMEWORK

¹ All translations are mine, unless otherwise noted

Abdulhamid Bajouki was deeply involved in union activism during his university years at Mohammed V University in Rabat. His involvement in the National Union of Moroccan Students and the 1982 strike led to his arrest and subsequent escape to Spain in 1984. These experiences are mirrored in the life of Said, the protagonist of *Eyes of Exile*. The novel is set against the backdrop of historical events that shaped both the author's and the protagonist's lives, providing a rich context for exploring themes of home, identity, and cultural integration.

In the novel *Eyes of Exile*, Abdulhamid Bajouki demonstrates a profound mastery as he crafts the journey of Said, a young Moroccan man who was driven by his involvement in political activism in 1984 uprising in Tetouan, then embarks on a clandestine migration to Spain in search of refuge. This literary work serves as an exploration of Said's experiences within the context of his migration. The novel traces his path through Spain, the challenges that beset him, and the complexities of adapting to his new environment. Bajouki's narrative of Said is interwoven with the lives of the key characters introduced throughout the novel. It is essential to show that these relationships provide explorations of Said's personal integration, adaptation, and assimilation into the new environment and act as a crucial locus of his quest to establish a renewed sense of self amidst this journey.

The central relationship in the novel is that of Said and Isabel. This particular narrative thread emerges as a quintessential exploration of the facets that emerge from Said's confrontation with Spain and its cultural landscape. The relationship between the Moor Said and the Spanish Isabel unfolds as a singular ramification between two distinct yet interwoven narratives, where the past and present seamlessly converge. Through Said and Isabel's relationship, Bajouki captures the complexities inherent in cultural encounters as he depicts the confluence of historical legacies, personal aspirations, and the intrinsic tension that arises from confronting different worldviews. Bajouki constructs a portrayal of Said's transformation. By positioning Said within these relationships, Bajouki demonstrates the malleability of identity and the process of reshaping one's self-perception in the face of new experiences.

In fact, the novel *Eyes of Exile* acts as a paradigmatic example of Bajouki's narrative finesse and his adeptness at crafting a narrative that engages with themes of migration, identity, and cultural encounters. Through the lens of Said's journey, Bajouki orchestrates an amalgamation of interpersonal relationships, most notably the complex connection between Said and Isabel, to shed light on the dynamics of integration and adaptation.

2.1. The Moro Jaime and Isabel

The novel embarks on a remarkable journey by introducing elements of history with the threads of its narrative. This fusion is achieved through a deliberate reimagining of significant historical figures whose stories were intertwined with the tribulations of the Moors. Among these figures, the name Isabel emerges as a central thread which is connected to the historical echoes of the Moriscos' struggle. Yet, within the novel's pages, Isabel undergoes a transformation and evolves into a resolute and captivating character. Her character is crafted with an embodiment of love and femininity and is marked by a sense of serene self-assuredness. This metamorphosis amplifies her fascination, which, in turn, intertwines with her fervent passion for Said the Moor. Isabel's emotional journey becomes emblematic of the dynamics between personal empowerment and the historical weight she carries. The fusion of her narrative with the historical context emphasizes the dynamics between personal desires and the legacies of the past.

The encounters between Isabel, Said, and Fernando make the narrative more complex. Fernando's position as a shared friend acts as a point of intersection, a bridge between two individuals whose connection is hindered by history's imprints. This strategic narrative choice accentuates the dynamics between personal emotions, social boundaries, and the interconnectedness of culture. The novel's recontextualization of historical figures, particularly Isabel and Said, highlights the inherent tension between personal agency and the weight of history.

This narrative feat is effectively accomplished through the strategic allocation of an entire chapter dedicated exclusively to the comprehensive portrayal of Isabel; a character whose role holds significant narrative weight. Within this dedicated chapter, the author exercises meticulous care by sculpting an introduction that shapes readers' perceptions of Isabel in a favorable light. By selectively accentuating her qualities and attributes, the author triggers emotions of admiration and curiosity among readers, all of which establishes a compelling foundation for her character.

What distinguishes this narrative exploration is the author's orchestration of a magnetic synergy that exists between Said and Isabel. Through this, the author explores their interactions and captures their exchange of mutual fascination and an undeniable pull of attraction that reverberates symmetrically. Their mutual attraction is evident from their first meeting, conveyed through exchanged glances filled with love and allure. "From time to time, her gaze tenderly turns toward Said, carrying kindness and empathy that stir his emotions within. Said lowers his head, attempting to hide his face, avoiding her intense and potentially captivating gaze" (Bajouki, 2013, p. 23). These nonverbal exchanges act as a language of their burgeoning relationship and encapsulate their sentiments that words might fail to express. These wordless dialogues transform into potent symbols, emblematic of their emotions' evolution and the unspoken layers that gradually unfold. This narrative weaves a fabric of longing, desire, and anticipation which evokes a profound sense of the characters' internal worlds and the magnetic pull that propels their bond.

This exploration does not only encapsulate the exploration of bonds and romantic inclinations but also contributes to the discussion of cultural intersections. The intertwining of Said and Isabel's connection reflects the exploration of attraction, wherein complexities arise due to cultural, historical, and social influences. Through their relationship, the author crafts a microcosm of the novel's overarching thematic exploration and sheds light on emotions, social norms, and personal connections.

Undoubtedly, the author employs a complex approach to unveil the dynamics of Isabel and Said's relationship, weaving together threads of personal, historical, and cultural significance that intertwine to shape their connection. This exploration then focuses on the maternal figure, a harbinger of nostalgia and shared origins, whose memories of Tetouan serve as a bridge connecting Isabel and Said. Through her, one gains a great understanding of the emotional significance attached to the birthplace – a place that resonates with both characters on a deeply personal level. Isabel's maternal encouragement to nurture the bond between Isabel and Said pushes their relationship. This maternal influence carries echoes of shared memories and the potential for mutual understanding which provides fertile ground for their connection to take place.

Said's journey, one marked by processes of adoption, adaptation, and integration, reflects the experience of many immigrants living in new cultural landscapes. As his affection for Isabel blossoms, it becomes evident that she symbolizes more than just a romantic interest – she embodies universal values of compassion and empathy that transcend cultural boundaries. Said's quest to establish common ground reflects a deep-seated desire to bridge the gap between their backgrounds all of which set the floor for a relationship that transcends cultural differences and embodies shared humanity.

However, the narrative is not off its challenges, and here emerges the character of Isabel's father as a formidable barrier. He personifies both historical and cultural forces that stand as obstacles to the fruition of their relationship (Said, 1978). This aspect highlights the dynamics between personal desires and social norms. Isabel's father is a symbolic representation of the historical enmity between their cultures which acts as a reminder of the complex historical baggage that weighs upon their interactions. The tension that arises from his presence shows the stark contrast between individual aspirations and the collective cultural consciousness.

In this novel, the author weaves a profound portrayal of Isabel's mother. Through narrative techniques, the author orchestrates a symbiotic relationship between Said, Isabel's mother, and the rich cultural landscape of Morocco. Isabel's mother emerges as a central character as she becomes a bridge between the past and the present, between generations, and most importantly, between Morocco and Spain. Her stories, full of nostalgia, show her emotional and cultural connections. As she shares her experiences and memories of Tetouan, the city of her birth, with Isabel, the author plants the seeds of a shared heritage, one that spans across time and geography. These tales are not just anecdotes but rather a carefully constructed thread that stitches together the fabric of Isabel's identity.

Isabel's mother's unwavering passion for Morocco and Tetouan, expressed through her stories and occasional tears, conveys a love that transcends borders. It becomes evident that she wishes to cultivate in Isabel a profound appreciation for her cultural roots, to nurture a sense of belonging that can bridge the gap between her birthplace and her current home in Spain. This nurturing of cultural identity acts as an overarching theme in the novel. Isabel's mother acts as a connection and guides both characters towards a common space.

By showcasing Isabel's mother as a conduit of cultural heritage, the narrative becomes tangled with emotions and histories woven together. One witnesses not just the individual struggles and aspirations of the characters but also the collective memory and shared aspirations of two distinct societies. The parallel emotional attachment that Isabel's mother has for Tetouan and that Said has for his homeland creates an intriguing symmetry in the narrative. To illustrate, the following passage is crucial.

[I], Said, hold a deep affection for Moroccans, and my heart beats for Tetouan, My mother often regales me with stories of Tetouan, and sometimes her tears fall as she recalls her youth in the city. He asked her, his tone infused with surprise: "Did your mother live in Tetouan?" he inquired, to which she responded with enthusiasm: "No, the truth is that she was born in Tetouan and lived there until the age of twenty, because my grandfather was a military man and was in charge of the medical analysis department at the military hospital," she answered. Isabel's response brought Said back to Tetouan and its atmosphere, its cafes, and its breezy air. Isabel, noticed Said's stray,

and asked. "Do you know the military hospital in Tetouan? Perhaps it has a different name now?". Said responded, "Yes, sure; I know it. It still carries the same name, and it's located in a neighborhood that still bears a Spanish name, Bario Malaga. The memories of the Spanish still linger in that neighborhood, and its residents share nostalgically stories about the Spaniards." (Bajouki, 2013, pp. 29-30)

In the provided passage, the author tackles the idea of forging affiliations and constructing identities through the medium of telling stories. This narrative exploration is shown by Isabel's remarkable ability to exhibit a deep and genuine affection for Morocco and its people, despite never having set foot in the country. Within this context, the author shows the compelling influence of storytelling as a conduit for cultural transmission and affiliation which shows how personal narratives can evoke a profound sense of connection even across geographical and temporal distances.

Isabel's declaration of her love for Morocco and Moroccans represents the impact of storytelling. Through the enchanting narratives shared by her mother, Isabel establishes a rich emotional bond with a land she has never personally experienced or been to. This dynamic shows the captivating ability of stories to transcend physical boundaries and transcend time itself. This allows Isabel to forge a deep-seated connection with culture and place she might never encounter directly.

The author emphasizes the idea that storytelling can weave significant themes of affiliations that enable individuals to feel a part of a world that extends far beyond their immediate surroundings. Isabel's affection for Morocco, nurtured solely through the words of her mother, illustrates how narratives can impart values, evoke empathy, and kindle a sense of belonging (Anderson, 1991). By painting mental images of Tetouan's streets, ambiance, and people, Isabel's mother's stories breathe life into a distant world and enable Isabel to envision it and feel attached to it on an emotional level. By exposing Isabel to the makeup of Moroccan life and Tetouan's features, the narratives mold her identity. Her mother's stories allow her to authentically engage with a heritage that would otherwise be alien to her.

Moreover, within the passage, the author employs a significant narrative to show the shared origins of both Said and Isabel's mother in Tetouan. This deliberate emphasis on their common birthplace and upbringing acts as a crucial element and anchors their connection. Through these subtle details, the author constructs a narrative framework that extends beyond the characters themselves to symbolize a connection between Morocco and Spain.

The fact that both Said and Isabel's mother hail from Tetouan carries profound implications. It creates a link between their stories and aligns their trajectories within a shared historical and geographical context. This commonality, which will be referred to as conviviality (Gilroy, 2004), becomes more than a mere coincidence; it evolves into a symbolic representation of their intertwined fates and the potential for connections that transcend conventional boundaries.

Isabel's mother's upbringing in Tetouan, living there until the age of twenty, and Said's arrival in Spain at the age of twenty-three form a thread that highlights the notion of shared journeys. This parallel timing illustrates their synchronicity and the commonality of their connections, all of which emphasize that their paths intersect despite the physical distance that eventually separates them. The narrative subtly conveys that while they might have embarked on different paths, their origins are remarkably akin. This establishes a foundation for commonality that

resonates with these characters. The author's intention to forge common grounds and spaces between Said and Isabel, as well as between the contexts of Morocco and Spain, is unmistakably evident. This thematic exploration goes beyond the characters' interactions; it symbolizes a larger endeavor to find points of convergence and unity amidst historical and cultural divergence.

Lastly, the passage sheds light on the intriguing dynamics of the Spanish presence in Tetouan. Despite the backdrop of Spanish colonialism in Morocco, the author adroitly maneuvers the narrative to portray a romanticized perspective of the Spanish influence in this Moroccan city. In this, Isabel's grandfather comes out as a significant character, a figure that embodies an alternative representation of the Spanish presence in Tetouan. Instead of depicting him as a military figure wielding authority through force, the author chooses to cast him as a doctor who served in a military hospital. This deliberate choice imbues his character with a noble purpose, one that extends beyond the realm of conquest and into the realm of healing. By emphasizing his role as a healer, the narrative challenges preconceived notions of colonial dominance and redirects attention to the contributions that transcend political and military agendas.

The account of the people of Tetouan, especially those residing in the vicinity of the Spanish hospital, and their preservation of positive stories about the Spanish presence carries an undertone of nostalgia all of which reveals a sentiment that might have arisen from meaningful interactions and shared experiences. These stories recounted with a touch of longing, emphasize the existence of a harmonious coexistence between the Spanish and the local community, an aspect that often gets overshadowed in conventional colonial narratives.

The preservation of the Spanish hospital within the same neighborhood, still bearing its original Spanish name, explores the historical dimension in the narrative. This deliberate act of preservation echoes a certain sentiment of cultural continuity and echoes the spirit of Andalusia's historical legacy. The parallel drawn between the modern preservation efforts and the historical practices of preserving cultural and architectural features during the Muslim rule in Spain offers an intriguing perspective. This acts as a reminder that cultural interactions can yield outcomes that go beyond dominance which result in a harmonious coalescence of diverse influences.

The author's crafting of the Spanish presence in Tetouan is, then, a narrative strategy that seeks to transcend conventional colonial narratives. By imbuing characters and settings with complexities that challenge such stereotypes, the author does not only deepen the characters' connections but also illustrates the potential for shared histories that defy the boundaries of nationality and culture. The portrayal of Isabel's grandfather as a healing figure, the perpetuation of positive stories, and the preservation of the Spanish hospital all contribute to a textured depiction of cultural exchange that echoes the ideals of coexistence and mutual respect; hence, conviviality.

As the story continues, it goes into a crucial conversation between Isabel and Said, a conversation that holds great importance. During this talk, Isabel shares a deep insight with Said that connects their emotions. She explains how both he and her mother share something profound - a sense of longing for Tetouan, a place that holds special memories for both. Isabel emphasizes that her mother's words, full of encouragement and understanding, played a vital role in bringing her closer to Said.

Isabel goes on to reveal that her mother sees Said as a representation of their shared homeland. It's as if Said embodies the essence of the place they both hold dear, a place filled with memories and emotions. This realization shows a strong bond between Said and Isabel's mother, as well as the rich cultural ties that intertwine Moroccan and Spanish heritage. The author emphasizes how these two cultures can coexist and find common ground which reflects the spirit of Andalusia, a time when both cultures thrived together. Through her words, a bridge is built between Said and Isabel and brings them closer emotionally and culturally. The theme of shared nostalgia becomes a bridge that connects two hearts across their differences. To illustrate, the following passage is crucial.

[S]aid started telling Isabel about Tetouan and "Barrio Malaga," also about "Aviación," which is now the area of the airport. He talked about "Pabillones," a special place where the elite Spanish lived during a time of protection. He continued sharing stories, his voice filled with nostalgia, until Isabel interrupted him and said: "Said, the features of your face and the radiance emanating from your eyes remind me of my mother when she embarks on narrating the story of her life in Tetouan. The remark drew Said's attention, and the comparison between his nostalgia and Isabel's mother's nostalgia stirred him. In moments, he pondered within himself: "How can one equate my longing for my homeland with the longing of a colonizer's daughter?" He couldn't hold back and cautiously asked Isabel: "But my dear, don't you think that your mother is not Moroccan, and her longing for Spain is stronger, while my situation is the opposite? Isabel looked at him, examining his features, and responded with a hint of annoyance and seriousness: "This is what my father used to say to my mother in moments of her sadness and yearning for Tetouan. But she would answer him firmly and sometimes reply tearfully." "You do not understand what home means, you mistakenly believe it flows solely through veins and blood, tied to a name, a language, and heritage. You're mistaken in your definition of homeland and in your understanding of belonging. You will never truly grasp it. Homeland is about feelings and a land that welcomes you into this world. It's a breeze, a fragrance, the scents of perfumes, herbs, and mint. Homeland is unbeatable and impervious to the onslaught of colonization's armies. It's eternal, continuous, and its love knows no bounds. It doesn't end within geographical borders, nor even within the confines of life itself..." She continued, as if battling back tears: "Do you know, Said, that her words have encouraged me to visit you after I told her about our meeting last night? She wishes to see you and get to know you," she continued: "Do you know, Said, that my mother calls you 'Paisano,' meaning a son of her homeland?" (Bajouki, 2013, p. 30)

The passage provided tackles three ideas. Firstly, it draws attention to the parallelism in the emotions of nostalgia experienced by both Said and Isabel's mother. This resemblance is highlighted through Isabel's observation that the same radiant emotion she perceives in her mother's expressions when reminiscing about her life in Tetouan is mirrored in Said's eyes. By creating this psychological connection, the author intentionally constructs a shared mental realm that reinforces the mutual yearning for their homeland all of which fosters a profound bond between Said and Isabel's mother.

Moving on, the passage highlights how Isabel's mother, channeled through Isabel's words, reflects Said's notion of 'home'. This insight presents Said with this comprehensive understanding of 'home,' which obliterates the typical boundaries that restrict its interpretation.

Consequently, his understanding of 'home' becomes dynamic and all-encompassing geographical barriers. This transformation alters the way Said perceives his place of belonging. This interaction highly impacted his perspective of home.

Lastly, the passage brings into focus the role played by Isabel's mother in nurturing the connection between Isabel and Said which brought them within a shared space of conviviality. Through her influence, their relationship evolves, overcoming any disparities and culminating in a harmonious coexistence. This idea of conviviality signifies not just mere cohabitation, but a deeply intertwined, collaborative existence, all of which suggest that the bond between Said and Isabel is fostered by a force beyond their individual selves. Isabel's mother acts as a motive that brings them together in a space that embodies commonality echoing the spirit of Andalusia.

Examining the dynamics between Isabel's mother, Said, and the reemergence of cultural influences, this fascinating convergence of emotions and social forces comes to light. Isabel's mother, who is driven by her compassionate attitude and the shared connection with Said through their hometown, takes a supportive stance towards the blossoming romance between Said and Isabel. Her encouragement reflects a deep understanding of the significance of their shared roots, and she champions their relationship as a meaningful bond forged from their common heritage.

However, the story takes an intriguing turn when the force of culture intervenes. Culture, with its web of traditions, values, and expectations, possesses a powerful ability to shape perceptions and rekindle distinctions. Despite the shared nostalgia and emotional closeness between Said and Isabel's mother, cultural factors act as a reminder of the differences that exist which create tensions between their personal feelings and the larger social context.

This tension becomes evident with the introduction of Isabel's father. His appearance carries symbolic weight which is presented as a paternal figure as well as the embodiment of tradition and cultural norms. His role in the story acts to reintroduce a sense of order and perhaps a certain level of conservatism. In this, he underlines the social norms and traditional boundaries that Said and Isabel's relationship might not exceed. He emerges not merely as a character, but as a symbol of entrenched tradition and implicit influence. In his very presence, he embodies a sentinel of unwavering values and guards against the emergence of an alternate history that could intertwine Said, a representative of the Moor heritage, with Isabel, a bearer of Catholic identity. The metaphorical weight of his stance rests as an insurmountable fortress against any potential fusion that threatens the established norms.

The confluence of characters and their interactions sets the stage for an exploration of cultural dynamics. Within this, the figures of Isabel, her mother, her father, and Said become motives that ignite a thought-provoking compilation of definitions. Each identity they embody is woven with dynamics that reach beyond personal attributes. Isabel's Catholicism and Said's Moor heritage symbolize individual backgrounds and carry the weight of collective histories all of which evokes an evident tension between cultures that have often stood at odds throughout history. As Isabel's father takes his place as a steadfast sentinel, his resistance to any revision of the narrative represents the entrenched norms of social norms which preserve the distinct boundaries that have historically defined these cultural spheres. To illustrate, the following passage is crucial.

[L]ook, Said, my father warned me before that our cultural, religious, and upbringing differences would turn our shared life into a hell. I realized this during the year we spent together. Maybe my mother sees things differently, as she was born in your homeland and lived there for a long period. This might be why she has ongoing problems and conflicts with my father. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 99)

The provided passage carries significant weight and weaves together three significant ideas that collectively shape the narrative's intention. Firstly, a striking assertion emerges from Isabel's father which echoes with a sense of unyielding conviction. His stance firmly emphasizes the impracticality of a relationship between Isabel and Said, all of which is rooted in the undeniable divergence of their cultural, religious, and upbringing backgrounds. This element of impossibility becomes a central pillar of tension. He resolutely opposes their union and forewarns Isabel of the tumultuous consequences that could await her if she proceeds. The notion of incompatibility propelled by these differences tackles a broader social struggle that transcends the characters' individual experiences. This contention becomes a reflection of social norms, all of which explore the boundaries that culture and religion can impose on personal choices.

Secondly, Isabel's internal conflict comes to the forefront as she is torn in her father's resolute stance. His admonitions penetrate her thoughts which raise doubts about the viability of her relationship with Said. Swayed by her father's warnings, she confronts the arduous decision to cut ties with Said.

Lastly, the tug-of-war between Isabel's parents echoes a broader dynamic in the narrative. Isabel's mother emerges as a counterbalance to her husband's staunch opposition. Her relentless efforts to unite Isabel and Said represent a yearning for shared experiences, history, and connections that span beyond the barriers of culture and religion. Her role highlights the potential for relationships to bridge divides and evoke shared spaces that transcend the boundaries set by society.

For Said, the relationship he shares with Isabel embodies a profound turning point in his life. In Isabel, he finds not just a lover, but a gateway to an expansive realm that defies the limitations imposed by nationhood and the boundaries of home defined by physical borders. She becomes the embodiment of a door that leads to a world unconfined by the territorial constraints that shape one's perceptions.

Isabel's significance in Said's life goes beyond the personal and extends to a broader philosophical perspective. Through his connection with her, Said adopts a panoramic worldview, one that stretches far beyond the geographical lines etched on maps. This expansive lens opens his eyes to the boundless potential for connections that transcend the limitations that often segregate people based on their origins.

Said's gradual embrace of a philosophy of coexistence, or conviviality (Vertovec, 2007) is very significant in his evolving self. The concept encapsulates the spirit of harmonious living and collaboration between individuals of diverse backgrounds. Through Isabel, Said comes to embody this idea in a tangible manner, as their relationship becomes a living testament to the possibility of a shared existence that is not hindered by nationalistic boundaries or the traditional confines of home.

Said's perspective undergoes a metamorphosis and shifts from a more localized understanding of identity to a panoramic one that celebrates Andalusia as an idea, not as a physical space. Isabel acts as a motive that introduces him to a reality that goes beyond the confines of land and heritage, into a space where the shared values, emotions, and experiences become the ties that bind individuals together. To illustrate, the following passage is crucial.

[S]aid gathered his strength and pretended to be confident. He spoke quietly, unlike usual, while trying to explain to Isabel that he didn't believe in her excuses regarding cultural and religious differences. He told her that since he met her, he no longer knew himself, not even where he is from nor in what language he dreams. He reminded her of her mother, born in Tetouan, and he shares with her mother her definition of affiliation and home. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 100)

In the above passage, the author employs a deliberate approach to unveil Said's perception of Isabel. Beyond seeing her merely as an individual, Said acknowledges her as a profound embodiment of Spanish culture and heritage. His refusal to accept Isabel's given reasons for their impending breakup serves as a significant revelation. Said's skepticism toward these justifications unveils a deep-rooted understanding and a fluidity of perspective. He fosters a common ground, a realm where their relationship can thrive, independent of the superficial boundaries imposed by their cultural differences.

Said's stance is indicative of his profound capacity for inclusivity and shared experience. By rejecting Isabel's rationale, he exemplifies his willingness to explore a more comprehensive and dynamic approach to their relationship. This outlook extends far beyond the limitations that cultural disparities might impose. Said's refusal to accept the status quo reflects his desire for a deeper connection, where their individuality finds resonance within a broader space of coexistence.

As of great significance, said states that Isabel influenced his worldview and rendered it a state of constant flux. In this revelation, Said embraces a dynamic understanding of identity and belonging. His admission that he no longer identifies himself by his place of origin or the language he dreams of signifies his journey and how it shaped him and changed him. This statement encapsulates the third space, where individual identities intersect and fuse, transcending singular affiliations (Bhabha, 1990). Said's evolution reflects a willingness to occupy this third space, where the borders of belonging fade.

Another noteworthy facet of the passage is Said's revised understanding of both home and belonging, which he shares with Isabel's mother. He perceives her as a daughter of his homeland as she reciprocally does. This sense of shared belonging affirms a collective experience that transcends geographical borders between these characters. This shared vision affirms the interconnectedness of this experience, regardless the origins, and highlights the ability of such relationships to shape perspectives and redefine cultural boundaries. Therefore, for said, Isabel represents a gateway to explore and navigate these cultural variations and differences, adopt new attitudes, behaviors, and ideas as he is exposed to different cultures that coexist within the world of Diaspora.

2.2. The Moro Jaime in Diaspora

As a diasporic author, Bajouki weaves themes that are inherently associated with this complex experience. The crux of this web lies in the negotiations of identities—those that undergo a perpetual state of flux, adaptation, and negotiation as they traverse new cultural landscapes.

From the outset of the novel, Said's journey within the Spanish diaspora becomes a compelling microcosm of these themes. With each step, he is confronted with the challenge of molding his self-concept and starts to negotiate the terrains of both personal and cultural identity. This negotiation occurs within a realm that necessitates a constant process of negotiation—a negotiation that involves elements of adoption, adaptation, and transformation.

The significance of this diasporic journey lies in the manner in which Said embraces or assimilates key markers of his evolving identity. The very first instance, marked by the granting of a new name by the Spanish, becomes emblematic of this transformation. This name, which carries implications far beyond the surface, is symbolic of Said's shift within the diaspora. The change of name signifies the metamorphosis of identity, often underpinned by external forces, cultural encounters, and the negotiation of unfamiliar spaces.

Furthermore, Said's adaptation of these new markers and identifiers represents the dynamics of individual and cultural dimensions. His experience parallels the broader diasporic narrative, where individuals are compelled to redefine themselves in relation to the foreign, they inhabit. This negotiation extends beyond mere linguistic or cultural shifts; it encompasses the very essence of identity and encapsulates beliefs, values, and self-perception. To illustrate this point, the following passage is significant.

[O]nce again, there was a strong knock on the door, and the voice of Abuela Maria, Grandma Maria, the owner of the boarding house, called out to Said: "Jaime, Jaime," a name that Said was becoming more familiar with as he heard it from his Spanish friends and acquaintances. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 16)

In the passage above, three main ideas that intertwine to describe Said's journey within the new cultural terrain of Spain are uncovered. Firstly, the Spanish friends' use of an alternate name, Jaime, embodies a significant shift in Said's identity formation. This new name does not align with his Moroccan heritage which highlights the divergence between his native culture and the one he is now experiencing. This renaming practice illustrates the tension between his original identity and the emerging persona he's becoming.

Said's response to this new name forms the second noteworthy theme. Instead of resisting or rejecting the name Jaime, he gradually becomes accustomed to it, responding naturally when called by it. This shows his willingness to immerse himself fully within his new surroundings. His fluid (Hall, 1990) adaptation to the name showcases a readiness to accept change and highlights his preparedness to engage in the cultural dynamics of his adopted home. This flexibility illustrates his desire to integrate seamlessly into Spanish society, even if it means transcending the confines of his original identity.

The third key element is encapsulated in the phrase Abuela Maria, or Grandma Maria. This term encapsulates Said's integration into the social fabric of his new environment. He doesn't merely adapt to the Spanish culture superficially; he forms deep emotional bonds that illustrate his genuine connection with those around him. The use of Abuela Maria implies a sense of warmth and acceptance. Said's ability to connect with Grandma Maria signifies his successful

immersion within the community, all of which suggest a level of integration beyond mere language or surface-level interactions.

Moreover, the mention of Spanish friends and acquaintances symbolizes Said's capacity to transcend boundaries and establish meaningful relationships within Spanish society. This extends beyond isolating himself within a specific ethnic or cultural enclave. Instead, he demonstrates an openness to engage with individuals from diverse backgrounds. This social network reflects his efforts to weave his narrative into the dynamic of Spanish culture and foster connections that challenge stereotypes. Collectively, these intertwined themes show Said's transformation within the Spanish diaspora. His evolving identity journey, from the acceptance of a new name to the seamless integration into the community, represents a narrative of adaptability, cultural engagement, and meaningful cultural connection.

As the narrative unfolds and the storyline progresses, the author shifts focus to Said's evolving behavior and its implications. The first significant glimpse into Said's cultural dissonance occurs during his initial encounter with Isabel, an interaction that is facilitated by Fernando. Isabel's customary approach to greeting him with a kiss renders Said shy and visibly bewildered, his cheeks flushing red with discomfort. This moment highlights Said's unfamiliarity with this mode of greeting, particularly between individuals of opposite genders. His reaction originates from the contrast between Spanish customs and the norms of his Moroccan conservative society, where such interactions are not only unconventional but deemed somewhat impermissible.

This initial instance of cultural collision serves as a compelling entry point into Said's journey. The divergence between his native customs and the newfound practices he encounters in Spain becomes emblematic of his adaptation to a foreign milieu. Said's discomfort shows his deep-seated adherence to the norms of his home culture, where interactions between men and women are carefully regulated to uphold traditional values. His blush signifies a complex emotional response—an intertwining of embarrassment and unfamiliarity.

However, as the narrative progresses, Said's evolution becomes more pronounced. His transformation represents the malleability of his experience which highlights the profound impact of exposure and immersion in a new cultural environment. The adoption of Spanish ways of life which range from greetings to culinary preferences, marks a shift in Said's identity. This adaptation demonstrates his capacity to negotiate multiple cultural milieus and to embrace the fluidity that accompanies diasporic experiences (Clifford, 1994).

Said's progression toward embracing Spanish customs encapsulates the arc of his assimilation. The gradual erosion of initial discomfort shows his growing familiarity with a world that once felt foreign. His journey exemplifies his inherent ability to evolve and transcend cultural barriers, and to forge connections that go beyond social boundaries. To illustrate, the following passage is crucial.

"[K]iss, kiss, kiss..." The two lovers stood up, and Said held his girlfriend around her waist. They indulged in a warm kiss while everyone in the café, including some customers, was cheering and clapping. Meanwhile, the waiter placed a birthday cake on the table with a candle shaped like the number 23, representing Said's age. He blew it out to the rhythm of the song: "Happy birthday, Said," which everyone repeated in Spanish, French, and English. Said and his Iraqi friend Khalid also repeated it in Arabic.

Isabel looked at him, mesmerized, her eyes shining with a mix of longing, desire, love, admiration, and a lot of affection. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 53)

The passage captures Said's profound transformation as he assimilates Spanish ways of life. This reflects his immersion into a new cultural milieu, that of a Spanish one. This evolution is best exemplified through a significant event that unfolds in a public setting—a café filled with friends and customers—where Said's behavior is of central significance. This transformation exemplifies a compelling embodiment of the dynamic journey experienced by many within the diasporic context.

At this juncture, Said's actions reveal a complete departure from his earlier stance. He now embraces his role in a public space with newfound ease and engages in a behavior that aligns with Western cultural norms. The act of spontaneously kissing his lover Isabel in front of the assembled crowd is met without hesitation by him. This contrasts his earlier struggles upon arriving in Spain when even simple greetings held a sense of discomfort for him. This shift highlights his willingness to adapt and challenge his preconceived notions.

Said's journey becomes even more profound when viewed through the lens of the private/public dynamic. What was once deemed impermissible in his native Morocco, particularly within the public sphere, has now evolved into a celebrated and even cherished act within this multicultural Spanish setting. This shift questions cultural norms and social contexts, and how Said's assimilation has led to a re-evaluation of these dynamics.

The passage accentuates how Said has immersed himself in new identity features. The convergence of different languages—Spanish, French, and English—melding together to celebrate his birthday emphasizes the mosaic of influences that shape his new reality. This linguistic amalgamation reflects the diverse society he now inhabits, where different cultural backgrounds intertwine to form a complex texture.

The inclusion of Said and his friend Khalid's repetition of the birthday greeting in Arabic is equally significant. This addition creates an atmosphere of hybridity which highlights the liminal space that Said occupies. Thus, this hybridity reminds one of the nature of his experience; it showcases his capacity to bridge different cultures and embrace both the values of his heritage and the aspects of his adopted society.

Amid this dynamic atmosphere, the author crafts the stage for Said's very first birthday celebration in his twenty-three years of life. This seemingly ordinary event takes on profound significance as it symbolizes Said's transformation from his Moroccan roots to a newfound embrace of Spanish cultural norms. Said's unfamiliarity with the concept of celebrating his birthday is a marker of his cultural journey. Back in Morocco, birthdays might not have held the same social or personal significance as they do in Spain. This unfamiliarity highlights the depth of Said's immersion within his new cultural texture, as he adopts practices that once lay beyond his horizons. His willingness to participate in this celebration reveals an openness to engage with a foreign concept and weave it into his evolving identity.

As Said embraces this new tradition, it becomes a tangible representation of his evolving relationship with Spain—a place that has granted him not just a new environment, but a mosaic of customs and practices that enrich his journey. The act of celebrating his birthday, something previously foreign to him, symbolizes his readiness to absorb and adapt to the culture that now

surrounds him. This experience of celebration signifies his integration into the social context, one that extends beyond his personal journey to resonate within the larger Spanish community.

Furthermore, Said's transformation from someone unfamiliar with birthday celebrations to a participant who basks in the warmth of the moment encapsulates the features of the diasporic experience. His journey is marked by the relinquishing of the familiar, as he navigates unfamiliar traditions and customs with a willingness to learn and embrace. For more illustration, the following passage is important.

[I]sabel brought a box containing a cake her mother had made and whispered in Said's ear, "My mother made it specially for your birthday." Said felt a surge of joy and inhaled deeply, catching the scent of his lover and the warmth of her breath, causing his lips to tingle as if he were savoring remnants of honey nectar. Then he whispered in his lover's ear, saying, "Do you know, my dear? This is the first time I've celebrated my birthday." He continued, "Simply because in my homeland, we, the poor, aren't accustomed to such celebrations." Isabel looked at him tenderly and replied, "My love, it's your first birthday in your new life. We'll celebrate all your future birthdays, even beyond a hundred." [...] Moments later, the tavern echoed with a song Isabel had specifically requested for Said. She knew he was captivated by it and would sing it whenever he was happy and elated. The song was "Mirala, mirala, la puerta de Alcala," by the duo Lola y Manuel. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 52)

The passage brings to the forefront a makeup of significant aspects that interweave the narrative with threads of cultural integration, emotional connections, and newfound experiences. Isabel's deliberate act of presenting a cake, crafted by her mother, holds a profound symbolism. Beyond being a mere gift for a birthday celebration, this cake acts as an expression of Said's entry into a new phase of life. In this gesture, the boundaries between cultures and identities blur, and Said becomes an active participant in a celebration that is characteristic of his new home. The cake, prepared with care by Isabel's mother, does not only embody the sweetness of the occasion but also the warmth of acceptance and inclusion that Said is gradually experiencing in his adopted community. This act of generosity resonates beyond the cake itself; it signifies Said's deepening integration and the establishment of emotional bonds that extend beyond superficial boundaries.

The bridge between Isabel and Said is further fortified through her mother's contribution. The act of preparing a cake tailored to Said's celebration exemplifies the emotional investment that Isabel's family has made in his journey. This gesture represents an embodiment of conviviality, a shared space where differences are overlooked through shared experiences and genuine connections.

The passage extends its embrace to encompass the relationship between Said, the Moro Jaime, and Isabel, the Catholic. This pairing does not only defy conventional expectations but also negotiates a realm where cultural and religious boundaries are transcended. Through their union, the passage showcases an example of liminality—where conventional categories blur and a space of harmony and coexistence is forged which then allows their relationship to flourish beyond the confines of prescribed identities.

The emergence of music and Spanish songs within the scene encapsulates Said's gradual familiarity with his new surroundings. However, what is particularly significant is the way

music becomes a vessel for his emotions. The songs do not merely play in the background; they reflect the cadence of Said's heart. The resonance between his happiness and the Spanish tunes captures his deepening affinity for the cultural fabric surrounding him. This merging of music with emotional experience represents the impact of cultural immersion and a journey that transcends the surface and embeds itself within the core of one's being.

Bajouki reveals the dimensions of Said's adoption, with a focus on his culinary experiences. As Said journeys into the depths of Spanish culture, the culinary makeup becomes an essential thread of his exploration. The Spanish cuisine, at first foreign and unfamiliar, gradually transforms into a realm of comfort and enjoyment for him. Through taste, texture, and aroma, Said embraces the flavors of his adopted home. What is truly remarkable is Said's unflinching acceptance of Spanish dishes, even when they conflict with the dietary norms of his Moroccan-Islamic upbringing.

This willingness to engage with Spanish cuisine shows Said's capacity for cultural immersion. His open embrace of the unfamiliar demonstrates a remarkable ability to transcend the restrictive confines of his original homeland's conservatism. Said's journey isn't just about culinary exploration; it's a metaphor for his engagement with Spanish society and its values. In savoring Spanish food, he symbolically partakes in a larger process of embracing the dynamics of a new cultural identity.

The scene involving Said's consumption of Spanish food marks a moment in his integration. It represents his transition from being an observer to a participant in Spanish society. Said's culinary ventures signify his willingness to challenge preconceived notions and to fully embrace the cultural environment he finds himself in. Bajouki's portrayal of Said's interaction with food acts as a microcosm of his journey of adoption and assimilation in which Said is shown to blur the lines of his origin and his newly adopted features. Through cuisine, the author sheds light on the depth of Said's shift and shows a transformation that goes beyond mere consumption, all of which encapsulates a profound shift in his perspective and identity to illustrate, the following passage holds significance.

[T]he waiter, Javier, approached and placed some appetizers, jokingly asking, "Jaime, would you like some Jamon?" "Yes, and if it's young and tasty, even better." Said replied. Khalid laughed and commented, "Not all Moors are Muslims, bringing us Jamon (dried pork meat) and Jamona, along with their descendants. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 49)

From the outset of the novel, the author opens a window into Said's ideological foundations rooted in Morocco while a student and activist in Mohamed the 5th university. In emphasizing Said's Marxist communist viewpoints early on, the narrative sets the floor for an exploration of his beliefs and identity. Throughout the novel, an intriguing absence emerges: Said does not exhibit any discernible actions that overtly signal his Muslim religious identity. This apparent omission raises questions about Said's ideological leanings and their potential intersections with his personal faith.

The portrayal of Said's Marxist communist views juxtaposed with his lack of overt religious engagement creates a complex dynamic. This juxtaposition could suggest that he aligns with the revolutionary facets of Marxism that often challenge religious establishments, including Islam. However, the subsequent revelation that Said enjoys dry pork meat embodies this

complexity. This culinary choice signifies an aspect of his adaptation and engagement within his new cultural context, all of which reveal a facet that cannot be neatly attributed to his ideological beliefs alone.

The act of consuming pork, which holds no place in the diverse makeup of Moroccan cuisine due to religious dietary constraints becomes a significant symbol. Said's evident pleasure in dry pork meat, and his ability to distinguish between variations such as Jamon and Jamona, points to a more profound integration into the Spanish culture. This integration surpasses superficial markers and digs into the realm of preferences, all of which reveal his affinity for the culinary offerings of his adopted home.

Said's initial experiences in Spain were marked by a sense of confusion and shyness as he encountered numerous unfamiliar aspects of daily life. These feelings were particularly evident in his interactions with cultural practices and social norms that contrasted with those of his Moroccan upbringing. However, what is truly remarkable is the seamless transition that Said undergoes in adapting to his new environment over time. As the narrative unfolds, it becomes evident that Said's immersion in Spanish society goes far beyond mere surface-level interactions; he fully embraces and embodies the features of Spanish culture.

One striking aspect of Said's transformation lies in his evolving relationship with alcohol. In his early days in Spain, he relatively regarded some unfamiliar norms with a mixture of curiosity and perhaps a hint of apprehension. These beverages were emblematic of the new culture he was immersing himself in, and their role in social gatherings and celebrations somehow initially felt unfamiliar to him. However, as time progresses, a profound shift occurs. Said's occasional engagement with alcohol shifts into a habitual practice that reflects the patterns of the Spanish locals around him.

The transformation is not just about the beverages themselves; it's emblematic of Said's larger embrace of the Spanish way of life. The choice to partake in the daily consumption of alcohol signifies an intimate integration into the rhythm of Spanish society. It signals that Said is no longer a mere observer or passive participant; he has become an active agent in shaping his own experiences within the diaspora. This transition shows his adaptability and willingness to learn, unlearn, and relearn as he navigates a new cultural milieu.

In this journey of immersion, Said's interactions with alcohol act as a metaphor for his broader integration into the Spanish way of living. This evolution reveals his capacity to navigate the external aspects of culture, such as language, customs, celebrations and the internal dynamics that inform everyday behaviors. It's not just about the drinks he consumes; it's about the sense of camaraderie and belonging he fosters as he partakes in activities that are intrinsic to the fabric of Spanish life.

Said orders usually “two beers” (Bajouki, 2013, p. 25) when he is accompanied by Fernando or “three beers” (Bajouki, 2013, p. 24) when Isabel joins. However, this idea becomes very significant when he chooses to drink wine and celebrate some significant events in places outside of the Spanish scope. To illustrate, the following passage is crucial.

[T]he end of the autumn season coincided with Said's birthday, so Isabel suggested to him that they go out with Fernando, Khalid, and the rest of the group to celebrate the

occasion. Said chose a German pub in the nearby Carmen Square (Plaza del Carmen), close to the Opera Palace (Placio de la Opera) in Madrid. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 52)

The passage shows some of the features of Said's journey into his adopted cultural landscape, woven with the threads of Spanish norms and his identity. It serves as a tangible feature that captures his transformation. This narrative transcends the mere chronicle of his birthday celebration. The profundity of Said's assimilation into the normative rhythms of Spanish life becomes evident. Within this moment of celebration, a mosaic of connections takes shape which embody the relationships he has crafted with friends from the Spanish side of his life.

The gathering of Spanish friends to commemorate Said's birthday represents his deep-rooted connections and the meshing of his worlds. Yet, it's Said's active role as the architect of this celebration that is significant. His discerning selection of the ideal locale highlights his awareness of his environment and his growing agency in shaping his experiences. This action echoes his integration into the dynamics of Spanish life and signifies his transition from a passive observer to an engaged participant in his adopted community.

Beyond his role as a convener, Said's choice of celebration venue is a tangled assertion of his evolving identity. By deliberately opting for a German pub in the bustling Plaza del Carmen, a space neither confined to Spanish norms nor tethered to Moroccan or Arab traditions, Said crafts a narrative within the narrative. His choice becomes a reflection of his endeavor to construct a third space, a liminal one that defies conventional categorizations (Bhabha, 1990). This conscious selection transcends the physical and becomes symbolic of his aspiration to fuse his diverse roots into a harmonious identity.

In this choice, the author perhaps seems to craft an exploration of Said's identity and push it beyond the confines of nationality or culture. Said's birthday celebration becomes a tool through which he expresses the conscious and thoughtful amalgamation (Bhabha, 1990) of his Moroccan origins with his newfound Spanish reality. The selection of a German pub becomes a representation of his identity in flux.

2.3. The Moro Jaime and Home

The convergence of perspectives between Moro Jaime Said and Isabel's mother on the concept of home represents a profound exploration into the intangible essence of belonging that transcends geographical boundaries. Their shared understanding dives deep into the dynamics of what constitutes a home, one that extends beyond mere physical spaces and territorial confines. This viewpoint demonstrates a shift from a conventional notion of home tied to a specific place to a more expansive and ethereal concept rooted in emotions, spirituality, and faith.

For both Said and Isabel's mother, home becomes an abstraction, an embodiment of sentiments that traverse time and space. It's a sanctuary immune to external forces or the machinations of conquerors. This shared perspective highlights their lived experiences and the realities they've encountered. The idea that home is not constrained by walls or borders embodies some notions of diaspora, where traditional notions of belonging are often disrupted and reshaped.

Their perspective offers a powerful critique of conventional definitions of home, which can often be bound by materialism or nationalism. By shifting the focus to the experiential aspect where emotions, faith, and spirituality intertwine, their understanding then echoes the experiences of individuals in the diaspora who seek to negotiate their identities across cultures

and lands. The similarity between Said's and Isabel's mother's views highlights the conviviality as the spirit of Andalusia. It emphasizes that the longing for home isn't limited to specific backgrounds or contexts, but it's a sentiment that can be deeply shared across divergent circumstances. To illustrate this, the following passage is crucial.

You do not understand what home means, You mistakenly believe it flows solely through veins and blood, tied to a name, a language, and heritage. You're mistaken in your definition of homeland and in your understanding of belonging. You will never truly grasp it. Homeland is about feelings and a land that welcomes you into this world. It's a breeze, a fragrance, the scents of perfumes, herbs, and mint. Homeland is unbeatable and impervious to the onslaught of colonization's armies. It's eternal, continuous, and its love knows no bounds. It doesn't end within geographical borders, nor even within the confines of life itself... (Bajouki, 2013, p. 30)

In the above passage, the author employs the lens of Isabel's mother to present a refreshingly comprehensive and fluid interpretation of the concept of home. Through her perspective, the narrative expands to encompass the boundless dimensions of what constitutes a true sense of belonging. This inclusive and profound definition contrasts with the more conventional and materialistic understandings that often restrict home to physical spaces.

Isabel's mother's outlook offers a commentary on the way individuals commonly construe home. She acknowledges that many people tend to equate home with bricks and mortar, confined by geographical borders and delineated by walls. However, her perspective diverges significantly and reveals a home that transcends the limitations of the physical realm. Her vision of home manifests as an embodiment of openness, fluidity, and acceptance.

The notion of inclusivity is central to her definition of home. Rather than drawing boundaries, her notion of home acts as a welcoming space that embraces a diversity of individuals from varied backgrounds. It's a vision that is similar to the fluidity of diaspora which challenges the conventional norms of what constitutes belonging. This expansive vision portrays home as a refuge where cultural, religious, and geographical distinctions dissolve, and conviviality emerges from shared experiences and emotions.

The metaphors she employs to describe home, breeze, fragrance, and scents of perfumes exemplify this borderless world she envisions. These images emphasize the intangibility of home, where the core of belonging isn't confined to geographical coordinates but is rather disseminated across the vast expanse of individual experience. Home becomes an experience that transcends the physical and permeates the senses, a space where identities blend and cultural diversity interweaves. The significance of this portrayal is its affirmation of the unstoppable nature of belonging. Isabel's mother's perspective reframes the perception of home and highlights its boundless reach, unconfined by walls or borders. In this vision, home isn't static; it's a dynamic, ever-expanding space. This view is very significant when Said, the Moro Jaime, embraces the same perception. He "shares with her mother her definition of affiliation and home." (Bajouki, 2013, p. 100)

Before reaching this inclusive perception of home, Said embarked on a journey, between Morocco and Spain, between the personal and the collective, the roots and the routes, in his pursuit of belonging and affiliation. Said's narrative is that of a refugee, one who fled from Morocco to find refuge in Spain. This past experience haunts his psyche and instills an ever-

present fear of being arrested. Consequently, his home in Morocco becomes intertwined with fear and nightmares that plague his sleepless nights. In contrast, Spain, the country he consciously chose as his refuge, holds a significant place in his heart, even though other options like France or Germany where his brothers had settled were available. This choice signifies a deliberate decision made despite his refugee status, all of which highlights his agency and determination to carve out his own path.

Said's perspective is grounded in the belief that a common space exists between Spain and Tetouan, his hometown in Morocco, where he can forge a distinct identity. This sheds light on the complexity of his identity, where he seeks to negotiate divergent aspects of his life and bridge the gap between the two cultures that have shaped him. His journey is marked by the tension between the familiar and the unknown, as he strives to negotiate his Moroccan heritage with his evolving Spanish identity. This process is laden with challenges, as he manages the weight of his past while also facing the uncharted territory of his future.

Said's conscious choice to settle in Spain instead of other potentially more advantageous destinations highlights his determination to create a new home, a place where he can rebuild his life. This choice represents his determination, as he seeks to overcome the trauma of his refugee experience and find a sense of belonging in a foreign land. His decision to stay in Spain signifies his commitment to construct a unique identity that transcends the labels of refugee and immigrant and that strives for a more comprehensive sense of self that encompasses both his past and his aspirations.

As Said manages the intersections of his personal history, cultural heritage, and present circumstances, he aims to create a space of belonging that is not confined by geographical boundaries. His journey then reflects the struggles of forging an identity in a diasporic context, where the push and pull of various influences shape his perception of home. Ultimately, his aspiration to establish a shared space between his Moroccan roots and his Spanish reality showcases his deep desire to foster unity and understanding, bridge the gaps between cultures, and create a new narrative that transcends the limitations of his past experiences. To illustrate, the following passage holds significance.

[I]t is normal, my dear friend, you are currently experiencing hard times, living the fear of pursuit and the pain of separation. You are going through a strong weaning from home and everything beautiful you left behind. The stout man with the thick mustache is the dictator who's chasing you, and your brother Abdul Hadi is the one who eases the weight of shock and the pain of weaning. He is inviting you to a new birth and a new homeland. Right now, you're grappling between the two births and the two homelands, and your suffering won't end until you create one homeland from the two. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 21)

The passage is a contextualization of a significant conversation between Said and his confidant, Fernando. This exchange is a lens into Said's journey and psyche. The point of this dialogue revolves around a recurring nightmare that haunts Said's slumber. It is an unsettling manifestation of the psychological turmoil he manages following his flight from Morocco to Spain. This haunting dream assumes such significance that the author dedicates an entire chapter. This chapter is titled 'The Nightmare' in which the author aims to unravel Said's innermost suffering and expose the ramifications of his flight on his emotional and mental well-being.

Within this conversation, Fernando's interpretation of Said's nightmare plays a crucial role in illuminating the emotional landscape Said inhabits. Fernando's explication of the nightmare digs into its symbolic elements and offers a perspective that sheds light on Said's subconscious fears and aspirations. In this analysis, the stout man with a thick mustache is emblematic of Morocco itself, the very nation and regime from which Said has sought refuge. This interpretation sheds light on the oppressive forces that compelled Said to flee his homeland, all of which highlight the political and emotional weight he carries.

In stark contrast, Said's brother, Abdul Hadi, emerges as a figure that symbolizes a beckoning to reconstruct and embrace a new identity. This reading represents Said's trajectory of seeking a fresh start and negotiating the features of belonging and integration. Abdul Hadi's presence in the dream is a motive that urges Said to transcend the shadows of his past and craft a narrative that is uniquely his own. Through this interpretation, the passage then explores themes of renewal and transformation and encapsulates Said's aspiration to break free from the confines of his history and forge an identity that fits his new reality.

Beyond these analyses of the nightmare's symbolism, the passage highlights the inherent conflict that resides within Said and the struggle between his two homes. His connection to both Morocco and Spain present, then, a dichotomy that fuels his internal conflict. While his flight from Morocco shows his rejection of the regime and the circumstances he ran away from, it also embodies a wrenching departure from his cultural heritage and familial ties. This internal conflict encapsulates the complex ramifications of displacement, assimilation, and the yearning for a sense of rootedness.

Said's early days in Spain were characterized by a deep struggle to distance himself from Morocco and his strong connections with his homeland and its people. This struggle was evident in his every step as he negotiated the unfamiliar territory of a new country. Despite physically leaving Morocco, he found it hard to cut the emotional ties that bound him to his home.

In this new environment, every aspect of Spain seemed to remind Said of Morocco. He constantly searched for traces of his hometown, Tetouan, in the streets, the people, and even the architecture of Spain. This yearning for the familiar landscapes of Morocco highlighted his longing for a sense of belonging and the difficulty of adapting to a different cultural context.

Said's need for connection and familiarity led him to actively seek out other Moroccans in Spain. This desire to reconnect with his countrymen highlighted his attempt to find a piece of Morocco in his new surroundings. When engaging with other Moroccans and speaking in their shared dialect, he could temporarily bridge the gap between the two worlds he inhabited, which shows his desire to bring a slice of Tetouan into the streets of Spain.

These early struggles reflect the complex process of adapting to a new cultural and geographical reality while still holding onto one's roots. Said's difficulty in cutting his ties to Morocco and Moroccans exemplified the internal conflict many migrants face and the tension between embracing a new identity and holding onto the past. As the novel unfolds, this tension becomes central and shapes Said's journey as he negotiates the features of his old and new worlds. To illustrate, the following passage holds significance.

[W]hile away from his homeland, Said didn't truly feel at ease. Neither his studies, projects, nor even his beloved Isabel could make him forget the reasons why he left Morocco. He sought opportunities to connect with fellow Moroccans in Madrid. though they were few, on Sundays, he would head to the Rastro market in Madrid, hoping to encounter Moroccans, engage in casual conversations in their familiar dialect and meet the very few of home that is available. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 51)

The passage above encapsulates the challenges that defined Said's initial days in Spain. These moments were far from comfortable for him, not solely due to the initial unfamiliarity of the new environment, but also because they were shaped by the very reason, he left Morocco which was escaping an oppressive regime and leaving behind everything he held dear. Said's unease and disconnection from the new land stemmed from cultural differences and from the weight of his past and the painful circumstances that forced him to become a refugee.

Moreover, the passage unveils another important theme woven into Said's journey that of his integration into Spanish society. Despite the hardships and the departure from his homeland, Said's pursuit of education and aspirations to establish a business in Spain gradually opened doors to a sense of belonging. These endeavors provided him with opportunities to engage with his new environment on a deeper level and foster a semblance of a welcoming home that contrasted with the displacement he felt as a newcomer.

Crucially, Said's regular visits to Madrid embodied his ongoing negotiation between his Moroccan identity and his new Spanish context. These interactions with fellow Moroccans and speaking in the Moroccan dialect became a way for him to maintain a connection to his roots. While physically residing in Spain, these encounters allowed him to create a hybrid space where elements of his Moroccan heritage were brought to life within the confines of Spain. This hybrid space blurs the boundaries between two worlds and allows him to experience a sense of home within another home, all of which bridge the gap between his past and present.

Said's endeavor to bridge the gap between Morocco and Spain goes beyond his visits to Madrid and engages deeply with his creation of a small restaurant. This entrepreneurial venture becomes a significant embodiment of his attempts to intertwine his Moroccan roots with his burgeoning life in Spain. The restaurant acts as a symbolic space where cultural fusion and cross-pollination occur and allows Said to connect with his compatriots and establish a strong presence within the larger Spanish society.

By creating his own restaurant, Said transforms his yearning for home and his hybrid identity into a tangible reality. The restaurant becomes a tool through which he crafts his multicultural identity. Through its offerings, décor, and atmosphere, Said weaves elements of Moroccan culture into the fabric of Spanish life. Moroccan cuisine becomes a medium through which he shares a piece of his heritage while catering to the local palate all of which foster a sense of cultural exchange that enriches both sides.

The restaurant's success represents Said's skill in cultivating relationships within the Spanish community. As the establishment gains popularity among Spaniards, Said's reputation extends beyond the Moroccan diaspora. This reflects his ability to transcend the confines of a specific cultural group and integrate seamlessly into a broader social context. In doing so, he positions himself as a bridge between cultures, facilitating cross-cultural interactions and mutual understanding.

Said's restaurant becomes a microcosm of conviviality. Through his business, Said contributes to this tradition by creating a space where diverse communities converge. The relationships he forms with Spanish contribute to breaking down stereotypes and foster genuine connections that extend beyond the confines of nationality or background. To illustrate, the following passage is significant.

[T]he café was small, adorned with arabesques and arches. he had written the café's name in both Moroccan dialect "*Brad Alfida*" and Spanish. [...] Said turned around at the old man Manolo's shout, asking for 'Majoji', which referred to the Moroccan appetizers that Said was known for serving. It consisted of fried pieces of chicken liver seasoned with cumin. Said replied to Manolo, "Take it easy, Abuelo (grandfather). Making Majoji that you love requires time for preparation, and you won't find it anywhere else but my café." (Bajouki, 2013, p. 85)

The above passage holds immense significance in shedding light on the hybrid space that Said both inhabits and cultivates. Following the financial support he receives from the refugee agency; Said undertakes the creation of a Moroccan café adorned with captivating Arabic patterns and architecture. This deliberate decoration creates an ambiance reminiscent of Moroccan aesthetics, amplified by the background music that of Moroccan melodies. Said's choice to name the café in both Moroccan dialect and Spanish is of particular intrigue. This linguistic duality represents and embodies hybridity and becomes a visual manifestation of Said's complex and hybrid identity.

The juxtaposition of the two languages shows the makeup of Said's identity and the space he seeks to establish. The inclusion of the Moroccan dialect is then a marker of his roots and heritage, while the Spanish name reflects his adopted home and the cultural integration he is striving for. This linguistic hybridity becomes a representation that encapsulates the features of Said's identity, all of which echo his journey of belonging between two distinct worlds.

Furthermore, the passage shows Said's adeptness at fostering connections between different cultures. By offering Moroccan dishes, such as the renowned Majoji, Said bridges the gap between Moroccan and Spanish culinary traditions. In doing so, he creates a dynamic fusion that brings the two cultures together on a single plate. This culinary blend becomes a means to forge connections and facilitate interactions. This creates, ultimately, a hybrid liminal space where conviviality finds its place.

Said's café, with its amalgamation of Moroccan décor, music, language, and cuisine, becomes a microcosm of the world he occupies. It is within this space that the convergence of various elements symbolizes his journey of self-discovery and integration. As Spanish customers immerse themselves in Moroccan flavors and aesthetics, the boundaries between the two cultures begin to blur. The café becomes a living embodiment of Said's navigation through a hybrid identity, where his Moroccan roots and Spanish presence coalesce.

The author crafts a multi-dimensional portrait of Said's sense of home and intertwines various facets of history, ancestry, and personal experience. At its core, Said's identity is rooted in a mosaic of origins, starting with his birth in Morocco. Yet, beneath the surface, lies the lineage of Moor roots all of which goes back to his mother's family heritage in Aragon, an Andalusian city with a rich history. This dual heritage sets the floor for a complex exploration of belonging and displacement.

Said's experience is an embodiment of historical echoes. He finds himself in a peculiar situation where he is exiled from the very place that his ancestors were once exiled to. This historical symmetry creates a narrative thread that ties together different generations' experiences of displacement and search for a home. The cyclical nature of this history draws parallels between Said's journey and his ancestors' struggles and forges a bridge across time and space.

The theme of exile is significant as Said flees to an exile that was once his ancestors' homeland. The irony is evident, he is leaving behind a place that was once their refuge and returns to it as an exile himself. This dynamic between ancestral past and personal present highlights the complexity of identities forged through displacement and migration. It sheds light on the fluidity of home and the ever-changing concepts of belonging.

Said, then, in this narrative, achieves his ancestors' dream of returning to their homeland. However, this achievement is not a culmination but a continuation, as the author suggests that Said's journey might lead him to dream of his own true home, a convergence of his dual heritage and personal experiences. In weaving these elements together, the author creates a sense of commonality and conviviality, where different threads of history, identity, and experience come together and coexist. This mosaic of complexities embodies a postcolonial consciousness that reflects the makeup of cultures, histories, and narratives that have shaped Said's perception of home. To illustrate, the following passage holds importance.

[T]his name means that I am a son of a Moor lady whose ancestors were forced to experience the bitterness of exile after the fall of Al-Andalus. They sought refuge in Tetouan while waiting to return to their homeland. These are my ancestors who insisted on carrying their homeland along with their belongings to that place where I came from today, and it's from there that I was compelled to leave for exile, the homeland of my ancestors. With a lost and sorrowful look, Said continued: The paradox, my friend Khalid, is that today Said goes into exile, the homeland of his ancestors, fulfilling their dream of returning, but he dreams once again the same dream of theirs to return to his own homeland. That Moor or Morisco, Jaime, who was once expelled by Queen Isabella the Catholic, returns today in the form of Said and others. These are homelands of freedom that choose their sons with different names. (Bajouki, 2013, p. 49)

The passage encapsulates a rich exploration of the concept of "home" and explores its tangled facets and histories. Said's words reflect a profound and tangled perception of the term and highlight the nature of belonging, displacement, and the intergenerational legacy of exile. Said's name itself becomes a portal to his ancestral history and evokes his lineage from a Moor lady whose ancestors faced the harsh reality of exile following the fall of Al-Andalus. This historical backdrop sets the stage for a deep examination of the paradoxes and ironies that surround notions of home. The act of carrying their homeland along with their belongings to Tetouan emphasizes the determination of Said's ancestors to maintain a connection to their origins even in the face of displacement.

The notion of 'home' becomes tangled with the passage of time. Said's own exile reflects his ancestors' history, as he departs from the homeland they were expelled to. This cyclical nature of displacement highlights the ties that bind generations together through shared experiences of searching for "home". The passage captures the irony of Said's situation as he is returning to his ancestors' homeland while still yearning for his own original home which is a sentiment that reflects their own dreams.

The reference to Queen Isabella's expulsion of the Moor or Morisco, Jaime, and his return in the form of Said draws attention to the historical continuity of the experiences of exile and return. This continuity traverses time and suggests that the concept of home is not confined to a single historical moment but rather evolves and transforms across generations. The inclusion of different names symbolizes the diverse identities that emerge from these homelands of freedom. This then reflects the fluidity and complexity of individual and collective belonging.

In this portrayal, the author crafts Said's sense of home. Said's birth in Morocco, his Moor lineage, and his mother's heritage rooted in Andalusia form a unique blend of narratives. His exile echoes that of his ancestors, and his flight from their former home to his own makes it even more complex. Said fulfils his ancestors' dream of return and sparks the possibility of yearning for his original homeland. This portrayal, woven with commonality and conviviality, embodies a pluralistic postcolonial perspective.

3. CONCLUSION

Eyes of Exile: Jaime the Moor by Abdulhamid Bajouki provides a complex exploration of the Moroccan diaspora experience through the journey of Said. The novel meticulously reflects themes of migration, identity, and cultural integration and offers a deep display of personal and historical narratives. Through Said's interactions with Isabel and other characters, Bajouki illustrates the complexities of cultural encounters and the process of reshaping one's self-perception in a new environment. The novel's portrayal of home as an abstract concept that transcends geographical boundaries resonates with the broader experiences of diaspora communities. Bajouki's novel, by showcasing the potential of conviviality, provides a valuable framework for understanding successful cultural integration in the Mediterranean. This model, rooted in the historical spirit of al-Andalus, challenges narratives of alienation and exclusion often associated with diaspora experiences. Moreover, the novel's exploration of hybrid identity contributes to ongoing debates about belonging in a globalized world, demonstrating how individuals can negotiate multiple cultural affiliations and create new spaces of belonging that transcend traditional boundaries. Ultimately, *Eyes of Exile* contributes significantly to the understanding of the complex dynamics of cultural integration within the Mediterranean sphere.

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