“A COMMUNITY LIFELINE”
ARAB-CANADIAN FEMINIST ANTHOLOGIES AS A SOURCE OF COMMUNITY BUILDING AND KNOWLEDGE PRODUCTION

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Abstract

This thesis explores how two Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* and *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance*, exemplify resistance literature by fostering community, producing knowledge, and critiquing power dynamics within multiculturalism, assimilation, and through their content and themes. Using a feminist lens, the study examines how these anthologies, published twenty years apart, form a continuum in fostering alliances and resisting discrimination based on identity, race, class, and sexuality. By focusing on these works, the research addresses the gap in scholarly attention to Arab-Canadian literature, positioning them as platforms for discussing their feminism, communicating anti-discrimination discourses, and challenging stereotypical portrayals of Arabs.

The methodology involves tracing the historical landscape of Arab-Canadian literature, highlighting how these anthologies serve as counter-narratives to dominant multicultural and national discourses. Moreover, the complexities in defining Arab feminists in anthologies helps explore cultural identity and those feminists' transnational solidarity with other women of colour. Finally, a comparative analysis of the anthologies' structures, contributors, and thematic content—while considering their goals and stated purposes—shows their stylistic innovation and resistance to the canon and how they transcend linguistic, geographical, and cultural boundaries. This research deepens the understanding of Arab-Canadian literature, Arab feminism, and the diasporic relationship to Canada, highlighting how these anthologies challenge racism, neocolonialism, and Orientalism.

Résumé

Cette thèse explore comment deux anthologies féministes arabo-canadiennes, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* et *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance*, illustrent la littérature de résistance en favorisant la communauté, la création de savoirs et en critiquant les dynamiques de pouvoir au sein du multiculturalisme, de l'assimilation, et à travers leur contenu et leurs thèmes. Cette analyse adopte une perspective féministe pour examiner comment ces anthologies, publiées à vingt ans d'intervalle, forment une séquence ininterrompue en favorisant des alliances et en résistant à la discrimination basée sur l'identité, la race, la classe et la sexualité. En choisissant ces anthologies, la recherche comble le manque d'attention scolaire portée à la littérature écrite par des arabo-canadiennes. Les anthologies sont aussi des lieux de discussion pour les femmes arabo-canadiennes pour négocier les problèmes de discrimination et des représentations clichées des arabes.

La méthodologie repose sur une analyse du contexte historique de la littérature arabo-canadienne, en soulignant comment ces anthologies servent comme contre-récits aux discours multiculturels et nationaux. De plus, les complexités de la définition des féministes arabes dans les anthologies aident à explorer l'identité culturelle et leur solidarité transnationale avec d'autres groupes racisés. Enfin, une analyse comparative de la structure des anthologies, des contributeurs et du contenu thématique, en tenant compte de leurs objectifs et finalités déclarées, montre leur innovation stylistique et leur résistance du répertoire littéraire, en illustrant comment ces anthologies dépassent les frontières linguistiques, géographiques et culturelles. Cette recherche contribue à une compréhension plus approfondie de la littérature écrite par des arabo-canadiennes, du féminisme arabe et de la relation diasporique avec le Canada, mettant en lumière la manière dont ces anthologies défient le racisme, le néocolonialisme et l'orientalisme.

Introduction and Positionality: My love story with Anthologies

In the heart of Montreal's Villeray neighbourhood, a multitude of colourful designs adorn my walk along De Castelnau, which is closed to traffic during the summer. Bicycles glide beside me, their wheels humming, and the sunlight bathes the wooden coffee shop benches, drying them just enough after a spurt of summer rain. Eli Tareq and Samia are animated, recounting their journey of bringing *El Ghourabaa: A Queer and Trans Collection of Oddities*[1] to life. I watch them with deep gratitude for their dedication and hard work. This passion is such a gift to the literary world and Arab Canadians in particular, as it has been a decade since the publication of the last Arab Canadian anthology, *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance*,[2] despite the continued proliferation of Arab-diasporic writers and poets.

Typical of Montreal, our conversations blend multiple languages—French, English, and Arabic. Eli Tareq recounts stories about the French translations they included in the anthology, reminiscent of the first Arab-Canadian anthology, *Arab-Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences*,[3] which also featured three French translations, and two pieces translated from Arabic. Despite the added workload, this commitment to translation is a testament to the editors' dedication to showcasing the rich literary production of Arab Quebecois writers. This desire to include and highlight Arab Quebecois writers was also a central impetus in Elizabeth Dahab's anthology, *Voices in the Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers*.[4] Time unfurls slowly, like the tendrils of ivy that adorn the aged facades of the surrounding duplexes, their red

[1] Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch and Samia Marshy, eds., *El Ghourabaa: A Queer and Trans Collection of Oddities* (Metonymy Press: 2024).
[2] Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications: 2014).
[3] Kamal A. Rostom, ed., *Arab-Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs and Reminiscences* (1989, York Press).
[4] Elizabeth Dahab, ed., *Voices in the Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers* (2002, Guernica Editions).

bricks bearing witness to the passage of decades. As I listen, I feel comforted by the literary continuum that I am bearing witness to.

It is no small feat to have an idea, draft a proposal, find a publisher, look for contributors, open and then close submissions, curate, edit, structure, and finalize an anthology. It is a full-time job requiring constant negotiations, follow-ups, planning, and meeting deadlines. However, Eli Tareq and Samia's passion and dedication overcame these hurdles. They believe in its power, as I do, in how our voices ring stronger and louder together. Through this collection, we shine brighter. As clichéd as that may sound, we radiate and shimmer because we are together.

The title *El Ghourabaa* was a focal point in our discussion, holding significance and reverence to our language, Arabic, while also serving as an intriguing linguistic metaphor for Montreal's languages. Transliterated into English, it inherently presents a challenge, especially with the inclusion of the soft, vibrating sound "ghayn," absent in English phonetics. This sound resembles clearing one's throat, akin to the French "r," but with a deeper resonance. Eli Tareq elaborated on the title's genesis, drawing from their expertise in seamlessly blending Arabic with other languages, as demonstrated in their award-winning poetry collection, *The Good Arabs*.[5] They detail how *El Ghourabaa* came to them after they researched different Arab words for "queer" and their desire for something authentic and resonant for Arabic-speaking queers in the West. The title speaks to the inclusivity of those represented within the collection, echoing the approach of previous anthologies such as Evelyn Shakir's *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab-American Women in the United States*.[6]

[5] Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch, *The Good Arabs* (Metonymy Press, 2021).
[6] Evelyn Shakir, *Bint Arab: Arab and Arab-American Women in the United States* (Praeger, 1997).

Anthologies have been a common feature in teaching Arabic literature because they provide a broad scope of writing, facilitate literary analysis, and can be grouped diachronically by period, country, or genre, like Reynold Alleyne Nicholson's *A Literary History of the Arabs*,[7] which has been republished fifteen times, according to miriam cooke in *Arabic Literature for the Classroom Teaching Methods, Theories, Themes and Texts*, to satisfy a Western curiosity and fill a gap in literature departments.[8] Classical Arabic literature anthologies primarily featured poetry by men because poetry was considered the highest form of literary expression in Arabic literature, and poems were easier to compile into a collection. However, time has expanded our views of what is regarded as "literature." This expanded perspective embraced by certain contemporary anthologies included a mix of genres: poems, short stories, essays, comics, drama, life stories, and excerpts from longer works under various categorizations. They sometimes cover a specific theme, time, or country or are curated around a specific event, like *Voices of the Arab Spring: Personal Stories from the Arab Revolutions*, or *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: Poets and Writers Respond to the March 5th, 2007, Bombing of Baghdad's Street of the Booksellers,* or *Banthology: Stories From Banned Nations*.[9] Such anthologies critique power dynamics through their content and themes.

[7] Reynold Alleyne Nicholson, *A Literary History of the Arabs* (New York, C. Scribner's sons, 1907).
[8] miriam cooke, "Arab women writers 1980–2010" in Muhsin J. al-Musawi, ed., *Arabic Literature for the Classroom Teaching Methods, Theories, Themes and Texts* (Routledge, 2017): 43.
[9] *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here: Poets and Writers Respond to the March 5th, 2007, Bombing of Baghdad's "Street of the Booksellers"* pays homage to the historic booksellers' landmark, the cradle of democracy; illuminates the indomitable spirit of the tenth-century poet: "I am the one whose literature is seen by the blind, and whose words are heard by the deaf"; and sheds light on Iraq's tragic losses through a global art exhibit. Next, *Banthology: Stories from Banned Nations*, stands tall, a fierce response to the 2017 travel ban imposed by the Trump administration in the United States on seven Muslim-majority nations to amplify the voices of those directly affected by the ban and to shed light on its human consequences. The stories echo the impact, from satire to realism, giving voice to those silenced by discriminatory laws. Lastly, having participated myself in the 2011 revolution in Egypt, *Voices of the Arab Spring: Personal Stories from the Arab Revolutions* holds a special place in my heart. It documents the Arab revolutions through the journey of activists and everyday heroes, offering a profound immersion into the ongoing struggle for justice and the strength of collective action.

Anthologies allow educators to introduce students to a wide range of literary works. They serve as valuable teaching tools for literary analysis and facilitate the establishment of a literary canon. Editors and independent presses will resist canonization and discrimination by choosing groupings that challenge prevailing norms, reinforcing community identification, and creating their own canon of works. These anthologies epitomize resistance literature by fostering community, producing knowledge, and critiquing power structures.

Arab anthology editors have learned a great deal from African American, Asian American, and Latinx American anthologies on how they have provided a sense of community for their kin and often acted as vehicles of transnational solidarity. For example, *Arab and Arab-American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*[10] states community building and knowledge production as part of its objectives and connects Arab women around the world through a feminist vision that imagines a world without oppression and considers alternatives to exclusionary heteromasculinist and xenophobic politics.

Anthologies like these offer a convergence between academic and non-academic communities by aligning diverse audiences toward a shared vision of resisting exclusionary politics; they become pivotal in community formation and solidarity. During my conversation with *El Ghourabaa*'s editors, we discussed similar powerful anthologies: for Samia Marshy, it was *Octavia's Brood: Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements*,[11] which was her favourite because of its unique, groundbreaking fusion of speculative fiction and social justice activism, inspiring critical reflection and tangible change. Eli Tareq's pick was *We Want It All: An*

[10] Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Asultany, Nadine Naber, eds., *Arab and Arab-American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging* (Syracuse University Press: 2011).
[11] Walidah Imarisha and adrienne maree brown, eds. *Octavia's Brood : Science Fiction Stories from Social Justice Movements* (AK Press, 2015).

Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics,[12] boldly harnesses poetry for trans liberation, amplifying transgender voices, embracing radical poetics, and exploring diverse themes of resistance and liberation within an imagined world overturned, where poems delve into myriad aspects of trans existence. Their choices reinforce what Joe Kadi states in the introduction of *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*: anthologies record a community's history and spirit and are valuable maps in the struggle for liberation.[13] It is why *Food for Our Grandmothers* remains one of my most beloved anthologies and the object of this study.

So many exciting, engaging, moving anthologies emerged from this standpoint, like the anthologies published by Saqi Books. With a three-decade legacy, this London-based, independent publisher champions literature from the Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA) region and its diaspora. They recently published *We Wrote in Symbols: Love and Lust by Arab Women Writers*,[14] and *This Arab Is Queer: An Anthology by LGBTQ+ Arab Writers*.[15] These anthologies interrogate market practices that package and sell literary texts using tired and worn stereotypes, while they enable crucial discussions on the challenges and complexities of Arab lives. *El Ghourabaa* furthers this mission through its collaboration with another esteemed, independent press, that is, Metonymy Press. Renowned for its award-winning publications, it has garnered acclaim from readers, authors, and the publishing community, headquartered in Tiohtià:ke (Montreal), on unceded Kanien'kehá:ka (Mohawk) territory.

[12] Andrea Abi-Karam, and Kay Gabriel, eds. *We Want It All : An Anthology of Radical Trans Poetics* (Nightboat Books, 2020).
[13] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xvii.
[14] Selma Dabbagh, ed., *We Wrote in Symbols: Love and Lust by Arab Women Writers* (Saqi Books, 2021).
[15] Elias Jahshan, ed., *This Arab Is Queer: An Anthology by LGBTQ+ Arab Writers* (Saqi Books, 2022).

These anthologies have resisted erasure, essentialization, and fetishization simply by existing. Like the Art Deco storefronts that bear witness to Villeray's industrial past and the contemporary bistros that breathe new life into century-old spaces, all these anthologies fundamentally allow readers to be swept away by the power of a great story, indulge in the finesse and lyricism of language, and be moved to both laughter and tears.

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Thirty years ago, I embarked on a journey to study in Virginia. Scholarship in hand, I never imagined that the small, exclusive women's university would disorient me so much. My familiarity with Americans throughout my life had not prepared me for a different facet of the America—where anyone of a different race, class, gender, and/or sexuality all convened at the "others" table. A handful in a sea of white, I found myself an Egyptian Canadian, alongside two African-Americans, a Saudi-American, a Spaniard, and a Mexican, as if I had entered an episode of one of my favourite eighties TV Shows, *The Twilight Zone*. The unsettling experience unfamiliar to me in Montreal became suffocating, and I longed to go home, not just to leave the U.S. but to head back to Cairo.

I spent most of my savings from my two campus jobs to hop on a 24-hour long bus trip to stay in Montreal with family and friends during the Christmas holidays. Montreal's Arab diaspora, even with a -40 windchill, was a warm shelter from Virginia. No cellphones or internet yet, Egypt and my family across an ocean, but at least on this island, there were islets of Cairo. Rania, my best friend, knew that she could cheer me up with a stroll through independent bookstores, and it was at *L'Androgyne* on Saint Laurent with half-eaten croissants in hand that I found *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists.* This discovery proved to be a lifeline. Reading it cover-to-cover, home was within these pages, these writers whose names

I memorized and searched for in every library I entered, using the only tool we had back then, the analog Dewey Decimal System. Despite never meeting the writers, the anthology resonated deeply with me. Everything I had experienced and felt in my life was suddenly between these pages: a community I longed for and writers I had never come across in school or libraries, ones I never knew existed until this collection came into my life.

Throughout my adult life, as a mom and an avid reader, I continued to follow and read these writers, seeing their own novels, memoirs, and poetry chapbooks come to life. I became obsessed with anthologies and Arab literary journals because they gather many writers under one umbrella, and I was constantly excited when someone mentioned an Arab anthology I had not come across or one that took a new direction or approached writing that had never been given space.

Yet *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* has remained my most cherished collection due to its ability to forge a sense of community at a time when I desperately needed one. When that same joy and connection resurfaced in an anthology two decades later, I was thrilled to discover *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance*. Both anthologies stand out from other Arab diaspora anthologies because they explicitly commit to feminist perspectives, as signalled by the inclusion of "feminist" in their titles, and they demonstrate a deep engagement with Arab feminist discourses and transnational feminism. Additionally, the inclusion of queer narratives within these anthologies highlights a commitment to representing a diverse range of feminist expressions, thereby enriching the discussion on Arab-Canadian feminism. These anthologies are, therefore, the only two that specifically address Arab-Canadian feminism, which is underrepresented compared to Arab-American and other diasporic feminist works.

Lastly and most significant to both these anthologies is that they centre their narratives around Palestine, highlighting the Arab community's opposition to neo-colonialism, Zionism, patriarchy, and military expansionism. This focus on Palestine, combined with a feminist and transnational lens, sets these works apart from other collections, which may not offer the same comprehensive engagement with these specific socio-political issues. As I write this thesis, the ongoing genocide in Palestine heightens the urgency of following their precedent, given the escalating challenges for Arabs and the rising waves of Islamophobia across North America.

This sense of urgency is not new. Arab diaspora anthologies have long been a crucial means for community members to find, support, and uplift one another. By doing so, they counter being ignored, misrepresented, or unrepresented in the Western literary landscape. In the introduction to almost every Arab diasporic anthology, editors speak of being ignored by the canon, overlooked by the literary community, and disregarded by publishers. Yet, this lack of representation has also motivated many writers and editors to create their own presses. An example is York Press founded by Saad al-Khadim in New Brunswick in 1974, which aimed to disseminate the works of Arab-Canadian writers, and where he also contributed to the broader cultural scene.

The rationale for selecting these anthologies lies not only in their explicit feminist focus but also in their unique role in Arab-Canadian feminist discourse. *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* is among the first to identify its contributors as Arab-Canadian feminists, while *Min Fami* is published by a feminist Canadian press and features numerous contributions by Arab-Canadian feminists. Unlike many other anthologies, both engage deeply with Arab and transnational feminism, incorporating queer narratives, centring on Palestine, and opposing neo-colonialism, Zionism, patriarchy, and military

expansionism. Together, they serve as a testament to the ongoing need for community and collective resistance, offering perspectives and themes rarely addressed in other collections.

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A gentle, warm breeze wafts in the scent of fresh croissants from nearby bakeries, mingling with the aroma of blossoming linden trees that line the avenue, their leaves casting dappled shadows on the cobblestone path. It reminds me of when I first discovered *Food for Our Grandmothers*. It was quite surprising to find its editor and one of the contributors included in *El Ghourabaa*, demonstrating the close-knit nature of the Arab-Canadian writers' community, proving how this community is indeed a continuum, a loving family.

The collectivity being stronger than the individual is fundamental to diaspora anthologies, which preserve their own literature and pave the way for young writers. As Brinda J. Mehta articulates in her analysis "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber" within *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, "The harmonious integration of the self into the ensemble subdues the egotism of the individual while promoting the group ethos of community building in a hostile environment, as an act of love."[16] I reflected on how this was true for *El Ghourabaa*, and I could feel this love in every aspect of Eli Tareq and Samia's description of how they brought this anthology to life, how the cover carries art by the same artist who did some of Eli Tareq's tattoos, how they solicited the work of one of their favourite Arab authors, how they overcame hurdles to include a piece they adored by an author they loved who had passed away.

[16] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Editions Rodopi B.V., 2009): 215.

In a podcast interview, Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, explains how "me-search"[17] was her driving force in her academic pursuits and in creating *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives*.[18] Her words resonated deeply with me, and I searched for why I loved these anthologies so much. What about them attracted me to spend hours, days, and years holding them close, reading, analyzing, and exploring their uniqueness? I discovered that I want to hug their editors, contributors, and publishers, and wholeheartedly thank them for what they have achieved.

During a book signing in October 2023 in Montreal, I had the opportunity to meet Iman Mersal. During her talk, she spoke of how she did not believe in these grand slogans that literature can save the world, but rather that it focuses on interiority and helps unmask individual truths and raw emotional honesty in storytelling. As a dreamer and an optimist, I wished she would retract that statement, especially in front of the peering twenty-year-olds gathered around her. Considering the genocide we are currently witnessing, I know she is right. However, literature—particularly Arab feminist literature—undeniably saved my world.

[17] Fulya Pinar and Mejdulene Bernard Shomali. "New Books in Critical Theory: Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023) on Apple Podcasts." *Apple Podcasts*, 17 Mar. 2023, podcasts.apple.com/ca/podcast/new-books-in-critical-theory/id593872749?i=1000604614040.
[18] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023).

Methodology

i. Exploring the Scope of this Thesis

This thesis explores how *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* and *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance,* despite being published two decades apart, create a continuum of resistance by fostering community, producing knowledge, and critiquing power. These anthologies challenge categorizations within multiculturalism and assimilation, and critique power dynamics through their content and themes.

The first chapter of this thesis examines the impact of early anthologies, Arab women's relationships with feminism, transnational solidarity with women of colour, and the inclusion of queer voices, with a focus on how these two collections have challenged multiculturalism by building community. By doing so, they not only preserve cultural heritage, but also resist the assimilation by creating spaces for diverse identities to thrive and be acknowledged within Canadian literature.

Moving on to the second chapter, the focus shifts to the challenges posed by the feminist frame and hyphenated identity relations to multiculturalism in Canada, emphasizing knowledge production through stylistic innovation and resistance to the literary canon. This section analyzes strategic narration and situated knowledge, exploring themes such as the definition of Arab identity, the centrality of Palestine, and the self-representation of Arab-Canadian feminists.

Finally, the third chapter positions Arab-Canadian anthologies as counter-narratives that challenge dominant discourses on multiculturalism and identity formation by examining the dynamics of nationality, diaspora identity, and linguistic diversity. It addresses the linguistic and literary dynamics within Arab-Canadian and Arab-Quebecois contexts, considering perspectives on arabophone, anglophone, and Quebecois literature, and the role of linguistic exile on identity

formation. Additionally, it explores the broader implications of literary categorizations, challenging restrictive labels by examining the fragmentation caused by multicultural policies, assimilation, and minority literature.

ii. Methodology: Arab-Canadian Feminist Literature through Anthologies

This thesis is a detailed analysis and exploration of Arab-Canadian feminist themes, identity, diaspora, and resistance in two seminal anthologies: *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* and *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance.*

Both anthologies explicitly commit to feminist perspectives, as indicated by incorporating the word "feminist" within their titles, showcasing a deep engagement with Arab feminist discourses and transnational feminism. Additionally, the inclusion of queer narratives within these anthologies highlights a commitment to representing a diverse range of feminist expressions, thereby enriching the discussion on Arab-Canadian feminism.

The methodological approach for this thesis involves a contextual and historical analysis to situate the anthologies within broader socio-political and cultural frameworks. This involves examining the historical context of Arab-Canadian immigration, the evolution of diasporic Arab feminist movements, and the impact of multicultural policies in Canada. Given the prevalence of more Arab-American anthologies compared to their Arab-Canadian counterparts and the frequent categorization under the overarching label of "North American," a comparative analysis of this context is essential. By doing so, this research provides a deeper understanding of the external factors that influence the production and reception of these anthologies, thus highlighting their substantial engagement with feminist themes relevant to both the Arab-Canadian socio-political context and the broader landscape of North American literature.

Additionally, both anthologies can be examined using Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality, which posits a more comprehensive understanding and multifaceted nature of discrimination and identity. This analysis necessitates acknowledging that various identity categories mutually shape one another as "interlocking systems of oppression."[19] Both collections feature writings that capture intersectional complexities in the lives of Arab-Canadian women of different races, classes, and genders, while reflecting on their experiences.

Moreover, a literary analysis involving a close reading of the contributions within *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* to decode the narratives, themes, and contexts they encompass is also necessary. This includes examining the essays, poems, and other forms of writing to identify recurring themes, stylistic features, and rhetorical strategies that contribute to community building, knowledge production, and power critique. Attention is given to how these elements challenge categorizations within multiculturalism and assimilation.

Finally, an interdisciplinary approach is used by addressing transnational feminist solidarity, the inclusion of queer voices, the centrality of Palestine, and the dynamics of hyphenated identities. These methodologies are derived from literary studies, feminist studies, and diaspora studies. This allows for a nuanced exploration of how the anthologies intersect with issues

[19] The concept of "interlocking systems of oppression" was coined by the Combahee River Collective (CRC) in "A Black Feminist Statement" (CRC 1977/1981/1983, p. 210). It asserts that multiple forms of oppression and privilege construct our experiences, emphasizing the need to analyze sexual desires, identities, orientations, and oppressions in relation to other aspects of social identity, such as race, gender, class, age, disability, citizenship, and religion. The "Combahee River Collective" was collaboratively authored in 1977 by members Barbara Smith, Beverly Smith, and Demita Frazier, honouring the "guerrilla action" led by Harriet Tubman in 1863, which freed 750 enslaved people in South Carolina (CRC, p. 210). It first circulated as a pamphlet before it was published in Zillah Eisenstein's edited collection, *Capitalist Patriarchy and the Case for Socialist Feminism* (1978); it was then reprinted in Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga's anthology *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (1981); in *All the Women Are White, All the Blacks Are Men, But Some of Us Are Brave: Black Women's Studies,* co-edited by Gloria Hull et al. (1982)*;* and in Barbara Smith's *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (1983). CRC quickly became a canonical text in the burgeoning discourse of women of colour feminisms.

of identity, power, and resistance, and how these collections altogether contribute to a sustained tradition of resistance literature.

Chapter 1:
Challenges of the Feminist Frame and Hyphenated Identity Relations to Multiculturalism in Canada: Exploring Nationality, Diaspora, and Hyphenated Identities

i. The Landscape of Arab-Canadian Literature and The Role of Anthologies

Arab-Canadian literature emerged in the 1970s, produced by first-generation immigrants who identified as Arabs, through Arabic language and culture, from multireligious and multiethnic backgrounds.[20] It has received less attention than Arab-American literature, with very few anthologies devoted to it.[21] However, Arab-Canadians have also been hyper-visible in their own context because of securitization politics, Orientalism, and Islamophobia. Within the context of "Canada as a settler-colony and its relationship to the Indigenous Peoples of Turtle Island (North America); immigration and migration patterns, and policies of inclusion and exclusion; official multiculturalism and bilingualism; and the relationship of Quebec to Canada,"[22] Arab-Canadian writers are fully aware of local-global connections and have worked actively over time on issues of social justice in Canada and abroad.[23] Through their literary production, these writers delve into themes concerning identity, belonging, and cultural hybridity, thereby challenging dominant narratives and misconceptions about Arab-Canadians.

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[20] Elizabeth Dahab, "On the Poetics of Arab-Canadian Literature in French and English," in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Oxford University Press, 2015): 639.

[21] Other than the two anthologies object to this study, there are only five specific Arab-Canadian collections: *Arab Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences,* ed. Kamal Rostom (1989); *Voices in the Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers*, ed. Elizabeth Dahab (2002); *The Lands Within Me: Expressions by Canadian Artists of Arab Origin,* eds. Aida Kaouk and Dominique Bourque (2003); *Arabitudes: l'Altérité Arabe au Québec,* eds. Mohammed Arkoun and Georges Leroux (2010); and *El Ghourabaa: A Queer and Trans Collection of Oddities* eds. Samia Marshy and Eli Tareq El Bechelany-Lynch (2024).

[22] Michelle Hartman, "Canada." in *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions* (Oxford University Press, 2017): 3.

[23] Houda Asal. "Se dire 'arabe' au Canada. Un siècle de vie associative, entre constructions identitaires et mobilisations politiques (1882–1975)." (*L'Atelier du Centre de recherches historiques, Revue électronique du CRH*, 2012).

Notably, they confront the tendency to equate the Arab-Canadian identity solely with the Arab-Muslim one, thereby overlooking the presence and contributions of other linguistic, ethnic, and religious minorities within the Southwest Asia and North Africa (SWANA) region. Moreover, Arab-Canadians have often been subsumed under the designation "Arab-American." As Rabab Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber, and Evelyn Alsultany point out in "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives," the term Arab-American "does not adequately describe the large contingent of Arab-Canadian authors who are often referred to as Arab-Americans."[24] For example, Rawi Hage's short story "The Salad Lady" is included in *Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab-American Fiction*. However, neither the title nor the introduction mentions a Canadian contributor. Similarly, in the anthology *Arab and Arab-American Feminisms*, there are four contributions from Canada, including the editor of *Food for Our Grandmothers*, Joe Kadi. However, this fact is not highlighted anywhere in the anthology.

Anthologies bearing the imprimatur of renowned publishers such as Penguin, Oxford, or Norton[25] imbue the collection with authority and hegemonic influence.[26] They act as gatekeepers that allow specific literary works to enter canons of world literature, establishing themselves with domestic and international audiences. Since they are widely used in classrooms as teaching tools, they play a crucial role in shaping literature and its definition within literature departments by influencing both content and teaching methods.

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[24] Rabab Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber, and Evelyn Alsultany, eds., "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives," *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (Spring 2005): 150.

[25] Some examples by Hopkins, such as *The Oxford Books of Modern Verse* by W. B. Yeats and Philip Larkin (1936, 1973) seem at first sight to be neutrally 'representative' period-anthologies. But both, in fact, offer highly polemical and personal views of their subject. *The Norton Anthology of English Literature*, compiled with input from a vast 'focus group' of academics throughout the English-speaking world, and regularly updated, is considered a 'market leader' among anthologies covering the whole field. Two other anthologies, one comprehensive and one period-based: Christopher Ricks's *Oxford Book of English Verse* (1999) and David Norbrook's and Henry Woudhuysen's *Penguin Book of Renaissance Verse* (1992).

[26] David Hopkins, "On Anthologies," *The Cambridge Quarterly* (Oxford University Press, 2008): 286.

Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* scrutinizes the presumed neutrality of anthologies in curating literary history and how they act as canonical anthologies attempting to erase their ideological construction by claiming a neutral curation process and an objective rendering of literature:[27]

> Each editor proclaims the anthology's completeness and self-sufficiency as a culmination of American or English literary history, with revisions of previous editions resulting not from ideological flux or pressures but from the possibility of more accurate and complete coverage (including, in the last fifteen years, women and people of colour).[28]

Franklin exposes the inherent ideological underpinnings of such anthologies. She unpacks how literary canons are constructed, refuting the claim of objectivity by revealing how the selection and presentation of literary works are influenced by evolving cultural and societal norms, thereby challenging readers to consider the complex interplay between literature, power, and identity. This canonical status impacts the significance of the anthology's dissemination and how it is, consequently, published by a mainstream publishing house rather than an independent press. This reveals the intricate socio-political power dynamics at play; as Jeffrey Di Leo states, "[i]n addition to shaping our teaching experience, anthologies have a key role in canon formation and are always already implicated in various political and cultural agendas."[29] Therefore, as I aim to show, they can also serve as tools of resistance by questioning and disrupting established literary canons and power structures.

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[27] Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):6.
[28] Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):6.
[29] Jeffrey Di Leo, ed., *On Anthologies: Politics and Pedagogy* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004): 5-6.

The normative voice in American anthologies leans toward a gendered male and racialized white perspective.[30] Many writers have fought for this white, Western, and male-dominated canon to encompass a more fluid, inclusive literature that is not explicitly Western.[31] However, world literature anthologies still can, but do not represent everyone. While some anthologies broaden the literary canon, they often operate from within traditional English departments, where the notion that "the normative 'American' literary voice in teaching anthologies might be gendered male and racialized white is by now a truism."[32] Despite claims of addressing historical biases, canonical anthologies, such as the Norton, Penguin, and Heath anthologies, demonstrate minimal alterations. These can be attributed to "multicultural pressures." But generally, they only show superficial adjustments such as improved typefaces or tokenistic inclusions. For example, the 1991 *Heritage of American Literature* claims to be more inclusive by incorporating white women and one black man. However, the discrepancy in the number of contributors and the amount of page space allocated to different categories of authors highlights the issue of tokenism.[33] Joe Lockard and Jillian Sandell's insights in *National Narratives and the Politics of Inclusion: Historicizing American Literature Anthologies* directly support this central thesis. It is because of this environment that feminist anthologies emerged from ethnic and women's studies classes, aiming for inclusivity and challenging the ideological underpinnings of canonical anthologies. They do not emerge directly from the academy; rather, they challenge white middle-class feminist models, embrace identity politics, and aim to break the bounds of academic discourse.[34]

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[30] Joe Lockard and Jillian Sandell, "National Narratives and the Politics of Inclusion: Historicizing American Literature Anthologies," *Pedagogy* 8, no. 2 (April 2008): 227.
[31] Jeffrey Di Leo, ed., *On Anthologies: Politics and Pedagogy* (University of Nebraska Press, 2004): 40.
[32] Joe Lockard and Jillian Sandell, "National Narratives and the Politics of Inclusion: Historicizing American Literature Anthologies," *Pedagogy* 8, no. 2 (April 2008): 227.
[33] Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):8.
[34] Cynthia G. Franklin, Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):11.

Despite their marginal positions, feminist anthologies have exerted pressure and can potentially transform canonical anthologies by redefining literature, exposing ideological biases, and offering a critical perspective.[35] Lockard and Sandell reveal how representational exclusion has been a practice that has functioned as a fundamental organizing principle within both American society and the literary canon, reinforcing racial hierarchies. By systematically omitting authors of non-white backgrounds from consideration based on their racial identity, American literature anthologies have perpetuated a narrative that prioritizes and legitimizes the experiences and perspectives of white writers. As Lockard and Sandell argue,

> Representational exclusion has served as a basic organizing principle for American literature anthologies as much as it has for U.S. society. By creating literary taxonomies that explicitly and implicitly excluded other-than-white authors from consideration on their merits, the critical enterprise that shaped long-prevailing concepts of "American literature" intellectually colluded in reinforcing the color line.[36]

Lockhard and Sandell argue that this exclusionary practice extends beyond mere oversight or inadvertent bias. An intellectually complicit endeavour which legitimizes the exclusion of non-white voices from the literary canon, these anthologies contribute to the perpetuation of what W.E.B. Du Bois famously termed "the colour line,"[37] wherein racial boundaries and hierarchies are maintained and reinforced.

These same exclusionary practices stand true for the anthologization and canonization of Canadian literature. Robert Lecker's study, *Keepers of the Code: English-Canadian Literary Anthologies and the Representation of Nation*, claims to be the first comprehensive examination of English-Canadian literary anthologies, covering nearly two hundred works from 1837 to the

[35] Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):8.
[36] Joe Lockard and Jillian Sandell, "National Narratives and the Politics of Inclusion: Historicizing American Literature Anthologies," *Pedagogy* 8, no. 2 (April 2008): 229.
[37] W. E. B. Du Bois, *The Souls of Black Folk* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007): 113.

present. It focuses on collections that present a pan-Canadian perspective rather than being confined to specific regions, movements, age groups, or periods.[38]

Lecker found that since the publication of Edward Hartley Dewart's 1864 anthology,[39] which emphasized the significance of national literature in shaping national character, modern editors of English-Canadian literary anthologies, like their predecessors, continued to embody this strong sense of nationalism and selected works that reinforced rather than challenged national identity. Despite the rise of feminist theory and increasing calls for inclusivity of Indigenous literature, Black writers, and the diverse voices of immigrant authors "by the mid-1980s, nationalist anthologists of the 1980s largely ignored these growing influences of regionalism, race and ethnicity, feminism, and leftist politics."[40] According to Lecker, the first anthology dedicated to Indigenous literature in Canada did not appear until 1991, and the first anthology focused on multicultural literature was published only in 1996. He does not mention Canadian diasporic feminist anthologies such as *Food for Our Grandmothers*, published two years prior. This omission highlights the systematic erasure faced by Arab cultural production in Canada. Despite being profoundly influential and formative within Arab diasporic communities, anthologies like *Food for Our Grandmothers* were overlooked in the broader Canadian literary canon. This exclusion underscores the importance of studying and foregrounding these works, not only to recognize their contributions but also to challenge the dominant narratives that marginalize diverse voices within Canadian literature.

[38] Robert Lecker, *Keepers of the Code: English-Canadian Literary Anthologies and the Representation of the Nation*, (University of Toronto Press, 2013): 3.
[39] Edward Hartley Dewart, ed. *Selections from Canadian Poets with Occasional Critical and Biographical Notes and an Introductory Essay on Canadian Poetry* (Lovell, 1864).
[40] Robert Lecker. *Keepers of the Code: English-Canadian Literary Anthologies and the Representation of the Nation* (University of Toronto Press, 2013): 283.

Specific transnational anthologies that challenge and depose canonical anthologies, serving as tools against hegemony categorized by theme, nation, gender, or events like the Arab Spring[41] or the bombing of Al-Mutanabbi Street in Iraq,[42] become even more crucial within "the literary industrial complex."[43] They diversify the literary landscape by providing platforms for disseminating alternative narratives, thus disrupting dominant power structures and fostering inclusivity and representation. These types of transnational anthologies can also be defined as resistance anthologies, in the same way that diaspora anthologies are, because they are produced by and focus on certain communities. They use the anthology's frame to establish and define hyphenated identities, for example, African, Asian, Arab, or double hyphens like Arab-Muslim-American and North American Muslim. For example, Kazim Ali expressed a similar inclination to unite North Americans and chose the label "Muslims" rather than "Arab," as evidenced in the anthology *New Moons: Contemporary Writing by North American Muslims*.

Moreover, the fusion of multiple hyphenated identities can serve as a powerful source of transnational solidarity, or alternatively, it may act as a melting pot that amalgamates various "others" into categories such as those on the periphery, subalterns, minorities, or the marginalized. Michelle Hartman's analysis in "Rabih Alameddine's I, the Divine: A Druze Novel as World Literature?" posits that "multiple identities coexist—not as opposed parts that are fused together but rather as simultaneously coexisting within the protagonist, overlaying each other at the same time."[44] This argument about the portrayal of "multiple identities coexisting" in literature is more

[41] Asaad Al-Saleh, *Voices of the Arab Spring: Personal Stories from the Arab Revolutions* (Columbia University Press, 2015).
[42] Beau Beausoleil and Deema K. Shehabi, *Al-Mutanabbi Street Starts Here* (PM Press, 2012).
[43] Joe Holley, "Editor Helped Shape Prominent Writers' Work," *Los Angeles Times*, 14 Aug. 2008, www.latimes.com/archives/la-xpm-2008-aug-14-me-solotaroff14-story.html

[44] Nouri Gana, ed., *The Edinburgh Companion to the Arab Novel in English: The Politics of Anglo-Arab and Arab American Literature and Culture* (Edinburgh University Press, 2013): 23.

reflective of the reality of diasporic identity. Similarly, Mejdulene B. Shomali, in "Scheherazade and the Limits of Inclusive Politics in Arab-American Literature," notes that the duality of hyphenation "simultaneously reveals their inclusion in American identity and the ways they are separate from it."[45] Therefore, anthology titles frequently navigate the complexity of identity by combining main titles with extensive subtitles that highlight the most significant identifiers and themes. This approach aims to surmount the challenges of representation, simultaneously reflecting the contributors' perspectives and the editors' vision.

Furthermore, individuals migrating from Arab nations and settling in the North American diaspora navigate a complex landscape of identity and varying broad categorizations, lumped together as one geographical region: Arab world, SWANA, Middle Eastern, or a single all-encompassing category Arabs, or Muslims or merged like *Behind Our Names: An Anthology of SWANA & Muslim-Identified Teens*[46] where the poetry collection fosters solidarity among Muslim and SWANA writers by highlighting their shared experiences of discrimination, weaving together their diverse voices. Such anthologies are essential for building community; they construct cultural identity and gather contributors who share this identity, engage in polemical discourse, express and address cultural differences, and celebrate their diversity. They also offer an alternative source of knowledge production that forges alliances and becomes a tool of resistance against discrimination toward this identity or others, including race, class, and sexuality.

ii. Tracing the Historical Context

The first anthologies in North America that embarked on a community-building endeavour through literary production and adopted hyphenated diasporic titles were *Grape Leaves: A Century*

[45] Mejdulene B. Shomali, "Scheherazade and the Limits of Inclusive Politics in Arab American Literature," *MELUS: The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States,* 43, no. 1 (Oxford University Press, Spring 2018): 72.
[46] Michaela Mullin, ed., *Behind Our Names: An Anthology of SWANA- & Muslim-Identified Teens* (Black Lawrence Press, 2020).

of Arab-American Poetry[47] in the United States and *Arab-Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs and Reminiscences*,[48] in Canada. In the foreword, Rostom emphasizes how Arab-Canadian writers and thinkers have been ignored, "and Canadian anthologies and encyclopedias have also overlooked their contribution to the literary mainstream of this country."[49] This neglect highlights the critical need for such anthologies to preserve and highlight the rich cultural and literary heritage of Arab diasporic communities.

The publication of *Food for Our Grandmothers* five years later marked another pivotal moment, bridging the gap between Canada and the United States but also championing women and queer writers through its feminist title and contributors. It provided a platform for those ignored and erased by the literary community, thus creating space for their perspectives. Kadi articulates this position in his introduction to the anthology, where he states, "We will feel the effects of the social construction of "the Arabs" that has cast us as enemy, other, fanatical terrorist, crazy Muslim. If we are women, we can add to that list veiled Woman and exotic whore."[50] Kadi poignantly encapsulates the complex interplay of stereotypes, misrepresentations, and cultural marginalization that Arab individuals, particularly women, confront in the diaspora. The social construction of Arabs as the "enemy" or "other" is a powerful testament to the pervasive influence of Orientalism, which acts as a paradigm through which the West misinterprets and dominates the East, compounding the challenges Arab women face with gendered stereotypes that both fetishize and vilify them.

[47] Gregory Orfalea and Sharif Elmusa, eds., *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry* (Interlink Books, 1988).
[48] Kamal Rostom ed., *Arab Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences* (York Press, 1989).
[49] Kamal Rostom ed., *Arab Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences* (York Press, 1989):1.
[50] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xvi.

Food for Our Grandmothers marked a significant advancement in cultural productivity among Arab communities in contrast to *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry* and *Arab-Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences*. One key reason is its inclusion of over forty contributors, whereas *Grape Leaves* featured only twenty poets, and *Arab-Canadian Writing* had just eleven contributors. This broader participation in *Food for Our Grandmothers* highlights the growing cultural productivity and representation of Arab communities in both the U.S. and Canada. It also cemented the need to acknowledge the heterogeneity of these communities and map their histories and concerns onto the US and Canadian terrain rather than treat them as perpetual foreigners because of their connections to the Middle East or the Arab world.[51]

The emergence and evolution of Arab feminist diasporic mixed-genre anthologies can be traced back to the groundbreaking work of radical Black feminists in the late twentieth century, like *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology*,[52] and the work of other diasporic women like *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings By and About Asian American Women*,[53] and *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women*.[54] These anthologies have historically functioned and remain vital tools for community empowerment and resistance against erasure.[55] By referencing these feminist and women of colour anthologies in the introduction of *Food for Our Grandmothers*, Kadi not only valorizes their efforts but contextualizes his own anthology within a broader tradition of activism and cultural production and describes them as

[51] Carol Fadda-Conrey, *Contemporary Arab-American Literature: Transnational Reconfigurations of Citizenship and Belonging* (New York University Press, 2014): 22.
[52] Barbara Smith, ed., *Home Girls: A Black Feminist Anthology* (Kitchen Table: Women of Color Press, 1983).
[53] Asian Women United of California, eds., *Making Waves: An Anthology of Writings by and About Asian American Women* (Beacon Press, 1989).
[54] Beth Brant, ed., *A Gathering of Spirit: A Collection by North American Indian Women* (Firebrand Books, 1984),
[55] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xvii.

tools that "help record a community's history and spirit. They are valuable maps in our struggle for liberation, offering the hope and information, sustenance and analysis, education and challenges that we need so desperately."[56] This multiple-tiered motivation—"liberation, hope, sustenance and education"—as well as solidarity, is what makes the anthology a rich repository of Arab feminist diasporic communities, documenting its struggles, resistance, and literary contribution.

However, *Food for Our Grandmothers* also emerged as a response to exclusion, as no Arab authors were invited to contribute to *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*.[57] Nada Elia explains this erasure as a betrayal in her essay "The Burden of Representation When Palestinians Speak Out," "it was supposed to be by "all women of colour" and for all women of colour, but did not include a single Arab voice. It completely erased the existence of radical Arab American feminists."[58] Yet *This Bridge Called My Back* still stands as one of the most seminal feminist anthologies in contemporary scholarship. Its significance lies in its unyielding commitment to raising awareness of the narratives of women of colour. In the introduction, Anzaldúa declares:

> We see the book as a revolutionary tool falling into the hands of people of all colors. Just as we have been radicalized in the process of compiling this book, we hope it will radicalize others into action. We envision the book being used as a required text in most women's studies courses. And we don't mean just "special" courses on Third World Women or Racism, but also courses dealing with sexual politics, feminist thought, women's spirituality, etc. (…) We want the book in libraries, bookstores, at conferences, and union meetings in every major city and hole-in-the-wall in this country. And, of course, we hope

[56] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xvii.
[57] Cherríe Moraga and Gloria E. Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (Persephone Press, 1981).
[58] Nada Elia, "The Burden of Representation: When Palestinians Speak Out," in *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Asultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 151.

> to eventually see this book translated and leave this country, making tangible the link between Third World women in the U.S. and throughout the world.[59]

Anzaldúa articulates how the anthology is a transformative, educational, and widely accessible tool for social justice. It aims to radicalize readers and integrate diverse perspectives by employing various literary forms such as poetry, first-person testimonials, analytical essays, and visual art and works by writers like Audre Lorde, Donna Kate Rushin, Mitsuye Yamada, Cheryl Clarke, and Genny, Lim who fearlessly share their lived experiences and perspectives. [60] She also positions the anthology as a transnational feminist coalition-building tool for women of colour to challenge systemic inequalities and inspire action. More than a decade later, we can see how Joe Kadi's *Food for Our Grandmothers* overtly responds to the framework established by *This Bridge Called My Back* while adopting the same purpose and a similar structural approach. This choice is particularly significant, as *Food for Our Grandmothers* did not emerge in isolation but rather drew inspiration from the editorial strategies of *This Bridge Called My Back*, while also reacting to the exclusion of Arab women and their lack of representation in the anthology, which highlights how essential *Food for Our Grandmothers* was in creating space for those marginalized within the broader feminist discourse.

Although its sequel, *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation*,[61] tried to repair its predecessors' omissions by including all six Arab and Arab American contributors, it "was meant to pick up where the groundbreaking volume had left off."[62] However,

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[59] Cherrie Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa, eds., *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, (Kitchen Table, Women of Color Press, 1983): xxvi.
[60] M. Jacqui Alexander, *Pedagogies of Crossing: Meditations on Feminism, Sexual Politics, Memory, and the Sacred* (Duke University Press, 2005):207.
[61] Gloria Anzaldúa and AnaLouise Keating, eds., *This Bridge We Call Home: Radical Visions for Transformation* (Routledge, 2002).
[62] Nada Elia, "The Burden of Representation: When Palestinians Speak Out," in *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Asultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 151.

Nada Elia explains in her essay how it not only strayed very far from the spirit of its parent but also included white contributors of both genders, and worst of all was that during an online discussion between the contributors, the Arab American women were silenced and insulted when discussing the Israeli occupation of Palestine.[63] Elia explains how "The centrality of the Palestinian issue to women of colour generally—namely, the fact that we are a colonized people seeking to break through the distorted hegemonic narrative that either completely erases or totally misrepresents us—was once again pushed to the margins."[64] Elia goes on to state that Arab feminists promised themselves not to be disheartened, to narrate "center-stage," never to fade away even when experiencing immense backlash, to shoulder the burden of representation, "and never to assume that those individuals claiming to follow in the footsteps of "radical women of colour" will necessarily bear some of the weight with us."[65]

It is within this same spirit of strength, resilience, and resistance that twelve years later, *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance* emerged. This work can be seen as a homage to *Food for Our Grandmothers*, as it follows a feminist structure, includes multi-genre contributions, and centralizes Palestine, given that the editors, Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, are both Palestinian and have brought forward many Palestinian voices. Moreover, in the editors' co-authored introduction to the anthology's final section, titled "Liberation from

[63] Nada Elia, "The Burden of Representation: When Palestinians Speak Out," in *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Asultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 153. "Despite our most articulate arguments, we were unable to bring these contributors to an understanding that the Palestinian denunciation of the Zionist policy of illegal occupation, dispossession, and racial discrimination stemmed not from anti-Semitism but from women of color's desire to be free of multiple sites of oppression. The anti-Arab rhetoric kept coming, unprovoked."
[64] Nada Elia, "The Burden of Representation: When Palestinians Speak Out," in *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Asultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 154.
[65] Nada Elia, "The Burden of Representation: When Palestinians Speak Out," in *Arab and Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, ed. Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Asultany, and Nadine Naber (Syracuse University Press, 2011), p. 155.

Within,"[66] they draw inspiration from Black feminists, particularly Patricia Hill Collins' concept of resistance as self-definition and self-valuation. They assert that "the contributions do no less than liberate our voices, and thus redeem our humanity as Arab women."[67] The editors emphasize the transformative power of language and self-expression in challenging and overcoming systems of oppression. Through acts of creative resistance, the narratives reclaim agency over Arab women's voices and experiences, challenging dominant narratives and oppressive structures by "talking back."[68] Additionally, they dismantle oppressive linguistic structures and stereotypes by "breaking apart the very language we use,"[69] aiming to reclaim their humanity and right to self-representation. These narratives challenge and transform the portrayals of oppressed communities as lacking full human subjectivity,[70] asserting instead their rightful place as active agents of their own identities and futures.

iii. Challenges of Arab-Canadian literary production

The challenges and limitations that Arab-Canadian literary production faces, particularly in gaining mainstream recognition, are the focus of study for Elizabeth Dahab in *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature*. Her aim in this book is to delineate a canon of Arab-Québécois literature and advocate for its inclusion as part of Canadian literature, dismantling stereotypes and broadening the scope of multicultural discourse. Dahab argues in her essay "On the Poetics of Arab-Canadian Literature in French and English" that although there are Arab-Canadians "in all genres over 150 books covering styles of writings ranging from the realist

[66] Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, eds., "Liberation from Within," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 185.
[67] Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, eds., "Liberation from Within," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 187.
[68] Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, eds., "Liberation from Within," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 187.
[69] Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa, eds., "Liberation from Within," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 187.
[70] Patricia Hill Collins, "Learning from the Outsider Within: The Sociological Significance of Black Feminist Thought," in *Just Methods: An Interdisciplinary Feminist Reader*, ed. Alison M. Jaggar (Boulder, 2007), 310.

to the postmodernist,"[71] most people remain unfamiliar with this literary production. She identifies three phases of Arab-Canadian literature: an initial phase marked by nostalgia and longing, a second phase focusing on trauma and reconciliation, and a third phase characterized by transcendence and opposition.[72]

Arab-Québécois writers, as minorities within a minority, face unique challenges in navigating the dominant literary systems in Canada. The reluctance to acknowledge anglophone literature within Quebec further complicates this landscape, reflecting broader tensions between preserving French heritage and embracing multicultural diversity. Despite these challenges, Dahab's work highlights how Arab-Canadian literature enriches Quebec's cultural context, challenging the selective acceptance within its multicultural ethos.

Moreover, Michelle Hartman explores the prevailing "tendency to perceive the majority of novels authored by Arab Canadians and Arab Quebecois as individual exceptions within the context of multiculturalism and/or interculturalism."[73] This perspective often overlooks their literary merit, thereby significantly influencing their reception and circulation. This exceptionalism also mirrors the reception of people coded as immigrants, who are received more warmly as individuals rather than as communities.[74] Debates about literary excellence further complicate these dynamics, often called the canon wars, where formalism and aesthetics are traditionally seen as opposed to content addressing race, sexism, and power. In this context, Arab feminist diasporic cultural production deserves recognition within the literary canon, as these

[71] Elizabeth Dahab, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature* (Lexington Books, 2009): viii-ix.
[72] Elizabeth F. Dahab, "On the Poetics of Arab-Canadian Literature in French and English," in *The Oxford Handbook of Canadian Literature*, ed. Cynthia Sugars (Oxford University Press, 2016).
[73] Michelle Hartman, "Canada," in *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*, ed. Waïl S. Hassan (Oxford University Press, 2017): 4.
[74] Himani Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender* (Canadian Scholars' Press Inc., 2000): 107.

works, along with the people they represent, possess inherent literary merit that extends beyond mere spectacle or denigration.

Titles focusing on women and feminist themes affirm their literary contributions, for example, *Voices in the Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers*[75] or the two anthologies object of this study, *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance* and *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*. These three anthologies leverage their hyphenated identities within their titles and narratives to affirm and celebrate their literary contributions.

Standing in stark contrast to these anthologies are the mainstream, mass-market portrayals of Muslim and Arab women in commercial publishing, depicting their brutal treatment in memoirs and other forms of pulp nonfiction, yet enjoy widespread popularity and commercial success.[76] Lila Abu-Lughod in *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* analyzes how such books, often sensational and extreme, are marketed within a specific political context. These mainstream literary representations do more than recycle old Orientalist tropes; they serve as contemporary vehicles for political agendas. These works, she argues, not only perpetuate stereotypes of Arab and Muslim women as victims or exotic others but also align readers with the political machinations that justify interventions in Muslim-majority countries.[77] She highlights the dangerous interplay between literature and politics, where the consumption of such narratives becomes a tacit endorsement of militaristic policies against Muslim communities, by explaining how

> popular literary representations define views and structure feelings about Muslim women and their rights. Memoirs and other forms of pulp nonfiction are not just texts whose themes and tropes relate to earlier popular travel and missionary literature on Muslim women.[78]

[75] Elizabeth Dahab, ed., *Voices in the Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers* (Guernica Editions, 2002).
[76] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 106.
[77] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 115.
[78] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 106.

This alignment with political agendas fosters a climate of suspicion and hostility toward Arabs and Muslims, increasing Islamophobia, contributing to a cycle of fear, hatred, and the profiling of Muslim men even within their home countries.[79] Throughout her analysis, she unpacks and gives examples of how the publishing industry and these writers are used for political purposes.

> This industry commissions and promotes a genre of books that one can identify, and judge, by their covers. We see them at airport bookstores. The copycat images are of women wearing black or white veils, showing only their eyes—or sometimes one eye. The titles are variations on a theme: *A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia; Sold: One Woman's True Account of Modern Slavery; My Forbidden Face; Without Mercy; Burned Alive; Married by Force.*[80]

The focus on sexual abuse in these memoirs has elevated their authors to celebrated activists despite the often-poor quality of writing.[81] They are not merely reflections of earlier popular travel and missionary literature about Muslim women; they are also commercial products shaped by specific political contexts in which publishers market them, and readers consume them.[82]

Despite *Food for Our Grandmothers*' cultural and literary impact, it went out of print in 2014 with the closure of South End Press. South End Press was established in 1977 by Michael Albert, Lydia Sargent, and Juliet Schor, and was named after the Boston neighbourhood where it operated. It was an independent, non-profit publishing house based on a participatory economics framework. Although the press specialized in releasing works by prominent political activists and established authors such as Arundhati Roy, Noam Chomsky, bell hooks, Winona LaDuke, Manning Marable, Ward Churchill, Cherríe Moraga, Andrea Smith, Howard Zinn, Jeremy Brecher, and Scott Tucker, it struggled to sustain itself financially.[83]

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[79] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 106.
[80] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 79.
[81] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 95-96.
[82] Lila Abu-Lughod, *Do Muslim Women Need Saving?* (Harvard University Press, 2013): 106.
[83] "South End Press." *Wikipedia*, Wikimedia Foundation, 25 Oct. 2022, en.wikipedia.org/wiki/South_End_Press.

Until today, the bulk of Arab diaspora anthologies have been published by independent, university, or literary presses with distinct audiences, editorial styles, and limited circulation. In this relatively limited publishing scene, these anthologies enjoy greater editorial freedom and rarely attain the mass circulation commonly associated with mainstream publishers. In his analysis of Canadian multicultural literatures in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*, Graham Huggan explains:

> It seems worth noting, though, that the majority of these anthologies have been put out by smaller presses, and are often heavily dependent on state subsidies, whereas more mainstream publishers—Penguin and HarperCollins, for example—have sometimes appeared to favour multicultural writers who *distance* themselves from their ethnic origins.[84]

Huggan describes the smaller presses that have been crucial in publishing Arab diaspora anthologies, noting that these presses often operate with limited circulation and rely on grants and subsidies. This situation applies to both *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami*, which were each published by small independent presses.

Within this context, many Arab-Canadian writers find themselves unpublishable or published by non-mainstream publishers. This mainstream refusal to include Arab writers in literary production prompted many to create their own independent presses and literary magazines to establish their own cultural production. Rostom Publishing and Éditions Naaman are two examples of publishing houses founded to increase the representation of Arab-Canadian authors.

Many Arab Canadians published literary magazines along with their presses, like Saad Elkhadem, who is always considered to be, as Michelle Hartman states, the first Arab-Canadian literary figure referred to in histories of the tradition.[85] He founded York Press in 1974, a bilingual

[84] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (Routledge, 2001; Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003): 133.
[85] Michelle Hartman, "Canada," in *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*, ed. Waïl S. Hassan (Oxford University Press, 2017): 4.

Arabic-English press and *The International Fiction Review* in 1975.[86] Similarly, Kamal Rostom founded Rostom Publishing in 1984 in Ottawa, where he published translations of his own Arabic writing and that of others in French or English. Also of Arab origins, Anne-Marie Alonzo co-founded Editions Trois in Laval in 1985 with the Quebecois Main Laframboise, along with their bilingual literary review, *Trois*. Antoine Naaman was another Arab Canadian professor, writer, researcher, critic, analyst, thinker and publisher. He founded Editions Cosmos in 1969 and managed Editions Naaman from 1973 onwards, along with the biannual publication *Presence francophone*, and a quarterly, *Écriture française dans le monde*.[87] These bilingual and trilingual literary outputs of Arab-Canadian writers and presses not only enrich the Canadian cultural fabric but also challenge traditional literary classifications.

The systemic barriers Arab-Canadian writers face within the mainstream Canadian publishing industry prompts, as shown above, many Arab-Canadian writers and intellectuals to create spaces for their voices to be heard. By founding independent presses and literary magazines, they bypass traditional publishing barriers to bring Arab-Canadian literature to readers. These initiatives, such as Rostom Publishing, Éditions Naaman, York Press, and Éditions Trois, serve not only as platforms for publishing Arab-Canadian writers but also play a crucial role in fostering a diverse literary culture. They enable the publication of works that might otherwise remain unseen, offering their community and future Arab diasporic writers the freedom to explore their identity, heritage, and experiences without the constraints imposed by mainstream publishing norms. Moreover, these independent presses and their associated literary magazines have been instrumental in establishing a cultural production ecosystem that values diversity and

[86] Elizabeth Dahab, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature* (Lexington Books, 2009): 18.
[87] Elizabeth Dahab, *Voices of Exile in Contemporary Canadian Francophone Literature* (Lexington Books, 2009): 18.

representation. They signify a form of resistance against the mainstream literary market's exclusionary practices, contributing to the enrichment of Canada's literary landscape

This same dynamic of seeking alternative platforms is echoed in the publication of the two anthologies studied here, published by Innana and South End Press. This collaborative approach involves banding together, where authors support one another through reviews, critiques, and joint promotional efforts, which fosters a vibrant, robust community of writers and thinkers united in their mission to produce impactful resistance literature for themselves and future generations. Their independent initiatives play a crucial role in resisting erasure, providing alternative platforms for cultural production that challenge the mainstream narrative while emphasizing the resilience and creativity of Arab-Canadian writers.

Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies, therefore, distinguish themselves in their refusal to conform to the mainstream multicultural narrative embraced by larger publishing entities. They operate similarly to other texts, such as those described by Mejdulene Bernard Shomali in *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives*, "the regional and personal modes of production, publication, and circulation in these texts are very much at odds" with the mass circulation commonly associated with mainstream publishers.[88]

iv. Arab-Canadian Anthologies as a Counter-Narrative

Anthologies as a literary form involve a delicate balancing act between various elements such as structure, theme, the number of contributors, and genre. Ideally, these components should coalesce to create a cohesive aesthetic. However, an overemphasis on one aspect at the expense of others can result in an anthology that fails to fulfill its literary and artistic objectives.

[88] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 120.

Critiques of anthologies often center on their potential lack of coherence, the dilution of literary quality, and the artistic compromises made to accommodate thematic or market concerns. The fragmented nature of anthologies, composed of multiple voices and styles, may disrupt narrative unity and aesthetic flow, leaving readers with a disjointed or surface-level reading experience. This can limit the depth of engagement with individual works, as anthologies often encourage intermittent reading rather than sustained immersion.

Furthermore, anthologies are sometimes criticized for reinforcing existing power dynamics, tokenizing contributors, or imposing restrictive editorial frameworks on diverse voices. The editorial process can introduce biases or exclusionary practices, where the collection may favor safe, palatable contributions over more experimental or avant-garde work. This tendency often arises from the commercial realities of large-scale publishing, where anthologies are produced and distributed by major publishers with significant influence over the literary marketplace.

Ultimately, these critiques highlight the challenges faced by anthologies in balancing inclusivity, literary innovation, and aesthetic coherence, all while navigating the pressures of the publishing industry. However, the anthologies studied here represent a critical counterpoint, which can be understood as resistance literature or *adab al-muqawama*, as coined by Ghassan Kanafani.[89] These types of literary works are produced in the context of political or social oppression, colonization, or conflict, and actively engage with, critique, and resist the dominant power structures.[90] As Frantz Fanon asserts, "You substantiate the existence of your culture in the fight

[89] Ghassan Kanafani, *Literature of Resistance in Occupied Palestine: 1948-1966, Adab al-Muqawama fī Filastin al-Muhtalla 1948-1966* (Dar Manshurat al-Rimal, 2015), 163.
[90] The Palestinian Arab is therefore resisting a cultural hegemony purported by Zionist Settler Colonialism in order to guard language, culture and tradition and land from colonialism. (Kanafani, 1966)

you wage against the forces of occupation,"[91] and this is how communities engage in armed struggle within their works of poetry, art and literature.[92] In the case of the Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies, the editors' selections depend on their interpretations of literary history, and the works chosen defy the canon, cross borders and contribute to the broader narrative of resistance. By offering alternative perspectives, preserving the collective memory of the community, and fostering a sense of identity and resilience in the face of adversity, they engage with and critique dominant power structures.

Positioned within Kanafani's concept of resistance literature, the Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies studied here transcend geographical boundaries and engage in a broader struggle against cultural hegemony. They embody the principles of resistance literature, as Kanafani repeatedly reiterates in his book, taḥaddi, which is defiance or confrontation, in how the contributions expose the violence of the Israeli state, make room for Palestinian agency and collectively summon liberated futures.[93] They not only contribute to shaping a global literary narrative but also function as instruments interrogating and challenging the evolving dynamics of canon formation through the study of global text circulation in publishing, translating, reviewing, teaching, and other practices. These anthologies, though published by smaller presses with limited circulation and reliant on grants and subsidies—a reality underscored by Huggan—transcend geographical confines, thereby asserting their place within world literature despite lacking mainstream commercial backing.

[91] Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, trans. Constance Farrington, preface by Jean-Paul Sartre (Grove Press, 1963): 223.
[92] Lama Hasan Jamaleddine, "Exploring Palestinian Resistance and Anti-Imperialist Solidarity through the Lens of Media" (MA thesis, American University of Beirut, July 2023): 29.
[93] Sanabel Abdelrahman, "Approaches to Palestinian Liberation: Magical Realism as Resistance Literature," *No-Niin, Essay*, May 2023, Issue 17.

Their role in world literature is further supported by Lawrence Venuti's analysis in *Hijacking Translation: How Comp Lit Continues to Suppress Translated Texts*. Venuti highlights the dynamic and multifaceted nature of world literature and how its influence and reception are not static but evolve over time, shaped by varying canons and margins. Within this analysis, he explains how an anthology that asserts the world literature label would

> show not only that the patterns of influence and reception constitutive of world literature are historically variable, coalescing in different canons and margins over time, but also that world literature involves diverse practices, including translation, adaptation, and editing, as well as diverse readerships, elite and popular, professional and pleasure-seeking.[94]

His analysis highlights the critical role of translation and cross-cultural engagement in enriching the literary landscape, emphasizing that world literature is a participatory and evolving field influenced by a plethora of voices and perspectives.

Similarly, Michelle Hartman discusses in "World Literatures and World Markets: The Translation Industry," how the translation and circulation of literary works by women from Arab and Islamic cultures are often shaped by asymmetrical power relations within the global literary market.[95] These dynamics result in the exoticization and subordination of such works, which are marketed not for their literary merit but for their perceived difference. Hartman highlights that the English-language literary market is particularly prone to this, with only a minuscule proportion of translated works originating from non-English languages, compared to European languages like French and Italian. This skewed representation reflects broader market-driven forces that prioritize works aligning with Western preconceptions about Islamic cultures, particularly those that focus

[94] Lawrence Venuti, "Hijacking Translation: How Comp Lit Continues to Suppress Translated Texts," *boundary 2*, 43, no. 2 (2016): 185.

[95] Michelle Hartman, "World Literatures and World Markets: The Translation Industry," in *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures*, edited by Suad Joseph (Brill, 2013).

on themes like the oppression of women.[96] Venuti further emphasizes the importance of these anthologies in questioning and exploring the dynamics of literary reception and influence across cultures. As he explains,

> a reception-oriented anthology could pose such questions as why, in the current Anglophone canon of world literature, writers like Orhan Pamuk, Roberto Bolaño, and Yoko Tawada have displaced Italo Calvino, Gabriel García Márquez, and Assia Djebar as focuses of interest. It might even be able to explore differences in the worldwide reception of a particular contemporary writer, say, Lydia Davis or Haruki Murakami, by juxtaposing selected translations (along with annotated English versions) and sampling critical commentary.[97]

Venuti emphasizes how the categorization of literary works under "World Literature" often exacerbates the marginalization of non-Western texts. Similar to Hartman, he argues that the marketing of these works relies heavily on ethnographic Orientalism, where texts by women from Islamic cultures are flattened and stripped of their complexity to fit Western narratives of difference. As Hartman and Venuti both note, this commodification of "Third World difference" serves not to foster transcultural communication but to reinforce existing power structures within the global literary market.

Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies, however, resist these reductive categorizations by challenging the very structures that seek to marginalize them. By embracing Kanafani's notion of literature as defiance, these anthologies assert their place within the canon of resistance literature, actively contesting the forces that seek to exoticize and diminish their contributions by embodying translation, adaptation, and editing practices, these anthologies not only navigate but also redefine the geographical and cultural boundaries of literature. They democratize access to diverse narratives by catering to a wide spectrum of readerships, from the academic elite to popular

[96] Michelle Hartman, "World Literatures and World Markets: The Translation Industry," in *Encyclopedia of Women & Islamic Cultures*, edited by Suad Joseph (Brill, 2013).
[97] Lawrence Venuti, "Hijacking Translation: How Comp Lit Continues to Suppress Translated Texts," *boundary 2*, 43, no. 2 (2016): 185.

audiences. They contribute to the expansion of the literary canon by recognizing their transnational relevance and acknowledging their role in including diverse and underrepresented narratives. Moreover, they challenge the static nature of canon formation and invite readers and scholars to engage with a spectrum of local, context-specific expressions of Arab and Arab diasporic literatures.

In this context, Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies are not merely literary works but acts of resistance that align with Kanafani's vision of literature as a powerful tool for defiance and liberation. They resist the canonization processes, asserting their rightful place within both world literature and the broader context of resistance literature.

v. Arab-Canadian Anthologies and the Global Literary Canon

Building on Venuti's insights about the necessity of broadening the scope of world literature through critical reception analysis, Graham Huggan underscores the vital role of anthologists in multicultural settings, such as Canada and Australia, in further enriching this literary domain. His analysis in *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* commends anthologists, especially those from ethnic minority backgrounds in Canada and Australia, who "have consistently shown their awareness of the dangers of condescension implicit in a politics of minority literary labelling."[98] This acknowledgment underlines the critical role anthologists play in the global literary dialogue as they skillfully curate diverse voices and navigate the complex terrain of world literature with a keen awareness of the pitfalls associated with minority literary labelling. Such careful stewardship is crucial in avoiding condescension or tokenism, thereby enriching the global literary landscape with varied and genuine narratives. This commitment to authentic representation plays a pivotal role in navigating the complexities of diaspora, immigrant,

[98] Graham Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins* (Routledge, 2001; Taylor & Francis e-Library, 2003): 134.

refugee, ethnic, minority, minor, mineur, and marginalized literatures, which all contribute to the terrain of world literature, cosmopolitanism, and globality.

The myriad terms coupled with literature such as "diaspora," "immigrant," "refugee," "ethnic," "minority," "minor," "mineur," and "marginalized" is a result of how groups of people are positioned and defined on the peripheries of mainstream literary canons. We can even add Spivak's "subaltern" and Bakhtin's "hybrid" paired with the word "literature" to reflect a certain discourse or to frame an argument. This naming is sometimes associated with their voluntary or involuntary movement from one country to another, their cultural or ethnic identities, or their status within the societies they inhabit. The literature from these groups delves into the complexities of cultural navigation, belonging, and resistance against oppression. Each term might be associated with certain themes by publishers for marketing purposes or by the State to differentiate its relationship with residents. Writers of colour, especially women and LGBTQ+ individuals, use their work to resist marginalization and tokenization within the literary domain. The emphasis on cultural production as a site of resistance and material struggle signifies the power of Arab feminist and diasporic literature to transcend mere representation, advocating for a reconceptualization of the canon that recognizes the inherent value and merit of diverse literary voices.

The authenticity of being "Arab" was crucial for Arab-Canadian writing to retain its distinctiveness within the multicultural spectrum. This emphasis on authentic representation and the struggle against liberal multiculturalism's dominance reveals a complex landscape where Arab-Canadian writers strive for recognition of their cultural contributions as inherently valuable and deserving of canonical status. Moreover, the establishment of Arabic studies in Canadian academia signified the growing presence and influence of the Arab-Canadian diaspora, fostering a connection through shared cultural and linguistic heritage. As pointed out by Kamal Rostom in

his introduction to the anthology *Arab-Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences,* "the establishment of the formal study of Arabic in several Canadian colleges and universities, and often their participation in them"[99] not only reinforced the linguistic ties that bind the Arab-Canadian community to its roots but also served as a vital bridge for younger generations seeking to connect with their heritage. This expansion of formal Arabic education continued to develop through the intersection of Muslim Canadian Studies and Arab-Canadian cultural studies, which prompted consideration of how its application would impact Arab-Canadian literature.

This interaction of diverse literatures with the overarching concepts of world literature, cosmopolitanism, and globality enhances our understanding of the global literary landscape. It prompts a critical reevaluation of what constitutes "world literature," urging an expansion of the canon to encompass voices that articulate universal themes through distinctly localized experiences. Moreover, these literatures illuminate the discourse on globality — the intricate web of global interconnectedness. They reveal how localized experiences are influenced by and contribute to global forces, thereby enriching the dialogue on cultural exchanges and the plurality of voices within the global narrative.

Gesine Müller and Mariano Siskind critique the tokenistic inclusion of literatures in world literary studies, advocating for a more nuanced and inclusive approach that genuinely appreciates the complexity and diversity of global cultures. In *World Literature, Cosmopolitanism, Globality Beyond, Against, Post, Otherwise*, they state that "Literatures which entered world literary studies, debates and anthologies as a result of a tokenist logic according to which supposedly stereotypical texts established a metonymic relation with the totality of the culture they were supposed to

[99] Kamal Rostom, ed., *Arab-Canadian Writing: Stories, Memoirs, and Reminiscences* (York Press Ltd., 1989): 9.

express."[100] It calls for re-evaluating how literatures are selected and presented within the world literary canon, advocating for a broader, more inclusive approach that appreciates the complexity and diversity of global cultures specifically the position of Arab and Arab diasporic literatures globally.

In such cases, readers can then engage not only in reinterpreting the significance of Arab literature worldwide but also in critically examining how the world is conceptualized and produced from an Arab perspective. Mejdulene B. Shomali, in *Scheherazade and the Limits of Inclusive Politics in Arab American Literature*, discusses the development of Arab-American literature and the roles that anthologies played. She explains how

> the '90s witnessed a flourishing of the Arab-American literary scene in the form of numerous collections that sought to establish Arab-Americans through the creation of a minor literature. These anthologies, like *Post-Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry*, and *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* highlighted poetry as heritage for Arab writers while attempting to situate Arabs alongside other minority groups in the US.[101]

The emergence of these anthologies signifies a critical moment of cultural assertion and visibility for Arab-Americans. They not only showcased their literary talents but also aimed to secure a place for Arab-Americans within the broader context of American literature.

Similarly, Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies offer a critical examination of the superficial treatment of multiculturalism in North America, advocating for a deeper and more nuanced understanding of cultural identity. These works highlight the detrimental effects of

[100] Gesine Müller and Mariano Siskind, eds., *World Literature, Cosmopolitanism, Globality: Beyond, Against, Post, Otherwise* (Walter de Gruyter, 2019): 2.
[101] Mejdulene B. Shomali, "Scheherazade and the Limits of Inclusive Politics in Arab American Literature," *MELUS: The Society for the Study of the Multi-Ethnic Literature of the United States,* 43, no. 1 (Oxford University Press, Spring 2018): 67.

orientalist and exoticizing narratives on the perception of Arab and Muslim women, calling for portrayals that are more authentic and reflective of their true experiences.

The complexities surrounding Arab and Arab-Canadian identities can be understood through Arabness, Arab-Diaspora hyphenated identities, and self-representation among Arab-Canadians and Arab-Canadian feminists. Language and literature dynamics—encompassing arabophone, anglophone, francophone, allophone, Quebecois, and translation considerations—further enrich these identifiers. By unpacking how these two anthologies delineate identity by sometimes including writers from outside the Arab region, such as Iran and Turkey, I address and unpack the geographical and terminological challenges, including the preference for some anthologies to use decolonial terms like "SWANA" over colonial designations like the "Middle East" or "Fertile Crescent."

Using identifiers such as "MENA" in political and economic contexts, but not in literary circles, highlights the tension between specificity and broader categorization. While broader identifiers like Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) can align with Canadian multiculturalism, they risk oversimplifying and homogenizing diverse identities, neglecting specificities and erasing intersecting aspects like racism, settler colonialism, gender, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. In contrast, identifiers such as Arab-Canadian-Feminists-Feminisms enrich the literary community through its specificity by fostering solidarity and expanding collective knowledge.

Furthermore, they emphasize the significant cultural contributions made by Arab-Canadian communities, arguing that their recognition transcends simplistic categorizations as foreigners or minorities. The role of independent publishers in bringing diaspora literatures to the forefront is acknowledged, yet the discussion also brings to light the challenges these publishers face regarding

sustainability. For these reasons, Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies are positioned as resistance literature, since they actively contest prevailing narratives and make substantial contributions to the discourse of global literature. Through these multifaceted efforts, these anthologies not only challenge the status quo but also pave the way for a more inclusive and equitable literary landscape. Thus, Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies stand as pivotal contributions to world literature, cosmopolitanism, and globality, asserting the complexity and vibrancy of Arab diasporic narratives in shaping a more inclusive and representative global literary canon.

Chapter 2:
Arab-Canadian Feminist Anthologies and Their Challenge to Multiculturalism: Fostering Community and Cultural Identity

i. Cultural Identity and Its Impact

Arab feminist diasporic anthologies distinguish themselves from other anthologies of Arabic literature by foregrounding a feminist perspective that intertwines with issues of race, identity, and community. They do not merely celebrate cultural differences; they critically engage with how Arab and Muslim identities are constructed and contested within the Canadian context. By doing so, they expose the limitations of official multiculturalism, which often fails to address the lived experiences of systemic racism and exclusion that these communities encounter. In Michelle Hartman's essay "Grandmothers, Grape Leaves, and Kahlil Gibran: Writing Race in Anthologies of Arab-American Literature," she examines how three Arab-American anthologies address the complex dynamics of race. She argues that these diasporic anthologies "take the responsibility of articulating notions of Arab-American identity and community seriously," [102] engaging in a rigorous critique of how race informs their literary projects.

Hartman's analysis demonstrates how these anthologies serve a dual function: fostering a sense of community among diasporic populations and simultaneously challenging and disrupting dominant narratives about race and identity within the diaspora. By addressing the complexities of race and identity, they contest and subvert the often monolithic and reductive portrayals of Arab and Muslim communities in the broader societal discourse. This critical engagement underscores the role of these anthologies in both preserving and redefining communal bonds, while also

[102] Michelle Hartman, "Grandmothers, Grape Leaves, and Kahlil Gibran: Writing Race in Anthologies of Arab-American Literature," in *Race and Arab-Americans Before and After 9/11: From Invisible Citizens to Visible Subjects* (Syracuse University Press, 2008): 176.

resisting and reshaping the hegemonic narratives that seek to marginalize and stereotype these communities.

This focus on community-building is not unique to the anthologies Hartman analyzes; it is a common thread in other works, such as *Dinarzad's Children*, where writers have "sustained the integrity of their communities through their stories, letting the outside world into their world and providing a sense of community for their kin."[103] These North American Arab feminist anthologies thus serve as crucial platforms for diasporic voices, creating new dialogues around identity and community that challenge and reframe mainstream narratives. Through this lens, we can see how these anthologies not only foster a shared sense of cultural identity but also resist and complicate the simplistic narratives of Canadian multiculturalism, which often frames cultural diversity within a narrative of harmonious coexistence. This approach, while well-intentioned, can sometimes overlook the complex realities of power, exclusion, and marginalization that these communities continue to face.

This section will further explore how these anthologies engage with Hartman's concept of local-global contexts, Elsadda's notion of situated knowledge, Geesey's idea of the "in-between" space, and Franklin's view of the critical bridge between theory and activism. Together, these concepts will show how Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies foster a sense of community and cultural identity that challenges Canadian multiculturalism.

The feminist angle through which Arab feminist diasporic anthologies set themselves apart translates into a pronounced commitment to inclusivity and solidarity, emphasized by their conscientious integration of the socioeconomic and political contexts surrounding the production of literary works. This awareness of "glocal" spaces, where the interplay of global and local forces

[103] Pauline Kaldas and Khaled Mattawa, eds., *Dinarzad's Children: An Anthology of Contemporary Arab American Fiction* (University of Arkansas Press, 2009): xx.

complicates notions of belonging and cultural identity,[104] is particularly vital in the post-Gulf wars and post-9/11 era, where Muslims and Arabs became targets under the guise of a worldwide "war on terror." These events not only occurred in their home countries but were also magnified, distorted, and sensationalized by racist, imperialist, Zionist, and violent Western media campaigns.

Within this context, these anthologies navigate spaces where global and local forces intersect, complicating notions of belonging and cultural identity. Hartman provides a real-life example of how these local-global connections manifest in the Canadian context when students protest against the Israeli occupation of Palestine while standing in solidarity with Indigenous Peoples' struggle against settler colonialism.[105] These Arab-Canadian communities actively engage in social justice issues both within and beyond Canada.[106] This activism is currently visible in the ongoing protests against the genocide in Palestine, which has galvanized the Arab-Canadian communities, fostering coalitions of support among all oppressed groups. This intersectional solidarity not only strengthens the community's collective resistance but also underscores the interconnectedness of global struggles against oppression and colonialism.

By engaging in these transnational and local struggles, Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies challenge the superficial narratives of multiculturalism in Canada. They do so by fostering a more nuanced and critical understanding of cultural identity—one that recognizes the complexities and intersections of race, gender, and power in a multicultural society. That is why the authors included in these Arab feminist anthologies frequently reference personal, cultural, historical, and political

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[104] Kristian Shaw, "'A Passport to Cross the Room': Cosmopolitan Empathy and Transnational Engagement in Zadie Smith's NW (2012)," *C21 Literature: Journal of 21st-Century Writings,* 5, no. 1 (2017): 5.
[105] "In the summer of 2014, amidst demonstrations against the Israeli army's war on Gaza, the streets of Montreal rang out with the chant "From Turtle Island to Palestine, occupation is a crime." This chant connects the struggles of Indigenous Peoples for liberation and self-determination and shows how Arab and non-Arab people in North America (Turtle Island) themselves are linking the local and the global." Michelle Hartman, "Canada," in *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*, ed. Waïl S. Hassan (Oxford University Press, 2017): 1.
[106] Michelle Hartman, "Canada," in *The Oxford Handbook of Arab Novelistic Traditions*, ed. Waïl S. Hassan (Oxford University Press, 2017): 1.

realities from their, or their parents' countries of origin. Contrary to conventional expectations, their narratives do not reflect a simplistic nostalgia or a straightforward relief at having escaped to the Western world. Instead, they present a nuanced expression of how the "old" and "new" worlds are intertwined.[107] This approach carries significant implications. Firstly, it challenges the assumption that "the West" is the central point, redefining the periphery and highlighting the human cost of Western policies. This de-centred worldview emphasizes the value of human life with narratives that affirm that events occurring "there" are intricately connected to events "here."[108]

Hoda Elsadda takes this further by stating that "knowledge produced in the margins of power is often more in touch with specific realities and therefore a 'situated knowledge,' that can potentially create new possibilities and 'new epistemologies,' can work toward changing existing power relations."[109] These anthologies, by bridging theoretical frameworks with activism, not only provide a platform for marginalized voices but also create a critical space where new forms of knowledge can emerge and challenge dominant power structures. Many diasporic anthologies thus adopt an activist role, framing their feminism within broader socio-political contexts and encouraging readers and writers to engage in collective action for social change.[110] This activist role manifests vividly in the Canadian context, where the artistic and cultural scenes intertwine with immigration histories and reflect this energy. These narratives not only capture the complexities of identity and belonging but also serve as powerful tools to challenge prevailing stereotypes and advocate for a more inclusive and empathetic world.

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[107] David Williams, "This Hyphen Called My Spinal Cord: Arab-American Literature at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *World Literature Today* 81, no. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2007): 55.
[108] David Williams, "This Hyphen Called My Spinal Cord: Arab-American Literature at the Beginning of the 21st Century," *World Literature Today* 81, no. 1 (Jan. - Feb. 2007): 55.
[109] Hoda Elsadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel: Egypt, 1892-2008,* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012).
[110] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "New Directions: Arab American Writing at Century's End," in *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, ed. Akash Munir and Khaled Mattawa (Syracuse University Press, 1999):134.

This engagement with global and local dynamics and the situated knowledge that challenges power structures aligns with Patricia Geesey's concept of a "new discursive territory," articulated in her essay, "Identity and Community in Autobiographies of Algerian Women in France," where "texts that seek to reformulate the debates on assimilation, integration, cultural and identity politics within a new discursive territory."[111] By situating identity formation within this "new discursive territory," these texts create spaces for alternative narratives and voices that resist dominant cultural discourses.[112] Within this space, traditional notions of assimilation and integration are questioned, allowing for more nuanced and multifaceted understandings of identity. This new territory enables authors to negotiate their cultural identities in ways that resist simplistic categorizations and embrace the complexities of their lived experiences. It allows for a more dynamic interplay between different cultural influences, fostering a sense of belonging that is not tied to a single, dominant narrative. According to Geesey, this is because these texts, like the anthologies studied here, "resist appropriation and (re)inscription into the dominant discourse toward an "in-between" space between assimilation and alterity."[113] Geesey explains further how, because of the politics of readership and reception,[114] this "in-between" space transcends national and cultural limitations and is a self-defined space writers made for themselves.[115] This "in-

[111] Patricia Geesey, "Identity and Community in Autobiographies of Algerian Women in France," in Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2014): 17.
[112] This aligns with Stuart's Hall definition of cultural identities as fluid and subject to the continuous play of history, media, audiences, socio-political contexts, culture, and power. Stuart Hall and Paul Du Gay, eds., *Questions of Cultural Identity* (SAGE Publications, 1996): 4.
[113] Patricia Geesey, "Identity and Community in Autobiographies of Algerian Women in France," in Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2014): 198.
[114] The ways in which readers' backgrounds, identities, and societal contexts influence the interpretation and acceptance of literary works as described in *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers.*
[115] Patricia Geesey, "Identity and Community in Autobiographies of Algerian Women in France," in Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2014):198.

between" space, with its awareness of local and global dynamics and its situated knowledge, also builds a powerful site of resistance where Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies can redefine the terms of belonging and identity on their own terms. By doing so, these anthologies, I believe, effectively challenge the hegemony of official multicultural narratives in Canada, asserting a more complex and self-determined vision of community and cultural identity that resists easy categorization and appropriation.

Furthermore, as Franklin emphasizes, these spaces serve as critical bridges between theory and activism, where multi-genre feminist anthologies unite diverse communities and resist oppressive power dynamics. By bridging the gap between academia and the 'real world,' [116] these anthologies demonstrate their capacity to be more inclusive by providing a platform for collective voices and reinforcing the shared sense of purpose among their readership. This, in turn, strengthens their resistance to oppressive national and cultural power structures, further solidifying their role as agents of social change within the broader landscape of Canadian multiculturalism.

This thesis argues that *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* have served as essential sites for Arab women to connect, engage in dialogue, and challenge mainstream narratives by articulating their identities and communities. Through these anthologies, Arab-Canadian feminist voices contribute to a shared sense of purpose and a collective resistance against dominant cultural discourses. By integrating Hartman's concept of local-global contexts, Elsadda's notion of situated knowledge, Geesey's idea of the "in-between" space, and Franklin's view of the critical bridge between theory and activism, these anthologies foster a sense of community and cultural identity that directly challenges and redefines Canadian multiculturalism.

[116] Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):5.

ii. Arab Women's Relationships with Feminism: Expressing Transnational Solidarity with Women of Colour

Arab feminist diasporic anthologies have an additional explicit goal of fostering connections and solidarity with other feminists of colour and defining Arab women's relationships to feminism. This goal of building alliances across different feminist movements is vividly expressed in the anthology *Arab and Arab-American Feminisms Gender, Violence, and Belonging,* as a form of "alliance building between Arab and Arab-American feminists, on the one hand, and Native feminists, U.S. feminists of colour, diasporic feminists from the global South, and feminists in other parts of the world who struggle for justice and peace, on the other."[117] This transnational feminist coalition building is common to other Arab feminist anthologies. For instance, *Min Fami* acknowledges this continuum, stating, "To the feminists of colour who have struggled, written, and breathed liberation before us. We are highly indebted to you and hope to keep your fire alive."[118] Such expressions of gratitude and solidarity highlight the deep connections between Arab feminists and other women of colour, reflecting a shared commitment to resisting oppression and striving for justice across borders.

Ghadeer Malek's metaphorical invocation of "building mountains out of books"[119] in her introduction "Hesitations" vividly encapsulates the cumulative and collaborative essence of feminist literature, underlining a dynamic process of collective voice-building, where each book acts as a foundational stone in a larger edifice of shared knowledge, experience, and resistance. She states,

> I have learned that it is important to build mountains out of books and scream out from their cliffs so our voices can echo off each other; (…) Putting together *Min Fami* meant

[117] Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Christine Naber, eds., *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, & Belonging* (Syracuse University Press, 2011): xxxv.
[118] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): xiv.
[119] Ghadeer Malek, "Hesitations" in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 5.

> recognizing what came before us, affirming writings spurting alongside of us, and being part of a base on which future books are to stack themselves.[120]

This imagery of mountains formed from books, with voices echoing from their cliffs, emphasizes the strength and power of collective expression and the resonant impact it can have across time and space. It suggests that by linking one's voice in concert with others, the message not only carries further but also strengthens the bonds within the community. Malek's assertion that "Arab feminist writing does not exist in isolation" highlights the interconnectedness of feminist narratives. "Affirming writings spurting alongside of us" points to the importance of solidarity with contemporary voices, recognizing that the struggle is ongoing and that current contributions are vital to the movement's vitality and relevance. Finally, being "part of a base on which future books are to stack themselves" speaks to the editors' awareness of their role in the broader narrative of feminist solidarity, understanding that their contributions lay the groundwork for future feminist discourses and actions.

This transnational solidarity also serves as a critique of the limitations and oppressive tendencies of global feminism. In *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers*, Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj articulate it as "historicizing Third World women's cultural production as a way of counteracting the homogenizing tendencies of both global feminism and postcolonialism."[121] The creative and intellectual output of women from the Global South is affected by colonization, economic exploitation, or political marginalization. Global feminism, I argue, dominated by white feminists, erases and silences the specificities of Third World women's experiences and struggles and does not factor in race, class, sexuality, culture,

[120] Ghadeer Malek, "Hesitations," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 5.
[121] Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (Routledge, 2014): 18.

and geography. Similarly, postcolonialism as a field of study can sometimes overlook or generalize people's diverse experiences in formerly colonised regions, treating them as a monolithic group rather than acknowledging the unique contexts and histories of different communities. The shift toward a transnational perspective within feminist theory, as exemplified by the writings of Chandra Mohanty, Gayatri Spivak, Inderpal Grewal, Ella Shohat, and other scholars, reinforced the importance of understanding how race, class, colonial history, and global power dynamics shape women's lives in different ways across the world including the intersectionality of various forms of oppression, sexism, racism, classism. Transnational feminist theory also included the effects of globalization, including how economic policies, migration, and transnational labour and capital flows affect women differently across various contexts. By focusing on the experiences and voices of women in the Global South, transnational feminism decentered Western feminist narratives. However, it encouraged solidarity and coalition-building across national and cultural boundaries of the Global South, uniting women in collective action for justice and equality. Both anthologies studied here align themselves with this broader transnational feminist perspective and, through their literary production, actively contribute to the critical discourse that challenges and expands the boundaries of feminist theory on a global scale.

Not only do the specific literary strategies employed by these anthologies embody transnational feminist principles, but I argue that they also employ unique narrative techniques and literary tools to address and resist homogenizing tendencies. One of these tools is the concept of hyphenated identities, which bridges diverse cultural and social contexts, thereby fostering a sense of interconnectedness and transnational solidarity. These hyphenated identities—whether based on gender, language, nationhood, or a combination of these—align the content with the specificity of the title; however, such choices carry significant implications. For instance, *Voices in the*

Desert: An Anthology of Arabic-Canadian Women Writers could more accurately be titled "An Anthology of Arab-Francophone-Quebecois Women Writers," since nearly all contributors have been translated from French into English, with the exception of one writer from Ontario. The use of the hyphenated identity "*Arabic-Canadian Women*" in this context intersects with language and regional distinctions yet fails to account for Quebec's distinctiveness, homogenizing Quebec and French by subsuming it under the Canadian label, thus erasing the specificity of the Quebecois contributors. Additionally, the term "Arabic" is problematic because it replaces "Arab" in this context since Arabic usually references the language, not the ethnicity; this further complicates the anthology's representation. The title "Voices in the Desert" is equally misleading, perpetuating the stereotypical depiction of the Arab world as a barren desert landscape, disregarding the fact that many diaspora members hail from modern, urban Arab cities and have emigrated either for economic opportunities or as a result of forced displacement due to war.

Another example is *Arab Women Writers: An Anthology of Short Stories*, which includes forty previously untranslated stories by Arab women, written originally in Arabic, all translated by Dalya Cohen-Mor. This anthology showcases the linguistic and cultural diversity within the Arab world, as it brings together one specific genre by women into English. However, Cohen-Mor explains that in choosing the identifier "women," there is "discomfort with the category of 'women' became increasingly manifest as the universalist pretensions of feminisms emanating from predominantly white, Western, and middle-class contexts were called into question by Third World and post-colonial feminists."[122] These examples illustrate how the labels "Canadian,"

[122] Deniz Kandiyoti et al., *Gender, Governance and Islam* (Edinburgh University Press, 2022), 3; see also Marnia Lazreg, *The Eloquence of Silence: Algerian Women in Question* (Routledge, 1994); Trinh T. Minh-ha, *Woman, Native, Other: Writing Postcoloniality and Feminism* (Indiana University Press, 1989); Chandra Talpade Mohanty, *Under Western Eyes: Feminist Scholarship and Colonial Discourses* (Routledge, 1988); Uma Narayan, *Dislocating Cultures: Identities, Traditions, and Third World Feminism* (Routledge, 1997).

"women," and "Arabic" can inadvertently perpetuate homogenization, flattening the distinct cultural, linguistic, and regional identities of the contributors.

In contrast, hyphenation as a literary tool can sometimes embrace transnational feminist principles and embody solidarity by encompassing a broader spectrum of experiences, as seen in the use of double hyphens like Arab-Muslim-American or North American Muslims. As Mejdulene Bernard Shomali notes in *Between Banat*,

> asylum seekers, refugees, and immigrants might all have different and complex relationships to either national or ethnic signifiers. Their own understanding of their identity is further mitigated by how they are hailed upon their arrival in a new place (…) complicated by anti-Arab and anti-Muslim sentiment.[123]

Examples of such double ethnic or national signifiers include *Arab-American and Muslim Writers*[124] and *New Moons: Contemporary Writing by North American Muslims*.[125] While these anthologies may not explicitly frame themselves within feminist discourse, their community-building practices and efforts to create transnational solidarity resonate with feminist ideals of inclusivity, intersectionality, and collective empowerment.

A narrative technique that resists homogenizing tendencies is echoed in Michelle Hartman's *Breaking Broken English: Black-Arab Literary Solidarities and the Politics of Language*, where she demonstrates that "coalition building and solidarity can be challenging; poetry can be both a reflection of these processes and a way into them." [126] In this context, poets such as DH Melhem, Saladin Ahmed, and Naomi Shihab Nye advocate for recognizing poetry's instrumental role in elucidating and perpetuating intercommunity connections and shared histories

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[123] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 7.
[124] Rebecca Layton, ed., *Arab-American and Muslim Writers* (New York: Chelsea House, 2010).
[125] Kazim Ali, ed., *New Moons: Contemporary Writing by North American Muslims* (New York: Red Hen Press, 2021).
[126] Michelle Hartman, *Breaking Broken English: Black-Arab Literary Solidarities and the Politics of Language* (Syracuse University Press, 2019): 114.

of collective struggle. These poets intertwine their literary work with their feminist commitments and political activism, linking poetry directly to their actions and engagements within communities.[127] The intersection of feminist ideals and literary expression is further illustrated through the role of poetry within anthologies, which plays a significant part in resistance literature. As Ghassan Kanafani posited, popular poetry is an active form of resistance and a vehicle for weaponizing traditional wisdom, transforming it into a potent tool for challenging oppression and colonialism.[128] By integrating their literary work with their lived experiences, community involvement, and feminism, I argue that these poets exemplify the power of poetry as a form of resistance literature that transcends cultural and geographic boundaries. Much like the contributions in *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami*, their work articulates Arab feminists' communities' shared struggles and aspirations, fostering transnational feminist solidarity that challenges and redefines the dominant narratives of multiculturalism.

Through this collective process, Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies not only challenge the dominant narratives of multiculturalism but also expand the boundaries of feminist discourse. They illustrate how feminist community-building practices can transcend geographic, cultural, and religious divides, fostering a sense of solidarity that is both inclusive and resistant to the homogenizing forces of global feminism.

By maintaining a dialogue with both past and contemporary voices, these anthologies ensure that the mountain of feminist literature continues to grow, providing a solid foundation for future generations to build upon. This ongoing process of collaboration and connection is central to the challenge these anthologies pose to Canadian multiculturalism, as they foster a community

[127] Michelle Hartman, *Breaking Broken English: Black-Arab Literary Solidarities and the Politics of Language* (Syracuse University Press, 2019): 114.
[128] Ghassan Kanafani, *Adab al-Muqawama fi Filastin al-Muḥtalla 1948-1966*. (Dar Manshurat al-Rimal, 2015).

and cultural identity that is self-determined, dynamic, and deeply intertwined with global movements for justice and equality.

iii. Evolution of Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminism

Food for Our Grandmothers reclaims feminism as a dedication "to our grandmothers, our community,"[129] echoing the sentiment of gratitude toward the foremothers who paved the way for this discourse. It acknowledges the contributions of ancestors and the responsibility to pass down cultural legacies to future generations, thereby reinforcing intergenerational connections and collective identity.

The feminism of these anthologies is also part of the scholarship of and solidarity with feminist professors. The collaborative efforts of scholars like Evelyn Shakir, Carol Haddad, Lisa Suhair Majaj, Nada Elia, Therese Saliba, Michelle Hartman, Nadine Naber, the current editors, Joe Kadi, and Ghadeer Malek and Ghaida Moussa and many more highlight the intersectionality of feminisms within Arab American studies and Arab Canadian studies. Feminist scholars have played a pivotal role in exposing the direct relationship between representations and silencing, white supremacy, and imperialism. They have also crystallized how Zionist censorship intertwines with illegibility and the barriers that Arab and Arab-American women face when organizing within women-of-colour spaces.[130] It shapes their Arab feminist discourse, setting it apart from other feminist movements.

The constant threat of violence and the struggle for basic human rights is an inseparable reality in the everyday lives of Arabs, including feminist academics, writers, and poets. Their work and existence are deeply intertwined with the socio-political contexts of their homelands and the

[129] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xx.
[130] Amira Jarmakani et al., *Sajjilu Arab-American: A Reader in SWANA Studies* (Syracuse University Press, 2022): xvii. Tearing down patriarchy in the field of Middle East studies also required a feminist revolution; see Joseph (2021).

diaspora. Rabab Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber, and Evelyn Alsultany give examples of the reality of life for Arab women and what it means for their feminism in "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives,"

> The meaning of feminism for an American white woman who is fighting for equal pay in her job is completely different from the feminism of a Palestinian woman who is trying to find a safe corner to live in where she can protect her children from gunfire. (…) Arab and Arab-American feminists focus on one of the very basic rights women are supposed to enjoy, the right to survive. With the bombings, killings, and continuing building of Israeli settlements in Palestine, theft of water, as well as of land in Iraq, Palestine, and other occupied locations, the concerns and priorities of Arab and Arab-American feminists are different from those of white American feminists.[131]

Understanding this context is essential to grasp the unique dimensions of Arab-American and Arab-Canadian feminism.

As Zeina Zaatari writes, "The feminist waves of the Middle East have had distinctive characteristics that responded to or interacted with particular historical developments."[132] I believe that this is why it is the purpose and aim of Arab diasporic feminist anthologies to expose and overturn white middle-class models of feminism and position themselves directly against "white middle-class models for their erasure of differences among women, and for their unspoken assumption that 'woman' constitutes a white and middle-class category."[133] Both Arab-American feminism and Arab-Canadian feminism have existed, been active in the community, and produced literary works; as Elsadda expresses, "Arab-American feminism is not new. From approximately 1904 to 1924, Afifa Karam wrote hundreds of columns/articles in Arabic, mostly for *Al-Hoda,* where she was editor/director of women's issues. Karam was an important campaigner for

[131] Rabab Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber, and Evelyn Alsultany, eds., "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives," *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (Spring 2005): 153-154.
[132] Suad Joseph and Zeina Zaatari, eds., *Routledge Handbook on Women in the Middle East* (Routledge, 2023): 222.
[133] Cynthia G. Franklin, *Writing Women's Communities: The Politics and Poetics of Contemporary Multi-Genre Anthologies* (University of Wisconsin Press, 1997):11.

women's rights within the Syrian/Arab community in the US."[134] More active in the workplace and on the ground than white feminists, Arab feminists were accustomed to resistance through their anti-colonial activism. The seeds of anti-colonial pan-Arab feminism were sown in the 1920s and 1930s when feminists in the Arab world (AFU, and later AWU and AWA[135]) formed alliances with their counterparts, feminists from Iran, Turkey, and India, prompted by their realization that Western feminists were refusing to include Palestine and Palestinian feminists in their endeavours for justice.[136]

From the Nakba to the 1980s, Arab diasporic feminism continued to evolve as has been studied elsewhere.[137] The emergence of women's caucuses within organizations like the Association of Arab American University Graduates (AAUG) signalled a growing recognition of the intersectionality between Arab and Arab American women's activism. It is important to note that Arab feminist activism and scholarship in the Middle East predated their Western counterparts, with institutes and journals dedicated to women's studies established as early as the 1970s.[138] It is also within this charged political context of Palestinian erasure and denigration of Arab women that the earliest Western-produced English-language anthology was published. Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan's *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak*[139] focused on Arab

[134] Rabab Abdulhadi, Nadine Naber, and Evelyn Alsultany, eds., "Gender, Nation, and Belonging: Arab and Arab-American Feminist Perspectives," *MIT Electronic Journal of Middle East Studies* 5 (Spring 2005): 103.
[135] In 1938, the AWA attended the Eastern Women's Conference for the Defense of Palestine in Cairo. In 1944, the AWA split into the original AWA and the Arab Women's Union (AWU) renamed itself the Palestinian Arab Women'sn 1944. the Arab Feminist Union (AFU) after the Arab Women's Congress of 1944. The AWA continued to function, mainly in the form of a charitable association in Jerusalem.
[136] 1935, and 1938 AFU conference in defense of Palestine.
[137] Laurie Brand, "Nasir's Egypt and the Reemergence of the Palestinian National Movement," *Journal of Palestine Studies,*17, no. 2 (Winter 1988): 37.
[137] Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s.* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2017): 225.
[138] Pamela E. Pennock, *The Rise of the Arab American Left: Activists, Allies, and Their Fight against Imperialism and Racism, 1960s-1980s.* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2017): 225.
[139] Elizabeth Fernea and Basima Bezirgan, eds., *Middle Eastern Muslim Women Speak* (University of Texas Press, 1977).

women; however, its title positioned the West as a superior force granting voice to an oppressed minority group. This framing not only reinforces problematic narratives but also undermines the agency of the women represented, subsuming their ability to speak for themselves had it not been for the editors' intervention. By framing their experiences through a Western lens, the anthology perpetuates stereotypes rather than empowering Arab women to narrate their own stories.

In the 1980s, Carol Haddad founded the Feminist Arab Network (FAN), marking a milestone in Arab-American feminist initiatives. The Association for Middle Eastern Women's Studies (AMEWS) and The Union of Palestinian Women's Association in North America (UPWA) were established during this period. Also, in the 1980s, a North American chapter of the Arab Women's Solidarity Association (AWSA) was formed. The 1990s witnessed significant events, including the organization of the first major exhibit of Arab women's art in the United States at the National Museum of Women in the Arts in 1993 and the publication of *Food for Our Grandmothers* in 1994. The anthology was considered a key contribution in vocalizing the Arab-feminist diasporic existence; it even included the organizations mentioned above and others in an appendix titled "Organizations with an Arab-American/ Arab-Canadian focus." These efforts illustrate how Arab-American and Arab-Canadian feminist movements have built communities and resisted dominant multicultural narratives, leading to the creation and significance of Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies.

iv. Creating Community: Arab Feminist Contributors

Both *Food for our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* underscore a feminist perspective not only through their titles, beliefs, and activism but also through the deliberate inclusion of specific contributors in the curation of the anthologies. These contributors include feminist activists, academics, poets, and writers whose work aligns with the feminist principles the editors uphold.

In *Min Fami*, for example, Shahd Wadi, a doctoral student in feminist studies at the University of Coimbra, undertakes an examination of the narratives and representations of women's bodies within the context of the Israeli occupation of Palestine. Other examples of contributors who define themselves as feminist activists are Samira Saraya, a Palestinian feminist and LGBTQI activist; Ghadeer Malek, one of the anthology editors, who is also an active Palestinian feminist; and Jacinthe A. Assaad, an Egyptian feminist, poet, and academic. While Amal El-Mohtar defines their poetry as "feminist speculative," they are Lebanese-Canadian residing in Glasgow. Together, these contributors collectively illustrate the broad spectrum of feminist expression.

Similarly, *Food for our Grandmothers* includes diverse voices, such as those by Hoda M. Zaki, an Associate Professor of Political Science and Director of African American Studies at Hood College, specializing in feminist and African-American science fiction; Mary Salome, an apprentice producer and engineer at KPFA, a listener-sponsored radio station in Berkeley, and a writer for a student feminist magazine; Anne J. M. Mamary, a graduate student in feminist philosophy at the State University of New York at Binghamton, embodies the intersectionality of middle-class, Christian-cultured Pennsylvania Dutch and Syrian heritage. In legal scholarship, Azizah Al-Hibri, a law professor at the University of Richmond Law School, stands as a prominent figure because of her contributions to feminist theory and her role as the founding editor of *Hypatia*: *A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, which discusses the compatibility of Islam in its original form with feminism, are examples of her impactful work.[140] A final example of someone who self-defines as a feminist is Martha Ani Boudakian, an activist and aspiring midwife who co-founded an organization of Armenian feminists in Boston. The diverse range of feminisms among

[140] Michael W. Suleiman et al., *Arab American Women: Representation and Refusal* (Syracuse University Press, 2021): 248.

contributors highlights the versatility of the feminist definition, underscoring the plurality, complexities and nuances inherent in these self-definitions.

V. Challenges in Defining Arab Feminists in Anthologies

The linking of Arab feminists within the region and in the diaspora helps reinforce their resistance narrative, which is systematically silenced and distorted by the complex interplay of anti-Arab and anti-Muslim racism, capitalism, colonialism, and Zionism. Although both anthologies studied here use "feminist" in their titles, the term is still navigated with caution and considers the challenges faced by Arab feminists. Many scholars (for example, Al-Oraimi, Elsadda, Makdisi) have determined obstacles and challenges for producing an Arab feminist line of thinking and the utilization of "feminist" as a label in activism. Elsadda sheds light on the obstacles, emphasizing the importance of distinguishing between 'feminism' and 'feminist activism.'[141] For example, some female activists in Egypt were often accused of promoting Western ideologies, leading to accusations of cultural imperialism with labels such as "men-hating, aggressive, possibly lesbian (but most likely to be obsessed with sex), and certainly westernized women"[142] who are welcoming neo-colonialism because of their type of activism.[143] The reluctance of many Egyptian women to identify themselves with feminism is not only related to their negative image in society. It is also linked to the conviction that it detracts from such 'larger issues' as imperialism, class struggle, and Zionism.[144] Nawar al-Hassan Golley, in her piece in *Min Fami,* titled "A Feminist Regeneration," discusses this:

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[141] Hoda Elsadda. *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel Egypt, 1892-2008* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012): xxvii.
[142] Nadje Al-Ali, "We Are Not Feminists! Egyptian Women Activists on Feminism," in *Situating Globalization: Views from Egypt*, edited by Cynthia Nelson and Shahnaz Rouse (transcript Verlag, 2000): 340.
[143] Zaky Radamis, *Beyond the Ousting of Mubarak: An Intersectional Analysis of Egyptian Women's Activism after the 2011 Egyptian Revolution* (PhD diss., University of Ottawa, 2022): 40.
[144] Nadje Al-Ali, "We Are Not Feminists! Egyptian Women Activists on Feminism," in *Situating Globalization: Views from Egypt*, edited by Cynthia Nelson and Shahnaz Rouse (transcript Verlag, 2000): 341.

> Above all, feminism helped me challenge cultural stereotypes depicting women's individuality as incompatible to collective Arab society, allowing me to discover that individualism and collectivism are not necessarily apart or contradictory. Feminism helped me cross cultural borders as it became possible for me to think of my individuality through a collective and relational sense of identity. I eventually acquired a sense of feminist consciousness by understanding the need to recognize the common oppression of women and their diversity in terms of race, ethnicity, sexuality, class, age, and ability. It was this universal and collectivist consciousness that made sense to me. To me, feminism is about social, economic, and political justice for men and women. After all, I had no choice in being born an Arab or, a Muslim or a woman. But I chose to be a feminist. This made all the difference.[145]

Therefore, there is strength in choosing to be a feminist because it represents an ideological and ethical stance that one actively adopts and in consequence, becomes a part of community, transnational, activism and knowledge production.

However, Arab feminist scholar Hoda Elsadda asserts that "for historical and political reasons, Arab feminism is in a highly volatile in-between space that impacts directly and indirectly on how matters develop, including questions on language, identity, strategies of confrontation and resistance."[146] This points to how it is the responsibility of editors of anthologies to choose wisely and define with exactitude whose feminism they are referring to, within what socio-political frame and in alliance and conversation with whom. For example, in *Arab & Arab American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*, anthology editors Rabab Abdulhadi, Evelyn Alsultany, and Nadine Naber elaborate on the fluid and overlapping nature of geographic boundaries between Arab homelands and diasporas. They emphasize the articulation, theoretical exploration, and experiential representation of ideas, desires, emotions, and survival strategies. They affirm the coexistence of Arab and Arab-American feminist discourses and practices on multiple fronts, including within families and communities, in resistance against racism and colonialism, in

[145] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 47.
[146] Hoda Elsadda, *Gender, Nation, and the Arabic Novel Egypt, 1892-2008* (Edinburgh University Press, 2012): 39.

discussions concerning spirituality and the divine, within progressive, feminist, and queer spaces, in academic settings, and among themselves.

It is within this rich Arab feminist setting that *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* emerged and demonstrated the transformative potential of feminist anthologies when rooted in community, serving as a resistance strategy against racial, class, and gender inequalities within the diaspora. These types of anthologies advocate for "a nuanced and less defensive feminism"[147] and emerge as crucial platforms for reclaiming narratives, fostering solidarity, and honouring the diverse voices within the Arab feminist movement.

vi. Building an Arab Feminist Diasporic Community: Self vs. Group Ethos

The Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* employ the "group vs. self ethos" as a fundamental aspect of their feminist positioning and framing, creating a profound tool for community-building. Brinda J. Mehta, in her essay "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," explains this concept in how Diana Abu Jaber expresses it in relation to food, where the self mitigates individual egotism to promote the group ethos of community building in a hostile environment as an "act of love."[148] Food has always been more than mere sustenance; it serves as a vehicle for cultural expression, identity formation, and communal bonding. By preparing and sharing meals, individuals prioritize the group's well-being, demonstrating a collective ethos.

Abu-Jaber's novel *Crescent* uses food as a powerful narrative device that helps her delve into complex themes of belonging, identity, and ethnicity. The multifaceted nature of food becomes a language for triggering memories, invoking nostalgia, and conveying love and exile for immigrant

[147] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "New Directions: Arab American Writing at Century's End," in *Post Gibran: Anthology of New Arab American Writing*, ed. Akash Munir and Khaled Mattawa (Syracuse University Press, 1999): 173.
[148] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 215.

characters in the United States. Abu Jaber's perspective on food as a symbol of communal harmony and love offers a pertinent analogy and is particularly relevant to the two feminist Arab-Canadian anthologies studied here.

Food for Our Grandmothers uses "food" in its title to symbolize an offering to grandmothers and the community, bridging generations, invoking the cultural tradition of passing down family recipes and stories through generations, highlighting the importance of collective memory and shared cultural heritage. Additionally, its practical functionality as a cookbook gives it a dual role, integrating the traditionally female-dominated genre of cookbooks into literary discourse. This decision goes beyond mere thematic alignment; it acknowledges the central role that food and culinary traditions play in the lives of Arab-American and Arab-Canadian women. By featuring them prominently within the anthology, as dividers between the sections, Kadi highlights the importance of these culinary traditions in shaping identity and fostering community among Arab women in the diaspora.

Kadi details his journey as a cultural worker in his essay, "Five Steps to Creating Culture." His heartfelt explanation emphasizes his values and beliefs, leading by example, "to be a cultural worker is to give life, to give back to the community, to tell our stories, to pass on recipes, to tell us who we are, to mark a trail that curves east to west to east to west."[149] This "giving back" is indeed Kadi's gesture of profound love and care, an offering of sustenance that goes beyond mere survival, seeking to nurture and uplift those who partake: "Eat, I say to my loved ones, and what I mean is, Let me sustain you, let me nurture you, let me help you not only to survive but to flourish, I want to give this to you."[150] Kadi's invitation to partake not only in the sustenance of the body

[149] Joe Kadi, "Five Steps to Creating Culture," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 235.
[150] Joe Kadi, "Five Steps to Creating Culture," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 236.

but also in the nourishment of the spirit, where with each morsel shared, there is a whisper of hope, a promise of flourishing amidst life's trials. It is a sentiment that speaks to the essence of community and the power of generosity, reminding us of the boundless potential for growth and renewal found within Arab feminist circles.

This is precisely what Abu Jaber speaks of when she describes food as an "act of love" that extends beyond physical nourishment to encompass the transmission of history, culture, stories, resistance, grief, and self-discovery. *Min Fami* emphasizes this same type of "act of love" toward the community as expressed in one of the introductions of *Min Fami*, "Hesitations," where Ghadeer Malek highlights how "words are born out of love, suffering, resistance, grief, reconciliation, understanding, and self-discovery."[151] She underscores the emotional complexity within the collective framework by highlighting the deep, multifaceted emotional and experiential sources from which writing and storytelling emanate, where themes are interwoven with personal and collective struggles against oppression, identity, and belonging. Her assertion that "without action, words are empty" further intensifies the conviction that storytelling, while foundational, gains its true power and relevance through the actions it inspires and the realities it confronts. This perspective emphasizes the belief that writing is not merely a passive act of recording but a dynamic process of engaging with and transforming the world.

The community Malek describes is one of honesty and authenticity that permits "a plain truth that comes from a personal and shared understanding. It is that quest that has allowed those pieces to emerge from the same lands, find the same histories, and a common language."[152] This bond becomes a means not just of care but a way to overcome the harsh realities of the injustice and

[151] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 5.
[152] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 5.

discrimination these writers have endured. The anthology is not "just words, simple calligraphy bound together into one bundle of paper,"[153] it is a lifeline and a connection that reassures each writer and reader that they are not alone. Although the injustices are clear and glaring, collective resistance is possible and more powerful than the imperialist narrative suggests.

Mejdulene Shomali, in *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives*, focuses on collections of texts centring queer voices in the "Love Letters" chapter. She articulates that the editorial decisions within these works "capture precisely the intimacy of the works' movement and to attest to the labour of love the works perform, in staking their histories and in creating and imagining community," transcending mere compilations of written works.[154] Instead, they are endeavours that validate and celebrate their contributors' histories, experiences, and communal connections. This same "labour of love" underpins the editorial philosophy and work of the editors of *Min Fami* and *Food for Our Grandmothers.* Kadi, Malek, and Moussa transcend the traditional scope of editors through the love involved in overseeing and bringing these anthologies to completion.

This emotional and communal space is similar to how other communities feel that feminist anthologies have provided nourishment through their existence, "when I come to Cherríe Moraga and Gloria Anzaldúa's anthology of Third World feminists and writers who sing laments and odes to community and collectivity, I am in graduate school, writing poetry part-time because, while it sustains and feeds me."[155] Just as food nourishes the body and soul, the stories and poems within these anthologies provide emotional sustenance and cultural continuity. They carry the weight of

[153] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 5.
[154] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 120.
[155] Amelia M. Kraehe et al., *A Love Letter to This Bridge Called My Back* (University of Arizona Press, 2022): 3.

history, culture, and personal experiences, offering a space for reflection, reconciliation, and self-discovery.

When individuals embrace a collective ethos, it is not a suppression of individuality but a celebration of the intricacy of human experiences. These anthologies provide a platform where individual stories nourish because they are rooted in personal love, suffering, and resistance to form a collective voice. This fusion of personal and collective narratives not only preserves the cultural heritage of Arab-Canadians but also encourages dialogue and empowers the Arab-Canadian community to resist different forms of erasure and discrimination.

Chapter 3:
Challenges of the Feminist Frame and Hyphenated Identity Relations to Multiculturalism in Canada: Producing Knowledge

i. Producing Knowledge: Stylistic Innovation and Resistance to the Canon

My close reading of the anthologies *Min Fami* and *Food for Our Grandmothers* provides a distinct perspective that diverges from existing scholarship, as these works have not previously been compared to one another. Notably, *Min Fami* has largely been overlooked by academia. Together, these anthologies create a continuum upon which future Arab-Canadian feminists can build. Proving the existence of this continuum is *El Ghourabaa: A Queer and Trans Collection of Oddities,* although not explicitly feminist, draws inspiration from the approaches and positioning established in these earlier anthologies. For example, the contributor Leila Marshy appears in both *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *El Ghourabaa*, illustrating a sense of continuity within the community, where past members collaborate with new contemporary voices. This stands in contrast to anthologies that reinforce Western narratives of superiority and position Western editors as the primary voices granting agency to marginalized groups. Both these anthologies resist these erasures and misrepresentations by articulating their own lived experiences.

These anthologies deliberately foreground the lives of queer Arab subjects, revealing how Orientalism, coloniality, nationalism, and heteronormativity both shape and complicate notions of Arab identity. This approach not only disrupts traditional narratives but also dismantles stereotypes and offers a complex understanding of Arab femininity, masculinity, and queerness. As Shomali explores in *Between Banat*, there is a critical need to categorize and analyse queer Arab identities both within Arab cultures and in the diaspora. She argues that,

> Queer Arab subjects, particularly women, index the circuitry of Arabness itself, revealing how notions of Arab identity in multiple locations are impacted by Orientalism, coloniality, nationalism, and heteronormativity. Within these meta-narratives emerge distinct strands,

> such as anti-Blackness, authenticity politics, homonormativity, and respectability politics. Queer Arab critique foregrounds that Arabness is constructed through gender and sexuality. Queer Arab subjects are discursively overwritten and invisibilized via the multiple discourses of race, gender, sexuality, and nation that surround them.[156]

Her analysis emphasizes how queer Arab identities are systematically erased or marginalized through intersecting discourses of race, gender, sexuality, and nationalism. She emphasizes how the experiences and identities of queer Arab individuals, especially women, are central, not peripheral, to understanding the broader concept of Arabness. By "Indexing the circuitry," she means that these queer identities serve as key indicators, reference points that reveal the underlying mechanisms ("circuitry") by which Arabness is constructed, negotiated, understood and contested. Arab identity, according to Shomali, is not a fixed or singular concept but is shaped by various external and internal forces across different geographic and cultural contexts.

Queer Arab identities, Shomali explains, are "discursively overwritten"—either ignored or misrepresented in ways that align with dominant cultural narratives. As a result, the unique experiences and perspectives of queer Arabs are rendered invisible, further reinforcing the dominance of heteronormative, nationalist, and Orientalist views of Arab identity. These dynamics are particularly relevant in the Canadian context, where state-driven narratives shape collective identity, and societal expectations often assume heterosexuality as the norm. Arab queer identities directly challenge mainstream Canadian feminist frameworks, which are shaped by white, Western perspectives that overlook non-Western, queer, and racialized identities.

Shomali also emphasizes that discussions of Arab identity cannot neglect other critical factors such as anti-Blackness, which refers to the discrimination and marginalization of Black individuals within Arab communities; authenticity politics, which involves debates over what

[156] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 9.

constitutes "real" or "authentic" Arab identity; and respectability politics refers to the pressure on marginalized groups to conform to dominant societal norms to gain acceptance. Homonormativity describes how queer identities are assimilated into mainstream norms; this is true for many anthologies that resist Orientalism and respond to racism yet still produce visions of Arab femininity and Arab cultures that exclude or erase queerness. Shomali highlights this issue by pointing to how "the generic Orientalist discourse on Arab love and sexuality renders it simultaneously perverse and homophobic."[157] This discourse portrays Arab men as sexually insatiable and Arab women's sexuality as so repressed that their bodies figuratively disappear from public view. Issues like polygamy, the promise of virgins in heaven, and the varying degrees of female veiling are framed in Orientalist discourse as markers of non-Western and, thus, nonnormative sexual practices.[158] Shomali further elaborates that,

> the homosociality of Arab culture—along with the sometimes real, sometimes perceived homoeroticism of gender-segregated spaces—further distances "Arab culture" from "American" or "Western" ideologies, which present the United States and the West as sexually free and primarily heterosocial.[159]

This analysis reveals how Western perceptions of Arab culture are constructed in opposition to an idealized notion of Western sexual freedom, further marginalizing queer Arab identities.

By taking into account these four strands: anti-Blackness, authenticity politics, homonormativity, and respectability politics, the understanding of queer Arab identity is further complicated and understood as it introduces additional layers of power and marginalization, highlighting the need for a more nuanced and intersectional approach.

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[157] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 37.
[158] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 37.
[159] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 37.

The anthologies studied here actively counter this erasure by cultivating homegrown feminist discourses, policies, and practices that address the unique challenges and experiences of women and LGBTQIA+ individuals within the specific contexts of Arab cultures and their diasporas. They provide a stark contrast by including queer voices and experiences, addressing and resisting such reductive and erroneous portrayals. By doing so, they resist and dismantle these stereotypical portrayals of Arab identity.

The deliberate centring of queerness in *Min Fami* and *Food for Our Grandmothers* reflects what Shomali describes as the "labour of love," [160] a process through which these anthologies produce knowledge by resisting the erasure of queer identities and highlighting the intersections of race, gender, and sexuality. The hyphenated identities of these anthologies by Arab-Canadian feminists reflect the complexities of belonging and identity in a multicultural context and challenge the invisibilities of Arab queer identities that Shomali elaborated on. By critically engaging with these themes, the editors of these anthologies contribute to a broader discourse that challenges dominant narratives and expands the canon to include the diverse and multifaceted experiences of queer Arab subjects.

ii. "Unbecoming" transcending linguistic, geographical, and cultural boundaries

Min Fami and *Food for Our Grandmothers* offer valuable knowledge about how language, culture, and identity interact and influence one another. Both anthologies embody Shomali's concept of "unbecoming"—"the unbecoming ways we are erased in Orientalist and Arab heteropatriarchal thought and the unbecoming of identities and practices that do not serve us."[161]

[160] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives*, articulates that the editorial decisions within these works "capture precisely the intimacy of the works' movement and to attest to the labour of love the works perform, in staking their histories and in creating and imagining community," transcending mere compilations of written works. (Duke University Press, 2023): 120.
[161] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 1.

These anthologies deconstruct and reshape imposed identities and narratives through "unbecoming," which involves resisting the erasures imposed by dominant narratives, emphasizing liberation from the oppressive structures that entangle women and rejecting practices and identities that do not serve their well-being and autonomy.

Firstly, by questioning and challenging the use of English, these anthologies engage in a process of unbecoming. This process allows for a more authentic and autonomous expression of self and collective identity, facilitating not only individual empowerment but also community building, as it creates a space for shared resistance and solidarity. The tension between the language used and expressed and the forced neglect of the language of the home is a commonality in many Arab diasporic anthologies.

The editors of *Min Fami* explore this linguistic tension through rhetorical questions like "What does it mean to publish a book about Arab feminist reflections on identity, space, and resistance in English?"[162] This act of centring Arab women in a dominant language is itself a form of resistance, as it ensures that these stories and perspectives are heard within the broader literary and cultural discourse.

Moreover, this inquiry challenges the reader to consider the layers of meaning lost or transformed when one's experiences and cultural reflections are conveyed using a colonial or adopted language—English, in this instance—to articulate experiences and ideas deeply rooted in Arab culture and identity. Despite using English, as I argue in this chapter, the contributors infuse their writings with elements of their Arab heritage, such as cultural references, idioms, and themes deeply rooted in their identities. This blend of language and cultural content resists the erasure of

[162] Ghaida Moussa, "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 2.

their heritage and challenges the homogenizing tendencies of dominant narratives that often seek to assimilate or dilute diverse cultural expressions.

Furthermore, this choice of language is not merely pragmatic but is laden with implications for identity, cultural continuity, and resistance. Moussa expands on this dilemma by interrogating the role of language in shaping our understanding of self and community: "How does language connect us to who we are and those who have come before? What points of entry/closure does it provide? Does it matter which version we use, as long as it comes from us, from our mouths? We are not the first to ask these questions."[163] This critical stance disrupts the assumption that using English is a simple or neutral decision, thereby challenging the dominance of English as a normative medium of expression. Finding solidarity and strength in the Kenyan writer Ngugi wa Thiong'o, who expresses its commonality with post-colonial writers, "our continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not on the cultural level continuing that neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit?"[164] While language serves as a vital connection to cultural roots, it also presents a challenge in a world where Western education in European languages is often seen as the primary pathway to employment and success. Moreover, for immigrant parents, refugees, or those affected by forced displacement, there is often little choice in language use. The need to communicate in whatever language one can, regardless of its colonial origins, becomes essential for survival and self-representation.

These anthologies generate insights into how language shapes identity, culture, and power dynamics, contributing to our understanding of how it can constrain and enable expression. This struggle is expressed by Moussa, who asks provocatively, "What does it mean that I could not

[163] Ghaida Moussa, "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 2.
[164] Ghadeer Malek, "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 2.

write a book in Arabic even if I wanted to? What does it mean that our tongues have come to know surrogate mothers?"[165] The incapacity to write in Arabic transcends a simple reflection of assimilation; it reveals the complex entanglements of colonization and neo-colonization and the resulting linguistic shifts. This phenomenon is particularly pronounced in the SWANA region, where the prioritization of the English language prevails due to its perceived advantages in facilitating social mobility and access to employment. Additionally, the challenges in obtaining a comprehensive Arabic education are exacerbated for second- and third-generation immigrants in the diaspora, including refugees and stateless individuals, who confront even more formidable obstacles in acquiring proficiency in the Arabic language while they are constantly in search of safety, health, and stability.

Both anthologies challenge the notion of linguistic purity and embrace the multiplicity of languages and dialects within the Arab diaspora. Moussa advocates for a more inclusive understanding of language that accommodates diverse experiences and modes of speech by emphasizing the validity of expression, which lies in its personal and communal origins. This stance resists the homogenizing tendencies of dominant cultures that often devalue non-standard forms of language.[166]

Secondly, *Min Fami* and *Food for Our Grandmothers* illustrate the crucial role in constructing and negotiating identity by emphasizing the relational and dynamic nature of Arabness, thus challenging static and monolithic perceptions of readers. These prevalent stereotypes often reduce Arabness to simplistic narratives shaped by Orientalist and colonial

[165] Ghaida Moussa, "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 2.
[166] The dynamic relationship between language and self-perception reflects a broader debate within post-colonial literature and diasporic writing about the power dynamics embedded in language use, the authenticity of expression, and the quest for a voice that can faithfully represent hybrid, transnational identities.

discourses that fail to account for the diversity and complexity within Arab communities. By foregrounding the multifaceted experiences of queer Arab individuals, these anthologies resist the essentializing tendencies of mainstream representations that typically portray Arab identities as homogeneous. In doing so, they foster a more nuanced understanding that recognizes the intersectionality of race, gender, sexuality, and culture, allowing for a richer and more authentic representation of what it means to be Arab in contemporary contexts.

The term "Arab" in these anthologies serves as a designation for a collective identity, representing a people bound by shared cultural ties and linguistic alliances within a specific geographic region. However, this collective identity entails the erasure of distinctions among individual Arab countries. While nationalist anthologies and literatures coexist, preserving their distinct spaces, within the broader framework of "Arab," there emerges a resilient resistance literature that reclaims the term Arab for its acknowledgment of the shared historical traumas, such as colonialism, Zionism, imperialism, racism, Islamophobia, and U.S. military expansionism.

Reclaiming the term "Arab" extends beyond a narrow ethnic label, establishing a comprehensive categorization that encapsulates the vast geographical area now referred to as SWANA instead of the colonial terms Middle East and Near East. This decolonial naming reflects the multiracial, multilingual, and multiethnic populations in the region. This broader categorization includes Iran, Turkey, Afghanistan, and the Arab countries of the Middle East and North Africa; sometimes, even Muslim-majority nations outside the region are included. *Min Fami* embraces this broader categorization, defining identity in a manner that recognizes it as "plural, multiple, and complex; that what it is to be Arab, or a Woman is not a process of generalization or uniformity."[167] Ghadeer Malek, in the introduction, asserts that what it means to be Arab or a

[167] Ghadeer Malek, "Through the Fog," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 9.

woman reflects the diverse realities of the region and its diaspora. This inclusive approach to the word 'Arab' encompasses not just literary and cultural production but extends to economic activities, trade, sports, and leisure activities, fostering a collective identity that transcends ethnic and linguistic boundaries.

Similarly, *Food for Our Grandmothers* provides a definition of Arabs in its introduction that is also relational, "three contributors to this anthology are of Middle Eastern, but not Arab, descent: two Armenian-Americans and one Iranian-American. These women share a great many things with Arab women."[168] Had the term SWANA been more prevalent then, it would have been a fitting descriptor, although an added note might still have been necessary for the Armenian contributors. Kadi himself uses the umbrella term "Arab" after considering multiple other labels which fit less; the hyphenated name fosters the relational alliance across the multi-racial, multi-lingual, and multi-ethnic aspects of the contributors' identities.

Similarly, Shomali's *Between Banat* emphasizes a critical perspective on Arab identity, challenging conventional, fixed notions of cultural and ethnic categorizations. Shomali posits that Arab identity is not a static label attached to a specific set of cultural practices or a particular group of people. Instead, she argues that "Arab is not a fixed category that describes sedimented cultural practices or peoples, but rather a relationship between people and their shared cultures."[169] This conceptualization of Arabness as a dynamic, relational construct aligns with Ghadeer Malek's reflection in one of the introductions to *Min Fami*, where she questions whether Arabness is defined by language, shared history, or other identity markers. "I am still not sure what makes something "Arab" (…). Is "Arab" a language, a history, a future that we share, or a border through

[168] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xvii.
[169] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 9.

which we exclude others?"[170] Both perspectives portray Arabness as a fluid, transnational identity that "crosses, circulates, and changes within Arab nations."[171] This fluid and relational understanding of Arab identity emphasizes how Arabness is a lived, evolving experience shaped by ongoing interactions and shared histories.

By framing Arabness as a "relationship between people and their shared cultures,"[172] Shomali, Malek, and Kadi move away from essentialist views that often seek to box identities into rigid, homogeneous categories, and challenge the notion of Arabness as a monolithic identity. Instead, they highlight the fluidity and multiplicity inherent in Arab identity, emphasising that it is continually shaped and reshaped by ongoing interactions, exchanges, and shared experiences among people across, within and in relation to the SWANA region.

iii. *Min Fami*'s Feminist Organizational Structure

To demonstrate how the feminist framework in *Min Fami: Arab Women's Reflections on Identity, Space, and Resistance* produces knowledge, I analyse various aspects of the anthology and its structure, including section titles, editor introductions, section introductions, thematic categorizations, contributors, mixed-genre contributions, and the overall structure.

a. Editors' Introductions and Feminist Framework

Most anthologies typically feature a single introduction, but *Min Fami* distinguishes itself by including multiple introductions—one for each of the three sections: identity, space, and resistance. These section introductions guide readers to engage critically with the diverse content. They are authored interchangeably by Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, and both editors co-

[170] Ghadeer Malek, "Hesitations," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 4.
[171] Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 8.
[172]Mejdulene Bernard Shomali, *Between Banat: Queer Arab Critique and Transnational Arab Archives* (Duke University Press, 2023): 8.

wrote the last one. These five introductions offer readers insights into the editorial process and contextualize it within the thematic underpinnings of the anthology and the broader discussions of Arab women's experiences and perspectives.

For example, Ghaida Moussa's "Starting Points" sets the stage for the anthology. She characterizes her editorial approach as distinct from conventional editing, which typically prioritizes "urgent polishing, correction, redressing, and censoring."[173] This strategy is a feminist act of rejecting patriarchal and colonial impulses to control, interpret, or silence women's voices. Instead, Moussa champions the power of unbridled, genuine expression as a means of agency, authenticity, and resistance. She goes on to explain how,

> this anthology comes together as our fragmented, powerful, complex selves to talk, from our own mouths, despite barriers that generally stop our voices from being heard, call upon ghosts to lead us home, and take up spaces; barricaded by fences and doors.[174]

This description emphasizes the deep emotional investment involved in curating this anthology. Its editors foreground the feminist ethos of embodied knowledge and experiential truth—challenging academic and intellectual elitism by validating women's lived experiences as forms of knowledge production.

This approach encapsulates the editorial ethos that Moussa and Ghadeer Malek bring to *Min Fami,* allowing contributors the freedom to express themselves as they see fit, which then allows Malek's introduction, "Hesitations," to delve into the complexities of identity. Malek shares her profound connection with the contributors' voices, emphasizing how the selection process emanated from a deep connection, a love of the writing.

> I had fallen in love with the voices of each of the authors. Every story told is not the same, nor different. Each piece makes a sound unique to its author, and yet the strength that leaks

[173] Ghaida Moussa "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 1-2.
[174] Ghaida Moussa "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 1-2.

> out of their pens is one and the same. I learned to embrace the act of questioning as part of the process of writing, and to trust that it won't lead me astray but rather to an ocean of knowledge held together by narratives soiled in blood.[175]

Malek emphasizes the emotional investment and respect she holds for the contributors' narratives, a sentiment that directly aligns with the deep-seated belief in the importance of raw, unfiltered expression that both she and Moussa advocate for with the title. Malek describes the distinctiveness of each story, how each narrative brings its unique tone and perspective, and how a common thread of resilience and strength runs through them. "Every story told is not the same, nor different"[176] reflects on the paradox of individuality and universality within the anthology. Each piece is a testament to the author's personal journey, challenges, and triumphs, yet collectively, they underscore a shared strength that emanates from confronting and overcoming adversity.

Furthermore, Malek's admission, "I learned to embrace the act of questioning as part of the process of writing,"[177] reveals an openness to uncertainty and curiosity as catalysts for deeper understanding and growth. This approach indicates the feminist praxis underpinning the anthology, where questioning the status quo is not seen as a deviation but as a pathway to deeper insights and truths. It signifies a departure from traditional, authoritative knowledge production, valuing instead the chaotic, challenging, and ultimately rewarding process of exploring diverse perspectives and experiences. Her metaphor of being led "to an ocean of knowledge held together by narratives soiled in blood" speaks to the profound impact of these stories, which are deeply rooted in struggles, loss, and sometimes violence. It acknowledges the pain and sacrifice embedded in these

[175] Ghadeer Malek, "Hesitations," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 4.
[176] Ghadeer Malek, "Hesitations," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 4.
[177] Ghadeer Malek, "Hesitations," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 4.

narratives yet highlights the transformative power of writing and storytelling as acts of resistance, healing, and connection.

Palestine is also central to the anthology. Both editors are Palestinian, and many contributors' pieces, whether art, poetry, memoir, drama, or nonfiction, center on Palestine, an accurate reflection of how it is central in the psyche and existence of Arab lives. An example is the poem "spines from the prickly pears" by Laila Suidan, which reflects a deeply personal and emotional connection to Palestine, portraying a longing for peace, acceptance, and recognition of its existence and significance. The speaker expresses a desire for a harmonious relationship with Palestine, where they can feel at home, and their bond with the land is respected and embraced by their community:

> Palestine
> I have longed for a peace with you.
> I have longed for a relationship
> in which I could come home to you
> our union accepted and respected in community. I wish I could talk to coworkers about you.
> I have met people who told me
> that you did not exist.
> They looked me in the eye as they said this power and anger flashing at me
> words aimed to intimidate.
> Those evenings I came home to you shaken
> the heart current that we share wavering.[178]

The poem explicitly aligns with *Min Fami*'s feminist framework by addressing themes of identity, belonging, and resistance. The speaker's desire for acceptance and respect for their bond with Palestine reflects feminist ideals of agency and autonomy, advocating for the recognition of individual experiences and narratives within the broader community. Additionally, the poem sheds light on the challenges Palestinians face in asserting their identity and existence in the face of

[178] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 17.

denial and oppression, emphasizing the importance of resistance and solidarity in reclaiming their voice and agency.

The section on identity features Malek's "Through the Fog," which sets the stage for a deeper exploration of the theme by addressing the intricate relationship between identity and home and the external forces that impose stereotypes and disrupt self-understanding. She states, "Our understanding of our identity is often construed and interrupted by external forces that impose their superiority of knowledge. Can we know ourselves outside of the Other's knowledge of us?"[179] Malek delves into the complex interplay between self-perception and external perceptions of identity and how external influences can sometimes overshadow or distort self-understanding, take away autonomy and dehumanize Arab women. She states, "To be human is to be complex, to live in contradiction. Thus, to liberate ourselves from these labels is sometimes simply an act of seeing ourselves as human, as complex,"[180] as it is defined through queer theory as fluid and complex.

Themes of resistance, self-discovery, and agency intersect with queer narratives in this section, as evidenced in Lana Nasser's personal essay "'Aat' and the Apple Peel," "I stand in the back of alBalad theatre in Amman, watching a male dancer on stage, performing his first solo, *Fe(Male)*. He wears a white dress and hangs on a rope, jumping into the audience and back, dancing to a woman's story about a toy that was made to do something she did not want to do."[181] The performance visually and symbolically breaks down conventional gender binaries by challenging traditional gender expressions and showcasing gender fluidity.

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[179] Ghadeer Malek "Through the Fog" in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 11.
[180] Ghadeer Malek "Through the Fog" in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 11.
[181] Lana Nasser, ""Aat" and the Apple Peel," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space, & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 194.

Similarly, Nasser interrogates the labels imposed upon her; she states, "I was not always a woman, an Arab, or a Muslim; these things only came with time, at first I thought I was just... Insan: Human, a person, someone, somebody, often translated as man,"[182] which challenges the heteronormative insistence on rigid gender binaries and their inability to change over time. Such a deconstruction of identity resonates with queer theory, which advocates for fluidity and multiplicity in identity formation.

Amal Eqeiq's story "Electricity and Palestinian Virgins" explores power dynamics, identity negotiation, and resistance against oppressive norms, offering readers a glimpse into the complex negotiation of identity and agency in the face of social expectations and power imbalances. The encounter between Amal and Maybe-Yoav, characterized by his invasive questioning about her sex life and political views, reflects the imposition of heteronormative and patriarchal structures onto Amal's identity as a Palestinian woman. Amal's internal conflict between her feminist values and the strategic silence she adopts to avoid confrontation demonstrates the complex negotiation of identity and agency in the face of social expectations and power imbalances. Additionally, the narrative touches on broader themes of resistance against prejudice and stereotyping.

The "space" section includes Moussa's "Breathing Borders," which highlights how space and identity are deeply intertwined, where freedom of movement is contingent on the identities of those who inhabit them. By exploring the concept of home as both a physical location and a source of identity construction, Moussa prompts readers to critically engage with the transformations brought about by violence, occupation, migration, displacement, and colonialism. Employing queer theory, she challenges normative understandings of space and identity, highlighting the fluidity and multiplicity of Arab women's experiences, challenging heteronormative frameworks,

[182] Lana Nasser, ""Aat" and the Apple Peel," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 194.

prompting readers to reconsider notions of power and subversion, control and resistance inherent in various spatial contexts.

Malek and Moussa co-introduce the resistance section in "Liberation from Within," where they reflect on the transformative power of the Arab uprisings and the intersectionality of feminist resistance, emphasizing that true liberation requires both societal and self-reflection. By expanding the conceptualization of resistance beyond traditional notions of activism and drawing on insights from Palestinian politician Hanaan Ashrawi, they invite readers to reconsider how Arab women's experiences of resistance are intertwined with cultural narratives, symbols, and practices, providing readers with a deeper understanding of the complex dynamics at play during times of upheaval while emphasizing the integral connection between gender liberation and broader struggles for societal change. Through poignant examples and historical analyses, they illustrate the challenges faced by women within resistance movements and the importance of centring feminist perspectives in these struggles. This feminist framework enables the contributors to build on the themes and create a discourse that helps them understand and overcome their reality.

For example, Ghada Chehade's poem is a defiant response to stereotypes, colonization, and saviour narratives. She is a Palestinian-Canadian award-winning poet and political analyst; when she says, "So colonizer, while you may want to save meeeee, so that you may own me, I tell you instead you should fear me, because inside of me there is an a-r-m-y."[183] The poem does not just address colonialism as an external force but also critiques the internalized narratives and stereotypes perpetuating inequity and misunderstanding.

Yafa Jarrar, who is deeply rooted in the Palestinian struggle, enriches the anthology with personal experiences under Israeli occupation. The editors state, "Influenced by her own lived

[183] Ghada Chehade "Arab Woman" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 262-263.

experience and upbringing under Israeli Military Occupation and Apartheid policies, where she witnessed the arrests of both her parents numerous times and endured the effects of torture on her father in Israeli military prisons."[184] Her personal accounts of life under Israeli occupation bring to the forefront the lived realities of political oppression and its impact on Palestinian women and their families. Her narrative sheds light on the physical and psychological toll of military occupation and apartheid policies, providing a poignant illustration of how geopolitical inequities and violence permeate the everyday lives of individuals.

The plurality of introductions is inherently queer because it embraces a non-normative, collaborative approach that reflects the anthology's purpose of showcasing diverse, authentic voices and resisting traditional editorial control. Moreover, each editor also contributes a piece to the anthology, namely, Moussa's "My Colonized Tongue" and Malek's "A Rant by Me Because I Exist," embracing the dual role of editor and contributor. This practice pushes back against the notion that editors should not contribute to the anthology, a traditional view in literary studies. The idea is rooted in the belief that editors should maintain objectivity and impartiality, ensuring that the focus remains on the contributors rather than the editors themselves. This perspective is upheld in more traditional or canonical anthologies, where the editor's role is seen as purely curatorial.

However, this perspective has been increasingly challenged, particularly within feminist and diaspora literature, where the boundaries between editor and contributor are more fluid, and the editor's personal investment and community ties are seen as enhancing the anthology's authenticity and depth as portrayed above by *Min Fami*'s editors.

b. Titles

[184] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 290.

Titles of sections and individual contributions carry cultural symbolism; they encapsulate complex themes and serve as gateways to deeper exploration and understanding of feminist issues, contributing significantly to the broader discourse on gender, identity, and social justice. The anthology's Arabic title, *Min Fami,* meaning "from my mouth," signifies, as explained by the editors' writing, emerging uninterrupted and unrestrained from women's mouths "despite barriers" and "barricaded by fences and doors."[185] I argue that this imagery not only underscores the physical and metaphorical obstacles faced but also shines a light on the deliberate and systemic exclusions such as racism, sexism, colonial legacies, and other forms of discriminatory practices.

For example, the symbolic significance of the title "Abu Samir's Pigeons, Khalil, Palestine" by Laila Suidan actively resists the erasure and Israeli occupation of Palestine by naming "Khalil" in Palestine and highlighting its physical presence. Pigeons, a symbol of peace and home, evoke a sense of belonging and the deep ties to Palestine, highlighting personal and collective memories associated with the homeland. Another title by Suidan is her poem "spines from the prickly pears," which conjures images of the arid landscapes where prickly pears grow abundantly, symbolizing resilience and endurance amidst harsh conditions.

Other titles, like "Trajectories of Crossings" by Nayrouz Abu Hatoum, highlight migration experiences and the crossing of physical and metaphorical borders. Shahd Wadi adds to the infuriation of borders by adding three other identifiers in her title and a sarcastic tone, "Ain't I a Palestinian Woman? Artistic Bodies Finding Home at the Borders." The title challenges stereotypes and questions identity through the lens of the intersectionality of gender, nationality, and art, emphasizing the search for home and identity amidst displacement.

[185] Ghaida Moussa "Starting Points," in *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance,* Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds. (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 1-2.

"My Colonized Tongue" by Ghaida Moussa reflects the impact of colonialism on language and identity. It underscores the struggle to reclaim one's voice and cultural heritage in the face of historical and ongoing colonization. "Palestinian Women Freedom Fighters" by Yafa Jarrar honours the contributions and sacrifices of Palestinian women in resistance movements and their fight for justice and liberation. All these titles document and validate voices and experiences that are constantly subject to erasure.

The short story "Living in Sin" by Laylan Saadaldin explores taboo subjects since it traditionally refers to cohabitation without marriage, which indicates a confrontation with societal norms regarding acceptable behaviour, particularly related to sexuality and relationships. These titles ensure that the narratives of women are brought to the forefront, resisting the cultural erasure of their stories and struggles. The remaining works are the poem "Departing a City" by Rauda Morcos and the academic essay "Reconstructing Hudud: Using Stereotypes in Fatima Mernissi's Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood" by Christine Rezk, which both delve into themes of displacement, resistance against oppressive structures, and the negotiation of power dynamics within Arab societies.

c. Contributors

The contributors in *Min Fami* reflect a diverse array of voices, with thirty-one individuals contributing a total of forty-six pieces, many of them diasporic authors whose experiences span transnational lives and the complexities of nation-state dynamics. The contributors live and work in the United States or Canada; some are second-generation immigrants. Notably, there are authors born in Arab countries residing in the Gulf who, despite their immigrant status, are not explicitly labelled as part of the diaspora.

Among the contributors are academics, and their diverse geographic locations include eleven from Canada, four from Morocco, nine from the USA (including Dina El Dessouky, described as "local to no particular landmass"), one from the UAE (Nawar Al-Hassan Golley), four from Palestine (with Shahd Wadi emphasizing the centrality of Palestinian resistance), one from Saudi Arabia, and one from Egypt working in Saudi Arabia. This geographical diversity is significant for several reasons. Firstly, it expands Arab representation by including voices from various parts of the Arab world and the diaspora, offering a panoramic view of Arab experiences. Secondly, Dessouky's reference to belonging "local to no particular landmass" emphasizes the fluidity of identity, highlighting how migration, whether voluntary or forced, at times leads to a constant feeling of detachment and discomfort. This notion of being untethered from a singular geographic identity, individuals who do not fit neatly into nationality or ethnicity, speaks to the broader experiences of many within the Arab diaspora. This in-betweenness, as explained by Geesey in Chapter One, describes the "in-between" space between assimilation and alterity"[186] where identities are continuously negotiated and redefined. Within such spaces, identities are formed not just by the places of one's ancestry or birth but also by the myriad places and cultures one experiences. It involves grappling with feelings of rootlessness and searching for a community that understands and embraces the multiplicity of one's identity. In this way, Dessouky challenges static notions of culture and identity, complex experiences of those who live between worlds.

Laila Ait Bouchtba's passionate journey into photography was nearly thwarted by her family's limited resources: "Not many families could afford a camera, as this was a big luxury for a middle-class family like hers. They only used their camera in special festivities, as was the case

[186] Patricia Geesey, "Identity and Community in Autobiographies of Algerian Women in France," in Amal Amireh and Lisa Suhair Majaj, *Going Global: The Transnational Reception of Third World Women Writers* (Routledge Taylor and Francis, 2014): 198.

for most Moroccan families who had one."[187] Her story reflects the broader themes of resourcefulness, resilience, and overcoming barriers to personal and creative expression. It reflects diverse socioeconomic backgrounds among the contributors, their various paths to self-expression, activism, and the importance of overcoming structural barriers to achieve personal and creative fulfillment.

Furthermore, including various perspectives and backgrounds emphasizes the editors' commitment to representing a broad spectrum of voices within the Arab feminist discourse—the two male contributors open dialogues on masculinity, gender roles, and feminism. Azza Abbaro is an example of a contributor who is the cover designer of the anthology and embodies a feminist praxis where she takes on clients that are socially conscious organizations and businesses.[188] She considers herself "a self-proclaimed third-culture-kid; Azza is a nomad at heart and hopes to continue this work wherever in the world she goes."[189] Her inclusion highlights themes of global mobility, cultural hybridity, and the fluidity of identity. Abbaro's professional and personal background contributes to the anthology's discourse by illustrating how feminist values can be integrated into creative and professional realms, thereby broadening the scope of what constitutes feminist work and activism.

Another example is Nayrouz Abu Hatoum, a Palestinian doctoral candidate when the anthology was published and currently an assistant professor in the Department of Sociology and Anthropology at Concordia University. She delves into the discourses of borders and violence

[187] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 286.
[188] Azza Abbaro, "About + Contact," *Azza Abbaro | Creative Communications - Web & Graphic Design*, www.azzaabbaro.com/about--contact.html
[189] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 286.

within her personal narrative, highlighting the scholarly depth within the anthology. This blended narrative exemplifies the anthology's engagement with pressing socio-political issues.

Moreover, several *Min Fami* contributors embody queer theory through various forms of activism, artistic expression, and academic inquiry. Salam Jeghbir's visual arts work, particularly her exploration of identity and memory using diverse mediums, reflects queer theory's interrogation of fixed categories and embrace of fluid identities. Similarly, Ghadeer Malek's activism, poetry, and involvement in aqsaZine showcase a commitment to challenging gender-based violence and promoting progressive narratives within Muslim communities, aligning with queer theory's emphasis on resistance against oppression. Rauda Morcos's activism with organizations such as Aswat and Qamb mantiQitna, coupled with her public assertion of her identity as a lesbian and queer woman exemplifies queer theory's principles of visibility and resistance against heteronormativity. Furthermore, Ghaida Moussa's academic research on narrative and creative resistance among queer Palestinian women demonstrates her focus on challenging dominant discourses and reclaiming narratives. Finally, Lana Nasser's work as a playwright, performer, and festival director contributes to creating spaces for empowerment and self-expression, echoing queer theory's emphasis on disrupting power structures and fostering inclusive communities.

The variety of contributors, particularly those with transnational lives, challenges static notions of culture, identity, and belonging. This diversity foregrounds the fluidity of identity and the complexities of nation-state dynamics, offering a panoramic view of Arab experiences that defy singular, homogeneous narratives.

d. Mixed-Genre Contributions

Here, delving into examples of the mixed-genre contributions further illustrates how each piece generates knowledge and utilizes Kimberlé Crenshaw's intersectionality framework. An example from *Min Fami* is Dina El Dessouky's memoir piece, "London by Self Tour," which explores cultural identity and displacement. As an Egyptian-American discovering London with her mom, Malek describes the piece as detailing "how imperialism and colonialism express themselves by stealing the heritage of the colonized, thus fracturing history and deforming identity,"[190] which is crucial to the feminist vision of the anthology of imagining a liberated Palestine, a place of Arab solidarity and sisterhood, and a place where fragmented memories can be shared and reunited.

Dessouky is able, through her tour of London museums, parks, and shopping, to critically reflect on her identity and embrace its complexity, such as "whether or not Masr is the Mother of the World anymore is irrelevant. She is the mother of my world—this is non-negotiable: we do not choose our mothers or our motherlands. She follows me everywhere I go, as do her anxieties."[191] The idea that Egypt, with all its cultural, historical, and political baggage, follows the narrator everywhere adds a layer of inescapable influence. The narrator cannot detach from this identity, no matter where she is. Just as one cannot choose their biological mother, they cannot choose their birthplace and cultural heritage. This "lack of choice"[192] that the narrator experiences within her socio-cultural context allows different aspects of her identity to intersect, create a sense of inevitability and helplessness, and present unique, challenging experiences.

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[190] Ghadeer Malek, "Through the Fog" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 40-42.
[191] Dina El Dessouky, "London by Self Tour," in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 40-42
[192] Michelle Hartman, *Native Tongue, Stranger Talk : The Arabic and French Literary Landscapes of Lebanon*. (Syracuse University Press, 2014): 2.

Dessouki's critique and love are apparent in how she imagines a future identity that still does not exist,

> I too longed to walk arm-in-arm with other Egyptian, North African, and Arab women. I longed for sisters with whom I could finally share jokes in my fractured version of Masri. I wish they took as much interest in me as I did in them. I wish they recognized me as a sister.[193]

Envisioning a future that goes beyond existing oppressive structures, Audre Lorde's concept, who emphasized its importance,[194] which was adopted by Arab feminists like Nadine Naber in her essay "The Radical Potential of Mothering during the Egyptian Revolution," taking it further by the possibility of "imagine a different future,"[195] one where Palestine is free.

Another example of memoir that explores the fluidity and diversity inherent in Arab women's identity is "Girls as Women" by Maha Zimmo. This exploration of generational identity "tells the story of three generations of women and their resilience and strength in the face of war and occupation, all the while carrying a love for simplicity, happiness, and freedom."[196] This constant inclusion of matrilineal stories from the past into present contemporary narratives is critical to understanding the present reality in which Arab feminists live, as evidenced in the title, structure, and frame that Joe Kadi chose for *Food for Our Grandmothers*.

Moreover, I argue that this narrative serves a threefold purpose: first, it offers insight into Zimmo's personal experiences and challenges, providing a glimpse into her own life; second, it acknowledges the resilience and determination passed down through generations, highlighting how individuals have benefited from the resistance and struggle of their ancestors; third, it educates the wider community about the realities of contemporary life in Gaza under Israeli occupation.

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[193] Michelle Hartman, *Native Tongue, Stranger Talk : The Arabic and French Literary Landscapes of Lebanon*. (Syracuse University Press, 2014): 2.
[194] Audre Lorde, *Sister Outsider: Essays and Speeches* (Crossing Press, 2007), 106.
[195] Nadine Naber, "The Radical Potential of Mothering during the Egyptian Revolution," *Feminist Studies* 47, no. 1 (2021): 83.
[196] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 10.

The stark imagery of "standing by the Mediterranean's wintered coastline at Gaza, in approximately 1980"[197] vividly portrays the harsh conditions endured by families, where even pneumonia from frozen sea spray is normalized. This depiction emphasizes the enduring resilience and adaptability of Gazan families, who have faced immense hardships and inhumane conditions because of the occupation.

A third example of a contribution is the literary analysis "Mother-Daughter Relationships in Canadian and Arab Women's Literature" by Afaf Jamil Khogeer which discusses the family dynamics and tension of mother-daughter in shaping individual identity in four works of literature: *Hetty Dorval* by Ethel Wilson, *The Fire-Dwellers* by Margaret Laurence, *The Story Of Zahra* by Hanan al-Shaykh, and the autobiographical memoir, *A Border Passage*, by Leila Ahmed. This type of comparative literature article would usually navigate only in an academic context, but within this anthology, it circulates to a broader audience and helps disseminate knowledge to the community. This type of inclusion parallels the academic essays found in *Arab and Arab-American Feminisms: Gender, Violence, and Belonging*. Khogeer's comparison in *Min Fami* discusses the theme of silence and the strained maternal bond portrayed in the aforementioned literary works,

> In *Hetty Dorval*, *The Fire-Dwellers*, *The Story of Zahra*, and *A Border Passage*, there is a theme of silence that must be spoken, private worlds of women who need to speak with their daughters about their past lives, but for different reasons, are prevented from doing so. (…) The feminist movement brought with it a straining of the maternal bond, however, it holds within it limitless possibilities for a new connectedness between mothers and daughters of the coming female generations.[198]

[197] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 19.
[198] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 34.

This type of analysis fuels a conversation and allows readers to gain insight into the societal norms, historical contexts, and personal struggles women face in expressing their intersectional identities and sharing their stories. It sheds light on how the maternal bond may be strained by societal norms and historical silence, while also holding the potential for renewed understanding and connection across generations. Moreover, through the examination of literary works from both Canadian and Arab contexts, readers gain a deeper appreciation for the cultural nuances and shared experiences that unite women across different geographical locations.

The exploration of feminism across generations is further explored in Nawar Al-Hassan Golley's "A Feminist Regeneration," her personal narrative is also an academic essay and a manifesto of her feminism, embracing her Muslim identity as part of her feminism and by naming her feminist lineage, her ancestors, her living mentors, her consciousness, and pedagogy. She looks at how Arab feminism emerges not as an adopted ideology, but as a lived experience intricately interwoven from other Arab feminists, "it comes from autobiographies and experience of fellow Arab feminists and writers, and finds that it brings her peace to be able to reconcile various parts of her identity."[199]

The vivid exploration of borders and the complexities of living under Israeli military occupation is eloquently described in Nayrouz Abu Hatoum's personal memoir "Trajectories of Crossings," which illuminates the myriad struggles encountered within these spaces. "Births, at Israeli checkpoints, produce the border (experience): the separation as well as the penetration."[200] She describes how borders take on a bodily experience that enables its harsh reality to reach readers. "Borders encompass complexities and paradoxes as sites of oppression and liberation,

[199] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 10.
[200] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 139.

separation and connection, or life and death; and I would also argue that borders are sites of mourning, where memories collapse."[201] Abu Hatoum's exploration emphasizes the paradoxical nature of borders as complex socio-political constructs that manifest emotional, physical, racial, and economic manifestations, highlighting the intricate reality shaped by Israeli military occupation. It challenges simplistic narratives about borders, underscoring their role as contested spaces where power dynamics and human experiences intersect.

Additionally, Abu Hatoum delves into the emotional dimensions of border experiences. By portraying borders as sites of mourning where memories collapse, she acknowledges the profound psychological and emotional toll of living within such restrictive environments. This insight deepens readers' understanding of the human cost of conflict and displacement, enriching their comprehension of the lived experiences of individuals affected by border regimes. These borders profoundly impact Palestinian experiences of oppression, resistance, and loss, influencing both individuals' lives and Palestine.

Contrasting with Abu Hatoum's depiction of external borders is an exploration of how the legal term "hudud" has been fetishized by the West through Orientalism in Christine Rezk's insightful analysis "Reconstructing Hudud: Using Stereotypes in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood*." Similarly to Afaf Jamil Khogeer's academic essay, it is not a genre typically found in a literary anthology and shows how *Min Fami* produces knowledge that bridges these gaps, false divisions, connecting the silos that Western academia enforces.

Rezk explains that these societal spaces are not binaries of oppression and freedom, seclusion and extroverted behaviours. "Hudud is therefore perceived by many as a sign of honour

[201] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 147.

rather than imprisonment."[202] She discusses *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood* to show how "Women in Mernissi's harem strive to break barriers while sticking to their traditions and holding on to their Arab/Muslim identities. (…) Her feminism is not a tool of Western imperialism but is, instead, very specific to her culture and people."[203] This analysis challenges the notion that feminism in Arab and Muslim contexts is merely a replication of Western ideals, contributing to knowledge production by deconstructing Orientalist stereotypes, highlighting the complexities of cultural practices like hudud, and emphasizing the importance of context and specificity in discussions of feminism and gender dynamics in Arab and Muslim societies.

The section dedicated to resistance amplifies the voices of Arab women and serves as powerful testaments to their indomitable spirit. Works like Inaam's poem "I Resist" stand as strong, bold declarations of agency, resistance, and self-definition:

> I Resist
> I resist through definitions, to free myself of them.
> I resist through love, and I refuse to be confined by its accepted meanings.
> I resisted through being a woman, and breaking the limiting walls of its definition.
> I resist through naming it. Palestinian. I am Palestinian.[204]

The repetition of the word 'Palestinian' in such a short free verse adds to the strength of resistance through existence, through its simple declaration. Living itself is an act of resistance when a whole people are faced with ethnic cleansing. These women, as I have demonstrated, challenge societal norms, patriarchal structures, and political injustices by articulating their resistance through poetry and personal narratives.

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[202] Christine Rezk, "Reconstructing Hudud: Using Stereotypes in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood,*" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 167-171.
[203] Christine Rezk, "Reconstructing Hudud: Using Stereotypes in Fatima Mernissi's *Dreams of Trespass: Tales of a Harem Girlhood,*" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 167-171.
[204] Inaam, "I Resist," in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 199.

The final text I will analyze is Samira Saraya's "A Voice from Aswat," which emerges as a courageous assertion of LGBTQ+ identity within Palestine and how identity is interconnected globally. Saraya explains how groups like Aswat and Al-Qaws provide a haven for gay Arab women and are a means of educating and changing society. She further asserts how both organizations resist erasure by challenging the Israeli State's narrative and harmful subjugation, and "[t]hat without [education] we are fighting alone, isolating ourselves from the context surrounding us."[205] The narrator emphasizes the intersectionality of her own identity as a progressive political activist, a gay Palestinian woman, and an employee in Tel Aviv, challenging stereotypes and racism. "The universe gave me great gifts. I was given the responsibility of being a woman in a chauvinist society, an Arab in a Jewish State and a lesbian in a homophobic society."[206] Her profoundly personal narrative not only resonates at a communal level through her activism in Aswat but also contributes to the broader understanding of Aswat and Al-Qaws, elucidating their educational purpose and societal objectives. Despite enduring considerable challenges, she embodies a resilient hopefulness for a better world:

> When I was ten years old, I told a friend that our generation will play a critical role in the future, and that it will be remembered as a significant generation in the course of history. We will have the power to build or destroy the world. I felt those words so intensely back then, and I still do now, and I know that I belong with those who want to build a new world. I want to love, live, and be happy. I want to experience excitement without being indifferent and ignorant toward other people's suffering, just like I would not want them to ignore mine. I do not want to hate or hurt.[207]

Saraya embodies feminist principles by advocating for social change, equality, and the dismantling of oppressive systems. Her emphasis on emotions, hope, love, happiness, asserting the right to

[205] Samira Saraya, "A Voice from Aswat" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 205-206.
[206] Samira Saraya, "A Voice from Aswat" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 205-206.
[207] Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 207.

love, live, and be happy without discrimination, hatred or pain; empowerment, strength in solidarity and finding a home in the community: "I belong with those who want to build a new world"[208] where she imagines a better future, her optimism about shaping the future through collective action highlights resilience and determination, fostering empathy and critical dialogue on LGBTQ+ rights and identity politics in Palestine and beyond.

e. Conclusion

By thoroughly examining titles, editor introductions, section introductions, thematic categorizations, contributors and various contributions, by demonstrating above how *Min Fami* uses its feminist framework to enable knowledge production that resists assimilation and Canadian multiculturalism, it critiques power dynamics through its content and themes. *Min Fami* serves as a platform to accentuate Arab women's writing, challenge oppressive structures, and assert their agency, thereby contributing to a richer understanding of the complexities of gender, power, and resistance in Arab societies. The narratives transcend conventional discourse, offering profound insights into the complex interplay of identity, space, and resistance in the lives of Arab women, which enriches contemporary discourse and paves the way for future explorations of Arab women's experiences. Through its inclusive structure and diverse range of contributions, the anthology fosters a sense of solidarity and empowerment, highlighting the multifaceted nature of Arab feminism and deepening understanding of the intricate layers that constitute the Arab female experience, whether in the diaspora or elsewhere.

iv. The Feminist Frame in Food for Our Grandmothers

While *Min Fami* leverages its feminist framework to challenge assimilation and Canadian multiculturalism, asserting the agency of Arab feminists through a critical examination of identity,

[208] Samira Saraya, "A Voice from Aswat" in Ghaida Moussa and Ghadeer Malek, eds., *Min Fami: Arab Feminist Reflections on Identity, Space & Resistance* (Inanna Publications and Education Inc., 2019): 207.

power, and resistance, *Food for Our Grandmothers* similarly takes on a profound significance within the context of Arab-American and Arab-Canadian women's experiences. It explicitly adopts a feminist framework, using food not only as a thematic motif but also as a method of knowledge production and resistance. Though distinct in their thematic focuses, both anthologies are united in their efforts to reclaim narratives, resist stereotypes, and assert feminist identities. *Food for Our Grandmothers* centers its exploration on themes of home, belonging, resilience, and selfhood, offering a platform for writers to delve into the complex intersections of race, ethnicity, and gender. The following analysis will parallel the approach taken with *Min Fami*, focusing on symbolic categorization, structural models, empowerment, resistance, themes of home, belonging, resilience, and selfhood and the multifaceted nature of Arab feminist identity.

a. Symbolic Categorization with Food

Food for Our Grandmothers expresses the thematic divisions of the anthology through Arab foods and recipes as symbolic categories: Olives, Bread, Thyme, Laban, Grape Leaves, and Mint. By doing so, Kadi automatically creates a unifying, accessible, and familiar space for Arabs as an entryway to the anthology that bridges personal and collective experiences, emphasizing the interconnectedness of identity, culture, and community. Moreover, Brinda J. Mehta, in her essay "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber's Crescent," argues that the many Qur'anic references to food lead to their becoming a symbol of the divine in Arab culture. She states that cultivating food in the desert, the birthplace of Islam, symbolizes God's generosity and magnificence. In this line of thinking, Arab cuisine mirrors the abundance of Paradise, embodying godliness through wholesomeness, nutrition, flavour, and dietary balance.[209] Integrating cultural elements that overlap with religious significance into the anthology's structure challenges traditional literary

[209] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 204.

categorizations and rejects the denigration of Arab culture. "The important link between cuisine and identity"[210] is a crucial aspect of many diasporic works because of the way food reflects the emotions of home and belonging; as stated earlier, food transcends mere sustenance; it serves as a powerful symbol of cultural heritage and resilience in Arab diasporic literature. However, it is important to note that the culinary symbols chosen—Olives, Bread, Thyme, Laban, Grape Leaves, and Mint—are predominantly associated with the Levantine region, including Palestine, Lebanon, Syria, and Egypt. While these foods create a familiar and unifying entryway for many Arabs and readers, particularly given the prevalence of Lebanese cuisine in diaspora restaurants, they also inadvertently reinforce a regional focus, contributing to the homogenization of Arab identity. This focus tends to erase the specificity of each country's cuisine and often overlooks the unique ingredients and dishes of other Arab countries. Although the anthology is rich in its thematic use of food as symbols of cultural heritage, it still faces the challenge of representing the full diversity of Arab cuisines, potentially overlooking the ingredients and distinct culinary traditions of regions such as the Gulf countries.

In Nathalie Handal's introduction to *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology*, she discusses how it is not surprising that the two pioneering anthologies of Arab-American literature, *Grape Leaves: A Century of Arab-American Poetry* and *Food for Our Grandmothers*, use food as their emblem, she asserts that "Food is one of the most important themes in Arab-American literature. It provides an emblem of their history and culture, their Arab life away from home and their national identity."[211] Hartman also analyzes how food, grape leaves specifically, is an emblem in the above-stated Arab-American anthologies in her essay

[210] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 204.
[211] Nathalie Handal, ed., *The Poetry of Arab Women: A Contemporary Anthology* (Interlink, 2000): 46.

"Grandmothers, Grape Leaves, and Kahlil Gibran: Writing Race in Anthologies of Arab American Literature," where she shows how the food emblem is cultural production and emphasizes both family and community.

In "Five Steps to Creating Culture," Kadi states, "We owe it to ourselves, our ancestors, and the ones who come after us to celebrate our wonderful culture, whether we find it in the laban we eat or the stories we read."[212] This statement represents the final destination in this feminist odyssey, symbolizing the celebration of authenticity and selfhood. Kadi, through this essay reflects on the process of cultural creation and transmission, drawing inspiration from his grandmother making laban. This narrative explores the significance of cultural practices, particularly those passed down by women, in shaping identity and sustaining communities. The five steps outlined in the essay serve as a metaphor for Kadi's journey as a cultural worker, emphasizing the importance of anger, thoughtful reflection, communal grounding, careful treatment of cultural work, and the ultimate goal of nourishing and sustaining the community.

Hartman shows how Kadi's strategic portrayal of food as "cultural work" enables a nuanced understanding of the experiences of Arab-American and Arab-Canadian women as a unique form of cultural expression. Moreover, it reciprocates the nurturing bestowed by their grandmothers by aligning their labour with the intellectual pursuits of writing and anthologising: "By locating grandmothers' food preparation as cultural work that can be passed down and appreciated through generations, this anthology rejects a racial explanation for poetry and creative production."[213] Importantly, Hartman explains how the anthology intentionally avoids using food

[212] Joe Kadi, "Five Steps To Creating Culture," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 237.
[213] Michelle Hartman, "Grandmothers, Grape Leaves, and Kahlil Gibran Writing Race in Anthologies of Arab American Literature," in *Sajjilu Arab American: A Reader in SWANA Studies*, ed. Amira Jarmakani, Pauline Homsi Vinson, and Louise Cainkar (Syracuse University Press, 2022):100.

to emphasize misogynistic or patriarchal practices related to women's unpaid labour by not perpetuating traditional gender norms, rejecting the misplaced assumption that the responsibility for food preparation lies solely with women.

Additionally, the portrayal of women in this context reflects a racialized perspective, contributing to stereotypes that unfairly depict women of colour as incapable of engaging in sophisticated labour compared to their white counterparts. Kadi reinforces this belief by equating food to culture: "culture is absolutely essential for our growth and development. As necessary as food. As critical as water. As mandatory as air. As indispensable as sunlight and moonlight."[214] By advocating for the celebration of cultural heritage, the quote affirms the agency and autonomy of Arab women in defining and preserving their identities. Moreover, recognizing cultural heritage in tangible forms like food and intangible forms like stories emphasizes the significance of cultural identity in shaping individual experiences and narratives.

Furthermore, Mehta shows in her analysis "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber" how "the kitchen as feminine space is the locus of feminist knowledge imparted by the mother to the daughter, unmediated by patriarchal constructions."[215] It serves as a sanctuary of family memories, providing the heroine with a sense of origin and identity. Kadi adds to this by delineating how the kitchen is a joyous and creative place, too: "our foremothers were often the ones who handed on our culture; mothers, grandmothers, and aunts who carried out daily tasks in the kitchen, who passed on baking rituals and cooking rituals and singing rituals and dancing rituals

[214] Joe Kadi, "Five Steps to Creating Culture," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 236.
[215] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 212.
[215] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 212.

and storytelling rituals."[216] The transformative potential of domestic spaces and the narratives they contain, and the way Kadi and Mehta analyze them, exemplifies one of the ways in which *Food for Our Grandmothers* generates knowledge: by delving into the shared experiences and narratives of Arab women, highlighting the significance of feminine spaces and knowledge transmission.

b. Structural Model and Practical Functionality

By starting each section with a recipe, the anthology serves a practical function by offering readers tangible connections to the themes explored in each section and as a practical resource that readers can refer to multiple times, using it as a guide to recreate dishes and find a sense of community through shared culinary experiences. Unlike many other literary texts that may be read once and then forgotten, the reusability of this anthology renders it a resource that readers can return to multiple times, establishing a lasting relationship between the reader and the text. The anthology becomes more than just a book; it becomes a companion, a guide, and a reference that readers can rely on for inspiration and connection. It organically fosters a sense of closeness and community through its function as a cookbook, providing a practical avenue for readers to engage with the text and the themes it explores.

There is an experiential aspect to the anthology's structure as readers engage with the recipes; they not only gain insight into the culinary traditions of Arab culture but also immerse themselves in the sensory experiences associated with food. Lastly, centring on food as a structure and integrating recipes in the anthology allows a universal activity across classes to democratize the text, allowing women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in knowledge production and literary discourse. Historically, literary production has been dominated by the upper classes, limiting participation by women of colour and especially women from lower

[216] Joe Kadi, "Five Steps To Creating Culture," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 231.

socioeconomic backgrounds. This emphasis on inclusivity and accessibility underscores the anthology's commitment to intersectional feminism by promoting solidarity among feminists from varied backgrounds.

c. Empowerment and Resistance

The explicit feminist framework catalyzes empowerment and resistance among Arab women. The anthology's first section, Olives, is a poignant way of centring the anthology on Palestine, as the olive tree symbolizes Palestine's deep-rooted heritage, spanning thousands of years.[217] It also serves as a reminder of the ongoing struggles faced by Palestinians, particularly the destruction and uprooting of olive groves and usurp Palestinian land by the Israeli occupation.[218] Historically, the olive tree has been a powerful emblem of resilience and cultural identity, often evoking the historical context of displacement and dispossession that Palestinians have endured since 1948. The destruction of olive trees, especially during periods of heightened conflict, exemplifies the broader violence against Palestinian identity and land. By foregrounding this symbolism, the anthology not only highlights the interconnectedness of feminist and anti-colonial struggles but also amplifies the voices of those who have historically been marginalized in both feminist and nationalist discourses.

For these reasons, Kadi begins the anthology with this section and the meaningful subtitle, "Our roots go deep: where we come from," underscoring the centrality of the olive tree to Arab women's experiences. Similarly, Dina El-Hindi's essay "Solidarity in Roots: Ecofeminism and Palestinian Women" highlights the profound significance of the olive tree for Palestinians, portraying it as a potent symbol of heritage, resilience, and resistance. This emphasis on the olive

[217] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): 3.
[218] Dina Elhindi and Bassmah AlTaher, "Solidarity in Roots: Ecofeminism and Palestinian Women," *The International Journal of Literary Humanities*, 21, no. 2 (2023): 162-163.

tree's multifaceted importance aligns with feminist principles that recognize and celebrate women's roles in shaping cultural narratives and societal resilience. She states that,

> For Palestinians, the olive tree is more than just a plant. It has both a social and cultural meaning because Palestinian families come together to harvest the same olive trees that their ancestors had cared for. Families gather to harvest the olives from their trees, not just for the oil that they produce, but for the bond that it creates; a bond with one another, and, more importantly to the Palestinians, a bond with their land.[219]

El-Hindi's exploration delves into the social and cultural meanings embedded within Palestinian society, mainly through the communal practices surrounding olive harvesting. She illuminates how Palestinian families gather not only to collect olives for their oil but also to strengthen bonds with one another and their land, underscoring the pivotal role of women in preserving traditions and maintaining familial ties. These themes of agency and empowerment resonate deeply within feminist discourse, enriching our understanding of women's contributions to collective memory and resistance narratives.

El-Hindi's essay and Kadi's deliberate categorization within the anthology give readers a deeper understanding of Palestinian identity and experience. By examining how cultural symbols like the olive tree shape social relations, collective memory, and resistance narratives within Arab communities, they offer valuable insights into the enduring struggle for justice and self-determination, particularly among those who have been forcibly displaced and uprooted from their land. The essays and poems in this section bear witness to the strength of Arab women, echoing the sentiment expressed by the editor, Joe Kadi, "Find home wherever you can make it,"[220] expressing so clearly the challenges of how home is conditional for Arabs. For instance, Lisa Suhair Majaj's poem, "Recognized Futures," defiantly asserts the speaker's identity and refusal to

[219] Dina Elhindi and Bassmah AlTaher, "Solidarity in Roots: Ecofeminism and Palestinian Women," *The International Journal of Literary Humanities*, 21, no. 2 (2023): 161.
[220] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xv.

be erased, encapsulating the empowering gesture of recognizing her heritage. She delves into the duality surrounding her name, writing, "A contested name, a constant/longing, evening star rising mute/through the Palestine night."[221] Majaj's evocative imagery not only foregrounds the personal as political but also illuminates the broader struggle for identity and recognition within contested spaces, serving as a poignant reminder of the power of self-definition in the face of adversity.

Another example is Marti Farha Ammar, who contributed with a poem entitled *For My Son Shaadi*, although she does not define herself as a poet. She is a world traveller, translator, political activist and president of *Save Lebanon, Inc*., which provides humanitarian relief for Palestinian and Lebanese victims of the Lebanese civil war. Ammar's contributions, transcending her identification as a non-poet, reflect the power of personal stories to evoke empathy and action. Through her global travels, activism, and leadership in providing relief to victims of conflict, Ammar embodies the anthology's emphasis on the intersection of personal narrative with broader social and political engagement.

d. Bread: Home, Identity, and Community

In the second section, titled Bread, with the subtitle "A Basic Desire: Going Home," the essay underscores the symbolic importance of bread in Arabic culture. Moreover, bread is regarded as a basic unifying right, as seen in the 2011 revolution in Egypt, where crowds shouted, "Bread, Freedom, Social Justice," echoing the essence of the subheading, "a basic desire," since the word "bread" is the same word as "live" in some forms of spoken Arabic, Egypt for example. Furthermore, the subtitle implies a deep-seated human desire for a sense of belonging and

[221] Lisa Suhair Majaj, "Recognized Futures" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed., (South End Press, 1994): 5-6.

connection to one's roots, emphasizing the significance of returning to one's homeland or place of origin as a basic human need, particularly for those in the diaspora.

This desire for home is captured in the personal essay "Homecoming" by May Mansoor Munn; the act of returning to one's childhood home in Palestine is explored, highlighting the resilience and solace found amidst displacement. Munn reflects on the significance of reconnecting with her roots, acknowledging the complexities and tragedies of the present realities. She says, "It's that *other* home that we must occasionally return to and, despite our former rebellions, learn to embrace."[222] Her lyrical, nostalgic memories of her childhood, contrasting with how the current children live with war, are heart-wrenching and poignant and resist the dehumanization of Palestine and Palestinian children as dispensable.

As a staple food, bread embodies notions of community and belonging, often torn and shared around tables, evoking warmth and nurturance. Moreover, baking bread becomes a metaphor for unity and strength, particularly among women coming together around the oven, their work-worn hands embodying a sense of shared experience and solidarity. This female ritual aspect can be seen in Therese Saliba's personal essay "Sittee (or Phantom Appearances of a Lebanese Grandmother)," which reflects on the symbolic importance of bread within the context of her grandmother's life and their Lebanese heritage.

Sittee's kitchen becomes a space where foreign foods, incense, and rituals converge, offering a glimpse into the rich cultural heritage she carries from Lebanon to the United States. Saliba describes her grandmother's hands as "small, strong, gnarled"[223] and "work-worn hands,

[222] May Mansoor Munn "Homecoming," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 94.
[223] Therese Saliba, "Sittee (or Phantom Appearances of a Lebanese Grandmother)," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 9.

busy hands. I watched them kneading dough for Syrian bread."[224] She was especially fascinated by the baking practice, "there was something sacred and human in this culture that let you take holy bread home, bread that was thick and full, unlike the stale wafers of the Catholic church where my mother often took us on Sunday mornings."[225] This narrative revolving around bread reflects how it carries, in Lebanese culture, cultural, spiritual, and communal importance as physical nourishment and symbolizes unity, hospitality, and tradition. Sittee's role as a matriarch and guardian of cultural traditions positions her as a formidable figure within the family unit, defying conventional notions of women's roles and authority.

Additionally, the Bread section offers critical reflections on identity formation and intersectionality. In Mary Salome's personal essay "Wherever I Am," she critically reflects on the complexities of identity formation and the struggle to define oneself within rigid categories imposed by mainstream society. She states, "Identity is a complicated subject, and it is always hard for me to say who I am in a few words."[226] She writes about the constraints imposed by labels and their impact on perception, whether they pertain to Arab, American, lesbian, or feminist identities, illustrating her quest for acceptance and understanding. She says, "In mainstream Israel, our common humanity felt less important than the fact that I am an Arab, an American, a lesbian, and a feminist."[227] This essay emphasizes how Arab feminist diasporic identity is plural and resists the categorization limitations and misrepresentation imposed by the West. The Bread section is a

[224] Joe Kadi, ed., *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xiv.
[225] Therese Saliba, "Sittee (or Phantom Appearances of a Lebanese Grandmother)," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 9.
[226] Mary Salome, "Wherever I Am" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 87.
[227] Mary Salome, "Wherever I Am" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 87.

testament against erasure and the interconnectedness of home, identity, and community within Arab diasporic experiences.

e. Resilience and Selfhood

The sections' titles, Thyme and Laban, encapsulate the thematic essence of the following narratives, providing a glimpse into the multifaceted experiences of Arab women amidst conflict, cultural representation, and gender dynamics. Thyme and Laban symbolize resilience and the celebration of authenticity; they highlight the capacity to thrive despite challenging circumstances. The act of pounding spices serves as a metaphor for infusing new life into the body amidst the turmoil of the Gulf War, emphasizing the life-producing force of resilience, which explains the subtitle "Growing Against the Odds: Surviving the Gulf War."[228] Thyme's ability to grow in harsh conditions mirrors the strength and resistance of Arab women facing adversity.

This resilience is reflected in Therese Saliba's essay "Military Presences and Absences: Arab Women and the Persian Gulf War," where she critiques the media's portrayal of Arab women, exposing how liberation rhetoric serves to justify military expansionism and "is rarely intended to liberate anyone—least of all women."[229] Saliba shows how the invisibility of Arab women in Western media reinforces existing power dynamics and silences dissenting voices, perpetuating notions of Western cultural superiority. She explains how "in a war where reality was defined in terms of visibility, the invisibility of Arab women both in the U.S. media and within the Saudi kingdom served to reinforce existing power relations, both gendered and geopolitical, and

[228] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 218.
[229] Therese Saliba, "Military Presences and Absences: Arab Women and the Persian Gulf War" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 132.

to silence voices of dissent."[230] Saliba's analysis illuminates the intricate intersection of gender, power, and representation, contributing to our understanding of how media narratives shape cultural perceptions and reinforce hierarchies of power.

Another example of plural Arab heritage in the context of war is Nada Elia's essay "A Woman's Place is in the Struggle: A Personal Viewpoint on Feminism, Pacifism, and the Gulf War," where she states, "I am Lebanese, or so I tell people I think I will not be seeing again. Friends get the longer version. My parents are Palestinian. My birth occurred in Iraq."[231] She is an academic specializing in comparative literature and a journalist who covered the Lebanese Civil War. Elia addresses the intersection of feminism and pacifism, critiquing the entry of women into the war machine in the name of feminism: "I know I fought Desert Storm as a peace activist who is also a feminist."[232] Elia's multifaceted identity, her critique of militarism, and her commitment to peace activism challenge conventional narratives around feminism and war, offering a perspective that bridges personal history with broader geopolitical dynamics.

Additionally, thyme as a section symbolizes the cultural significance of spices that transcend socio-economic boundaries, reflecting the unity and diversity within Arab communities. Mehta discusses the importance of spices to Arab cuisine in her essay "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," stating that, "It's aesthetically pleasing presentation, the fragrant intoxication of the senses by the artful combination of 'heavenly' spices such as cumin, saffron, sumac, and

[230] Therese Saliba, "Military Presences and Absences: Arab Women and the Persian Gulf War" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 132.
[231] Nada Elia, "A Woman's Place is in the Struggle: A Personal Viewpoint on Feminism, Pacifism, and the Gulf War" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 114-116.
[232] Nada Elia, "A Woman's Place is in the Struggle: A Personal Viewpoint on Feminism, Pacifism, and the Gulf War" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 114-116.

thyme together with the anointed perfume of rose and orange-blossom water."[233] These aromas offer a sensory journey into the culinary world of Arab women, where food serves as a gateway to tradition, identity, and community. They not only tantalize the palate but also evoke memories of Arab homes and bustling markets, creating an experiential connection to the lives of Arab women.

This evocation of home and memory is seen in Lamea Abbas Amara's poem "Amara," which deals with the Gulf War's destruction of Iraq and brings to light the profound effects of conflict on personal and collective memory. Her poignant recollections evoke a profound sense of loss and sorrow for a place that holds cherished memories, including the home of the poet's grandfather, the school alley, and daily walks along the riverbanks: "In summer, the sound of a single mournful flute wafts/ over the sleepless rooftops."[234] The haunting sound of a single flute drifting over rooftops speaks to how the violence of conflict has affected and stifled cultural and artistic aspects of life. This example emphasizes how geopolitical forces and nationalism shape identities.

In contrast, "Laban" explores the misrepresentations of Arab women, confronting stereotypes and reclaiming narratives reflected in the subtitle of this section, "Silent Victims and Bellydancers: (Mis)representations of Arab Women." Through pieces like Azizah al-Hibri's personal essay "Tear Off Your Western Veil!" and Marsha J. Hamilton's republished magazine article "The Arab Woman in U.S. Popular Culture: Sex and Stereotype," authors challenge exoticized images and critique Western feminist discourse. Hamilton, in her republished magazine article, "The Arab Woman in U.S. Popular Culture: Sex and Stereotype," explores the nature of stereotypes and how "a stereotype gives the holder the ability to judge who is right and wrong in

[233] Brinda J. Mehta, "The Semiosis of Food in Diana Abu Jaber," *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature* ed. Layla Al Maleh (Rodopi B.V., 2009): 204.
234 Lamea Abbas Amara "Amara," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 113.

complex situations easily. It instills a feeling of cultural superiority over beings unlike oneself."[235] Stereotypes act as shortcuts and perpetuate specific images that shape public opinion, such as the harem beauty, the belly dancer, and the veiled, oppressed woman.

Azizah Al-Hibri, born in Beirut, Lebanon, is a celebrated professor emerita at the T. C. Williams School of Law, University of Richmond; she founded *Hypatia: A Journal of Feminist Philosophy*, and founder and president of *KARAMAH: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights.* Her critique, rooted in a deep understanding of both Western and Islamic feminist traditions, underscores the anthology's commitment to representing a broad spectrum of feminist thought, from academic analysis to personal narrative, from legal advocacy to grassroots activism.

"Tear Off Your Western Veil!" deals with the misrepresentation of Arab women. She speaks of the persistent focus on issues like clitoridectomy and veiling by Western feminists to critique Arab culture as oppressive without the U.S. women's movement to address its patriarchal tendencies and its inclination to perceive itself as the vanguard of the international women's movement: "The white middle-class women's movement has bestowed upon itself the right to tell us Arab and Arab-American women what are the most serious issues for us— over our own objections."[236] Al-Hibri's incisive critique underscores the need for Western feminists to engage in introspection and recognize their complicity in perpetuating patriarchal structures, emphasizing the importance of self-representation and agency in shaping feminist discourse. She states, "Tactical considerations at home override the ideology of sisterhood; and to appease their conscience, American feminists, with even greater vigour, denounce U.S. policy in Nicaragua,

235 Marsha J. Hamilton "The Arab Woman in U.S. Popular Culture: Sex and Stereotype," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 174.

236 Azizah Al-Hibri, "Tear Off Your Western Veil!" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 163.

hoping to drown with their loud voices the faint moaning of dying Muslim women."[237] She explains that the practical concerns within the domestic sphere of the United States sometimes cause American feminists to prioritize specific issues over others, leading to an overshadowing of global sisterhood ideals. The "faint moaning of dying Muslim women"[238] captures the neglect and oppression faced by Muslim women, which are not given the same platform or urgency within the discourse of these American feminists. The implication here is that the loud opposition to certain injustices can inadvertently drown out or diminish the visibility of other critical issues, such as the rights and lives of Muslim women, thereby undermining the global solidarity and support that the feminist ideology of sisterhood aims to uphold.

Exploring "Thyme" and "Laban" as thematic anchors within the narratives of resilience, selfhood, and cultural negotiation among Arab women offers a nuanced understanding of their experiences amidst conflict, misrepresentation, and gender dynamics.

f. Cultural Work and Knowledge Production

The final sections of the anthology, Grape Leaves and Mint, offer profound insights into the diverse and resilient lives of Arab women as they navigate the intricacies of identity formation, societal expectations, and cultural representation. "PART V. Grape Leaves. Tangled Identities: Claiming Ourselves" is a scholarly exploration of the intricate intersections of gender, race, ethnicity, and cultural heritage, thereby challenging reductive and essentialist perspectives on identity formation while celebrating the multifaceted dimensions of Arab women's lived experiences.

[237] Azizah Al-Hibri, "Tear Off Your Western Veil!" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 163.
[238] Azizah Al-Hibri, "Tear Off Your Western Veil!" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 163.

In the anthology's recipe for grape leaves, Saliba unpacks how they relate to identity, "The image of that plant, a tenacious survivor, tangling and weaving its way wherever it finds an opening, fits well with this section, since our identities are not clear-cut or easily defined. They are complex and layered, tangled and contradictory."[239] Saliba uses the metaphor of grape leaves to convey the resilience and adaptability of Arab women as they navigate the complexities of identity formation. Much like the grape leaves, which persistently grow and intertwine in various directions, Arab women's identities are not singular or static but rather multifaceted and evolving. The imagery of the plant's tenacity and ability to thrive in diverse conditions mirrors the resilience of Arab women in asserting their true selves despite societal pressures and stereotypes. It challenges essentialist views of identity, highlighting the fluidity and complexity inherent in Arab women's experiences.

Works such as Laila Halaby's poignant poem "Browner Shades of White" confront the complexities and challenges of racial identity, the subjectivity of stereotypes, the impact of erasure, and the inadequacy of standardized checkboxes. Halaby writes, "Under race/ethnic origin / I check white."[240] This line emphasizes the nuanced experiences of Arab women who navigate racial identity in contexts where their ethnic heritage may be overlooked or minimized, highlighting the limitations of simplistic categorizations and the need for more inclusive representations. The speaker in the poem highlights how Arabs do not have an ethnic label in the US, "My friend who is black / calls me a woman of colour. / My mother, who is white / says I am Caucasian." The privilege of being a "white-passing Arab within the racist and imperialist rhetoric which only

[239] Therese Saliba, "Grapeleaves," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 189.
[240] Laila Halaby, "Browner Shades of White," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 205.

reifies whiteness being a default."[241] By looking at the line, "I go to school / quite poor / because I am white,"[242] it is evident how the poem engages with the limitations and subjectivity of identity labels, whether racial categorization, class, or gender stereotypes that do not reflect reality.

Similarly, Margaret Salome's personal essay "On Language and Ethnicity" enriches this discourse, highlighting the pivotal role of language in shaping diasporic community identification and preserving cultural heritage. She reflects, "When I think about the fact that I didn't learn Arabic growing up, I feel frustrated because I believe it would have helped me in my travels in the Middle East and with projects I have done on the Arab linguists of the Middle Ages. I also think knowing Arabic would make me more legitimate as an Arab-American."[243] This statement encapsulates the complex experience of belonging to multiple cultural and linguistic worlds simultaneously, highlighting the nuanced identity formation of individuals navigating between different cultural spheres. Salome further explores the significance of language as a means of connection to one's cultural roots, illustrated through her sister's decision to study Arabic to deepen her connection to Arab identity: "My sister began studying Arabic because she wanted to be more connected to whatever it means to be an Arab."[244] Her narrative, which weaves together personal reflection and academic research, emphasizes how language profoundly affects diasporic community identification. She also highlights the disparities in language retention between different diasporic

[241] Layla M. Zbinden, *Path to Self, Path to Home: Arab Diasporic Reflections on State Violence, Authenticity, and Belonging* (Master of Arts thesis, San Diego State University, Fall 2018): 44.
[242] Laila Halaby, "Browner Shades of White," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 204.
[243] Margaret Salome, "On Language and Ethnicity" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 208.
[244] Margaret Salome, "On Language and Ethnicity" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 208.

communities, noting, for example, the success of Miami's Cuban community in preserving their language due to factors such as political influence and economic strength.[245]

Conversely, the section titled Mint serves as the culmination of this feminist narrative, symbolizing the celebration of authenticity and selfhood among Arab women. This section steers the focus away from mere survival towards a jubilant affirmation of self and cultural pride in the face of adversity and marginalization. The section begins with a recipe for "Tabouleh Salad" by Anne Mamary, and from various family members, where she describes mint, "that sharp mint flavour adds so much to many Arabic dishes, gives so much distinction to particular foods."[246] It is resilience and the ability to sprout in the wild without effort, Mamary goes on to explain how easy mint grows: "Put some in water-new roots come forth, and you can plant it almost anywhere, and it will flourish."[247] It is the perfect symbol for celebrating diasporic identity in its ability to grow because of, as Mamary says, its "Prune mint-a large quantity will grow back,"[248] which has made it not just popular but revered as an easy source of income.

Mint is used in many Arab drinks like tea, lemonade, and foods like tabbouleh and kofta, making it an essential ingredient in every household. The transformative potential of mint is reflected in L.A. Hyder's introspective essay "Artist," readers bear witness to the transformative potency of art and activism in expressing Arab identity and combating invisibility. It becomes her lifeline and a source of her activism. "Whatever the situation, I find it imperative to say I am Arab

[245] Margaret Salome, "On Language and Ethnicity" in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 208.
[246] Anne Mamary, "Tabouleh Salad," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994), 229.
[247] Anne Mamary, "Tabouleh Salad," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994), 229.
[248] Anne Mamary, "Tabouleh Salad," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists*, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994), 229.

in the same breath I say I am lesbian and all of the above."[249] The essay traces the writer's journey and her early influences of pop and psychedelic art to her engagement in feminist activism. She explains, "Today, I can connect my evolution as a feminist, activist, and artist."[250] The anthology has enabled her to vocalize and unapologetically embrace her plural identity while resisting erasure and producing art.

g. Contributors and Republications

In *Food for Our Grandmothers*, as discussed earlier, the anthology challenges and expands traditional understandings of identity and deliberately moves away from essentialist views that seek to box Arabness into rigid, homogeneous categories. Instead, it underscores the fluidity and multiplicity inherent in Arab identity, emphasizing how it is continually shaped, negotiated and reshaped by ongoing interactions, exchanges, and shared experiences across different geographies.

The anthology features contributors from various national backgrounds, the majority from the U.S., a handful of contributors from Canada, some from the SWANA region and nine prefer to be undefined. Kadi's commitment to inclusivity, the struggle against invisibility, and the complexity of identity politics within the Arab-American and Arab-Canadian community is reflected in these forty-three authors. Kadi deliberately showcases the diverse backgrounds of contributors where the diversity reflects how Arab identity transcends national borders and resists the confines of a single, monolithic identity.

The contributors' experiences and identities are relational and multifaceted, shaped by a combination of factors, including their own places of origin, those of their parents and grandparents, and the cultural heritage and linguistic influences of each. Additionally, these

[249] L.A. Hyder, "Artist," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 243.
[250] L.A. Hyder, "Artist," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 243.

identities are continually redefined through their interactions with the legalities, and societies in which they live and work. This transnational perspective is crucial for understanding the complexities of the contributors' identities.

For example, in his introduction, Joe Kadi explores the complex nature of belonging for Arab immigrants, questioning whether transplants ever truly find a sense of home and whether having a foot in both worlds leads to a sense of strength or displacement. His reflection, "Find home wherever you can make it. Make home so you can find it wherever,"[251] suggests that identity and belonging are fluid constructs that can be developed in various places, emphasizing the adaptability required in diasporic experiences.

Another example is J.A. Khawaja's essay, "The Queen, Carcasses, and Other Things," which illustrates the fluidity and multiplicity of identity through the recounting of her grandmother's experience with learning different languages in various places—French in Quebec, English in Canada, and Arabic in Syria. "Like my mother's mother who spoke French in Quebec. She learned it in Beirut. Like my mother's mother who spoke English. She learned it in Canada. Like my mother's mother who spoke Arabic she learned in Syria."[252] This repetition shows how identity is shaped by the places people have lived and the languages they have acquired.

The anthology also highlights the challenges of representing the Canadian Arab experience within the broader North American context. The inclusion of only a few Canadian contributors compared to the larger number of U.S.-based contributors raises important questions about the visibility of Arab-Canadian voices within Canadian literary production. As Joe Kadi reflects on his grandmother's immigrant experience, "Gram emigrated to Canada as a young girl—part of a

[251] Joe Kadi, ed, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xv.
[252] J.A. Khawaja, "The Queen, Carcasses, and Other Things," *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 40.

large family looking for a better life,"[253] the anthology as a whole reflects on the broader experience of Arab immigrants and their descendants. Despite Canada's claims of inclusivity through multiculturalism, the small number of Canadian contributors suggests an ongoing struggle to fully integrate and represent the Canadian Arab experience in the national narrative. This disparity underscores the limitations of multicultural policies that overlook the experiences and literary production of Arab-Canadians, challenging the notion that Canadian multiculturalism adequately supports the cultivation of Arab diasporic literature.

Bookda Gheisar's essay, "Going Home," further illustrates the relational nature of identity and its connection to place, particularly within the context of migration and diaspora. "I am in the Toronto airport at the immigration lines… But suddenly my hands shake, my heart beats rapidly, I sweat. I try to reassure myself because I have all the documents they might want to see and I am a permanent legal resident of the United States, yet I continue to feel terrified as if I have done something wrong and they are going to find out about it."[254] The anxiety felt at the border, despite having legal residency, reflects the persistent uncertainty and complexity of identity in relation to place and legality, how the contributors' identity is continually negotiated and influenced by geographic and political borders. The contributors' varied experiences, whether rooted in the U.S., Canada, or elsewhere, challenge the notion of a singular feminist or cultural identity, offering instead a mosaic of perspectives that enrich our understanding of Arabness.

The choice to include ten republications among the forty-three pieces is strategic. Kadi aims to create a conversation, a common thread, and a sense of community by bringing together previously isolated works. The contributors collectively unite through republication, moving from

[253] Joe Kadi, ed, *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists* (South End Press, 1994): xv.
[254] Bookda Gheisar, "Going Home," Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists, Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 192.

isolated islands in different publications to a cohesive representation of community, creating hope, resistance, and creativity.

The essays, poems, and works selected for republication also reflect the diversity of voices. Ellen Mansoor Collier's article, "Arab-Americans: Living with Pride and Prejudice," was initially published in *Glamour* magazine, "and an updated version was published in the Peace Education Foundation's magazine."[255] The varied magazines' contributors have engaged with, like *CHOICE*, *Denver Quarterly*, *Colors*, *lift, Friends Journal*, *Texas Magazine* and *Ararat,* showcase the anthology's commitment to visibility and representation. Republishing works ignored by the literary community also creates exposure and visibility to other presses like *Ararat*, which was a quarterly of literature, history, popular culture, and the arts published by the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) in New York, NY, and Dovetail Press which is now defunct. By selecting works initially published in mainstream and niche magazines, the anthology's efforts to bridge different audiences and contexts, thereby expanding the reach of these expressions. This strategic republication is a testament to the anthology's role in gathering and actively spreading the contributors' insights and experiences to a broader audience.

Mona Fayad dismantles Orientalist and stereotypical portrayals of Arab women in "The Arab Woman and I." Fayad, a professor of comparative literature at Salem College, Massachusetts, critiques the reductive portrayal of Arab women in media. She highlights the binary representation that oscillates between the "Faceless Veiled Woman" and the "Exotic Belly Dancer" stereotypical images that serve to either erase or fetishize Arab women in the public imagination. Fayad challenges these stereotypes by asserting, "To talk about an ordinary Arab woman, one who wears pants or a plain dress or a suit and walks around looking like everyone else, is uninteresting, to say

[255] Ellen Mansoor Collier, "Arab-Americans: Living with Pride and Prejudice," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 283.

the least."[256] By calling attention to the supposed ordinary Arab woman's portrayal, Fayad critiques the media and cultural narratives that fail to recognize Arab women as multifaceted individuals with varied lifestyles, aspirations, and identities beyond the confines of stereotypes.

In *Food for Our Grandmothers*, Lilith Finkler defines herself as "straddling the borders of many worlds."[257] As a Jewish bisexual of Polish-Libyan parents, her poem "A Lunatic From Libya, One Generation Removed" reclaims the word lunatic, having been a survivor of the psychiatric industry. "I am the lunatic, a moonbeam away from the fear of my own darkness."[258] Reclaiming the word "lunatic" and sharing her experiences adds another layer to the discussion by exploring the intersections of identity, mental health, and societal expectations. Like others in the anthology, her work underscores the multifaceted nature of identity and the resilience required to navigate and challenge societal norms and oppressions.

h. Conclusion

This section explores how the anthology serves as a powerful tool in the production of knowledge by departing from essentialist views and emphasizing the fluidity, multiplicity, and transnational nature of Arab identity. Through its feminist framework, symbolic categorization, and diverse contributions, the anthology challenges dominant narratives and offers a rich, nuanced understanding of Arab diasporic experiences.

The symbolic categorization of the anthology through Arab foods—such as Olives, Bread, Thyme, Laban, Grape Leaves, and Mint—creates a unifying, accessible, and familiar space for Arab readers. These foods serve as entryways that bridge personal and collective experiences,

[256] Mona Fayad, "The Arab Woman and I," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed.,(South End Press, 1994): 171.
[257] Lilith Finkler, "A Lunatic from Libya, One Generation Removed," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 190-191.
[258] Lilith Finkler, "A Lunatic from Libya, One Generation Removed," in *Food for Our Grandmothers: Writings by Arab-American and Arab-Canadian Feminists,* Joe Kadi, ed. (South End Press, 1994): 190-191.

emphasizing the interconnectedness of identity, culture, and community. However, while these culinary symbols create a sense of unity, they also inadvertently reinforce a regional focus that can contribute to the homogenization of Arab identity, particularly by emphasizing Levantine cuisine over the distinct culinary traditions of other Arab countries, such as those in the Gulf.

Structurally, the anthology integrates recipes at the beginning of each section, providing a practical function that fosters a lasting relationship between the reader and the text. This approach democratizes literary discourse, allowing women from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds to participate in knowledge production and engage in the broader conversation of Arab identity and feminism. The feminist framework of the anthology further empowers Arab women by centering their experiences and resistance narratives. Essays like Dina El-Hindi's "Solidarity in Roots" and Lisa Suhair Majaj's poem "Recognized Futures" highlight the significance of cultural symbols and personal narratives in shaping social relations, collective memory, and resistance within Arab communities.

The theme of bread in the section titled "Bread: Home, Identity, and Community" underscores the symbolic importance of bread as a staple food that embodies notions of community and belonging. Essays such as May Mansoor Munn's "Homecoming" explore the complexities of identity formation and the struggle for belonging, challenging rigid societal categories and reflecting the deep connection to one's roots and the significance of home in Arab culture. Similarly, the sections "Thyme" and "Laban" explore themes of resilience, selfhood, and cultural negotiation, reflecting the experiences of Arab women amidst conflict and misrepresentation. Contributions like Therese Saliba's critique of media portrayals of Arab women and Nada Elia's reflections on feminism and pacifism highlight the resilience of Arab women in the face of adversity.

The final sections, “Grape Leaves” and “Mint,” offer profound insights into the diverse and resilient lives of Arab women as they navigate the intricacies of identity formation, societal expectations, and cultural representation. The anthology’s use of metaphor, such as Saliba’s comparison of grape leaves to the complexity of Arab women’s identities, underscores the fluidity and adaptability of these identities. Contributors like Laila Halaby and Margaret Salome emphasize the role of language, identity, and cultural heritage in shaping diasporic experiences, while the inclusion of republications creates a sense of community and continuity by bridging isolated works and enhancing visibility within the broader discourse of Arab identity and feminism.

Ultimately, *Food for Our Grandmothers* challenges Canadian multiculturalism by highlighting the limitations of multicultural policies in adequately representing Arab-Canadian experiences. The small number of Canadian contributors compared to the larger number of U.S.-based contributors suggests an ongoing struggle to fully integrate and represent the Canadian Arab experience in the national narrative. Despite these challenges, the anthology’s transnational perspective, symbolic categorization, and diverse contributions offer a rich, nuanced understanding of Arab feminist diasporic experiences and contribute to the production of knowledge that challenges dominant narratives and embraces the complexity of Arab identity.

Conclusion

This thesis demonstrates the significant roles that *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* in fostering a sense of community among Arab-Canadian women and contributing to the production of feminist knowledge. By examining these anthologies as a form of resistance literature, I show how they challenge categorizations within multiculturalism, assimilation, and minority literature, and critique power dynamics through their content and themes. This research fills a crucial gap in the literature on Arab-Canadian feminist anthologies, offering new perspectives on their impact on diasporic identity and feminist discourse.

Anthologies like *Min Fami* and *Food for Our Grandmothers* challenge the norm, they are not just works of creative culture; they serve as expressions of feminist solidarity and political resistance. By providing a continuum of Arab diaspora identity while linking it to its cultural roots, these anthologies contribute to knowledge production, by forming a lifeline for their community, connecting generations, and reinforcing solidarity, cultural values and beliefs with other feminists of colour.

In this thesis, I have embarked on an exploration of the intricate landscapes shaped by *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami*, highlighting their critical roles in the Arab-Canadian feminist discourse and Canadian literary production. Through a detailed comparative analysis, this study has shed light on how these anthologies, despite the decades separating their publication, weave a continuum of resistance against discrimination and champion alliances across the multifaceted spectra of identity, race, class, and sexuality. These collections emerge not merely as repositories of feminist writings but as vibrant maps that navigate the complexities of Arab-Canadian identities, spaces, and resistances.

The metaphor of the "map," as alive, new, valuable, intricate prominently featured in both anthologies and described by Kadi in *Food for Our Grandmothers* as a foundational tool, that

encapsulates how these maps are "many-layered, multi-dimensional, open-ended, and braided." They showcase the multifaceted roles these compilations play, transcending the conventional bounds of literary collections to serve as navigational aids, charting the course of Arab feminisms and marking significant milestones in Arab-Canadian feminist thought and activism. These anthologies articulate the fluid and overlapping nature of geographic boundaries between Arab homelands and diasporas, mapping not only physical but also emotional, cultural, and political terrains.

Moreover, *Min Fami*'s editor, Ghaida Moussa, discusses how the anthology "takes up spaces barricaded by fences and doors." This imagery of "fences," "doors," and "entry points" within these anthologies unveils the nuanced realities of home and exile, encapsulating how Arab-Canadian women and queer individuals navigate between the freedoms and barriers presented by the West. These motifs address the complexities of belonging and alienation, offering narratives that challenge and transcend the confines imposed by external perceptions and internal struggles.

Acknowledging the foundational efforts of previous Arab feminists, Arab-American feminists, and feminists of colour, this thesis highlights the ground-breaking work that paves the way for these Arab-Canadian feminist voices to surface. Their narratives and struggles foster a lineage of resistance and solidarity that future anthologies can build upon, offering insights into navigating the complexities of identity, oppression, and resistance. Drawing from these experiences, the anthologies enrich our understanding of intersectionality and transnational solidarity.

Discovering *Food for Our Grandmothers* and *Min Fami* is a transformative experience for many, including myself, serving as both a lifeline and a source of reassurance of the existence of a vibrant, albeit geographically scattered, community united in its pursuit of justice, dignity, and

belonging. As Zimmo in *Min Fami* says, "we are one generation imprisoned in Libya, another in Occupied Gaza, and a third 'free' but apart in Canada." What does it mean that within this harsh dispersal, we find community, love, friendship within pages of these anthologies?

Malek answers by explaining how these anthologies map out a space of belonging that "binds and bridges" where the connections are interdependencies bound together, enabling unity and solidarity through "bridges" between different groups or perspectives across different linguistic, cultural, geographical and oppressive divides. By challenging these feelings of fragmentation and isolation within the North American diaspora, fostering a sense of community, cohesion and empowerment. These anthologies become ammunition, education to empower Arab feminists collectively, challenge assimilation and multiculturalism, and also serve as profound examples of cultural production that resist dominant power dynamics.

Uniting the "here" and "there," creating a realm built on love, support, and resistance—a testament to the power of writing and storytelling in forging communities of solidarity across the diaspora. An "open-ended" map signifies how the anthology is not a final word but a conversation starter, a point of departure for further exploration and dialogue, which can be seen in how *El Ghourabaa: A Queer and Trans Collection of Oddities* has taken the helm today.

Food for Our Grandmothers and *Min Fami* do more than simply place Arab-Canadian feminisms on the map; they redefine the contours of this map, celebrating the legacy of Arab feminists and feminists of colour. As Kadi states, these anthologies are living maps, these anthologies offer guidance, sustenance, and pathways toward liberation, charting courses for future generations in their quest for belonging, understanding, and freedom within the diasporic landscape. Thus, they stand not only as scholarly contributions but as beacons of hope and affirmation for Arab-Canadian feminists and anyone navigating the complex terrains of identity,

belonging, and resistance, embodying a spirit of community that is resilient, strong, and capable of overcoming barriers both “here” and “there.”

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