



(النصوص المهجرية أثناء الحرب الاستعمارية الأمريكية للكاتبة إنغام كجه جي في روايتها
"الحفيدة الأمريكية")

Diasporic Discourse during the American Colonial War as Reflected in The American Granddaughter

Ruqayyah Al-Emad

*Researcher -Faculty of Languages
Sana'a University - Yemen*

رقية العماد

باحثه – كلية اللغات - جامعة صنعاء - اليمن

الملخص:

هذه الورقة البحثية تقدم التجربة القاسية للمهاجرين أثناء الحرب الاستعمارية الأمريكية. فالكاتبة إنعام كجه جي تسرد صراعا لتثبت هويتها من خلال كتاباتها، إذ كانت منفية في العراق، ثم مهاجرة إلى باريس. وقد عمدت كجه جي أن تختار الكاتبة رواية "الحفيدة الأمريكية" لتوضح تجربة معاناة المهاجرين؛ الحنين إلى الوطن، المنفى، الهوية المهجنة، الشوق وحب الوطن. فقد نصت رواية الحفيدة الأمريكية عن عدائها للاستعمار الأمريكي والحكم العراقي الدكتاتوري. عندما برزت بعض الشخصيات في الرواية مثل: جدة زينة (رحمة)، وابنة طاووس (مهيمن). وضحت كجه جي أيضاً حب العراقيين لوطنهم، يظهر ذلك من قول زينة: "شلت يميني إذا نسيتهك، بغداد" (أ.د. 180)، تسعى أيضاً كجه جي أن توضح معاناة المهاجرين في أمريكا بسبب الفقر والمرض هناك، كما عانت عائلة زينة. من ناحية أخرى، تسعى كجه جي أن تكشف حقيقة الحرب الاستعمارية الأمريكية تجاه المواطنين العراقيين، لم تغفل الكاتبة أن تلفت الانتباه إلى الذرائع التي يتذرّع بها الاستعمار لاحتلال الدول العربية تحت عدة مسميات: الحرية، الديمقراطية، التطور، حقوق الإنسان ونحو ذلك.

الكلمات المفتاحية: المهجر، الاستعمار الأمريكي، الحنين إلى الوطن، المنفى، الهوية المهجنة، الشوق وحب الوطن.

Abstract:

The present paper focuses on the diasporic Iraqis' bitter experiences during the American invasion in Iraq. The writer, Anaam Kachachi, presents her own struggle to assert self-identity throughout her autobiographical writings, she first was as an exile from Iraq, and later she immigrates to Paris. In Kachachi's *the American Granddaughter*, Kachachi expresses diasporic themes such as nostalgia, exile, hybridized¹ identity, homesickness and patriotism. Further, she sets her novels against backdrop of the American colonization and dictatorship of Iraqi Saddam Hussien. In other words, she explores the reality of the American colonial war on Iraqi citizens throughout representing some characters such as; Zeina's grandmother, Rahm, and Tawoos's son, Muhaymen. Therefore, Kachachi gives voice to the Iraqi marginalized nations to prove their patriotism, when Zeina says, "I just repeat after my father: I'd give my right hand if I should ever forget you, Baghdad" (AD² 180). Kachachi attempts to draw the attention of the readers towards the process of neo-colonialism and U.S. invasion of the Arab-Islamic countries on the disguise of liberation, democracy, development and human rights..., etc.

Keywords: Diaspora, American Colonialization, exile, hybridized identity, crisis of identity, nostalgia, homesickness and patriotism.

Introduction

The research paper is based on an analytical reading of diasporic experiences in a new country with a particular emphasis on the

work of Iraqi writer, Anaam Kachachi. Kachachi was born in Baghdad in 1952, and studied journalism at Baghdad University, working in Iraqi press and radio before moving to Paris to complete a PhD at the Sorbonne.

¹ hybridized identity: the term 'hybridity' is related to critical theorist, Homi Bhabha, he is an Indian-British scholar. One of his central ideas is that of "hybridization," which, taking up from Edward Said's work, describes new cultural forms from identity fragmentation. Bhabha shows how its histories and cultures constantly intrude on the present, demanding that we transform our understanding of cross-cultural relations. His work transformed to colonial texts.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homi_K._Bhabha

² Kachachi's novel, *The American Granddaughter*.

Further, she is the major novelist of Iraqi diaspora who has achieved significant recognition within a relatively short period of time. She contributes to the field of fiction writing with a special emphasis on her own diasporic experience. After emigrating to Paris, she wrote various articles at Arabic newspapers. Kachachi has published two nonfiction titles: *Paroles d'Irakiennes: Le drame irakien écrit par des femmes* (Iraqis Speak: The Iraqi Drama in Women's Writing - 2003 and *Lorna, ses années avec Jawad Salim* biography of the English painter Lorna Hailes-1997. Kachachi is also the winner of the Lagardère Award in France, centers on the experiences of an American-Iraqi translator during the U.S.-Iraq War.³ These novel focuses on patriotism and homesickness.

In addition, Kachachi has received International Prize for Arabic Fiction (IPAF). The aim of this prize is to encourage the translation of Arabic literature into other languages. Her second novel is *The American Granddaughter*, which has been translated into English by Nariman Youssef. Nariman works as translation consultant. She has an MA in Cultural and Critical Studies. Her research interests revolve around translation theory and processes of cultural exchange. She is currently studying for a PhD at the Center for the Advanced Study of the Arab World (CASAW), at the University of Manchester, and divides her time between Egypt and the UK.⁴ According to Kachachi's *The American Granddaughter*, the main character is Zeina Behnam, who works as translator with U.S. army. She experiences a sense of ambivalence⁵

as she becomes caught between the humiliation of the Iraqi regime and the violent chaos that follows the U.S. invasion. Meanwhile, the narrator expresses that many immigrants have maintained spiritual and emotional links with their homeland.

Moreover, *The American Granddaughter* depicts the American occupation of Iraq and highlights the reality of American colonization by narrating the story of grandmother, Rahma Girgis Saour. Sinan Antoon added, "Zeina's grandmother was born in 1917 which is the year of the British occupation of Iraq"⁶. Further, Zeina depicts how the war destroyed Iraq, Zeina's father, Sabah also suffered and has been tortured by Iraqi ruler during American occupation. Kachachi narrates, "that same night security forces knocked on the door and turned the house upside down. When they didn't find anything, they took my two uncles to one of their secret interrogation centres and beat the shit out of them" (AD 43). In her writing, Kachachi aims to give a voice to subaltern⁷ Iraqi communities and shed light on their experiences of injustice in Iraq, she exposes Saddam Hussein's regime and its political corruption. Later, some Iraqi women writes a message on a phone, "Do you think the revolution is blind to its enemies?" (AD 43). Furthermore, Zeina's grandmother, Rahma, exposes the process of American colonization in Arab in general, and Iraq in particular.

Kachachi's fiction aims to bridge the gap left by other writers who neglect to address the realities of Iraq's regime rule and American colonization. Her novel portrays women such as Rahma, Betoul, and Zeina as leading spirits

³ <https://nationalibqatar.libraryreserve.com>

⁴ Kachachi, Anaam. *The American Granddaughter*. Qatar. Doha, Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation, 2010, p. 183.

⁵ ambivalence: it refers to a famous theorist in postcolonial studies called Homi Bhabha, the idea of ambivalence sees culture as consisting of opposing perceptions and dimensions. Bhabha claims that this ambivalence and this duality that presents a split in the identity of the colonized and allows for beings a hybrid of their own cultural identity and the colonizer's cultural identity. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homi_K._Bhabha

⁶ <https://nationalibqatar.libraryreserve.com>, edited by Sinan Antoon on 30th Nov, 2010.

⁷ subaltern: Antonio Gramsci coined the term *subaltern* to identify the cultural hegemony that excludes and displaces specific people and social groups from the socio-economic institutions of society, in order to deny their agency and voices in colonial politics. The terms *subaltern* and *subaltern studies* entered the vocabulary of post-colonial studies through the works of the Subaltern Studies Group of historians who explored the political-actor role of the common people who constitute the mass population, rather than re-explore the political-actor roles of the social and economic elites in the history of India. (David Ludden, 2003)

with strong personalities. Unlike, other writers depict woman with a deep sympathetic way. Furthermore, Zeina recognizes grandmothers's words and believes her. She says, "Her project of my re-education was never completed, but what she'd given me had completed me as a woman, as a human being" (AD 177). The paper is divided into two parts and its outline is as follows:

Part One: Introduction

This section of the paper provides an overview of the research and outlines its significance.

4. **Significance of the Study:** The paper seeks to

- Express diasporic suffering - including themes of nostalgia, exile, hybridized identity, and homesickness - through the analysis of Anaam Kachachi's *The American Granddaughter*.
- Shed light on the reality of American colonization in the Arab world, with a particular focus on Iraq, and give voice to subalternized Iraqi writers who depict the humiliation experienced by the Iraqi people due to political corruption.

5. **Objectives of the Study:** It is divided into two types; Broad Objective and Specific Objectives.

Broad Objectives: This paper intends to investigate diasporic discourses in the narrative of Iraqi writer and exposes the reality of American colonization in Arab in general and with a particular focus on Iraq.

Specific Objectives: Specific Objectives of this paper intends;

- to critically examine some Arabian novels with a view to clarify immigrant's bitter experience in terms of nostalgia, exile, homesickness and identity fragmentation.
- to highlight the impact of American colonial war on Iraqi civilians and explore the suffering of Zeina's family during Saddam 'regime rule.

6. **Limitation of the Study:**

Although there are many Iraqi diasporic writers, this research paper focuses solely on

the work of one writer, Anaam Kachachi, and one of her novels, *The American Granddaughter*. While the novel includes several themes, this study specifically aims to expose diasporic discourses during the American colonial war on Iraq and to give voice to subalternized Iraqi communities who suffered during Saddam Hussein's regime. Therefore, the scope of this paper is limited to a single novel and a specific set of themes.

4. **Methodology:** This paper follows a descriptive and analytical approach which includes the following:

- **Theoretical Study:** This section of the paper examines how many Iraqi diasporas maintain spiritual and emotional cultural links with their home country, as reflected in the novel under study. Moreover, *The American Granddaughter* exposes the political corruption of Saddam's regime and how Iraqi rulers played a major role in expanding American colonization under the guise of liberating the Iraqi nation. Despite this, Iraqis continue to be marginalized in America, with many living in poverty and struggling with health issues.
- **Critical study of Anaam Kachachi's *The American Granddaughter*:**

This section is divided into two parts:

1. Diaspora and Diasporic Discourses, which involve themes of nostalgia, identity hybridization, exile, and homesickness.
2. The Reality of American Colonial War on both Iraqi rulers and citizens.

The paper provides a deeper analysis of the selected works that will be examined in the following section.

Part Two: A Critical Study of Anaam Kachachi's *The American Granddaughter*

As previously mentioned, this section is divided into two parts:

1. **Diaspora and Diasporic Discourse:**

"I just repeat after my father: I'd give my right hand

if I should ever forget you, Baghdad" (AD 180).

The paper aims to contribute to the conceptualization of 'Diaspora'. In the past, the concept 'Diaspora' is used only in the singular, which referred to the dispersion of the Jews from Palestine during the ninth and eighth centuries. The word 'Diaspora' was capitalized and the concept of Diasporic signifies *shatat*⁸ in Arabic. On the other hand, Said illustrates:

All Palestinians during the summer of 1982 asked themselves what in articulate urge drove Israel, having displaced Palestinians in 1948, to expel them continuously from their refugee homes and camps in Lebanon. It is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel, could not tolerate another story of dispossession and loss to exist alongside it, an intolerance constantly reinforced by the Israel hostility to the nationalism of the Palestinians, who for forty-six years have been painfully reassembling a national identity in exile (qtd. in Salhi 2).

Thus, the researcher believed that the Israel's displacement⁹ is the God's punishment when Israel forces Palestinians to be exiled from their home in 1948. Unfortunately, Israel continues to use violence against Palestinians to this day. As the protagonist Zeina notes, "My grandpas sent to my grandmother from Jenin during Palestine was in 1948... For a while there was a truce, but the war between Arabs and Jews has carried on to this day." (AD 79). The conflict between Jews and Muslims is also perpetuated through social media, as warned by the Holy Quran, which states, "The Jews and Christians will not be satisfied until you follow their melodies" (Al-Bakhara 120). Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him and his family) also warns us not to follow them, as the Jews harbor hatred towards Muslims.

In the beginning of the 1990s, the concept 'Diaspora' is related to the study of movements of people and goods only. However, the term is used to describe immigrants' bitter experience, displacement and their identity fragmentation.

In other words, the idea of diaspora does not include only immigrant experiences, nostalgia to their homeland but also includes exile. Exile has a sense of loss, i.e. the immigrants become in conflict and still in quest of their own identity. They become hybridized as they navigate different environments, both in their homeland and in the host land¹⁰, as Zeina comments, "I was making a game out of hiding my army job from my neighbors and from Muhaymen, enjoying the pretense of being simply an Iraqi exile, homesick for her country and her people" (AD 113) Zeina's struggle to find her identity is not just a fictional theme displayed in a novel. In reality, many Iraqis and Iraqi-Americans are also struggling to find their own sense of identity. "If you lose a homeland, where will you find another?" (AD 117). Furthermore, Kachachi intends to express another aspect of diaspora literature is exile. It is clear when Kachachi narrates, "I was one of many Iraqi exiles for whom Jordan had become Jordan had become a place for the scattered families to meet a safe sky for the migrant birds of Iraq" (AD 111). When Zeina travels to Iraq, she realizes that she does not truly belong, as an Iraqi nor as an American. She feels a sense of exile. Zeina returned from Detroit to Baghdad, because she couldn't adapt to her life in Baghdad. Romana Wadi adds, "Psychologically, she is now a stranger to both lands, her identity perhaps evolving into an open quest that retains the commodities offered by the US, while also being drawn to Iraq mostly from a US perspective. Zeina's family feels upset and miserable in America". Kachachi aims to expose immigrants suffering throughout her fictional texts: she maintained the aroma of Iraq unchecked, sneaking into the noses of Iraqis in exile, be it self-imposed or forced ... *The American Granddaughter* is a masterpiece where every single word, every single expression, every single image, and every single detail are highly expressive that they speak for themselves and cannot be dispensed with.¹¹

⁸*Shatat*: It means separated and scattered in different places for a long period of time.

⁹Displacement: The term 'displacement' literally means a change of address. However, in postcolonial literature, it

is used to mean non-resident writers whose societies and culture has changed.

¹⁰host land: new land.

¹¹*Arab World English Journal*.

[Makaylaheisler](#) states in her article, “The American Granddaughter: Psychological Identity of the Girl Without a Nation”, “In many novels, this tension is described in the midst of tradition fighting with modernity, but Kachachi’s *The American Granddaughter* takes on a new perspective of developing national identity.”¹²

According to the main character in the novel, Zeina Behnam, she works with US as interpreter, Elnamoury adds:

Zeina Behnam, the American/Iraqi translator for the American Army during the Second Gulf War who is argued to be a dissociative personality due to trauma.¹³

Zeina grows up with her family in Detroit. her family has sense of patriotism; her father states, “Beware of Iraqis”, he feels upset about Iraq, he says, “my county is dear to me even if it makes me suffer.” (AD118). As Sinan [Antoon](#) asserts that Kachachi attempts to write patriotic novel, Kachachi revolts against the protagonist, Zeina:

she tells us. This fissure could have been far more productive for the narrative had Kachachi delved deeper into the tension between the two, but a few passing statements notwithstanding, she never does. The two remain neatly separated and stick to alternating narration, but at least the character is a bit more believable than the author who is too rigid and doesn’t evolve psychologically or politically despite the experience in Iraq¹⁴

Moreover, Kachachi presented patriotic characters in the novel, Zeina’s father, Sabah. He was a famous news broadcaster. He used to speak Arabic at home, and he taught Zeina Islamic Arabic poetry, as Zeina mentioned, “Muhaymen recited the first half of a verse from a pre-Islamic poem, and I surprised him by completing it for him. He talked to me about the Iraqi folk poet Muzzafar Al-Nawwab, and discovered that I memorized his poems better than he had.” (AD 119).

According to Muzzafar Abdal-Majid Al-Nawwab, he was born in [Baghdad, Iraq](#). His

family is of Indian origin and they are shi’ite. He was known for his appreciation of poetry and art. He has completed his undergraduate studies at the [University of Baghdad](#) and became a teacher, but he was expelled for political reasons in 1955. He and remained unemployed for three years, at a difficult time for his family who was suffering financial hardship. After the [Iraqi revolution](#) in 1958 which overthrew the monarchy, he was appointed an inspector at the Ministry of Education. In 1963, he was forced to leave Iraq to neighboring Iran, after the intensification of competition between the nationalists and the communists who were exposed to prosecution and strict observation by the ruling regime. One of his poems led to his imprisonment but late he escaped prison by digging a tunnel and fled to the marshlands. So his poems are known for their revolutionary themes against political corruption and injustice Arab dictators, he lived in exile in many countries, including Syria, Egypt, Lebanon and Eritrea, where he stayed with the Eritrean.¹⁵

Moreover, Zeina expresses to Muhaymen, “If he only knew how my father had taught me, what rhetorical elegance had graced my childhood!” (AD 119). Also, Zeina has a sense of patriotism, her Saturday nights are with Arabic friends, her music and songs are all Arabic, as Sinan Antoon notes, “her Arabic was fluent thanks to his love of the language and the poetry he recited”. Kirkus states, “Although her well-educated parents have never fully adjusted to their less privileged lives in exile”¹⁶ Zeina used Arabic language with her family and English in the street. Most of his friends were Arabian like Rulla. She is from Lebanon; they eat Arab food. Zeinas’ parents are prideful of being Iraqi, they cry and feel homesickness of their motherland. Zeina expresses homesickness, “I was homesick and would cry every night before going to sleep. Every night for three months. Until my mother started to worry about my health thoughts about sending me back to Baghdad. But in the fourth month I started

¹² <https://makaylaheisler.wordpress.com/> released date: 8th August, 2015.

¹³ Mona Elnamoury, *TJHSS*.

¹⁴ <https://nationalibqatar.libraryreserve.com>

¹⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muthaffar_al-Nawwab

¹⁶ <https://www.kirkusreviews.com>

school, and my tears eventually dried up” (AD 81). Kachachi also narrates, “Her eyes welled with tears when I pretend her with green friut picked from the garden of the big house in which she spent her youth. She took the limes in both hands and inhaled deeply like she was smelling her father’s prayers beads and her mother’s milk and her past life. (AD 2). Furthermore, they teach their children Iraqi traditions, Shawnm Ahmed¹⁷states:

The novel has strong and impressive language as the prose of narration and stylistic elements of form; this made it possible to be familiarized through the English-speaking world as an appealing and moving story of an individual who suffered from the atrocities¹⁸of war and confusion of her own identity.

Kachachi shows also one of diasporic suffering; hybridized identity when Tawoos described Zeina like a dog that has two houses “A Dog with two homes” (AD 147), her identity is fragmented into exile in Iraq and hard life in the dream of America, as Abdulqadr et al. adds:

Zeina experiences a complex anxiety in America. Her anxiety has come from the differences between the Iraqi and American nationalities which mislead her to be a binational character in the work. She confronts trauma in the story and struggles to know where she really belongs. Zeina’s journey confirm her nationality but is horrified¹⁹

On the other hand, Muhaymen, Tawoos’s son, says, “emigration was like captivity: both left you suspended between two lives, with no comfort in moving on or turning back” (AD 130). Also the article in Publisher’s *Weekly* states, “This excellent second novel from Kachachi is a fast-paced, insightful look at the Iraq War and the torn allegiances of American immigrants whose loyalties and identities are in two places at once”²⁰ Unfortunately, Zeina did not find a peaceful of her new life, “My life was broken in two: ‘before Baghdad’and ‘after Baghdad’. I

was confused and felt that this wasn’t yet the end of the story.” (AD 145), Fadwa Abdel Rahman argues “The novel ends while Zeina has seen her past in retrospect and with it a national history of her two homelands. She is resilient enough to go forward, but she would lose her right arm rather than forget Iraq” (p. 109)²¹

Zeina depicts her suffering in America:

It has turned the world and everything in it a strange colourwith unfamiliar hues that my words stutter to describe and my eyes fail to register. Maybe I was clour-blind before. Or was my eyesight perfect them, and is the colour that I now see the wrong one? Even my laughter has changed. I no longer laugh from the depths of my heart like I used to, (AD 1)

Moreover, Zeina tries to convince Muhaymen that “in this day and age, migration was a form of settling, that belonging didn’t necessarily come from staying in one’s birthplace,” (AD 130). These immigrants are raised in American culture, and become what we know Americans to be today, peoples of combined nationalities. Though, this creates a different understanding of the nation between parents and children, the children have a cultural conflict in the new land. When Zeina visited Iraq, the rose-colored ideas of her cultural heritage began to fade. Small actions seem to connect her to the Iraqi culture, she knows that in the Iraqi culture, she will never be depicted as strong, or as an individual as a woman. From these circumstances, Zeina is set apart. She no longer associates as an Iraqi as she did at a young age. She realizes that she cannot be part of a culture where she does not share the same values, and she never really knew what it meant to be an Iraqi. Therefore, that identity can no longer exist for her. Rather, their names were hybridized, “they called him Jason.” (AD 63). Zeina’s brother is Yazan, but American call him Jason. On the other hand, she sees America as their home, and she is proud to be both American and of Iraqi culture.

¹⁷Shawnm Ahmed, Directorate of education supervision-Sulaimany.

¹⁸atrocities: usually plural, an extremely cruel and violent action, especially during a war (Longman Dictionary)

¹⁹*Arab World English Journal*

²⁰ <https://www.interlinkbooks.com/product/the-american-granddaughter/>

²¹ *Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*

Furthermore, Kachachi explores a thematic element common in diaspora literature, which is nostalgia. When Zeina works as interpreter in U.S. Army, she said, "I'd be leaving Tikrit and transferring to the Green Zonw in Baghdad" (AD 97) Also, she depicts Baghdad while she is visiting Saddam's palace, "The morning is beautiful, even in the devil's house²². So how couldn't it be beautiful in Baghdad?" (AD 36). Further, Zeina feels nostalgia, she said, "I was overtaken by a strange sense of transcendence as soon as we entered Iraqi air place I imagined I could smell the blossoms of Seville oranges on the garden trees and the delicious scent of the smoke cooking *masgoof* fish²³"(AD 30). Zeina feels nostalgic she wants hopefully to come back to Iraq and stays there forever.

In addition, Zeina express their nostalgia when she missed her grandmother, Rahma, "I'd been missing my grandmother"(AD 72), she left Baghdad when she was fifteen. While Zeina was visiting Iraq, Rahma said:

Zein, Darring Zayouna. Zuweina. Zonzon. The Zeina- a dornment- of the house. My, Grandmother Rahma always went over the top with nicknames, as if under her tongue there lived a cunning bird that prompted her with words of affection, pampering and coddling (AD 41).

Zeina's grandmother, Rahma, remembers their memories with Zeina, it was tragic, "Zuweina, my child, is there any other country on this earth where people entertain themselves with memories of oppression and abuse?" (AD 44). Further, Zeina also likes Mosul because they speak the same language as her grandmother speak, "How could I not love Mosul, when everyone there spoke with my grandmother's accent? I liked my Mosul relatives, with their shiny backcombed hair and pale rosy faces." (AD 5). She considers to arrive to her grandmother, it is like the dream "I searched for the house that, for all times I'd seen it in my

dreams, I imagined I'd be able to find with my eyes closed." In other words, Rahma's story is Zeina's history of her homeland, it is the mirror of Iraqi history, Zeina listens to those stories but recognize that there is a "missing link," that she is "a stranger even to her grandmother.

Later, Zeina feels that she has to become the child of her own history, and to fully come to terms with that history: It is my history, whether I like it or not. It was mine even before I was born. As Elnamoury notes, "I am its legitimate child, no matter how foreign I may seem. How dare she, that gullible writer, think that I'll just hand over my inheritance to her, even if that inheritance is nothing but a tattered piece of nationalism, good for nothing, a handful of coins in a currency that went out of circulations a long time ago"²⁴

According to Zeina's family, Zeina expresses that her mother didn't cry from loneliness but also, she is poor in America, Detroit. Zeina depicts her family suffering, Zeina voices her family 'hard life, "to carry on living with my mother's coughing and my brother's drugged stupor" (AD 12). So that Zeina wants to bring happiness to her mother, she says, "Enough also send my brother Yazan whose name was now Jason, to drug rehab²⁵, and then support him through college" (AD 9). She searches to a peaceful life to her family. "I would cleanse my mother's lungs of the cheap cigarette smoke she'd been inhaling very night, year after year, while she sobbed in her room. I could hear through soundlessly, like a broken TV, but later I would see her wet cheeks and learn that women didn't cry from loneliness alone, but also from want... I wouldn't let this opportunity pass me by" (AD 9) her family suffered in both Iraq and America.

On the other hand, Iraqi people don't know the background of their history; and why they live in a new country. Thus, diaspora writers become divorced from the homeland as they spread to new lands. On that day in Detroit,

²²devil's house: Saddam's palace

²³*Masgoof fish*: traditional Iraqi dish of grilled fish spiced with salt, pepper and tamarind.

²⁴ *Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.

²⁵ rehab drug: it is a substance to overcome addiction, rehab facilities will provide a calm and comforting environment that allows the individual to focus on healing.

<https://palmettocenter.com/rehab-blog/defining-the-drug-rehabilitation-meaning-lake-charles-la/>

Batoul, Zeina's mother, seemed to express her disappointment with America. In other words, immigration is a consequence of America's colonial expansion. The colonizers aimed to force native populations into exile, causing them to face hardship in pursuit of the American dream. This will be explained further in the next part of the text.

2. The reality of the American war on Iraq during the period of colonization.

Did my grandmother die from the humiliation of my

job and my army uniform? Did she die of shame?

The shame of American granddaughter?
(AD 171)

Kachachi exposes how American colonization plays a major role in expansion of Iraqi regime in leading to war against Iraqi ruler and colonization of their country as they do with other Arab countries, Zeina narrates how her father has been tortured by Iraqi soldiers. They knocked their door in the neighbourhood for Al-Amin at three in the afternoon. Her mother, Batoul, was washing lettuce at the kitchen sink. When Yazan opened the door, solid hairy army pushed him aside, then, his father received a slap on the face. They dragged him a way. When he returned, he was unable to speak, his teeth were broken and cried non-stop. Batoul took him north, to her aunt's house to get away from the tension in Baghdad. Kachachi depicts, "Before they beat him up, urinated on him, broke his teeth, pulled his tongue with pincers and extinguished their cigarettes on his skin, they had sat him down naked at a table" (AD 70), [Makaylaheisler](https://makaylaheisler.wordpress.com/) mentions, "since the Iraqi-American war began in 2002"²⁶, Fadwa Abdel Rahman notes:

Kachachi, as a journalist has always been an advocate of the freedom of expression; her experience with the stifling censorship under Saddam Hussien's regime was her first incentive to leave her country of birth and settle in Paris. Since then she has been preoccupied with giving voice to Iraqi people in their

dilemma both in her fictional and nonfictional works (p. 107)²⁷

Then, Batoul decided to launch an official complaint and asked her superior at the University for advice regarding the legalities, she said, "They tortured my husband, professor!" (AD 70) The university dean laughed embarrassedly and said, "Tortured him? My dear, that wasn't torture. They were just messing with him. so it was all game then, when they broke Sabah's teeth, clipped off the tip of his tongue and electrocuted him" (AD 70) Batoul left everything she owned, the house, the car and the university job, and took Yazan and Zeina and escaped with her husband, that black night, out of the country, Zeina's family fled to Jordan and then the US.

Furthermore, In Baqhdad, Zeina's grandparents expose Saddam's regime rule who obey the colonizer, she described her grandparents, their hearts were broken, they cried a lot, because it wasn't normal journey, rather he felt like death so he prefers to escape from Iraq and his regime rule, "All homecomings are cherished except this one. It burns the soul." (AD 71). Kachachi does not only anti-colonial voices, she has shown how ignorance of Iraqi rulers that made it easier to occupy his country and destroy their motherland, Iraq. In other words, the process of American colonizer is to earn money. They attempt to control Arab countries culturally, economically and socially. Rather, they disturb and destruct in the name of progress and development. The greedy American colonizer had a benefit of Iraqi regime ruler, to invade Iraq in name of liberating the Iraq country, and then made efforts to promote democracy in Iraq through social media.

In Alfred Grosby's article, "Ecological Imperialism: The Oversea Migration of Western European as a Biological Phenomenon." he argues, "whenever and wherever Europeans crossed the oceans and settled, the pathogens²⁸ they carried created prodigious epidemic of small pox, measles, tuberculosis, influenza and a member of other disease...etc." (pp. 103-117). wherever

²⁶ <https://makaylaheisler.wordpress.com/>

²⁷ *Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*

²⁸ pathogen: technical something that causes disease in your body. (Longman Dictionary)

colonizer brought along with them famine and epidemics, Le Monde depicts Kachachi's *the American Granddaughter*, "We let ourselves be won over by this novel that describes with such faithfulness and emotion the tearing apart of a country..."²⁹

On the other hand, Kachachi exposes the American culture that is far away from our religion cultures in name of development and fashion:

Zeina could help him with the immigration documents and take him along to America. There he would catch up on his lost youth, he would drink as she liked, let his hair down and sing and dance without the self-appointed guardians of virtue coming after him. Loving live America, land of the drunk! (AD 67).

Nowadays, American culture attempts to corrupt Arab youth who are far away from Islamic religion through social media. As Fadwa Abdel Rahman concludes;

It is a novel that a reader can never forget or ignore; it disturbingly widens the reader's consciousness and shakes his/her settled convictions about what has happened in Iraq...The readers are never the same after reading *The American Granddaughter*; they are never allowed the relief of taking one side rather than the other...the readers cannot miss this sense of absence in Zeina's narrative. Some things remain unspoken, hidden; though the readers can see its effects working. They witness personal and national histories through Zeina's realization of her own traumas... (p. 110)³⁰

Unfortunately, Zeina joins U.S. Army as an Arabic interpreter because the colonizer shows a high salary \$186,000 per year that works with them as translator. So that Arabic poor Iraqi will accept, like Zeina who wants to help her mother and sister, Yazan. She joins with U.S., she knows nothing of American dictatorship, her purpose is to help her family; buy a new car, cure both her mother and her brother, Yazan. She thought the liberation and democracy when America invade Iraq and destroy their country culturally, she then has to

face the reactions of the Arab immigrant community. On the other hand, Zeina sets apart from Iraq culture. When she works with U.S. army whereas her grandfather worked with Iraqi army. So she is seen as a traitor in the Iraqi point of view, while her grandfather was a hero. Rahma said that "It was a mercy from God that he died before witnessing the occupation, before witnessing you." (AD 102).

Moreover, Zeina is cursed by her grandmother, Rahma. when Zeina visits her grandmother in Tikrit, she is very frightened if Rahma knows that Zeina work with the enemy with the US Army, "My grandmother was as mad as Tawoos" (AD 91), if she knows that Zeina assists the occupiers. Zeina recognized the working with colonizer is shame, she felt frustrated, "As we hugged, I cried tears of love and nostalgia, and she cried tears of love and frustration and maybe shame" (AD 61). Rahma knows the reality of American and the purpose of occupying Iraq, Kachachi narrates, "God damn you, Zeina, daughter of Batoul ... I wish I had died before having to see you like this." (AD 100). Rahma screamed and slapped her cheeks in the distinctive light-colored camouflage of the US Army. She didn't recognize her until Zeina has removed the helmet from her head. "But where do you get your salary from, daughter?" Rahma asks Zeina. "Bush or Kofi Anan?", Rahma also told her that she would break her legs if she ever came back with those lowlife and thanking God that his husband didn't see the shame that his granddaughter works with enemy as Roman Wadi states, "Indeed, the only character who exhibits any awareness of contradictions is Rahma, who tries to make sense of her granddaughter's betrayal of her people and country", so that as Mona Elnamoury asserts, "dictatorship and colonial war on Iraq has created national..."³¹ Also, When Zeina returned to Detroit, she only remembers Rahmas' words about Iraqi history: How are we supposed to preserve the living memories of the dead? If we let their experiences go with them to the grave, they're

²⁹ <https://www.interlinkbooks.com/product/the-american-granddaughter/>

³⁰ *Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences*.

³¹ Mona Elnamoury, Tanta University

lost to us for good. And then we must go back to the start and get our fingers burned as we relearn everything. We crawl like infants and walk into things but insist that we know it all. We rely on mystics and novelists to tell us our own history. There's no memory bank for this kind of data (AD 177).

In Tikrit, Zeina visits Saddam Hussein's palace there, she said "Oh my God" she cried out before I could stop myself. I bent down and was about to pick one up, but pulled my hand before touching it and looked to the colonel for permission, who nodded encouragingly. 'Sure, go ahead.'" (AD 57), she remembered how her father was tortured that let them immigrate and suffer in America because of illness. In *Aramco World*, it is mentioned, "The book poetically explores the stinging sorrow of grasping at the past, the link between language and identity, and the tragic loss of never being able to truly go home again"³²

In the past, Iraqi people feel comfortable before the American war set on Iraq. In the novel, Zeina's father Sabah, was a famous TV host in Iraq and her mother was a university professor in Iraq, but after the war on Iraq, Zeina's family have to immigrate to search in a peaceful life. Unfortunately, Zeina's mother, Betoul, works receptionist at hotel and a porter respectively in America. The same tragic with Zeina's brother, Yazan, who turns into a drug addict. Meanwhile, American colonizer cannot enter Baghdad till they destroy Baghdad and let them immigrate and suffer in their life, Kachachi states "Baghdad had become a free-for-all. Iraq was leaderless." (AD 16), so that they can simply control Iraq country as they did with others Arab countries; Syria, Lebanon, our country Yemen. Rather, the immigrants marginalized, and they have not given equal opportunity. The process of American colonizer is to marginalize the Arab nation in the new country, let them far away from working and developing their qualifications, so that Zeina's family was poor in America, both her mother and her brother are ill. Her father, Sabah, returns to Arizona where he works after

separating from the mother. As Zeina depicts father's homesickness, "They were all crazy about Iraq, like the myth of Majnun³³, who goes mad for the love of Layla. They said that Layla was sick in Iraq" (AD 118) like her father does.

Furthermore, Kachachi exposes the concept of democracy that Americans invoke in social media. They aim to control Arabian world, the protagonist, Zeina, is a strong individual who has a loud voice to expose the planning of American colonization, and she wants to make Iraqis' voices heard as well. This is the idea which influences Zeina to initially join the U.S. army, misleading Iraqi that the American colonizers will liberate Iraq and let Iraqi nations democratic. Later, Zeina soon realizes that her job assists the American occupiers and expand their corruption in Iraq. Rather, Kachachi exposes the reality of American colonization when they stand war against Iraq in name of terrorists. When terrorists attack American community. American colonizer calls war on terror, especially after 9/11 in name of liberating the Middle East and let Arabian to be democratic. First, America attack Baghdad, Zeina said, "I collapsed into myself as I watched Baghdad being bombed and the columns of smoke rising after each American attack. It was like watching myself use my mom's cigarette lighter to set my own skin with my nail scissors, of slap my left cheeks with my right hand" (AD 15).

According to some terrorists, American colonizers are also terrorists because they invade and wage wars against most Arab countries to control economic resources. The process of American colonization aims to associate terrorism with Muslims and Arabs, and they use social media to achieve this. The article "Prejudice Against Muslims and Arabs in the USA" asserts:

Today across the world there are increased incidents of violence and prejudice against Muslims, and against non-Muslim Arabs. Arab organization offices, mosques, and Islamic centers have been bombed and torched.

³² <https://www.interlinkbooks.com/product/the-american-granddaughter/>

³³ Majnun: the hero of the folk epic of Majnun and Layla, two star-crossed lovers. Layla tragically dies in one version of the myth. 'Majnun' also means mad.

Muslims and persons whose garb appear Islamic (particularly Sikhs) are being detained in airports and other places without justification. They are continually subjected to harassment and discrimination. Though discriminatory acts against Arabs and Muslims do not stand in isolation from similar acts perpetrated against other racial and ethnic persons around the world, their existence and effects upon Arabs and Muslims have been little acknowledged in society, with concomitant deleterious effect on perceptions in primarily non-Muslim parts of the world, as they touch upon relations with predominantly Arab and Muslim nations and organizations³⁴

In the novel, When Zeina accompanies American soldiers to invade the homes of innocent Iraqi people in search of supposed terrorists, she only sees terror in the actions of those who share her Iraqi blood - the American colonizers. As Antoon explores the process of colonizer:

Many Iraqis returned to their country after the American invasion in 2003 as members of the entourage that accompanied the invading army and helped it administer its occupation. Some of them were translators recruited by companies back in the US where they were living either as refugees, residents, or Iraqi-American citizens. Some bought into the "liberation" narrative and believed they were helping the old country get back on its feet. Others were simply in it for the six-figure salary. Zina, ... is one of those returnees... Ironically, it is the American dream itself that compels Zina to apply to go to Iraq and work as a translator for the US army

According to the novel, Kachachi adds another character who expose the reality of American colonization on Iraq is Muhaymen, Tawoos's son. When Zeina told Muhaymen that she is interpreter in U.S. Army, he said, "I don't want to be your sister, neither by milk nor blood that opened that rift between us, and drove me to say 'you and us'"(AD 163), his mother breastfed Zeina when her mother Batoul fell ill with typhoid. Muhaymen was

prisoner during war with Iran, he is a revolutionary against the US occupation and he is a member of the anti-American Mahdi Army. Later, when Rahma her grandmother died, Tawoos said that, "My grandmother didn't suffer from specific illness". Zeina surprised that "Did my grandmother die from the humiliation of my job and my shame? The shame of American granddaughter?" (AD 171), Muhaymen also asserts that five million Iraqi leave their own country and immigrate and suffer. They take them from the street like "like municipal trucks collected rubbish" (AD 124), he spent four years in captivity, he said that, "The one that stayed the same was my hatred for American's" (AD 124). He argues about American colonizer, "You drove King Kong out of the city and claimed the whole of Iraq in return."(AD 168), he states, "whole world can be your homeland. Haven't you heard the expression citizen of the world?" (AD 130), he attempts to remember Zeina's root, "Is your name Zeina or Chameleon? I only know the motherland, and I can't imagine having a step motherland. I find the idea of a second motherland ridiculous." (AD 130)

Later, Zeina realizes that Americans have betrayed her, when she meets her grandmother, Rahma. She is anti-American, she is nationalistic, Kirkus added, "Rahma, makes Zeina question her divided loyalties. She feels kinship with other American soldiers on the various bases where she's posted, willingly accompanying them on raids" Thus, Kachachi exposes colonizer, when Zeina said, "I liked it when Rahma expounded her views on politics, sounding like an expert on strategic affairs or CNN commentator when she said things like 'communist tide, 'American plot', 'Zoinist conspiracy' the Jewish Farhud' ..." (AD 43), the Zoinist conspiracy is referred to the Jewish occupational government, it means that Jews [control the governments of Western states](#), as depicted in the forged [Protocols of the Elders of Zion](#):

A secret Zionist organization controls international banks, and through them the

³⁴<https://www.umcjustice.org>

governments, in order to collude against white, Christian, or Islamic interest..., the movement for support of a Jewish state in the [Land of Israel](#). As the conspiracy theorists chiefly name countries outside that area, the usage of *Zionist* in this context is misleading because it is intended to portray Jews as conspirators who aim to [control the world](#)... The conspiracy theory illustrates a specifically American [far-right agrarian](#) preoccupation, namely the vital possibility of extinction allegedly faced by the rural world, seen as the backbone of America, a danger caused by a remote, centralized and power-hungry metropolitan elite corrupted by "alien" influences³⁵

The ideology of [Zionism](#) has a major role in Muslim discrimination and sectarianism (Sunni and Shiite). The greedy Jewish merchants control the economic forces in most Arab countries.

According to the term 'Farhud', it is an Arabic term translated as "violent dispossession", it is related to the history of the Jews in Iraq:

In the 1940s about 135,000 Jews lived in Iraq with about 90,000 in Baghdad, 10,000 in Basra, and the remainder scattered throughout many small towns and villages. Jewish communities had existed in this region since the 6th century, hundreds of years before Muslim communities established a presence in Iraq during the 7th century³⁶

Thus, Jewish were rarely assimilated with Muslim society because they hate Muslims, they are against Islamic laws.

On the other hand, the Communist tide as Rahma mentioned:

The Communist tide that swept on Eastern Europe in the wake of the Russian armies and found its first manifestation in the establishment of disguised Communist dictatorships is now completing an economic revolution which is converting all states behind the Iron Curtain into little Russias faithfully following the Soviet model³⁷

Later, Zeina admitted what her grandmother said. Rahma that has sense of strength as well as she is prideful of her Iraqi identity. Zeina now understands why her grandmother, Tawoos, and her parents are not proud of her decision to join the army, and feel as though she has betrayed her country, as America and Iraq have betrayed her. As Kachachi asserts, "A betrayed life encapsulated in two limes" (AD 2) because in America, Zeina becomes colonized and colonizer simultaneously. Zeina said that, "I could see a long chain of our soldiers' bodies lining the road from Hanoi to Baghdad. My Iraqi experience was starting to taste of vinegar." (AD 161).

In short, Kachachi intends to show immigrants' attitude toward the colonizer who invade their country and lead them suffer in both homeland and host land. The protagonist, Zeina, recognized that it is impossible to work with their enemy, to be simultaneously their daughter and their enemy, she admitted that she serve the colonizer, "How could I do to help my country in its adversity? How could a powerless immigrant like me serve the great United States of America? It was impossible to remain indifferent" (AD 12), "she begins to question all her values"³⁸ Furthermore, Kachachi is interested to explore the history of the American colonization that seems to be misleading and somehow far away from the reality that attempt to control the Arab world. In other words, she attempts to draw the attention of the readers towards the U.S. invasion of the Arab countries on the disguise of development, democracy, liberation and human rights. On the other hand, she explores American dominators who encourage racial discrimination and sectarianism (Sunni and Shiite) that lead the Arabs kill each other.

³⁵ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionist_Occupation_Government_conspiracy_theory

³⁶ <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-farhud>

³⁷ <https://www.nytimes.com/1948/04/30/archives/communist-tide.html>

³⁸ Qatar National Library

References (Works Cited)

- [1] Kachachi, Anaam. *The American Granddaughter*. Qatar. Doha, Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation, 2010, pp.1-183.
- [2] Salhi, Smail. "Introduction: Defining the Arab Diaspora." *The Arab Diaspora: Voices of an Anguished Scream*. New York: Routledge, Taylor and Francis Group, 2006, p. 2.
- [3] Summers, Della et al. *Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English*.
- [4] England: Pearson Education Limited, 2001, p. 69.
- [5] Ahmed, Shawnm. "Identity Crisis in Inaam Kachachi's The American Granddaughter". Iraq: East, Sulaimani, Directorate of education supervision, vol. 6, [Issue 1, 2022](#).
- [6] Abdulqadr et al. "The Binational Interpreter in Kachachi's The American Granddaughter: A Postcolonial Study.", Iraq: Sulaimaniyah, Komar University of Science and Technology, *Arab World English Journal*, vol. 13, 2023, pp. 164-173, p.10.
- [7] Elnamoury, Mona. "The Translator as a Traumatized Protagonist in Inaam Kachachi's The American Granddaughter." Egypt: Tanta University, edited by Fadwa Abdel Rahman, *TJHSS (Transcultural Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences)* vol. 1, Issue 2, 2021, pp. 101-110.
- [8] Grosby, Alfred. "Ecological Imperialism: The Oversea Migration of Western European as a Biological Phenomenon." pp. 103-117.
- [9] Wadi, Romana. "[Against the Loveless World](#)" in *The American Granddaughter*, published in [Asia & Americas](#), [Iraq](#) and [Middle East](#), 2020.
- [10] Antoon, Sinan. (A Review) Cover of the English version of The American Granddaughter Bloomsbury Qatar Foundation website. 30th Nov., 2010.
- [11] Ludden, David. "Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical History", *Contested Meaning and the*
- [12] *Globalisation of South Asia*. Delhi: Permanent Black, 2003.
- [9] <https://www.interlinkbooks.com/product/the-american-granddaughter/> ,released date: October 2020.
- [10] <https://www.umcjustice.org/>
- [11] <https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/the-farhud>
- [12] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zionist_Occupation_Government_conspiracy_theory
- [13] <https://www.nytimes.com/1948/04/30/archives/communist-tide.html>
- [14] <https://www.interlinkbooks.com/product/the-american-granddaughter/> , released date: 10th October 2020
- [15] <https://nationalibqatar.libraryreserve.com> , released date: 30th Nov, 2010.
- [16] <https://palmettocenter.com/rehab-blog/defining-the-drug-rehabilitation-meaning-lake-charles-la/> , released date: 14th Oct. 2019

Websites:

- [1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Homi_K._Bhabha
- [2] www.goodreads.com
- [3] <https://www.kirkusreviews.com> , released date: 15th Sept., 2020.
- [4] <https://nationalibqatar.libraryreserve.com> , released date: 10th August, 2020.
- [5] <https://www.middleeastmonitor.com>
- [6] <https://ik;l?www.adlibris.com>
- [7] <https://nationalibqatar.libraryreserve.com> , edited by Sinan Antoon on 30th Nov, 2010.
- [8] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Muthaffar_al-Nawab