The Dialectic of Borders and Multiculturalism in Naomi Nye's *Habibi*

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This paper investigates how the Arab-American writer Naomi Nye addresses the dialectic between borders and multiculturalism in her award-winning young adult novel *Habibi* (1997). Critiquing the essentialist view that presumes fixed boundaries for a culture, Nye promotes the alternative view that assumes individuals' power of defining and redefining their cultural identities in a multicultural society. The author argues that Nye's position is that borders/boundaries and geographical demarcations are flimsy, arbitrary and create divisions, animosities and hatred between people and nations whereas multiculturalism engenders feelings of reconciliation, friendship, and understanding. Though borders and boundaries can be divisive, cultural variety and hybridity can be inclusive. To counteract the argument of borders/boundaries, Nye posits the argument of multiculturalism. In this paper, the author intends to examine the assumptions of the physical and the cultural borders rhetoric in comparison with the multicultural approach narrative. It is the dialectic of these two opposing forces that shapes the events and the final outcome of the action and events of this novel.

Keywords: Palestinian, Jewish, American, borders, multiculturalism, identity, Nye

It is important to note that multiculturalism does not share postmodernist stance. Its passions are political; its assumptions... empirical; its conception of identities visceral. For it, there is no doubting that history is something that happened and that those happenings have left their mark within our collective consciousness. History for multiculturalists is not a succession of dissolving texts, but a tense tangle of past actions that have reshaped the landscape, distributed the nation's wealth, *established boundaries* [emphasis added], engendered prejudices, and unleashed energies.

—Joyce Appleby

Introduction and Biographical Information

Habibi (1997) is a novel by the Palestinian-American author Naomi Nye. It concentrates on the return of a Palestinian-American family from St. Louis all the way to Palestine, the father's original homeland. Though the father, Mr. Abboud grew up in Palestine, his family knows very little about their Arab heritage. Meeting her grandmother and the rest of her relatives, Liyana, the heroine, finds herself a stranger who cannot speak Arabic or understand Arab culture. Liyana is torn between two completely different cultures, American and Arab cultures. It is not until she meets Omer that her homesickness fades. As Omer is Jewish, their friendship faces great obstacles. Through their rapidly growing relationship, the two protagonists manage to bring a better sense of understanding and greater reconciliation between Jewish and Arab characters, a move that is symbolically meant

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to represent a call for Arabs and Jews to get know and understand each other with a view to establishing a greater hope for peace in the conflict-torn Palestine and the racial discrimination- and isolation-ridden Israel.

The poignant story of Liyana and her family parallels Naomi Nye's own life and experiences as an Arab-American living in the United States. Nye was born in St. Louis, Missouri to a Palestinian father and a German-American mother. Much like Liyana in *Habibi*, her mother is an American and her father is a Palestinian. When she was 14, her family moved to Jerusalem where she attended one year of high school after which her family moved to San Antonio, Texas. In Jerusalem, Nye absorbed many stories, impressions, and perceptions of the differences in cultures and the similarities among people. Many of her works draw on her experiences with people she observed and family members she learned about or knew well during her stay and her visits to Palestine and Israel. Nye deals with universal/cosmopolitan themes and focuses on similarities and differences between cultures and generations of families drawn from her own multicultural adolescent experiences. Her novel *Habibi* deals with immigration, travel, borders, multicultural issues, love, and friendship.

Nye is an internationally acclaimed author of several novels, collections of poems and short stories, children's books, nonfiction essays, and critical articles and editor of several poetry anthologies. She is also a songwriter and a translator of some important Arabic works into English. She has received many awards and medals for her literary achievements. Nye's American and Palestinian heritage and multicultural adolescent experiences give her a rich personal background from which she can draw emotions, themes, and characters in her novels and poems.

Review of Related Literature

Nye's novel *Habibi* has been the subject of various reviews, critical comments, academic articles, and university theses. Most of the previous studies of the novel have concentrated on such universal motifs as love, family, war, and peace, adjusting to change, ethnicity, identity, and culture. Several articles on Nye's works, including her novels, have appeared in a good number of academic journals. In addition, many biographical sketches of Nye and interviews with her have appeared in different sources. Many of Nye's works have also been anthologized in various collections and volumes of American literature.

There are reviews of this novel in such sources as *Book Links* (January 2006), *School Library Journal* (1997), *Book Report* (1998), *Book Magazine* (1997), *Publishers Weekly* (1997) and many others, often concentrating on the novel's plot, general themes, and main characters. An interview by Joy Castro in *MELUS* (2002, pp. 225-236) examines, among other things, how Nye's Arabic identity has shaped her writing. Another interview by Sharif S. Elmusa in *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* (2007, pp. 107-113) contains Nye's answers regarding Middle Eastern influences on her writing style and provides biographical details unavailable in other resources. Bill Moyer's interview (2012) with Nye focuses on her poetry and her novel *Habibi*. Mercer and Strom's "Counter Narratives: Cooking up Stories of Love and Loss in Naomi Shihab Nye's Poetry and Diana Abu-Jaber's *Crescent*" in *MELUS* (2007, pp. 33-46) explores Nye's use of food-related imagery and themes, noting the role of Middle Eastern ingredients and gardens to create poems and works examining family, addressing political topics, and connecting cultures. In her article in *The Heath Anthology of American Literature*, Knopf-Newman (2006, pp. 2975-2982) provides a biographical background to Nye's life and a critical commentary on her works including *Habibi*.

In his Critical Survey of Poetry, *American Poets* (2011, pp. 1435-1442), Reisman gives a brief critical survey of Nye's profile, her poetry, novels, achievements and a general evaluation of her works as a whole. In his article entitled "Border Shifting in Naomi Nye's *Habibi*", Yousef (2013) investigates how Nye's novel *Habibi* addresses the theme of border shifting from a postmodernist perspective that deconstructs the traditional view of borders meant to maintain exclusion and hegemony and instead considers them as being often flimsy, malleable, and changeable. Alkhadra and Majdoub's article (2014) on *Habibi* explores "neo"- and "post"-romanticism in Nye's works and thoughts with special emphasis on this issue in her poems.

Several theses have also been written on various aspects of Nye's works, addressing such questions as identity, hybridity, and political themes. Of these is Inas Al-Masri's (2001) study entitled "The Middle East in Naomi Nye's Poetry" in which she investigates the cultural and the political dimensions in her writings, particularly her poetry. A. T. Abdelrazeq's (2005) thesis concentrates on hyphenated identity and border crossing in contemporary literature by Arab American women, including Naomi Nye. In addition, Wafa Al-Khatib's (2009) thesis examines such general issue as postcolonialism, multiculturalism, and hybridity in Nye's *Sitti Secrets*, *Habibi*, and *19 Varieties of Gazelle Poems of the Middle East* and *Red Suitcase*.

Despite this wide spectrum of research topics on Nye's works in general and *Habibi* in particular, no study, to the author's best knowledge, has explored the relationship or the dialectic between the concepts of borders and multiculturalism. The aim of this study, therefore, is to investigate Nye's treatment of the restrictions and isolationism of borders (or closed-border, to be more exact) mentality and the open vision of multiculturalism.

Significance and Objectives

Nye tackles in her works such prominent themes as hyphenated and multiple identities, bi-cultural and multicultural issues, political, social and racial matters, and many other universal and global themes. Although these themes have received considerable attention, the relationship between the arguments of borders and multiculturalism has not been given the attention it deserves. The significance of this study, therefore, lies in its attempt to explore the dialectical tension between the arguments of borders and multiculturalism in Nye's novel *Habibi*, viewed mainly from a psycho-cultural dimension.

Discussion

In its general drift, *Habibi* can be seen as a novel about borders and multiculturalism. This paper is concerned with the representation of the powers of borders, frontiers, and geo-political maps as contrasted with the arguments of multiculturalism, plurality, and hybridity as presented in Nye's *Habibi*. This postcolonial text abounds with references to borders, fences, checkpoints on the one hand and meeting-points, trips, visits and social encounters between Jews and Palestinians, Israelis and Arabs on the other. It is also replete with references to multiculturalism, diversity, identity, hybridity, reconciliation, and socio-cultural relations between Palestinians and Jews. Characters from both sides cross borders and on the way many of the Palestinian characters are subjected to humiliating treatment by the Israeli side and many others die or are humiliated inside their territory. Conversely, characters sometimes cross borders to meet with others from the opposite side or to make exchange visits and establish friendly and even love relationships as evidenced in Liyana-Omer relationship and the exchange visits between Liyana and Omer and between Omer and Liyana's family and their

Palestinian relatives.

Borders

It is worth noting at the outset that in this article, the expression “border-mentality” is used in the sense of closed- rather than open-border mentality. Broadly speaking, a border is a real or artificial line that separates geographic areas. Borders can be geographic or political or even psychological and can take different forms and shapes: physical (concrete objects on the ground), conceptual (in the imagination), psychological, gender, ethnic, cultural, economic, political, etc.. Often, physical borders fall along natural boundaries like rivers or mountain ranges or may be arbitrarily imposed by force or military power. Nevertheless, borders can be flimsy, unstable and can change over time. As Cooper, Nicholson, and Bélisle (2007) observe:

In many cases borders may represent Freud’s *reality principle*; the arbitrary fact of power that limits our choices and our potential. On the other hand, a border is at best a fiction, at worst a lie.... Borders may exist more in our heads than on the ground. (p. 1)

Borders play a significant role in shaping human societies as they have cultural, economic, and political effects. A cultural border connotes a barrier that a more powerful side constructs to guard its own political power, cultural heritage and privileges. Many times, political borders divide groups of people who share a common religion, culture, ethnic origin, or language. Since borders contain both geographical and political implications, they are likely to bring crucial consequences in domestic and international politics. To many scholars a border is not a neutral demarcation line. It is a symbol of power that imposes inclusion and exclusion. The more privileged and dominant side will actively control the border to serve its own interests. Although some scholars believe we are living in a globalized world where state borders are becoming obsolete and are no longer barriers to the movement of goods, ideas, and people, there have been widespread arguments that borders are still significant and even that they have become more important than before in the process of globalization (Abdulsattar, 2013).

Sometimes, countries may wish to have their state based on their ethnic identity as it is the case with Israel which is trying to establish an all-Jewish state to the exclusion of its Palestinian-Arab population. This policy is clearly adumbrated by its building of walls of separation between Palestinian territories and Israel and between Israel and its Arab neighbors. Indeed, the borders between Israel and its Arab neighbors are one of the most heavily militarized borders in the world. The Israeli West Bank barrier or the “Separation Wall” is a separation barrier between Palestinians and Israelis. Expected to exceed 700 kilometers in its total length, the wall virtually undermines any hope for peace by unilaterally establishing new borders.

Habibi was conceived and written in the period following the Oslo Accords (signed in 1993) which brought a glimmer of hope for the peace process in the Palestinian-Israeli conflict. The novel appeared three years before the convening and the eventual failure of the Camp David Summit of 2000. Encouraged by what seemed at that time a good chance for peace between Israelis and Palestinians, Nye seems to have written this novel as a reflection of her hopes for a final peace and understanding in the region. That is why we see the novelist adopting a twofold attitude of a clear condemnation of borders, alienation, isolation and monoculturalism and an apparent call for multiculturalism, reconciliation, and inclusivity rather than confrontation and armed resistance as is the case in many other comparable works that fall under the label of “resistance literature”.

In the novel, Mr. Abboud, also called Poppy, fled his country Palestine after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war but is

now making a comeback to his native country after a period of study and work as a doctor in the United States. "Only recently he [Liyana's father] grew hopeful about Jerusalem and his country again. Things started changing for the better. Palestinians had public voices again" (p. 931), writes Liyana in her report to her history teacher. Arriving at Tel-Aviv airport, Abboud is surprised to see how the situation has radically changed. What used to be the Palestinian homeland has now changed into an Israeli homeland or a Jewish state. While Abboud asserts he is a Palestinian coming back to his country, the Israeli soldiers consider him as an alien who should be checked and searched before letting him in. Indeed, the whole Abboud family are subjected to a humiliating treatment at the airport as are all their relatives who have come to see them (pp. 34-36, 44).

Israeli occupation has resulted in devastating consequences for the Palestinian Arabs who still live inside Israel and in the Palestinian territories or what the Palestinians would call Palestine. Military checkpoints are erected everywhere (pp. 44, 101), barbed wire fences and no-entry signs are frequently seen (p. 102) and all Palestinians are threatened with Israeli guns and bad treatment (p. 51). Nye vividly depicts the borders erected inside Palestine, which are called "barbed wires". These barbed wires do not only separate families from each other; they also separate families from their houses and their property. The fences, enforced by the Israeli army in different Palestinian cities, separate people and are borders through which the Palestinians can occasionally see their old houses and close relatives. The borders imposed by the Israeli authorities/colonialists/occupiers, have contributed to the emergence of refugee camps all over Palestine, a sight that attracts the Abboud family on their way to Sitti's home. Separated from the Jewish towns, these refugee camps highlight the deepening division and the growing rift between the Palestinians and the Jews, the indigenous inhabitants and the outside occupiers who now consider themselves the real owners of the land.

Border mentality seems to be everywhere. For instance, a Jew tells Liyana, the heroine of the novel, not to buy from an Arab and to go instead to the Jewish part of the city (p. 95). In addition, there are frequent references to Israeli raids on Palestinians' homes (p. 184), the searching and exploding of Palestinian homes and the demolition of whole Palestinian quarters to build new homes for the Jewish settlers (p. 188). Many Palestinians are also jailed, including Abboud and some of his relatives (p. 223) and others are detained, persecuted, imprisoned, or terrified. Other characters are subjected to humiliating treatment by Israeli soldiers and many others lose their lives during the course of the novel—an act that is clearly emblematic of the Arab-Israeli conflict and the great suffering the Palestinians have been enduring in their homeland and across the borders. These boundaries separate people, causing thereby great hostilities, deep political tension and a large cultural rift between the opposing groups of the population.

It is noteworthy that the novel's title "Habibi" undermines the idea of imposed borders. In Arabic the literal meaning of this word is "my beloved". The term has also the meaning of "friend" or "darling". It can also serve as a term of endearment. Hebrew has the same or similar word. Indeed, it is one of many shared words in the two languages, Arabic and Hebrew. As used in the novel, the term does not only refer to the love story between the heroine and the hero Omer and Liyana; it also suggests that borders which separate people may be nothing more than artificial lines created by politicians and national and cultural prejudices. Drawing upon this notion, Nye stresses the arbitrariness of such demarcations. She illustrates this point through the love relationship between the two protagonists of the novel, the theme around which the main action of the novel revolves.

When traveling with her family to Sitti's (the Arabic word for grandmother) village, Liyana does not

imagine any demarcation line between the inhabitants of Palestine, the Jews and the Palestinians and is baffled by the numerous fences and checkpoints along the way. Liyana had already expressed her surprise and indignation when she and her family were made to go through so many procedures and checks at the airport (p. 36). Nye stresses the arbitrariness and the meaninglessness of such demographic and cartographic demarcations and highlights the inextricable relationship between Arabs and Jews. Responding to Liyana's question whether the Jews and Arabs secretly love one another, Abboud thinks "they are bonded for life" (p. 73). Liyana's father realizes the futility of the constant line-drawing by the Israeli politicians as it would not metaphorically separate anything or anyone but only provokes acts of violence on both sides of the divide. On his way to his former village, the father experiences a lot of suffering watching the barbed wires and the walls of separation constructed by the Israelis and expresses his anger and frustration to see them (pp. 250-251).

Border mentality seems to have led to a deep rift between Palestinians and Israelis and to the great hostilities and acts of violence that characterize their relationship. A good example of such violent and destructive actions is the smashing of Sitti's ancestral house. The old house is also seriously damaged for no good reason at all (p. 185). The Israeli police, searching for a relative of Sitti, stormed the house, following the bomb explosion that killed some Israelis. They smashed Sitti's bathroom and played havoc with her home. Obviously, the house has a great significance for the Palestinians. For them, the house symbolizes their identity and their nationhood. Not only have their lands been occupied by the Jewish army, but also their houses. Indeed, the demolition of Sitti's home comes as a great cause of trouble and anxiety for the whole family and their neighbors.

Though this is not clearly stated in the novel, the Israelis' interest in building walls and in setting up boundaries of different kinds seems to be prompted by various factors, most important of which is the legacy of the Jewish religion's superiority, to which one can add the ghetto mentality and a feeling of ethnic superiority. There are some implied references in the novel to this attitude. For instance, Abboud expresses his opposition to the idea of the superiority of one religion over other religions, with an implicit reference to Judaism: "The worst foolish thing is when a religion wants you to say it's the only right one. Or the best one" (p. 177). The Abboud family also does not believe in the idea of the "chosen people" or "anybody being 'chosen' over anybody else" (p. 178), again with a clear allusion to the Jews as God's "chosen people". Actually, the Bible speaks of the land of Israel and there are several passages in the Bible that describe the geographical boundaries of the so-called Promised Land. However, these passages come largely in the form of promises and prophecies rather than in concrete locations on the ground and they vary from one source to another (Berkowitz, 2007).

Additionally, Israelis are presented as avidly trying to preserve a distinct culture and demarcated geographic and political boundaries via the exclusion of other cultures and other nationalities. Historically speaking, the Jews have been following a kind of ethnic isolation called "the ghetto mentality". As well known, ghetto mentality often refers to the walled quarter in a European city to which Jews (often a minority) were restricted or required to live in isolation from other ethnic groups. In the novel, though the Jewish characters are not members of a minority, they are presented as prone to a sense of segregation/isolation that keeps them apart from other people. For instance, the first time we see Omer, we notice how he is reticent and withdrawn (pp. 150-153), in contrast with Liyana who is shown as open-minded and forthcoming all through the novel.

Another manifestation of borders is the "castle mentality" that the Israelis show in their treatment of their Arab neighbors. Often the Israelis are depicted as being anxious about protecting themselves and safeguarding

their security. They are also shown as being concerned about losing their identity and keen on preserving their own traditions and special way of life. An instance of this is the tight security measures the Israeli soldiers and security men adopt in their treatment of the Abboud family members (pp. 34-37). Other instances include the rigid attitude of Omer's parents towards the Arabs and the reserved stance of Omer's mother towards his new relationship with the Palestinian-American newfound love (p. 242). By adopting this castle mentality, the Israelis are trying to protect themselves from outside influences that would disrupt their security and hegemony, though they are all the while neglecting the interests of the other side. Thus, they believe that by establishing these metaphorical walls, they can keep out the enemy and stay secure.

Looking back at the past, the situation on the ground has undoubtedly changed (for the worse, of course) after the first appearance of the novel in the late 1990s. Walls, borders, and fences inside and outside Palestinian territories and Israel itself have grown and are increasingly representing not only physical barriers but also conceptual and psychological barriers that have been prompting Israeli politicians to press for an all-Jewish state that would expel all Palestinians living in Israel. These barriers are also strengthening an Israeli exclusionist mentality in the midst of a postmodern and cultural studies era that opposes marginalization and homogeneity and promotes equality, openness, and acceptance of the other. Cooper et al. point out that our modern world has been witnessing a wave of globalization enhanced by a trend towards multiculturalism, plurality and a sense of understanding and recognizing the other. Yet, they maintain, while singling out the Israeli "Separation Wall", that there has been a distinct rise in the culture of borders that promotes cultural, political, national, ethnic, social, economic, and religious exclusion of the other. In their words:

Physical barriers of the most concrete kind have been enjoying a marked resurrection. Less than two decades after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dawning of what Francis Fukuyama so rashly promised was the "end of history," walls are again being built. The physical divide being erected between Israel and Palestine is perhaps the best known example. (Cooper et al., 2007, p. 1)

Indeed, the Israeli "Separation Wall" is a startling example of the perpetuation of the castle mentality that has characterized some nations during world history including the Israelis.

Habibi is a novel that expounds on the interrelationship between geography and the international relations. The novel spans over three different geographical locations, namely the U.S.A., Israel, and Palestine. In it, borders mentally affect the way people think about their national status and shape their view of the "I" and the "other". Scholars have shown how geography plays a major role in human societies, shaping one's identity, cultural background and lifestyle. As Chang (2010) observes:

Not only for countries but also for individuals, geography determines many aspects of people's sense of self; for instance, depending on the place where a person is born or grows up, he or she will have a different cultural identity, different nationality, and different institutional services for his or her lifetime. (p. 1)

The Abbouds view themselves as Arab-Americans and sometimes find difficulty in determining their actual identity. For example, Liyana's father finds it difficult to explain to his Arab folks that he is partly Arab and partly American and his daughter and son also are not sure about their real identity:

Sometimes, she heard her father say, "We are Americans," to his relatives. ...
Americans?
Even Poppy who was always an Arab before?

Of course there was never any question about their mother being an American,
but Rafik and Liyana walked a blurry line. (pp. 124-125)

As young adolescents, the Abboud children become aware of the national and ethnic boundaries surrounding them. Psychologists and sociologists have demonstrated how immigration is not only about changing countries or places but also about changing identities, especially for adolescents. Children of immigrants, especially adolescents in the process of constructing their identity, face conflicting social contexts in which they attempt to incorporate “here” and “there” into a meaningful sense of self. Thus, the identity formation among immigrants, especially adolescents, the age when identity formation takes place for all people, is a continuous process in which both host country and origin country play a significant role in identity formation (Erikson, 1968). In *Habibi*, characters immigrate and change places and consequently identities.

As in many of her other works, Nye explores the theme of displacement, while simultaneously addressing the attachment to land and to indigenous and Bedouin roots. Undoubtedly, Nye’s biographical background figures prominently in the novel as indeed in all her works. Like the father of Liyana and Rafik, Nye’s father left Palestine after the 1948 Arab-Israeli war for the States and later moved to the Middle East to a town near Jerusalem. Family life and experiences seem to have left an indelible impact on Nye’s writing. Thus, immigration, travel, dispossession, refugee status, geography, and borders affect the characters’ lives in this novel. Family, identity, home, the refugee, and the settler are some of the themes raised in *Habibi*, all of which are seen against a backdrop of people’s daily lives—ordinary storytelling and traveling.

Political maps have a great power in imperialism; they can be considered as a way in which colonizers exert superiority over the colonized. In *Culture and Imperialism* (1994), Said describes imperialism as “an act of geographical violence through which virtually every space in the world is explored, charted and finally brought under control” (p. 14). Through these borders and maps, the colonizer oppresses, and the colonized is submitted under control. For Said, maps are “weapons of imperialism” which are used in colonial promotion. Nye presents a similar view of maps and borders by showing how borders and walls are intended as a means of separation, discrimination and political and cultural hegemony. However, Nye does not stop at this point. Instead, she goes a step further by countering the powers of political maps and borders with the powers of multiculturalism and diversity through which she tries to show the flimsiness of the borders and boundaries and the uselessness of political maps. Nye underscores the negative role of the current borders that divide Palestine and separate the Palestinians and the Israelis who used to live together before this demarcation was established by the new colonizers or the occupiers.

The idea that the borders drawn between Palestinians and Israelis on the map and on the ground may be imaginary and transient is brought up clearly in the love relationship between the two protagonists of the novel, Liyana (an American-Palestinian) and Omer (an Israeli Jew). Nye seems to suggest that if the politicians draw the border lines on the political maps, this does not mean that they actually divide the people altogether or cut all links between them for ever. By establishing a love relationship between a Palestinian and a Jew, the author wants to argue that people can be connected together despite all barriers. One might imagine that these border lines would divide people, but ironically, they can bring them closer together.

In Nye’s novel, as indeed in many other similar works, the border has an interesting dual meaning as both a barrier and a passage to freedom. In literature, particularly Black American literature, “crossing the border” has

for long been associated with some kind of freedom and a passage to liberation. As such, it is an escape from oppression, restrictions and more often from persecution. Similarly, Liyana's crossing of the frontier takes both physical and conceptual dimensions. It is both a crossing of the geographical borders (i.e., from East to West Jerusalem) and of moral or psychological borders (when she accepts to develop a romantic relationship with a Jewish boy). Indeed, the narrative is woven around not only violence and hostilities but also on love and friendship between the adversaries. Though the Palestinians and Jews are now divided by maps and borders, the novelist shows that they used to live together in the past and can do the same at the present.

The futility of borders is also apparent when the Abbouds, accompanied by some of their close relatives and Omer, go on a visit to Sitti's village. Sitti accepts Omer with all her heart. Despite all the deaths, the violence, and the smashing of homes Sitti has seen, when Liyana asks her about the recent peace talks, Sitti answers: "I never lost my peace inside" (p. 247). Later, Sitti tells Omer, "There are hard words waiting in people's mouths to be spoken. There are walls. You can't break them. Just find doors in them. See? You already have. Here we are together" (p. 270). Already, on their way to the grandmother's home, Abboud expressed his surprise at the "concrete Jewish settlement with its enclosures of barbed-wire fences and military tower" (p. 250). He also showed great amazement when he heard Omer talking about Israel proper and the West Bank as two different worlds:

Then Poppy asked Omer, "What do your friends think about the West Bank?"
 Khaled looked at him. Omer stared and stared out the window. He said, "They feel—scared. They—don't know. They never came here. They think it is a different world."
 There was a long silence in which poppy echoed him, whispering, "Different world?" (p. 251)

All the speakers in the above instances question the ability of borders to divide people. In their views, such borders and barriers only provoke acts of violence between peoples and different nationalities on both sides of the borders.

Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism has been defined as the view that various cultures in any society (rather than one national culture) can co-exist peacefully and merit equal respect and serious consideration in one single country. It also refers to the cultural, religious, and ethnic diversity of any society. Multiculturalism is manifested in customary behaviors, social values, patterns of thinking, and lifestyles. According to Peter Adler (2002), multiculturalism "suggests a human being whose identifications and loyalties transcend the boundaries of nationalism and whose commitments are pinned to a larger vision of the global community". Adler also argues that though nation, culture and society exert a great influence on all human beings, that human beings cannot hold themselves apart from some form of cultural influence and that there is no person who is culture free, there are people who can be "the product of the interweaving of cultures". He further elaborates: "Around the planet the streams of the world's cultures merge together to form new currents of human interaction... each such vignette is a symbol of the mingling and melding of human cultures".

Adler (2002) further believes that in our modern times, human connections and communication have seriously affected or undermined the traditional concepts of borders: "Accompanying the growth of human communication has been the erosion of barriers that have, throughout history, geographically, linguistically, and

culturally separated people". Consequently, a new type of person has emerged, someone whose horizons extend significantly beyond his or her own culture and whom Adler calls the multiculturalist (Adler, 2002). A multiculturalist, Adler maintains, is one whose essential identity is inclusive of different life patterns and who has psychologically and socially come to grips with a multiplicity of realities. His/her experience is grounded in the universality of the human condition and the diversity of cultural forms: "The multicultural person is intellectually and emotionally committed to the basic unity of all human beings while at the same time recognizing, legitimizing, accepting, and appreciating the differences that exist between people of different cultures" (Adler, 2002).

An essential part of multiculturalism is identity or multicultural identity, to be more specific. By identity is meant, "all of the beliefs, ideals, and values that help shape and guide a person's behavior" (Cherry, 2014). There are different types of identity. These types include cultural, ethnic, national, and religious identity, etc.. Cultural identity is the feeling of belonging to a group or culture. An ethnic identity is the identification with a certain ethnicity, usually on the basis of a presumed common genealogy or ancestry. A religious identity is the set of beliefs and practices generally held by an individual, involving adherence to codified beliefs and rituals and ancestral or cultural traditions, writings, history, and mythology as well as faith and mystic experience ("Identity Formation", *Wikipedia*, 2008).

One of the major exponents of identity is the German-born American psychoanalyst Erik Erikson (1968). Erikson's stages of psychosocial development comprise eight stages through which a healthily developing human should pass from infancy to late adulthood. Erikson's belief is that throughout each person's lifetime, they experience different crises/conflicts. Each of the conflicts arises at a certain point in life and must be successfully resolved for progression to the next of the eight stages. Each identity stage represents a particular configuration of the individual's progress with regard to identity exploration and commitment to the values, beliefs, and goals that contribute to identity. ("Erikson's Stages of Psychological Development", *Wikipedia*). Thus, "Identity versus Role Confusion" consists of adolescents trying to figure out who they are in order to form a basic identity that they will build on throughout their life. Once an adolescent has accomplished the task of figuring out "who they are", they are ready to enter the next stage of Erikson's theory, "Intimacy versus Isolation" where they will form strong friendships and a sense of companionship with others ("Identity Formation", *Wikipedia*, 2008). It is these two stages of identity formation that we shall be concerned with in the ensuing discussion; the other six stages as outlined and explained by Erikson are concerned with infancy and adulthood and fall beyond the scope of our investigation of the personal identity formation of the novel's heroine Liyana who is now about 14-15 years old.

The development of Libyan's identity during early and middle adolescence almost parallels Erikson's description of the above two stages, that is "Identity versus Role Confusion" and "Intimacy versus Isolation". The first crisis ("Identity versus Role Confusion") represents the struggle to find a balance between developing a unique, individual identity while still being accepted and "fitting in". The second crisis ("Intimacy versus Isolation"), occurring between late adolescence and early adulthood, represents the struggle to achieve a mutual balance between giving love and support, and receiving love and support. Erikson believed that when youth successfully pass this crisis they become able to form reciprocal relationships with others to achieve common goals such as love and marriage.

What is distinctive about the multicultural person is an abiding commitment to the essential similarities between people everywhere, while paradoxically maintaining an equally strong commitment to differences (Adler, 2002). Despite any possible commitment, the multicultural individual is always ready for modifying his/her identity: "The multicultural person is always in flux, the configuration of loyalties and identifications changing, the overall image of self perpetually being reformulated through experience and contact with the world". The identity of a multicultural person, Adler asserts, is fluid, more susceptible to change and more open to variation. It is an identity based "not on a 'belongingness' which implies either owning or being owned by culture, but on a style of self-consciousness that is capable of negotiating ever new formations of reality" (Adler, 2002).

In the course of the novel, we witness Liyana's growing cultural awareness, her constantly developing understanding and adjustment to different cultures other than her own which is basically American and only partially Arab. Though she sometimes, to use Bennett's terminology, views her American culture as "central to reality", she does not seem to be totally "denying" or "minimizing" or "defending" against cultural differences; rather she is simultaneously open to cultural differences and is capable of seeing her culture in the context of other cultures by finally "accepting", "adapting" and even "integrating" different cultural worldviews into her identity (Bennett, 2004). Eventually, she reaches a stage where she is ready to transcend cultural boundaries and adopt, together with her parents and her brother, a kind of cosmopolitan/universal cultural outlook.

Initially, Liyana is not ready to accept the values of her family, community, and culture without questioning. On the contrary, she tries to explore their value system and to learn more about her Arab cultural heritage, at least to some degree. Liyana's exploratory process ranges from a simple questioning of why things are the way they are, to experimentation with a different set of values and beliefs, to outright rejection of generally accepted values and beliefs. Liyana is trying to figure out who she is in order to form her basic identity. The first question she keeps asking about her personal identity amounts to this: "Who am I?" or "What can I be?" In this kind of question she is looking for what makes her unique as an individual and different from others. She is concerned with the way she views or defines herself and the network of values and convictions that structure her life. As Oswalt (2014) observes:

Adolescence is a prime time for youth to explore their cultural heritage and identity. They may want to learn about their family's origins and may ask to be told stories about their ancestors' history. Likewise, they may question what it means to be part of their culture in contemporary society.

As an embodiment of Nye's notion of multiculturalism, the novel's protagonist combines elements from different cultures: American, Arab, Armenian, Indian, etc.. As Liyana explores new possibilities, she forms new beliefs, adopts different values, and makes different choices. These developmental stages cause her to develop a progressively greater commitment to a particular individual identity; but her final identity will be multicultural rather than monocultural. Liyana is moving from an initially confused and undefined individual to a better defined identity and an individual sense of self.

Moving out from the States to Palestine/Israel brings for Liyana serious cultural issues she has to resolve. Such issues include the language she speaks, her dressing, her manners, her social interactions, her beliefs and values and, later on, her relationship with the other sex. Her identity formation includes various components from

different cultures and not just one culture. In Jerusalem, Liyana finds herself in a society that speaks different languages (Arabic, Armenian, Hebrew, and others) and nurtures different cultures. In the American school Liyana goes to, “the students were trilingual, speaking Arabic, Armenian and English” (p. 76), a situation that makes Liyana deeply worried. In her attempt to re-evaluate her understanding of the world and her values system, Liyana swings uneasily back and forth between her Arab and American cultural backgrounds, finding it sometimes difficult to adapt:

The minute Poppy told her to stop combing her hair on the balcony, she toppled on to the American side, thinking. If I were at home on a beach I could run up and down the sand with just a bathing suit on and no one would even notice me, I could wear my short shorts that I didn't bring and hold a boy's hand in the street without causing an earthquake, I could comb my wet hair in public for a hundred dumb years. (p. 125)

The second question that Liyana would ask herself is “can I love?” Once she has figured out whom she is, Liyana tries to form a sense of friendship and companionship with others, including Omer, the Jewish boy with whom she falls in love despite her parents' opposition. According to Erikson, at this stage (“Intimacy versus Isolation”) social development involves a dramatic change in the quantity and quality of social relationships. During her adolescence years Liyana begins to form different types of relationships, and some of these relationships become more deeply involved and more emotionally intimate. Additionally, her social networks greatly expand to include more people, and different types of relationships. This exploratory process can be frustrating for her parents, especially when she challenges the cultural values of the family, or when she directly challenges parental authority. Oswalt explains that during early and middle adolescent years, there is usually more frequent conflict between teens and their parents. Often, this is because they are trying to assert their individuality and are exercising their independence. Furthermore, youth may rebel against their parents' rules and values as part of their identity development process. Sometimes youth openly defy these rules and values, while at other times they do so in private (Oswalt, 2014).

Sometimes, Liyana has to go a step further by testing the limits and boundaries set by her parents and other authorities. She appears to oppose and resist restrictions of any sort.

While every family, religion, and culture have different rules and expectations about courtship, most youth have at least some interest in romantic relationships and may attempt to form a romantic bond, even if doing so breaks the rules.... Youth in early and middle adolescence will usually begin dating. (Oswalt, 2014)

Thus, we see Liyana testing her family's allegedly unprejudiced beliefs when she befriends Omer, a Jewish boy, whom she wants to introduce to her father. As Libyan's newly found lover is Jewish, her parents oppose this friendship (pp. 160-161). However, Liyana does not go to an extreme in her efforts to re-direct the course of her life and even her identity and her parents remain open-minded to her new explorations. Gradually, the Abbouds accept the new situation amidst the various episodes of violence and persecution that show how Arabs and Jews are torn by conflicts that infiltrate every aspect of their lives.

One of the main elements of Erikson's psychological stage theory is the development of ego identity. Ego identity is the conscious sense of self that we develop through social interaction. According to Erikson, “Our ego identity is constantly changing due to new experiences and information we acquire in our daily interactions with others” (as qtd. in Cherry, 2014). Liyana's identity is changing and developing and in the same way Liyana is also

developing her social and communication skills. In this adaptation process, she is helped by her mother and her father who, on one occasion tells her: “Cultural differences aren’t learned or understood immediately. Most importantly, you must abide by the guidelines where you are living. This is common sense. It will protect you” (pp. 61-62). So, we find not only parental opposition but also parental support and encouragement at later stages of the love affair’s development. Ultimately, this learning process and social support enable Liyana to create emotional intimacy with her selected love, to find satisfaction within these social and love relationships and to create a strong social web of family, friends, and possibly lifetime companions.

During this cultural and identity exploration, Liyana is concerned about her being a hybrid. Viewing herself in an amusing manner, she exclaims: “I am just a half-half, woman-girl, Arab-American, a mixed breed like those wild characters that ride up on ponies in the cowboy movies Rafik likes to watch. The half-breeds are always villains or rescuers, never anybody normal in between” (p. 20). We are also told that “in Jerusalem she was just a blur going by in the streets. The half-American with the Arab eyes in the navy blue American school uniform” (p. 84). She also refers to her hybrid origin: “I am an American”, she said, “Mostly” (p. 165).

Historically, the notion of hybridity was used with a negative sense (O’Connor, 2013). Hybridized people were seen as living in a state of in-betweenness which would result in discomfort and suffering. O’Connor (2013) adds that

hybridity is a term that has risen to prominence in articulations of social and cultural mix. We talk of hybridity as the fusion of distinct identities, foods, and languages but the result is often fluid and ambiguous. Nevertheless, the term has become a celebrated concept of identity.

Thus, hybridity indicates a mix of different elements which come from different sources and origins: religions, cultures, race, political and cultural identities, etc.. In the present times, mix is celebrated as a symbol of mobility whilst the purity championed by scientific racism has become associated with ideas of rigidity and inflexibility (O’Connor, 2013).

Originally used with a negative sense of inferiority, hybridity has now gained a different and positive sense especially in the discourses of identity, multiculturalism, race, postcolonialism, and globalization. Like Bhabha’s concept of mimicry (*The Location of Culture*, 1994), hybridity implies a dissembling image of having two identities at once. Additionally, it is concerned with the effects of mixture upon identity and culture, and with cultures and their interactions. It implies that traces of other cultures exist in every culture. The rhetoric of hybridity has progressed so that it forms a real challenge to essentialism or the idea that objects have their different and specific identity. Above all, it is basically concerned with multicultural mixture that defies the setting of borders and separation.

Politically, hybridity involves intercultural and international communication taking place amidst differential power. Cultural interaction is presented as resistant to political separation. Bhabha (1994) explores hybridity in the context of the postcolonial novel, celebrating it as the resilience of the subaltern and as the contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics, and identity, by natives who are striking back at imperial domination. He emphasizes hybridity’s ability to subvert and reappropriate dominant discourses. Bhabha (1986) saw hybridity as a transgressive act that challenges the colonizers’ authority, values and representations and thereby constituting an act of self-empowerment and defiance (Kraidy, 2002). But as Ang (2003) argues, “Hybridity is a concept that

confronts and problematises boundaries, although it does not erase them". This tells us that hybridity, the very condition of in-betweenness, can never be a question of harmonious merger and fusion: "Hybridity is not the solution, but alerts us to the difficulty of living with differences, their ultimately irreducible resistance to complete dissolution" (Ang, 2003, pp. 149-50).

In *Habibi*, cultural identities are not fixed, but dynamic and poised between different positions; they draw on different cultural traditions and become the product of those complicated cross-overs and cultural mixes which are increasingly common in a globalized world. Indeed, the novel critiques the concept of cultural purity or ethnic absolutism and presents a discourse that goes against racial inequality and racial discord, giving rise to a mixed population and more harmonious society. The novelist is obviously trying to promote cultural hybridity and to show that the boundaries of hybridity are flexible and malleable. As a general rule, hybridity always produces new outcomes. Consequently, we witness a mix of religions, cultures, race, political and cultural identities, etc. and a tension between the local and the global. Although the novelist seems to be presenting her views against the backdrop of what can be called a new democratic and multiculturalist age, we see an alarming insistence on fundamentalist identifications, a conflict between fundamentalist border mentality and liberalist multicultural open-border mentality.

Hybridity or mixed identities has constituted an important field of cultural studies. The use of hybridity in this field is closely linked to post-modern sensibilities which challenge modernist ideas assuming that fixity, territoriality and distinctive languages and ethnicities constitute themselves as separate identities. Instead, the post-modernists argue that borders are fractured and nation-states are becoming more complex and more fragmented, particularly as a result of international migration and cultural globalization. Hybridity is a concept that reverses the effects of imperial culturalism and instead posits the notion of creating mixed cultures. In this novel we witness the creation of commingled cultures from different parent cultures. Arab and Jewish cultures meet and integrate in one way or another through the relationship between Jewish and Arab characters as well as through language and a common desire for peace and reconciliation.

As a hybrid and as a multicultural person, Liyana is living with tension and continuous movement. Adler (2002) explains that to live on the edge of one's thinking, one's culture, or one's ego, is to live with tension and movement:

It is in truth not standing still, but rather a crossing and return, a repetition of return and crossing, back-and-forth—the aim of which is to create a third area beyond the bounded territories, an area where one can stand for a time without being enclosed in something tightly bounded.

And so, the multicultural person's identity is not confined or limited: "The multicultural person maintains indefinite boundaries of the self. ... Multicultural people are capable of major shifts in their frame of reference and embody the ability to disavow a permanent character and change in socio-psychological style". Adler further adds that "multicultural persons undergo shifts in their total psychocultural posture, their religion, personality, behavior, occupation, nationality, outlook, political persuasion, and values may, in part or completely, reformulate in the face of new experience". Adler (2002) concludes that

the multicultural person embodies attributes and characteristics that prepare him or her to serve as a facilitator and catalyst for contacts between cultures. The variations and flexibility of this identity style allows that person to relate to a variety of contexts and environments without being totally encapsulated by or totally alienated from any given culture.

Borders Versus Multiculturalism

To counteract the narrative of closed-border mentality, Nye utilizes the narrative of open-doors multiculturalism to express the effect of a multiculturalist perspective on life and intercommunal relationships. To achieve this objective, she drew upon various strategies including cultural diversity, characters interaction, language similarity, multiethnic history, rejection of all forms of essentialism/fundamentalism, disregard of purity of race or ethnicity, and equality of all religions. As explained earlier, Nye is keen on promoting interaction among different cultures. The novel is replete with references to various cultures including American, Jewish, Arab, Armenian, Hindu cultures, a fact which highlights the theme of multiculturalism and its role in bridging the gap between different races, countries, groups, and individuals. Indeed, Palestine is depicted to have been culturally, linguistically, religiously and ethnically one of the most diverse countries in the world and Palestinian culture was an amalgamation of these diverse cultures. Moreover, Nye celebrates the complex fusion of the Palestinian and American cultures in her Arab-American characters and their intermingling of cultural elements from their own bi-cultural heritage and from other cultures.

Nye also makes her different characters communicate regardless of their racial or ethnic differences or cultural backgrounds and on equal footing. She draws a variety of parallel and interlocking relationships between the Israelis and the Palestinians, most important of which is the love relationship that develops between Liyana, the Palestinian-American girl and Omer, the Jewish boy from Jerusalem. Such relationships are not random. They actually underline the core theme of the novel which is the possibility of friendship and connection between two characters, if not two peoples, who are ideologically, politically and religiously different. Moreover, Nye uses language as a common ground that can bring characters or people closer together and in this way cross the language barrier and become more able to interact and intercommunicate. This is clearly seen in the use of such words as “Habibi” and “Omer” which serve as a useful indicator of the hybridity of culture or linguistic hybridity. This phenomenon shows that both cultures (Arabic and Jewish) are actually interlinked or have one common origin. Furthermore, the novel shows a kind of welcoming strangers into one’s home when Liyana’s Palestinian family hosts Omer, her Jewish friend, in their home, though not without some accompanying tensions and the cumbersome impediments of Israeli fences and barricades along the way (pp. 252-253).

Border-multiculturalism dialectic is also noticeable in Nye’s drawing upon a discourse that rejects essentialism, purity of race and culture superiority. All members of the Abboud family see themselves as partly American and partly Arab (pp. 124-125) and have a kind of cosmopolitan outlook that would oppose fundamentalism and tolerate other cultures: “Any kind of fundamentalism gave Poppy the shivers.... ‘Fundamentalists talk louder than liberals,’ he said. That’s too bad. Maybe we moderate people should raise our voices” (p. 179). Additionally, Nye questions strict adherence to orthodox religious doctrines and critiques the traditional dogma of the Jews being “God’s chosen people”. As an embodiment of Nye’s own views, the Abbouds “did not believe in... anybody being ‘chosen’ over anybody else” (p. 178). Abboud also wonders: “Does it make sense... that God would choose some people and leave the others out? If only Christians and Jews are right, what about most of Asia and the Middle East?” (p. 179).

As part of her pro-multiculturalism narrative, Nye encourages religious freedom, the right to choose or change one’s own religion or no religion without any outside influence. Nye presents all religions on an equitable basis regarding their merits or demerits: “Poppy [i.e., Abboud] said every religion contained some shining ideas and

plenty of foolishness, too” (p. 177). Abboud also maintains that “the worst foolish thing is when a religion wants you to say it’s the only right one. Or the best one” (p. 177). Abboud’s wife has a liberal view of religion: “Liyana’s mother believed a *whole* lot in karma, the Hindu belief that what someone does in this world will come back to him or her” (p. 176). Liyana herself “liked the eightfold path in Buddhism, and the idea of the *bodhisattva*, the soul who does good for others without any thought for himself or herself” (p. 176). The whole family seems to be open-minded on the question of religious belief and affiliation: “The Abbouds had never belonged to a church since Liyana was born, but it might have made things easier. Liyana’s mother said they were a *spiritual* family, they just weren’t a *traditionally religious* one” (p. 175). This kind of attitude is almost paralleled by a similar one on the part of Omer, the principal Jewish character in the novel. Thus, we are told that Omer “doesn’t seem orthodox—anything. He seems universal” (p. 240). In this way, we find striking similarities between the religious views of the principal Jewish and Arab characters, an intriguing situation that is utilized by the author to promote her ideas on multiculturalism and to bring the conflicting parties closer together.

To enhance her border-versus-multiculturalism narrative, Nye explores the history of Palestine and its inhabitants as well as its colonization legacy. As shown in the novel, the population of Palestine had always been a mixture of different nationalities and diverse ethnic and religious groupings. This is clearly expressed in Liyana’s comprehensive report to her history teacher (pp. 28-32) in which the Arab-Israeli conflict is summed up in three periods: (1) the period of peaceful coexistence among all inhabitants of Jerusalem including Arabs and Jews, (2) the period of war and conflict following the end of the British mandate, and (3) the more recent period of peace negotiations after the 1967 Arab-Israeli war. In the past, Arabs, Greeks, Armenians, Jews, Muslims, and Christians used to constitute a sort of cultural mosaic in which all people from different ethnic origins could easily get together. Before the Israeli occupation, Palestine had become an example of multiculturalism in terms of its variety of religions, plurality of traditions and colorful ethnicity. Its largest ethnic minorities, Greeks and Jews, enjoyed peaceful coexistence with their Arab compatriots without any social troubles. As Liyana reports: “Everybody was mixed together. My father says nobody talked or thought much about being Arabs or Jews or anything” (p. 28).

That situation no longer exists under the Israeli state which is keen on enforcing a culturally homogeneous society that has one culture, one descent, one religion, and one language. Though cultural diversity had been the predominant policy in Palestine prior to the Israeli occupation, the Israeli policy is not one of multiculturalism but of monoculturalism and an opposition to cultural, religious and ethnic diversity. Current Israeli policy is keen on establishing a one-race population even though this goes against the present situation of a multiethnic country. Now, religion, instead of bringing people together as it used to do in the past, plays an important role in fracturing the local population, and ethnicity is a means for separation, segregation, and racial discrimination.

This negative attitude/policy occurs not only on the public and official levels but also on the level of individuals. For instance, Omer’s mother is totally against his acquaintance with the Arab-American girl, Liyana: “His mother didn’t want him to go the village with Liyana, *ever*” (p. 242). In another incident we are shown how an Israeli citizen blames Liyana for dealing with an Arab and urges her to go to Jewish stores instead: “‘Why you bother with this animal?’ he said, pointing to Bassam. ‘Be careful. Don’t trust animals. Go to better stores in our part of town,’ so she knew he thought she was Jewish” (p. 95). Thus, we notice an inclination for cultural isolation on the part of the majority of the Jewish characters in contrast with the principal Palestinian characters

who support multicultural diversity and a pluralist society.

Through her use of the multiculturalism narrative as a means of countering the border-mentality narrative, Nye is keen on promoting a sense of cultural diversity. Her aim is to establish a society that is rich in its tapestry of human life and to promote the desire amongst the people to express their identity in the manner they see fit so that there can be equal respect for the various cultures in that society and an acceptance of various ethnic, cultural, political and religious groupings. Cultural pluralism is viewed as a way of building a better and an egalitarian society. Compared with borders rhetoric, multiculturalism rhetoric is seen as a fairer system that would allow people to truly express who they are within a pluralistic society. It is also a useful means to combat racism, to protect minority communities of all types, and to undo policies that prevent certain communities from having full access to the opportunities for freedom and equality. Consequently, cultural norms and social values would not come from one dominant culture but through an open dialogue between different cultures.

This kind of attitude is clearly reflected in most of Nye's writings and in many of the interviews with her such as those conducted by Joy Castro (2002), Meg Kavanagh (2002), and Bill Moyers (2012) where she reveals her interest in globalization, multiculturalism and peaceful coexistence and where she seems to be promoting a kind of global consciousness and cultural diversity to offset the argument of closed-border mentality and to promote the discourse of open-doors outlook. In *Habibi* in particular Nye challenges the notion of closed borders and embraces the discourse of multiculturalism.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the relationship between multiculturalism rhetoric and borders narrative as manifested in Nye's novel *Habibi*. It shows how both borders and multiculturalism play an important role in shaping human relationships in this novel. Borders imply a variety of barriers: cultural, ethnic, psychological, and political. Geographical borders play a significant role in enforcing the differences and the gaps between Palestinians and Israelis and the cultural, ethnic, and political borders form a snag in the love story between the novel's two protagonists. In the end, all such borders are proven to be mere shadows because they divide two lovers who share similar feelings and sentiments and two peoples who used to live in harmony with one another.

Palestinian characters, as a minority group, are portrayed as being more open-minded to other cultures while the Jewish characters, as a majority group, are presented as being less inclined to accept other cultures. Whereas the Palestinians are generally interested in a life without barriers and boundaries, Israelis are keen on preserving a state of isolation and segregation. To counteract the argument of border mentality, Nye posits the rhetoric of multiculturalism. Cultural multiplicity would give all citizens the right to express and share their individual cultural heritage, including their language and religion, their right to equality of treatment and opportunity, and the removal of the barriers of race, ethnicity, culture, religion, language, or place of birth. Nye's position is that borders and geographical demarcations are arbitrary and create divisions, animosities, and hatred between people and nations whereas multiculturalism engenders feelings of reconciliation, friendship, peace, and understanding. Nye seems to be looking for a country whose inhabitants can live together though they belong to different cultures and have different history, different cultures, and different languages, which are actually similar in many ways. Though the writer is aware of such divisions, she demonstrates that such divisions and barriers can be overcome after all.

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