

# Escaping Absurdity: The Incarnation of Magical Realism in Rawi Hage's *Carnival* (2012)

Sabrina Kacha

Faculty of English Language and Literature, University of Jordan, Amman, Jordan

**Abstract**—This paper examines the various representations of magical realism in Rawi Hage's *Carnival* (2012). It investigates the portrayal of the fictionalized imaginative situations in the novel. Further, it discusses Fly as an exilic individual who attempts to escape his chaotic and disordered society. Through his flying carpet, Fly overcomes his hardship and produces a new space for his own in order to realize what he desires. Besides, among the serious problems that face the exilic individual is the absurdist existential life in exile. Thereby, this research article explores how Fly uses a magical realist element to escape the absurdity of his existence in the diaspora. Hence, Albert Camus' writings on absurdism and the absurdity of human existence are paramount in analyzing this character.

**Index Terms**—magical realism, exile, absurdity of human existence, Fly, Albert Camus

## I. INTRODUCTION

Contemporary Arab writers in diaspora have explored serious issues related to the decay circumstances and postcolonialism effects under the name of Arab diasporic literature. The latter is considered a late tendency of writing that unequivocally emerged after the events of 9-11. This literature mainly questions nationalism and identity crisis. Consequently, Arab diasporic authors celebrate themes of identity formation, hybridity, immigration, exile, trauma, aging, and representation. Their ultimate task is to write back, deconstruct, and dismantle the Western hegemonic discourse. Yet, having stated that the Anglo-Arab and American-Arab novelists aim to unravel the mystified portrayal of Arabs, it is significant to highlight the use of magical realism in the sense of introducing several issues related to Arabs in general and Arabs in exile in particular mainly the formation of their identity and the question of their existence.

Magical realism as a new tendency of writing is considered a rebellious activity that spread in the 1920s in Latin America to become a fashioned writing style years after its emergence. It is embraced by several contemporary writers all over the world to express their opinions freely under the umbrella of defamiliarization, bizarre, and magic as well as to write back, criticize, rebel, and resist indirectly. Therefore, Arab writers in the diaspora embraced this tendency to investigate their ideas freely because magical realism allows postcolonial writers to articulate new possibilities of criticism that go beyond traditional boundaries. Through the use of uncanny, these writers proclaim what they cannot express over realism such as the criticism of western political and governmental regimes, the hardship of social circumstances, and more importantly the individual's personal crisis of identity, belonging, and existence.

The concept of absurd concerns itself first and foremost as meaningless, unworthy, and senselessness. By the same token, Arab writers in the diaspora try to appropriate such concepts in their compositions in the sense to reflect and bring to the surface the major crisis that faces Arabs in the postcolonial period either in exile or in their homeland. Among the major problems, one may cite is the absurdism of human existence in such societies and the major causes that led to this debatable issue about Arab absurdist existentialism. Therefore, this research is conducted to investigate the theme of magical realism as a reflection of the absurdity of human existence in Rawi Hage's *Carnival* (2012). Yet, this paper implements that the use of magical realism in this text is highly recommended to highlight the absurdity of human existence within an environment characterized by chaos and tyranny. Through magical realism, the character under investigation escapes the realm he considers oppressive and unsettled by seeking other survival spaces, mainly the imaginative.

In light of what has been mentioned, the engaging composition significantly contains both the highlighted fictionality of magical realism and the reference of absurdism to actuality. Thus, this study is the application of the imaginative mode to describe the identifiable historical, political, and social events that create a sense of absurdity.

## II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

To define the term 'magical realism, it is worth stating that it is a hybrid term derived from the mixture of magic and reality. It is a naturalization of the unnatural. Differently, it is considered a coherent and equivalent composition in which fantasy and reality are combined. It is also defined as a mode suited to explore and transgress political, geographical, and psychological boundaries. It is significant to refer to what Zamora and Faris (1995) contended in their *Magical Realism Theory, history, and community* that magical realism appears through intertwining two worlds to have

a third hybrid one. For them, the link between the two spaces powerfully enhances the prosperity of another space where everything is available including the convergence of cultures and ideologies (p. 6). In the views of other critics like Perez and Chevalier (2020), magical realism is used as a means to transport and transgress the voiceless, marginalized, and decentered people into the center in an uncanny and bizarre image structured by defamiliarization. Significantly, they argue that “magical realism, we contended, is oriented toward future {...}, magic aims to reformulate reality and widen cultural parameters of the social world” (p. 27). That is to say, magical realism’s associated uncanny events in the context of reality are used to transgress messages throughout a reintroduction of reality from the lens of unordinary and illogical incidents.

To borrow the words of Perez and Chevalier magic in the twenty-first century has developed and spread into globalization, in which the oppressed, the dispossessed, and the captivated individuals may break down the regimes and arrangements of the colonial association (p. 3). To state it simply, twenty-first-century magical realism is a weapon in the hand of these writers to transcend the powerful hegemonic narrative of oppression and hierarchy. Thereby, the relationship between magical realism and other theories related to the contemporary period such as postmodernism and postcolonialism is consolidated. As it comes in Homi Bhabha’s *Nation and Narration* (1990), magical realism after its European emergence became a trendy language of the post-colonial world (p. 19). Additionally, Bowers (2004) in her introduction of *Magic (al) Realism* states that magical realism became a fashioned tendency adopted by postcolonial writers because of its qualification and strength in writing back the totalitarian systems through its attack and disturbance to the colonial organization and systems (p. 4).

Therefore, according to the writers, critics, and theorists of the postcolonial era, magical realism is considered as a counter technique against despotism and the colonizer’s tyranny. In light of what has been mentioned, it is worth stating the relevant and interdisciplinary relationship between magical realism and absurdism in the postcolonial and postmodern contexts. In the sense of criticizing and writing back the hegemonic discourse of colonialism, irony, the crisis of self and otherness, and binary oppositions of the east and the west in exile are brought to the surface. Magical realism as a narrative technique used by postcolonial novelists is highly appreciated to reformulate and recreate reality using bizarre, carnivalesque, and uncanny images and to help the scrutinized characters in their compositions to recover themselves. For example, Al hawamdeh (2014), analyzing Shakespeare’s *The Tempest* and Franz Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis* from a postcolonial magic realism’s vantage, argues that the Shakespearean delineation of the magic realist hero Caliban “shows more powerful deconstructing efforts to dismantle, decolonize and challenge the reality of the colonial master than the twentieth-century magic realist hero, as represented by Gregor in Kafka’s *The Metamorphosis*” (p. 1).

The absurdity of human existence in the nominated novel to be discussed in this study is explored from the angle of magical realism to describe the meaninglessness and worthlessness of human existence and life in exile. Therefore, the writings of French philosopher Albert Camus are predominant in analyzing the mentioned idea. In his theorization of the Absurd, Camus (1991) asserts the senseless and meaninglessness of human being life. However, in this study, the concept of the Absurd will be adopted and appropriated in a diasporic context. Before proceeding with the discussion, the definition of the word absurd is required. According to Baldick (2004), ‘absurd’ is a “term derived from the Existentialism of Albert Camus, and often applied to the modern sense of human purposelessness in a universe without meaning or value” (p. 1). Further, the term ‘absurd’ and its synonyms such as purposelessness, meaningless, and worthlessness refer to the individual’s status in front of the circumstances during their lifetime which makes them feel pointless, and their value in life is invalid which derives him to the feeling of the low self-esteem. Consequently, the individual in such cases faces several crises such as identical, psychological, etc. Thence, exile, being out of place, and instability of socio-political, and cultural situations are among the elements that have a direct effect on the existence of the individual and the construction of one’s identity, especially in the post-war era.

Camus argues that the absurd world creates its strength, advancement, and nobility from the “abject birth” in which senselessness, meaninglessness, and worthiness have a space. By absurdity, Camus refers to the world and the absurd to be the world that consolidates itself and gains its strength from the world of irrationality and senselessness (p. 19). Therefore, one may say that the term absurdity is related to the negative positions that can be experienced in daily life and the real world and is used to comment on unaccepted and unreasonable circumstances. Respectively, Camus asserts that the absurd reflects nothingness and it “symbolizes the odd state of soul in which the void becomes eloquent” (p. 19). In other words, the concept of absurdity reduces the unworthiness of existing and the senseless of the human soul in which the individual’s spirit becomes at the bottom and foolishness becomes acceptable.

Camus’s philosophy reflects the extent to which absurdism and irrationality consume the existence of human beings, where the individual’s qualification as a reasonable human being becomes highly associated with the mad world of irrationality. In other words, for Camus, feelings, and experiences of absurdism consume the human being’s prudence, lastly, he will accept the irrationality and foolishness of absurdity within his real and daily life. Hence, the world of the absurd is the refuge of those who experience the abjection and worthlessness of life and the real world. In his study, brings to the surface the causes that make human life absurd as well as he describes the absurd man as the person who recognizes the reality of nothingness and accepts it as an ordinary event in which he performs in contradiction to his reason, mind, and logic. Concurrently, this person recognizes the necessity to rebel and revolt against it. Thus, this study reveals that, contrary to what may be expected, there is no binary opposition between fictive magical realism and

absurdism, but that magical realism emanates from actual historical, social, and cultural settings and absurdism is the consequence of this highly fictionalized version of specific conditions.

### III. RAWI HAGE'S FICTION

Rawi Hage is a Lebanese Canadian writer whose novels are translated into numerous languages. Among his works, *De Niro's Game* (2006), *Cockroach* (2008), *Carnival* (2012), *Beirut Hellfire Society* (2018), and lately a collection of short stories under the title of *Stray Dogs* (2022). Hage's texts often investigate the hard circumstances of Arabs either in their homeland or in the diaspora. Hage as an Arab writer, one of the major writers in diasporic literature, and a person who is an outsider as well, worked on transmitting the difficulties that may face immigrants throughout the exploration of magical realism in his compositions which refer variously to many expressive situations. Rawi Hage is the first Arab Writer in the diaspora who uses magical realism firstly in his *Cockroach* and later on in other novels. Yet, the focus of this research is to analyze the scrutinized novels from the angle of magical realism and how unreal events cooperate in disclosing reality. However, he manifests different positions such as being an Arab immigrant in a Western country as in *Cockroach* and *Carnival* as well as being an Arab residing in an Arab country but in unstable conditions as in *Beirut Hellfire Society*.

### IV. DISCUSSION

*Carnival* is a novel written in 2012. Its story is set somewhere in North America it revolves around the protagonist Fly who is a taxi driver, he was born in a circus and grew up there. Throughout the storyline, Fly narrates his experiences with the different clients whom he met in his taxi, his neighbors, as well as, his colleagues in the taxi station. The novel attracts the attention of numerous researchers by investigating different aspects, in "To Roam a Borderless World: The Poetics of Movement and Marginality in *Carnival*" Dahab (2017) explores the novel through Edward Said's binary opposition of superiority where she focuses on the necessity of the creation of one's world without borders to deconstruct the boundaries of the binary opposition. Also, Sakr (2017) explores the idea of human rights in literature in her article "Expanding the Space of Human Rights in Literature, Reclaiming Literature as a human right: *Cockroach* and *Carnival*". In this article, she highlights the impression of "the violation of human rights in both war-torn third world countries and in the peaceful first world nations" (p. 96) with a focus on the humiliation, oppression, and mistreatment of the novel's characters. Accordingly, Awajan (2021) in her study "A new Stage for Hage's Protagonist in *Carnival* (2012)" seeks to unveil the relationship between the trilogy of Hage about the Lebanese immigrants from Rome to Montreal and finally somewhere in America. She argues that the protagonists desire to establish a new identity in a new world even though they are hugely different in terms of their behaviors to achieve their dreams. She investigates the similarities between Hage's protagonists in seeking freedom; Fly's story as a taxi driver and an owner of a flying carpet allows him to realize his freedom (2021, pp. 198-200). Yet, in this article *Carnival* will be discussed according to its magical realist elements to unveil the absurdity of Arab existence in exile and its causes.

In the view of George (2020), "magical realism draws from the modern literary fairy tales and the postmodern fairy tale of oral tradition. It is a postmodern variety of the fairy tale" (p. 611). To clarify, magical realism and fairy tales are two concepts that sound familiar and similar to each other because both of them rely on extraordinary and supernatural elements to introduce the aimed idea. As well as, the technique of defamiliarization is often centered in the eastern world and literature; it appears for example in Arabic Folklore and Arabian Nights in the sense of including magic between their lines and using common elements that are common Western ideology about the East concerning magic, sorcery, turbans, robes, desert, and Camels. Thus, Hage's *carnival* includes all the mentioned elements especially the theme of magic as an element of representation of the Arabic world and identity throughout using the flying carpet as used in the famous Arabian Folktales *Thousand and one night* and other stories. In Hage's novel, the magical element is mentioned in the very first pages when the bearded lady said to Fly "Your father's carpets were always floating above the ground he never laid his head on the floor" (Hage, p. 27); the adoption of the magical element of flying carpet is very symbolic in this text either on the person or on the collective standards. It mirrors the presence of Arabic existence in hostile countries and its continuous inheritance into the late young generations as a means to rebel against the hegemonic power.

Fly's use of the magical carpet reflects a lot of perspectives. It is a means to escape his reality towards the imaginative places he constructed to achieve what he could not do in reality. Also, it is considered his shelter from the chaotic, materialistic, and hypocritical society. Through this carpet, Fly accomplishes the pleasure of having time to improve himself and his sexual desire (masturbating). Eventually, Fly's carpet transforms into a real means of transportation to leave the community seeking new land and forming a new identity. Additionally, the environmental conditions Fly has grown up within reverses a very implicative idea that announces a couple of interesting points concerning Fly's absurdist existence in the actual society. In his discussion, Fly mentioned that he has grown up in a circus and he has crossed many lands which summarizes the instability and the chaotic surroundings he grew up within. He became influenced by that at a late stage of his life. Often in the narrative, Fly appears wandering to never set in a single place. When he is asked about his origin, he usually replies "I'm from everywhere" (p. 161). That is to say, he

grew up rootless and lived in a sense of nonbelonging and a continuous search for contentment which he realizes in his imaginative world using his father's fighting carpet.

Hage's *Carnival* delves into the core of western society's chaos and disorganization to disclose the status of ordinary people who belongs to the middle class and immigrants, and to bring up the absurdity of being a member in such an environment as well. Fly declares at the beginning of the story "the man like my father, came from the east" (p. 27). That means, the main character; the narrator of the story is an easterner (an Arab) which facilitates the mission of Hage to explore deeply the idea of the self and the other in western ideology. The opening scenes of the novel trace the lines of Edward Said's theory of Orientalism between east and west. In his theorization of the eastern western relationship, Said (1978) problematizes the identity crisis that may face Arab immigrants in exile and Arab inhabitants in western societies. Yet, Said intentionally used the terms east and west to clarify and summarize the boundaries created between Europeans and Arabs as a reference to the dissimilarities between them. Thus, Hage's expression of the East is relevant in the sense of distinguishing between natives and non-natives and clarifying the image of his idea from the beginning of the story. The author dealt with the narrative of an Arab in a western society and from different social, political, and cultural circumstances.

Indeed, magical realist novels can be read as political, social, and cultural criticism. These novels are powerful for the exaggerated use of fantastical and imaginative elements. Therefore, this study explores how such exaggerative fiction persuades the reader to pay attention to the serious political, social, and cultural realities, and how these imaginary elements produce a shelter for the protagonist who recognizes the absurdity of his existence in such chaotic realities. Thus, in his *Carnival*, Hage investigates historical, political, social, and cultural issues. However, he unveils the hidden realities in the chaotic, dictatorial, and hierarchal society. First, it is mentioned in the opening that Fly was born to an Arab father who owned a camel and grew up in a circus, inherited a flying carpet from him, and a clown prophesied for him (Fly) an unstable life of wandering among spiders and beasts. These incidents and environment are themselves a reflection of what is going to be presented in the novel. They reflect the unstable and chaotic environment that the protagonist goes through and was influenced by.

Absurdity, as it is defined in dictionaries, is meaningless and senseless. It is a disputed concept in the text of Hage because of the different positions it appears in. Yet, Camus' absurdity and meaninglessness of the individual's existence are personified in this novel in different images. Fly's mother is presented by the narrator to be a person who swung herself from the ropes. After her husband's departure, Fly's mother could not resist any longer; therefore, she decided to put an end to her life. Fly declares, "when my mother woke up, that day my father left, and didn't see the camel and its saddle, she fell to the floor and pulled her hair and screamed" (p. 153). Passages later, Fly asserts his mother's death and the way she ended her life by using the ropes and being hanged (p. 155). These scenes are a personification of Camus' absurdism when the individual realizes the meaningless of his life in the world and that world deals inversely with that individual's device. Thus, the latter accepts the indifference of his existence, life or death, and lastly commits suicide as a means to express himself. Therefore, Fly's mother recognized the absurdity of her existence without her husband and there is nothing left for her to exist and live more. That is to say, the first appearance of absurdism is reduced in the mother figure and her weakness.

Many critics and theorists such as Faris, Slemon, and other significant magical realism figures agree that magical realism's thematic core is centered on representation. Yet, it is the suited mode of expression. Thereby, the use of supernatural elements in *Carnival* is quite interesting and symbolic. Norridge Zoe in his *Magical Realist Novels and "The politics of Possible"* argues that magical realism offers a particularly fertile aesthetic approach to postcolonial material" (2016, p. 73). Fly's utilization of his father's carpet is quite symbolic in this text, often he uses his carpet to escape his real environment. Following his day's chronology, he regularly drives his taxi to different stations and meets a lot of clients. Fly's admiration of his job is one of the major characteristics listed by Camus to distinguish the absurd man. The latter is classified as the workman who works every day at the same appointment and his fate is no less absurd. Fly declares that he is always seeking freedom and happiness through his extraordinary ability he states "leave my car and fly, dance, live, and escape for a short while" (p. 23). Therefore, he is aware of his absurdist situation and he is searching for alternatives. Hage explores illusion and magic as a means of survival in western society as an Arab inhabitant who cannot recognize the freedom and happiness he searches for. Fly declares "Because I am fortunate in the tool of my escapes. I could, at any minute, dock my car under a bridge and, like a comic book hero, have my freedom fighter suit slapped on me in no time, fly above the ruins of men, and let my happiness come right into my hand" (p. 23).

## V. FLY, THE FLYING FLANEUR

Lefebvre (1974) argues that society impacts the individual's identity through daily and environmental interactions. Additionally, Ashcroft (2013) investigated Lefebvre's idea in his theory of habitation by exploring what is meant by the term habitation and to what extent this concept effectively impacts the construction of one's identity since the "practice of habitation is more than occupying of a location of a location, it is itself a way of being within which, through which, place comes to be" (p. 159). Habitation is not conquered geographically as a place only, but it is the way of being in that place from habits and activities one may practice in a special area. Therefore, in Hage's *Carnival*, habitation is consolidated with the magic world produced by the protagonist Fly and his fighting carpet. It is clear through the storyline that the only person who uses the carpet is Fly after his father. In another quotation, Fly's speech reflects

Ashcroft's ideology regarding the influential role of society in shaping the individual's being, identity, and activities; he states "we are all the products and victims of our own upbringing until we reflect, refuse, and rebel" (p. 68). Therefore, the flying habit adopted by Fly is a counter activity caused by his environment and sociopolitical conditions.

Following the view of Perez and Chevalier, it is "the gift of magical realism to extend temporally and spatially into decolonial realms and convert liminal Beings into productive vitalities" (p. 22). 21<sup>st</sup>-century magical realism associates itself with decolonization and helps in the transformation of passive beings into active, rebellious, and reflective beings. In Hage's *Carnival*, magical realism concerns itself with expressionism and reflection of the protagonist's identity. Throughout the advancement of the story's incidents, it is mentioned that Fly uses his Flying carpet countless times differently and visits several ancient civilizations. Before proceeding in listing the imaginative places and magical realist events of Fly, it is important to implement that there are a lot of sociopolitical occurrences that affected the protagonist's preference. This was for the exaggerative imaginary space to prove himself and realize his desires such as getting married in his imagination, having a good soldier's position in imaginary wars, and as the bearded lady said to him "the world has gone mad and our way of life was bound to change" (p. 156). Therefore, Fly preferred his imagination and exaggerated habitation as a means to associate and consolidate himself in the world.

According to many critics and influential contributors in the field magical realism offers writers the opportunity to express what is hard for them to deliberate in a direct way or realism. In *Carnival*, there are several images including exaggerated imagery to propose an absurdist reality that is related to the context of being in exile, for instance: "Une Société de chiens ici. Comme des chiens" (p. 71). During his work time, Fly met a British man with whom he visited a community of hierarchy where the human being is definitely absurd. In the words of Fly, once he enters the wooden castle, he witnessed animalistic and horrible scenes he declares:

It was dark inside but at the entrance, there was a large cage with a few men, half-naked with collars around their necks. They were all behaving like dogs. One of them was on his knees, sniffing the others and whimpering, one was in the corner howling, another barking and showing his teeth (p. 69).

This quotation represents the abject world announced by Camus in which the elements of irrationality appear. It echoes the animalistic realm with which non-westerners, immigrants, and enslaved people are associated. In other words, this passage summarizes the chaotic and hierarchal environment inside a society that seems to be regular, legal, and democratic. For more illustration, Hage introduces these people as slaves who are submissive, voiceless, and manipulated members of this society. The British man asserts that they are here to adhere to their masters and to be exchanged and swapped (p. 69).

Fly at this moment recognizes the catastrophic situation and the hard circumstances hidden inside society, he wrote about the scenes he witnessed:

I thanked the establishment for the moving experience, for the opportunity to witness it through this communal tunnel of the senses, and I mentioned the necessity of the symbolic and, if one so chooses, the experiential as well as the enactment of this lesser existence, the degradation of all that tangible, howl of dogs, the chains of entrapment, the need to personify the fate of man in this inferior world (p. 72).

In the view of Albert Camus, the absurd man is the one who accepts the irrationality and inferiority of the world and deals with it. In the above quotation, Fly personifies Camus's theory of absurdity and the worthlessness of human beings' existence in such a world and announces his fretfulness about the current situation he calls to rebel against this regime as well. He also highlights the necessity to epitomize a solution to this absurd position of human beings in such an alien and chaotic society as a means of rebellion. Thereby, Fly is a witness of the chaotic and disordered environment who misses the feeling of belonging to a particular band. He needs to get shelter in his extraordinary world which he reaches through his inherited flying carpet. After his work time off, Fly goes back to his home to lie on his carpet and imagine himself as a leader of a huge number of soldiers who are proud of him shouting his name after his successful military campaign in Rome. In Rome, Fly introduces himself to be a brave soldier, a conqueror, and a person of important status in that society.

Hage's protagonist is the example of the absurd man announced by Albert Camus in his theory which he defines as the man who "recognizes the struggle, does not absolutely scorn reason and admits irrational" (p. 39). Yet, after his exaggerated imagined heroic achievement against the Barbaric armies, he met the daughter of the King of the Visigoths. He realizes her beauty and dignity he said "how many Germanic tribes had I slaughtered, how many had I enslaved, yet I had never seen such beauty" (p. 74). To simplify, in his real life, Fly had nothing to do with such ancient civilizations for he knew them only throughout his historical books. He never met or had a sexual relationship with a woman. Thus, one may say that Fly's use of his carpet aims to accomplish his desire to express his ability to be a brave soldier, wealthy leader, or lover, as he said: "after all these campaigns, triumphs, and riches, beauty and violence were the only things that could give me a sense of existence" (p. 74).

In the same vein of the aim to improve himself and trying to give his existence a sense of worthiness, Fly always associates himself with ancient civilizations he never assisted and times he never lived in through the use of his magical flying carpet which gives him the opportunity of participating in important wars and battles. During all these battles he imagined himself as a brave soldier, in another imaginative situation in which he uses magic as a tool to transcend boundaries. As it comes in the words of Zamora and Faris (1995), magical realism actually appears through intertwining two worlds to have a third hybrid one. For them, the link between the two spaces powerfully enhances the prosperity of

another space where everything is available including the convergence of cultures and ideologies (p. 6). In other words, the world produced by Fly's imagination is considered the third hybrid world in which the element blended and gives a sense of consolidated ideology and culture in which he appears as a member.

Fly asserts "I couldn't sleep and I was horny as a Turk. So, I stretched out my father's carpet and fancied myself a Turkish soldier in the last days before the battle of Gallipoli" (p. 81). In such a scene, Fly visited Turkey as an important person, he visited a lot of places he was taught by his mother earlier, and he realizes his desire to meet Australians whom he wished to see in the battle of defending his grandfather's land. These events are not real but they are the production of Fly's imaginative space to flee the unworthy reality and society. Throughout his exaggerated use of fantasy, he constructs his private space in by performing what cannot be done in his real world. His imaginative ability helps his wishes and inner emotions to find a space to be realized even though it is temporary. It is mentioned in the novel that Fly lives alone in his apartment with no wife and no children; therefore, in his imaginative journey to Turkey he said, "I regretted that I had not married" and he added, "So I, the Turkish soldier, walked to the blue mosque to see the sheikh and ask his advice on the matter..." (p. 82). Because of his meaningless life, in reality, Fly often appears searching for a woman with whom he can realize a complete sexual relationship. This point reflects that he is unwelcome in his society even though he is independent yet he did not gain the love of either Zaynab -his beloved- nor other women outside for being a poor Arab in western society, and an ordinary man who is working in a taxi.

Fly always seizes the opportunity in his magical world to realize what he believes he can be or do. Thus, on the word of Fly, he gets married to a widow, and finally, he felt what he was always missing, then, he returns to the battle where he appears as a warrior like his grandfather and massacres the Australians considering himself as one of triumph when shouting 'long live Ataturk' as a mighty land savor. Fly ended up this journey by stating:

As my father's carpet reached the ceiling, I looked at the shores and I ejaculated in between the two colliding histories and felt fortunate to be alive, lucky to have water and to be able to clean myself after these horrific battles that leave smeared with mud, blood, wire, and bruises (p. 83).

Regularly, Fly's imagination ends up with a personal sexual affair (masturbation) which may reflect his oppression that is among the consequences of his daily and real life, as the Freudian theory argues that the human being's daydreaming is a couple of oppressed feelings appear as an expression of the individual's inner existence and psyche. Yet, Fly himself is considered the daydreamer coined by the psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Sigmund Freud. The latter argues that the actions of a human being are a result of his life and this person tries to create a personal space where he can express and improve himself freely and gain as much as possible what he can pleasure in his imaginary space. (Lodge, 1972, pp. 36, 42)

Always referring to the concept of the absurd and its characterization as it comes in Camus' theory, there are more scenes that reflect Fly's absurdist real life and the way he flees from it into his imaginative powerful world. They reflect a total acceptance of the irrationality and banality of the created world of fantasy. Although Fly is a kind of intellectual who is aware of the ancient civilizations and histories throughout his large library and history books which help him to explore his acquired knowledge differently, he often imagines himself as a visitor, a warrior, and a good soldier in different battles in the countries, continent, and cities he visits which reflects the idea of Camus in his *Myth of Sisyphus*, he insists that "At this point of his effort man stands face to face with the irrational. (p. 43) hence, in this novel, Fly frequently consolidates himself with the irrationality of magical elements to realize his happiness and at the same time rectifies and revises certain issues which reflect the absurdist life he has.

Following the words of Perez and Chevalier (2020), "this confluence of bodies and cultures, now part of a variety of social contexts, makes the fantastic claims that the "magical" is woven into the everyday lives of characters"(p. 2), it is important to assert that magical events become a part of Fly's daily life as these scholars argue; it develops into a personal habit he practices every time he entered his home even though it turns out to be a part of his real life as he narrates an incident where reality and imaginary mixed, he states:

I went straight and lay on the carpet. The Telephone rang. Yes, I said bitterly the interruption of my brewing fantasy. I was about to join the Red bridge in Italy. The Italian minister was in the back of the Van, all tired up and about to die. The woman beside me, driving, had pulled over and handed me a number. I stepped out of the van into the phone booth and, just as I imagined the police sirens were coming towards me, I realized that the phone in my house was ringing (p. 171).

Hence, Fly's fantasy habit becomes among his daily and continuous activities. He becomes to mix up reality and imagination and accepts its irrationality to guarantee the realization of his desires and happiness. It is common in the excerpts mentioned above that Fly appears always to voice and give himself a superior social position to prove himself and feels the necessity of his existence in the world because he is an Arab in western society.

## VI. TRANSCEND, REVOLT, AND ESCAPE REALITY

In his book, *The Rebel*, Camus (1992) questioned the concept of the absurd and what it means. He argued that the absurd as it may be a starting point to depart toward new beginnings, is also an evaluation and life's criticism (p. 18). The use of absurdism includes direct criticism and dissatisfaction with life and its situations, at the same time it includes the hope that absurd is not the final stage and loss but it may be a starting point of a new beginning. As it comes in Hage's novel, the absurdist world and life that Fly faced ended up with his departure to a new place where he may find

what he missed using his extraordinary ability to fly. He declared “I believe that I’m here now, and one day I’ll leave just like the butterfly leaves” (p. 175). He is wandering to live freely and peacefully somewhere just like this insect used to embrace the air with her wings by fighting far away on his inherited carpet. By the end of the novel, Fly gives up and decides to leave the chaotic society he lived in especially after the loss of his friend Otto who committed suicide.

Fly, by the end of the story, recognizes the absurdity of his existence in such a chaotic society and the worthiness of his sooner leaving, he affirms that it is time to leave the carnival city for its disorder and disorganization. Throughout his flight with his car above the carnival, Fly describes the different images he saw and may reflect a social criticism and the criticism of life itself such as men in women’s dresses, capes impersonating magicians and flying heroes, and Homo-sapiens with animal heads walked the alleyways with a beer in their hands (p. 288). Yet, the bizarre ability of Fly to see the city from above enables him to be an eyewitness which justifies his decision of leaving. As Camus asserts in his theory that the sense of absurdity is born when the man stands face to face with the world’s disappointment, Fly declares that “I drove and everything around me spoke of disappearance and decay” (p. 287). That is to say, Fly is fully aware of the absurdity he is facing thereby his leaving and withdrawal is required.

Bowers (2020) asserts that “magical realism is often employed by writers where the horror of actual events has exceeded what is considered ordinary experience” (p. 580). In other words, the use of exaggerated imaginary unreal events in literature often reflects the exaggeration of instability and disorder of ordinary situations and traces an indirect criticism as it is the case of the carnival city captured by Hage’s text. Fly ends up the story by stating “I unrolled my carpet and I flew above the city. I veered into a side street, went through an alley, and finally escaped the crowd” (p. 289). His habitation of flying helped him before realizing his desire and led him by the end to escape the chaotic society showing the senselessness of being a member in such space. Thus, Hage’s use of magical realist elements in this text is used to comment on the horrific events and the inadequate situations that may face Arab exilic individuals in western societies. Meanwhile, it creates a fictionalized space as a sanctuary for the oppressive Fly where he expresses and improves himself and rectifies the absurdity of his existence towards the hope of a new beginning.

## VII. CONCLUSION

Using a magical realist element to reflect the absurdity of Arab existence is identified as highly important. It has proved itself as an influential means to escape the chaotic absurd reality of the diaspora. It is an effective technique used by Hage to display the dominant matters that they may face Arabs in their exile. Thereby, the flying carpet is the elected magical element used by Hage in his *Carnival* to produce a powerful engagement with a global readership and invite the reader to evolve a convenient imaginative relationship with the presented world in which a variety of interpretations are appreciated. Thereby, it is significant to terminate the debate by stating that Fly’s adoption of the magical capability he has is the only approach he uses to flee the worthiness and senseless existence he has in reality.

Through the flying carpet, Fly accomplishes his sexual desires and improves himself as well in the sense of being a forceful figure in society. In many images, Fly is considering himself the hero of the story he narrates; but once referring to his real life, one may recognize why he is creating this exaggerated imaginary narration. As an ordinary Arab taxi driver, Fly lives alone without any relevant existence, rootless and influenced person by his past life and the environment he lived in. The character is deeply affected by the hard surrounding circumstances which cause him the fleeing of his actual society. It is already mentioned that magical realism is a kind of resistance and a mode of self-expression of the dispossessed and oppressed people. Accordingly, in Hage’s composition, magical realism is used as an aid to escape a serious problem that the protagonist faces. Thus, his absurdist existence in western society is represented by the effect of severe, hypocritical, and hegemonic regimes.

Hage’s experience in exile allows him to be very tentative and aware of the major problems that face the exilic individual in his out-of-place, his use of defamiliarization includes powerful messages and unveils serious problems that are neglected in late times. The absurdity of human existence is personified in the meaningless and continuous wandering of Fly in such a crowded and misplaced society, he attains the irrationality of his exaggerated and bizarre habit rather than associating himself with a purposeless reality. Thus, Hage’s protagonist is the absurd man coined by Albert Camus, he recognizes irrationality, accepts it, and uses it as a means to rebel and crop a new hybrid space full of hope in which everything appears possible to be realized, and finally, he uses his imaginative world and extraordinary capability as a point of departure toward a new beginning.

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**Sabrina Kacha** is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Jordan, Faculty of English Language and Literature, Amman, Jordan. She is interested in Magical realism, Arab Diasporic Fiction, and Postcolonial Studies.