

The Absence of Father/Mother and Postmemory in Rawi Hage's *Carnival* (2012)

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Abstract—This article aims to explore the consequences of parents' absence in transmitting the memory of homeland in Rawi Hage's *Carnival* (2012). This narrative demonstrates how storytelling could reflect on the protagonist's memory of home and origins as an Easterner. Besides, it analyzes the significance of using the transmission of memory and how it could shape the second generation's identity. In such a diasporic literary work, the protagonist, Fly, attempts to construct their own identity even in the absence of their parents; however, traumatic memories about childhood cause a deep disparity in the mind. Hage's *Carnival* identifies the circus life where the protagonist was born and raised as an old memory. Further, it identifies the flying carpet, inherited from the protagonist's father, as a path to an imaginary space. The latter represents an escape from a miserable life. In this respect, the memory transmission of Fly is studied based on Hirsch's conception of postmemory and Erikson's theory of psychosocial development and identity formation.

Index Terms—memory transmission, second generation, absence of parents, postmemory, psychosocial development, identity formation, *Carnival*

I. INTRODUCTION

The Anglophone Arab literature represents significant creative works in English by Arab authors or authors of Arab descent. The latter, arguably, wrote against a background of postmodernism. They seek to rewrite, dismantle, and deconstruct the stereotypes and the negative images conveyed about Arabs in Western literary works. Such transnational literature emerged in the late 19th century after waves of immigration to the west. Yet, it has received attention with the decolonization movements in the 20th century. Anglophone Arab writings have flourished widely after the 9/11 attacks (Vinson, 2022).

Abdul-Jabbar (2019) wrote about the rise of Arab Anglophone writers with reference to its major themes (p. 33). Arab diasporic writings celebrate themes of hybridity, displacement, migration, trauma, etc. It is important to note that Arab authors in diaspora deliver messages and raise awareness about the difficulty of life in diaspora. Particularly, Lebanese Anglophone literature, as Hout (2019, pp. 35-36) posited, represents significant themes like civil war, post-war, exile, and decolonization. Through postcolonial readings, Layoun (2022) tackled the emergence of Lebanese fiction written in English and explored the complexities of identity formation in transnational contexts. The transmission of memory among generations and identity formation are two major themes in diasporic Lebanese Anglophone writings (Layoun, 2022, p. 159). Through the repetitious creation of different kinds of fictitious characters, they depict the role of family members and their interaction in shaping and reshaping the identity of their children by using postmemory understandings.

Several contemporary authors across the world have embraced different forms of writing. In order to immortalize the past experiences, the form of 'postmemory' appears to empower different mechanisms of memory transmission to live and develop among generations. Arab authors in diaspora also tend to use this form in their writings. They attempt to glorify the postmemory conception with all its meanings and functions, as well as to value the memory of the alive and immortal. Indeed, the absence of a father or mother plays a significant role in achieving the process of transmitting memory to the children. Parents, in particular, are responsible for offering a suitable atmosphere where children grow up healthy. Their absence, however, leads the children either to depend on themselves to know about their homeland or to live in the host country and cope with all challenges (Anderson, 2007).

Although there has been an existing corpus of criticism oriented toward the use of postmemory in Arab diasporic fiction, there is no direct critical study that connects memory transmission with identity formation of the second generation in Arab Anglophone literature (Gana, 2015). Larkin (2010) tackled postmemory in Lebanon from a sociological perspective (p. 615). However, its occurrence in narratives is less targeted.

In this respect, this paper attempts to highlight how postmemory and identity formation are realized in the novel *Carnival* (2012), written by the Anglophone Lebanese novelist Rawi Hage. Through problematizing the father's or mother's absence and its consequences on the young members (children) in Arab diasporic fiction, this research work attempts to reveal how memory transmission reflects the parents' absence in diaspora and, eventually, results in shaping and forming the following generation's identities and behaviors. In order to explore both themes in such a specific choice of corpus, a potentially relevant theoretical framework is provided. First, Hirsch's concept of postmemory is introduced with relevant critiques. Then, a reflection on Erikson's theory of identity development is provided. Based on

both theories, the protagonist's portrayal of an immigrant Lebanese is discursively analyzed along with the aspects of his identity formation.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS

Neumann (2020) contends that memories link the past with the present as they have a substantial part in giving access to remote past (p. 133). Also, the identity formation of members depends on the crucial role of the first generation in this process. As far as the point of families is concerned with the transmission of memory, it is regarded as a serious matter because it is the first contact. At this point, we present Hirsch and Erikson's theories for clearer argumentations.

A. Hirsch's Theory of Postmemory

Emerging in the 1990s, postmemory, a conceptual innovation by American researcher Marianne Hirsch, explores the transmission of memory concerning literal and collective traumas through the second and third generations of survivors and witnesses. This encompasses not only the potentially fractious internal dynamics of traumatized families but also a larger, generational assessment of these shared experiences of pain. Though initially and undeniably connected to Holocaust studies, Hirsch (2012) posits that the framework of postmemory might hold wider academic utility in the analysis of any significant trauma that continues to exert an influence on subsequent generations, even in their adolescence (pp. 103-104).

Postmemory, as a term, appeared first in a text in the 1990s dedicated to Art Spiegelman's well-known graphic novel "Maus". It gained wide recognition in the humanities. Over time, the concept of postmemory evolved from its specific definition to encompass the broader phenomenon of how subsequent generations or remote contemporaneous observers engage with the personal, collective, and cultural trauma experienced by others (Hirsch & Smith, 2002). It could be experienced, recalled, or known only by means of images, stories, and behaviors. The concept of postmemory has gained significant literary and critical attention, particularly in diasporic literature. Accordingly, the tormented psyche of memory transmission portrayed through the characters of diasporic narratives often influences and affects their identity formation, specifically in the absence of family members.

In her book *'The Generation of Postmemory'* (2012), Hirsch discusses the relationship between memory and the present cultural connection and the power of what is remembered or restored from the past. Besides, as her focus is on the symbiotic relationship, Hirsch (2012) emphasizes the experience of personal and collective reality (p. 106). The meaning of postmemory is "an intersubjective transgenerational space of remembrance, linked specifically to artistic or collaborative trauma" (Hirsch, 2001, p. 10). In this vein, the postmemory concept extrapolates how the children were affected by their parents' reflections of the past. It depicts the connection of the following generations with the familial, cultural, or collaborative trauma experienced by their parents. As they flash back only as stories and images with which they grew up, such experiences are influential in the recollection of memories (p. 9).

It is noteworthy that the past evokes more memories in diaspora as it is passed down for generations in a transnational context. Emphasizing that second-generation memories are best understood through the lens of postmemory, it characterizes the experiences of those who grow up dominated by stories before their birth and their own delayed stories, which mean they were replaced by the story of a previous generation and shaped by traumatic events that could not be fully understood or reconstructed (420). According to Hirsch (2001), postmemory describes the connections between the personal, collaborative, and cultural traumas of those who have come to offspring and had an experience that they recall only through stories, images, and actions.

Stuber (2013) reviewed Hirsch's position and argued that the concept of postmemory is not by all means identical to memory. Rather, it is considered a legacy of a distant past inherited from familial connections or social relations between people that can be transcended through more than one generation. Therefore, it approximates memory in its affective force and psychic effects. The description of the postmemory underwent significant interpretations throughout time (p. 5). Further, O'Donoghue (2018) opined that postmemory as an inherited form of trauma. The idea has been used in literary criticism to support historical fiction's positive social and psychological effects. Postmemory is stripped of trauma theory's baggage as a defense against overblown assertions about the importance of historical fiction. Postmemory is best understood as the emergence of historical consciousness in society, driven instead by ethical considerations and a desire to take part in action rather by trauma.

Hirsch's conception of postmemory questions the pathways of communication among individuals and collective memory. It mirrors how the disruption of communication after hard times requires a form of memory that reconnects and re-embodies the past in the present. In regular generational inheritance, the circle of relatives is an important unit of communication. For that, the shape of memory is passed on to three to four generations (Culbertson, 1995). Yet, for Hirsch, individuals are part of social groups with shared beliefs that frame memories and shape them into narratives and scenarios. Hirsch (1997) exemplified photographs as a medium of postmemory stating that 'family pictures' enable people to touch their past. Therefore, images can bring divergent surrounds, holding distant representations of those who survived and those who did not. But the images all gesture to the same impenetrable history (p. 115).

Kim (2013) argues that the characteristic "aesthetics" of diaspora, infused with loss and mourning-like processes, are fundamentally rooted in the dynamics of postmemory. Kim (2013) brings back what Hirsch refers to as the 'aesthetics

of postmemory' as not always a 'diasporic aesthetics' (p. 339). The latter, on the other hand, is always aesthetics of postmemory characterized by temporal and spatial exile. As postmemory is not contingent upon a sociocultural context defined by migration or displacement, diaspora, thus, does not necessitate postmemory; rather, it arises from the psychical and sociocultural dynamics of postmemory (Hirsch & Miller, 2011).

B. Erikson's Psychosocial Development Theory

In the context of family absence, the theory of Erik Erikson (1993) is also relevant. Being well-known for his contributions to developmental psychology, he introduced and worked on 'identity crisis'. Erikson's approach is centered on epigenetics asserting that personalities grow through psychosocial developmental phases. Erikson considers that continuous developing identifications exist along with 'solidified' identities in adolescence (Kerpelman & Pittman, 2018, p. 311).

Erikson (1993) sees that "the whole interplay between the psychological and the social, the developmental and the historical, for which identity formation is of prototypical significance, could be conceptualized only as a kind of psychosocial relativity" (p. 23). Indeed, such a psychosocial development reflects wider and deeper insights into the eventual metamorphosis of the central transmission of memories. Erikson (1993) further highlights the positive role of the ego in development, as it actively acquires attitudes, ideas, and skills at each stage. This mastery contributes to children's successful progression and emergence as competent, valuable members of society.

Each of Erikson's eight psychosocial stages presents a unique challenge, a core conflict that individuals must navigate and resolve successfully to progress towards healthy and well-adapted adulthood (Cherry, 2022). Nonetheless, it is important to note that the experience of living parentless is a serious problem in achieving the process of memory transmission, particularly for those growing up in diaspora. As a result, the family has the responsibility to provide suitable surroundings for children to grow and develop. Then, if it is the opposite, their illness would spread and affect a sick society because the psychology of the child is home-made while his public identity is grasped from society itself (Orenstein & Lewis, 2021).

While both postmemory and psychosocial developments have been heavily explored in diverse literary works, their crucial roles in Arab diasporic fiction have received significant theoretical attention (Letaief & Awad, 2021). Notably, this article seeks to examine the unique experience of memory transmission in this context, specifically focusing on situations where parental figures (father or mother) are absent. Along with the theoretical framework, it is worth mentioning that this research links postmemory with the identity formation of the new members in diaspora through the analysis of Hage's *Carnival*.

III. FOCUS ON THE NARRATIVE

Rawi Hage is a Lebanese-Canadian novelist and photographer. His major works are *De Niro's Game* (2006), *Cockroach* (2008), *Carnival* (2012), *Beirut Hellfire Society* (2018). Also, he has recently published a collection of short stories under the title *Stray Dogs* (2022). Hage's writings tackle the issues that Arabs face in their lives, either in their homeland or in the diaspora. The diasporic context has been an essential tool to analyze his literary output. Hage, as one of the major writers in diaspora literature, knows what it means to be another. Hage himself experienced the western gaze and was seen as an outsider. For that, he takes on the responsibility of showing displacement, exile, and the hardships of the daily lives of immigrants through the use of several themes like memory and postmemory explorations of homelands. Hage, an Arab in diaspora, crosses two cultures and uses English deftly to demonstrate Arab characters' experiences in the Arab world and diaspora. Arab writers in the diaspora use different visions to bridge cultural gaps and help open dialogues between East and West. Rawi Hage succeeds every time in giving his readers true, meaningful stories where he reveals the difficulties of life.

Hage wrote *Carnival* in 2012, a novel that tells the story of a taxi driver of Arabic origins. This young character was born in a circus "somewhere in America" (p. 124). Fly was a young immigrant who witnessed a dreadful childhood away from his parents, his father's departure, and the suicide of his mother, influenced his life and his actions later. Fly stood at the core of these events. He was a good observer with a good intuition, as a fortune-teller, a profession that was inherited from his parents; his mother used to be a flying trapeze artist, and his father was a flying carpet performer of Arab descent. The latter converted to Muslim fundamentalist and left the family (Alhawamdeh, 2018). As a result, the mother hanged herself, and soon after, the circus ended. The bearded lady and the protagonist immigrated to a North American metropolis known for its habitual carnival.

The novel shows the quotidian experiences of the protagonist, Fly. As far as families are concerned, and because it is the veritably first contact that the child meets and learns from, the parents' absence played a meaningful role in Fly's attitudes and personality. Fly's situation exposes a number of stories that display the physical and internal chaos that the social circumstances have caused. Being a taxi driver helped him catch different kinds of ethnicities. Each customer in Fly's cab recounted their story, in which moral deterioration and the retrogression of ethics featured their lives.

Some stories, such as drug dealer and Mary's quarrel with her husband Chad, represented the regression of the society that Fly integrates into and interacts with its members. Indeed, Hage demonstrates his past as he worked as a taxi driver, particularly as an Arab immigrant in a western society. Ramon (2019) considers *Carnival* primarily as a temporal rather than spatial novel, highlighting the text's dynamic shifts between the protagonist's past and present

experiences. The spatiality remains essential as an important aspect of its oppositional, though hardly unproblematic, involvement with the complex significations of bodies in the metropolis (pp. 70-71).

IV. RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Hage's *Carnival* presents primarily marginalized people and their daily lives. The circus, in particular, represents a retreat for the rejected. The inability to sustain itself suggests a creaturely descent into an impoverished life. It also demonstrates how the human/animal dichotomy can be put to the test. *Carnival* tends to involve marginal sites in a fictitious metropolis where individuals are overwhelmed or bored by a political presence that distinguishes their human existence from animality. Hage tends to highlight the embedded nihilism of Fly's world by depicting the inefficiency of individual action. He does not divide society into life categories. Instead, his dystopia is portrayed as a jungle where the figurative consumption of the weaker animals by the stronger would result in actual cannibalism. It is also a time of rebirth, symbolized by the protagonist's flying carpet and memories of unchaining and emancipation.

Hall (1990) posits that the very essence of a diaspora identity lies in its continuous self-creation and renewal, driven by transformative experiences and evolving differences (p. 235). Yet, postmemory in such a diasporic novel reflects the transmission of memory between generations in the absence of the father or mother. Amidst a society shaped by misery and oppression, the character Fly resists and rebels against any kind of law used by other characters, society, and the circumstances that he is involved in. He proves himself by emphasizing his existence when using his father's inheritance (the flying carpet). He creates his own imagined world, where he is settled comfortably, escaping life's hardships and difficulties.

Fly's interaction with his origins lies in his use of his father's flying carpet. It is crucial to note that the interpretation of memory transmission practiced by Fly as a character can be justified differently depending on his perturbed psyche as a consequence of his destructive environment. Fly also engages imagination and memory throughout the novel. In order to achieve his desires and happiness, he mingles reality and imagination. His imagination of historical events while masturbating allows him to fulfill his desires and fantasies by being a part of these historical events: prisons, rescues, and battles.

A. *The Power of Storytelling*

Storytelling features how Fly's identity is formed from childhood into adulthood. Stories transmitted by his mother and his guardian, the bearded lady, are important acts in the future making of the protagonist. Memory transmission can be explored through the lens of violence, revealing its power to impede the protagonist's efforts to grapple with the traumas of parental loss (Letaief & Awad, 2021). Obviously, in his way of living with his guardian, he is looking for affection and care like any child his age. Even after the death of La Dame, Fly keeps looking for family care, which he finds in Otto and his beloved Aisha, whose home was the shelter that contained Fly.

It is undeniable that Fly perceives the memory of his homeland and his origins through the storytelling of his mother as a person who came from the east. In their absence, his guardian starts to tell him about his father. She said, "your father led a camel when he first appeared from beyond the dunes and carried a stack of rugs and blue stones to chase away the evil eye" (pp. 26-27). The quote shows the Arabic origins of the character, whose father is an easterner from an exotic land, highly influenced by his traditions and customs in keeping the evil eye away by holding blue stones.

Fly recollects that his memory of his childhood is quite related to the use of his inherited flying carpet, as he narrates:

When I remember my mother and her collection of bare-assed companions, when I lie on one of my father's carpets and float over the world, I journey through these ancient lands of guns, trenches, and blood, and troubled lands of Slavs, Germans, Latins, Assyrians, Arabs, Turks, Kurds, and Greeks. In those nations where young men were drafted and women wept and populations were transferred and people starved and burned by the millions, I landed my carpet, I witnessed, I rectified, and I flew again. (p. 29)

In this saying, Fly is describing his journey on his carpet—the adventures he goes through and the ancient civilizations and historical places he lands on. Fly experiences the memory transmission based on the family storytelling of both his mother and La Dame "the bearded lady". Besides, the flying carpet of his father's helps him live in different historical events and experience different emotions by giving him the chance to free the king's daughter and to marry, which he is incapable of doing in his real life. Fly is connected to his origins each time he uses the flying carpet; he fantasizes by masturbating and visiting historical places, making himself a heroic and invincible warrior. Thus, it is due to Fly's imagination that he can reach unreachable places by revisiting the past and history.

Indeed, Fly never meets his father; all he saw was "a poster of him sitting on a suspended carpet, legs folded, his moustache curled against a background of clapping monkeys, smiling cats, and painted clowns" (p. 28). As Hirsch (1997) puts photographs in a higher position to construct her argument of postmemory (p. 14), family photos represent Fly's medium of postmemory. The above quotation reveals that the photograph seen by the protagonist disseminates meanings that have great implications for him. In other words, by looking at the photograph (poster), Fly can clearly understand his identity as an Easterner based on the appearance of his father, and it also helps the protagonist to see that his father is a performer in the circus. Fly has constantly listened to his mother's and his guardian's stories about his origins. He is remarkably affected by their stories when he remembers his bleak, traumatic childhood. It is obvious that this can be seen as direct evidence in shaping the protagonist's identity.

B. *The Psychosocial Implications of Fly*

Due to the departure of his father and the suicide of his mother, the psychological, social, and religious aspects of Fly's identity were affected. The psychological impact of the parents' absence in a western society is thoroughly examined by tracing a traumatized person's life. When one of Fly's clients asked him about having a family, he replied, "No, no, why have children and leave them in the hands of this laughable world?" (p. 95). This reflects the consequences of having a family. Fly sees the world as meaningless, especially after his parents' abundance; thus, he decided to never have children and leave them in the hands of an absurd world. The trauma of being raised without parents plays a turning point in shaping his way of understanding and forming his identity. Being a victim of a traumatic childhood could make Fly's personality unstable in imaginary and real diasporas.

Trauma is defined as "the confrontation with an event that, in its unexpectedness or horror, cannot be placed within the schemes of prior knowledge... and thus continually returns, in its exactness, at a later time" (Caruth, 1995, p. 153). Based on this, the protagonist, Fly, is clearly a victim of traumatizing events delivered by his parents and society. Fly embodies the existential antihero – paralyzed by inaction in the face of life's challenges. Such an antiheroic tendency is found in Hage's narratives (Letaief & Awad, 2021, p. 243).

As it was hard for Fly to remember his childhood, "it is making me sad. This existence of perpetual transitions, of fluctuations between liberty and loss, is consuming me" (228). Such childhood is perceived as highly negative, yet when he lies on his father's carpet, he feels like the person he wants to be. For that, the flying carpet works as a shelter and gives a homey feeling. In this respect, the name "Fly" of the protagonist is used to demonstrate how escapist he is. That is, he can fly the world he lives in through his imagination, where he is a brave soldier and he can do things that cannot be done in his real world.

Based on Erikson's theory of psychosocial development, Fly went through the stage of 'trust versus mistrust' because he was abandoned by his parents. In fact, Erikson (1993) argues that the mother is a giver, therefore she is wholeness for the child. As a matter of fact, all that Fly required he could have found in his mother, and obviously what a child at his early age needs is care, love, and protection, and he needs the mother to teach him and tell him more about his origins as an Easterner. Fly seems to be ill-developed when his father departs and he loses his mother, who committed suicide. Erikson (1993) opines that a child can grow and develop with an organized conscience. Such conscience in the narrative is supposed to be acquired from both family and society, yet the protagonist lacks it in the story. The personality of Fly's mother is not stable, as she cannot accept the reality that her husband left her with a child alone and in a foreign country. Eventually, committing suicide was a consequence.

Even the other character, the young Tammer Othman, can be studied through this stage. He was a victim of his parents. The child of Fly's drug-addicted Angolan female friend, whom Fredao forces into street prostitution, is absent here, as is the mother, who plays a significant role in her children's lives. Linda's plight is similar to that of many other immigrant women of color, whom the protagonist refers to as "wandering animals" (p. 75). Tammer's mother contributes to deteriorating the construction of her child's identity. He grows up lacking to be in a permanent home and always hungry and asking for food. Therefore, the traumatic childhood marked by being unsettled along with the bad treatment received from his mother's pimp explain his beastly attitudes in the future. At the end of the story, Tammer and his friend, Skippy the Bag, commit a rebellious crime by murdering the pimp who battered his mother. Such a deed demonstrates Tammer's hatred towards the cruel society where he was born and raised. The uncanny act of cannibalism is only the beginning of a series of crimes committed by dehumanized black social outsiders against upper-class people, as listed by Otto, the latter of which was considered a shelter for both the protagonist and Tammer.

Hage shows in his novel the significance of both father and mother, especially in diaspora. To have a child is to have the responsibility to raise him and offer him a good life. It is obvious in *Carnival* that in the absence of fathers, mothers "Mariam and Linda" are two examples of the destructive and traumatic mother figure because children's personalities and behaviors depend on the closest person, who is certainly the mother. If the mother accomplishes her role as it should be, Fly and Tammer would develop and grow normally.

As the motherly presence and treatment in childhood is significant in family and society (Erikson, 1968, p. 35; Rich, 2021). Fly experiences inner instability coming from both his family and the world that prevents him from healthy development for his psychological identity. For that, he uses the flying carpet as a means to escape his chaotic, miserable world. It is through the flying carpet that Fly can be connected to his homeland and his origins. In addition, the Arabic features he inherits from his father, shown in the saying "T'as une tete d'arabe comme moi", seem obvious. When Hamete Bengeli asked Fly about inheriting the flying carpet, Fly adds the resemblance and the Arabic likeness from his father. This demonstrates an ongoing memory transmitted to keep reminding him about his Arabic identity. In another passage, Fly picked up the four drunk numbskulls, who asked him where he came from; his response was Brazil. After looking at his name on the dashboard, they said, "Brazilian, my ass, fuck. You are a camel jockey, liar" (p. 32). The saying explains that Fly is ashamed of his origins as he could not simply claim that he is from the east. Yet, his name and Arabic features have nothing to offer except being seen as an intruder in this society.

Moreover, from the stage of autonomy versus shame, Fly appears as ill-developed for being an orphan. Seemingly, not experiencing life within a family ambiance stops him from acquiring, learning, and normally growing. This familial atmosphere is essential for any child to be free of shame and doubt and reach the stage of autonomy. However, it is upside down for Fly because he was born and raised in a traveling circus as an independent wanderer. Unlike other

children of his age, Fly is born as independent; thus, he went through hard times to gradually reach autonomy. In addition, Fly searches to experience familial life with his guardian, the bearded lady, away from the opposed and unchosen autonomy that came before time. Contrarily to other children who look for autonomy, Fly tries to form his own self-confidence. This is confirmed by Erikson as simple confidence is acquired in the presence and support of parents (Maree, 2021). Otherwise, in their absence, Fly finds the support of La Dame, who loved and cared for him.

C. *Between Two Spaces*

Carnival emphasizes remembrance as a means of self-definition, with a focus on fly memories; Hage identifies postmemorial elements in the practice that counteract policed memory. Fly's memories are rooted in his body and geography, and he resists categorizing them as past or present. Fly's ethnicity is unknown, based on his reactions and the labels assigned to him by others. His origins are from the East, and he spent his childhood in a European traveling circus. Ashcroft (2001) studied the theory of horizon, and the extent to which such an element is influential on one's identity formation. Within phenomenology, Edmund Husserl's (1913) pioneering work elevated the concept of "the horizon" to a position of crucial significance. He envisioned it as the encompassing limit within which all objects, both real and conceived, inevitably manifest. In his own words, this horizon stands as "the spread out in space endlessly, and in time becoming and become, without end" (p. 101). Therefore, in Hage's *Carnival*, it is consolidated with shifting time and places produced by the protagonist when using the flying carpet or the taxi.

Hage uses the flying carpet as a vehicle of transport in this novel to mirror time and place shifts. The flying carpet -or what Fly inherited from his father- triggers the protagonist to escape his psychosocial conditions and troubles. Fly's yearning for escape from his oppressive surroundings finds a paradoxical echo in the solitary act of masturbation. This private act becomes a symbolic flight on a flying carpet, offering fleeting moments of euphoria and imagined mobility alongside the desire for a broader moment of political change (Zamanpour, 2019. p. 81). Besides, the carpet is the author's metaphorical cultural construct that has its own enunciative possibilities and limits (Awajan, 2021). The act of masturbation demonstrates the fictive side of the author's stories as Fly imagined his father traveling on his camel across the world. The taxi, on the other hand, is seen as a real escape and detachment from the world he lives in. He finds himself somehow involved in his clients' lives by being the central character in their stories or the person who makes the turning points in their lives.

Fly, like so many recent immigrants whose lives revolve around survival or defeat, appears to be working as a taxi driver. "In our profession, we are vulnerable," Fly tells a wealthy businessman (p. 196). He has a close relationship with other taxi drivers, to whom he refers as underprivileged, hungry "dogs" (p. 61). He explicitly refers to them as "human insects" (9), which resemble spiders or flies. The protagonist is referred to as a "wanderer," and he equates himself to "flies rather than spiders" that wait at taxi stands for the dispatcher's call or for customers to walk off the streets and into their hungry cars (p. 9). Even flies are roving operators in the protagonist's view, driving alone and around, picking up wavers and whistlers, and dealing with them on sidewalks and streets. For that, Dahab (2019) contends that the true meaning of the word 'flies' herein goes beyond its original one.

Following Hirsch's perceptions on postmemory, "the close relationship between memory and the present cultural connection and the power between what is remembered or restored from the past and what is in the present culture" (Hirsch, 2012, p. 204), In Hage's *Carnival*, postmemory relates itself to the horizon that Fly undergoes as "both spatial and temporal because the contextual horizon initiates a process of traversal by the act of consciousness: it is not only seen that the horizon is there in metaphoric space but moves through it in time in the process of contextualizing the object" (Ashcroft, 2001, p. 183). As an imaginary space, Fly makes it a shelter when he escapes his real world to reach his happiness. That was clearly seen when he got married to the soldier's widow and visited old and historical places.

Therefore, Fly shifts the two horizons -the real world and the imaginative one- as a way to cope with the environment and society. The real world and home, according to Fly, is his taxi, where he belongs: "my car, or what I call my boat, or sometimes my airplane, my home, or my library" (p. 20). The imaginative space that Fly inhabits feeds his need for empowerment and resistance by making him an important participant in creating and recreating history. In *The Politics of Home*, George (1996) asserts that the concept of home is elevated to a key determinant of individual ideology, alongside established factors like race, class, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and national identity. Fly clarifies this quotation when he says, "We are all the products and the victims of our own upbringing until we reflect, refuse, and rebel" (p. 68). This shows that our ideology is what manipulates us. Fly's childhood and adulthood are known as being of Arabic origin. Being raised in a circus and in a foreign country, in addition to the absence of his parents, is what shaped his identity.

Hage deploys postmemory elements in *Carnival* not only to explore the impact of his mother and guardian's storytelling on his understanding of his Eastern origins, but also to shed light on the precarious realities faced by Arab emigrants navigating Western societies. Meanwhile, Fly finds the freedom to shed societal constraints and embark on a self-exploratory journey, seeking to refine his character and correct the idea that he is a person coming from Arabic descent (Majer, 2019). Because of the practice of horizon, Fly could reach his desires and dream to escape his chaotic societal issues in the absence of his parents.

V. CONCLUSION

This research has attempted to prove the extent to which children are affected by family absence, particularly in diaspora. The main characters in Hage's *Carnival* can be considered as second, young members who have Arabic origins. They are victims of their parents and the society they were born and raised in. The novel spots light on the memory transmitted on the character Fly in the absence of his parents. Relating that to stories told from family members, the consequences of their absence affected the protagonists' identity construction in diaspora.

It is familiar that the main character in the story experiences the feeling of having a troubled mother after the departure of his father. For that, he had a profoundly traumatic image of his family and origins. Fly saw himself in Tammer, the young boy, as they shared the same traumatic childhood resulted from both parents and society. The family as the first contact with the child makes a great contribution to the future making of identity construction. Besides, the unstable role of Fly's mother contributed to some extent to deteriorating the self-establishment of the young ethnic member after the miserable life he had in the diaspora. All this is summarized in his way of understanding and interacting with the people that surrounded him, even in the attitude of Tammer, who grew up to become a killer.

As a conclusion, memory transmission in Hage's *Carnival* is investigated through the storytelling mechanism and the environmental circumstances that shape the protagonist's and Tammer's way of thinking and living. Driven by a shared ambition to forge new identities in a new world, these individuals embarked on vastly divergent paths towards realizing their dreams. By virtue of the flying carpet, Fly could fulfill his sexual desires while also improving himself as a powerful figure in society. In many images, Fly considered himself to be the protagonist of the story he narrates; however, when he referred to his real life, it was clear why he creates this overstated imaginary narration. Fly, an ordinary Arab taxi driver, lived alone, without any meaningful existence, rootless and influenced by his past and the environment he grew up in. The character is profoundly impacted by the unfortunate conditions that forced him to flee his current society. Indeed, analyzing the Anglophone Arab fiction of the twenty-first century through the lens of second-generation ethnicities reveals a valuable, yet limited, perspective within the complex and diverse tapestry of narratives woven by the preceding generation.

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