

Migration Experiences of A Young Arab Muslim Woman in the West from A Contemporary Young Adult English Novel

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Abstract. This article discusses migration experiences of a young migrant Arab Muslim woman in a western country portrayed in a contemporary electronic (digital literature) English young adult novel entitled *Alina Kanaan* written by Rhonda Boldt published in 2021 by Wattpad, a social storytelling application. This research aims to explain migration experiences of a young migrant Arab Muslim woman from Palestine in America through the analysis of the main migrant character with her problems related to hybridity, ambivalence & adjustment, and abandonment & return. The result shows that the novel has many diaspora issues especially through the experiences of migration of the main female character, Alina Kanaan as a young migrant Arab Muslim migrant woman in America. She struggles to face problems and to integrate to the new society through her hybrid identity, ambivalence & adjustment mainly through three issues namely language adjustment, food & drink selection, and avoiding “free sex culture,” as well as through the aspects of abandonment and return. Eventhough she receives bad treatments namely discrimination and racism toward Muslims in America from a number of Americans, she decides not to return to her homeland but to continue to live in the hostland America and pursuing her dream to be a successful singer as the winner of American Idol by maintaining her identity as a migrant Arab Muslim woman and an American resident at the same time.

Keywords: *Diaspora, Migration, Arab Muslim Woman, Electronic literature, Wattpad, Young Adult English Novel*

INTERFERENCE

Journal of Language,
Literature, and
Linguistics

E-ISSN: 2721-1835

P-ISSN: 2721-1827

Submitted : 4th December 2021

Accepted : 5th February 2022

INTRODUCTION

Arab Muslim diaspora is one of the largest diaspora communities in the world and also one of the main themes in Diaspora literature (Diasporic literature) particularly related to issues of migration. In Diaspora studies, one of the main issues is about migration. According to Edward Said, many Arab writers wrote about the experiences of migrants as unwelcome people or the Others (Marchi, 2014, p. 604). In literary studies, Muslim-American literature and Arab-American literature becomes an emerging field (Kahf, 2006; Noman & Shailyasthana, 2015). Many studies have been done on the topics of Muslim diaspora and migrant Arab Muslim women, however not many in the studies of literature particularly English literature. Some of them are Awajan et al. (2021); Hashim & Manaf (2009); and Mansour (2022). Therefore it is important to contribute to the study of Muslim-American literature and Arab-American literature particularly through a research that focuses on the voice of young Migrant Arab Muslim woman in contemporary English novel and electronic (digital) novel that can be read internationally through English reading application of Wattpad. The topic of diaspora and migration in the study of literature is also very important particularly related to migrant Arab Muslim woman issues that also could contribute to the study migrant Muslim literature, therefore this article tries to explain the migration experiences of Migrant Arab Muslim Woman in the West (a western country) from an English novel particularly through the analysis of a migrant character in the context diaspora and literary studies.

The word “diaspora” is defined as the spreading of people from their original homeland to other area (Chakraborty, 2013, p. 96). In the migration process, the term “diaspora” can be understood as a migrant group based on their place of origin, for instance Italy diaspora that refers to all people who migrate from Italy along with their descendants for anykind of reason of migration (Kenny, 2013). Diaspora also means a transnational community emigrated from their original homeland but preserve a group identity (Grossman, 2018; Macwan, 2014, p. 46). Brah explains that the core notion of diaspora is the image of migrants’ journey from their arrival in the hostland through a long process of community organizations and transnational ties to their settlement (Grossman, 2018).

Etymologically, the word ‘migration’ is originally from the Latin ‘migrare’ which means to “wander” or “to move”. This means that people “migrated” from one settlement to another called migration, that nowadays it has broad and complex meanings that include important issues such as economic and social (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, p. 685). As part of the history, migration involves the creation of identities and affiliations (Chakraborty, 2013, p. 96). Migration has many reasons, such as colonization, survival from natural disaster or deadly conflicts, traveling, and trading links. Even though in the hostland migrants have a secure life, they still maintain their connection to their homelands (Karim & Al-rawi, 2018, p. 2). In short, migration is defined as an activity of a person or a certain group of people moving from their homeland to the hostland.

Furthermore, in the twenty-first century, diaspora is done by many people for getting prosperity of economic and academic matters in other countries, such as in the United States, Australia, and the United Kingdom. Immigrants who settle in

those countries face many issues related to cultures and traditions which create multiculturalism (Selvakumari, 2019, p. 111). According to Baubock, it is important to note that diaspora belonging and loyalty to the hostland or the homeland of the immigrant is a significant debate which is often associated with resettlement and migration in different countries. It has also been discussed that diaspora belonging is constructed. Therefore, diasporic communities association must not be taken for granted (Chaudhry & Bilal, 2021, p. 4).

The topic of migration by Arab Muslim woman in the West can also be seen in a popular reading application also called social storytelling application named Wattpad through an electronic young adult novel (digital literature) entitled *Alina Kanaan* written by Rhonda Boldt published in 2021. Wattpad is a mobile reading platform established in 2006. It is a digital reading application (app) for not only reading, but also inviting readers and professional writers to write and chat about fiction from around the world. The app has millions of uploads with many languages that are mainly in English with its translation to other languages. It has many kinds of contents such as fiction, non-fiction, and poetry, with various genres, such as romance, fantasy, historical fiction, horror, science fiction, fan fiction, humor, and many more (Wattpad, 2021).

Alina Kanaan is a story about a young migrant Arab Muslim woman named Alina who was born in Palestine. The country has an intense war with Israel that forces many Palestinians including Alina's family to move to other countries namely Egypt and later to California, the US (America) as their last destination when Alina at the age of 14. Therefore, as a native Arabic speaker, she is able to learn some languages, such as English, French, Spanish, and Indian. She is also a good singer as a contestant of American Idol, the biggest singing completion in America then becomes the winner of American Idol. She becomes a famous singer and receives a lot of motivation and support from her family and friends.

Even though she becomes a famous singer, living in California for her is far from easy. This is because she receives a lot of discrimination and racism from many people because of her identity and background as an Arab Muslim from Palestine. She receives many attacks in the form of blasphemy and also a target for assassination because a number of people in the society considered her as part of terrorists because of her identity as an Arab Muslim. As a migrant she tries to adapt in the new environment that faces some problems and struggles to live in America.

Based on the background above, the focus of this research is the migration experiences of a young migrant Arab Muslim woman in a western country through the main character named Alina Kanaan. Particularly, this research is aimed at explaining the migration experiences through the analysis of the main character with the perspective of Diaspora in the novel of *Alina Kanaan* that shows how the main character deals with her problems as a young migrant Arab Muslim woman in America.

RESEARCH METHOD

This qualitative descriptive research studies an electronic novel (digital novel) from Wattpad social storytelling application. The unit analysis is *Alina Kanaan* novel written by Rhonda Boldt published in 2021 as the main data analysis. The

analysis focuses on the main female character who is a young migrant Arab Muslim woman named Alina Kanaan and her migrant experiences. As a study of literature, the data are analysed descriptively and critically by using content analysis technique and the theory of Diaspora and migration, particularly migrant literature.

The study of migration has its own term that explains about the subject matter about migration, culture, and tradition of the hostland called 'migrant literature'. In migrant literature studies, there are diverse themes and primary issues that play big roles mainly related to the experiences of migration and the difficulties of adaptation (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, p. 680). The literature of migration aims to explain various narratives of the cultural, social, political and economic aspects of migrants live in their hostland (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, p. 681). The present researches of migrant literature mainly are about three general themes namely hybridity, ambivalence & adjustment, and abandonment & return (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, p. 685).

Firstly, hybrid identity is a new identity that is formed due to the mixing of cultures between the original culture and the new culture in a region. According to Bhabha (1994), hybrid identity can be obtained by mimicking the dominant culture. Through interactions that occur with a new culture then a new identity is created in an individual. According to Barker, identity is something that is created and is a process of becoming fully identity with culture (Lingga et al., 2020). In addition, Hall said that identity is something that is always built and that identity is used as a feature in a group. Therefore, it can be said that the hybridity process that a migrant goes through has an important influence on the formation of his/her identity. This will show his/her identity through the process of imitating the culture he/she does in a new place (Lingga et al., 2020). Bhabha also explains that, hybridity arises because of the efforts made by an individual or a group of people to find his/her identity that can be seen from adopting such as culture, clothing, food, and also forms of literature. Finding identity also means creating a culture that is mutually collaborative and applied by the community (Furqon & Busro, 2020, p. 77).

Secondly, ambivalence and adjustment are also the main themes of the migration literature. Ambivalence is understood as the migrant character's reaction towards any confusing, complex, or enduring emotion on social phenomena, situation, attitude, or condition through their experiences. Ambivalence also means the confrontation between the two opposing affections of the migrant experiences shown through contrasting or contradictory roles done by the migrant. The struggles to adjust to the new environment to achieve resolution by leaving both roles and choosing the third space namely the hybrid in betweenness by having cultural roots at the same time with integration to the new culture. Ambivalence is a passage that should be stepped by the migrant before stepping the phase of adjustment where in this phase usually the character is successful in creating hybrid space with diverse cultures (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, pp. 687–688).

Adjustment is the process of integration of migrants in the new community (Aryand et al., 2020, p. 215). In the process, their adjustment can be accepted or rejected by the community, however those who try to interact and communicate with the local cultures then they experience acculturation. An individual will also

experience psychological impacts such as feeling stressed and depressed (Aryand et al., 2020, p. 216) culture shock (Wang et al., 2018, p. 825) unpleasant feelings and feeling anxious (Unjore, 2014, p. 558). Furthermore, physically different cultures, languages, and communication styles can also hinder the adjustment process of migrants (Muchura-Theuri & Obuya in Aryand et al., 2020, p. 216).

Thirdly, abandonment and return is another main theme in migration literature. The aspect of abandonment usually talks about the experiences of the migrants that receive such as terror and humiliation when they suffer from seeking sanctuary in hostland (Pourjafari & Vahidpour, 2014, p. 689). The aspect of return then talks about the dilemma of migrants who are confused about the choices between coming back to the homeland or staying in the hostland (Jacobs, 2011, p. 151). Return is categorized into three dimensions namely spatial, temporal, and social (Cohen & Sirkeci, 2021, p. 97). According to Tsuda, there are also three kinds of returns namely returns as one-time occurrences ending migration trajectories, returns as repeated occurrences, and returns as part of a continuing migratory process (Cohen & Sirkeci, 2021, p. 97).

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

In the novel of *Alina Kanaan*, the female main character is a young migrant Arab Muslim woman who was born in Palestine but then she and her family moves to Egypt and then America to survive. She and her family are the victims of the long conflict between Israel and Palestine. In America, they live in Santa Rosa, California. Alina adapts to her new environment which is very different from her homeland, Palestine and Arab countries. The process of adaptation shows her creation of her new identity in America. Because of that, there are some ambivalences and adjustments that she encounters as a migrant Palestinian Muslim woman. She also encounters the feelings of abandonment and return as part of the experiences of being a migrant in a western country. The analysis below divided into three parts explains about these migrant experiences through three aspects namely hybridity, ambivalences & adjustments, and abandonment & return.

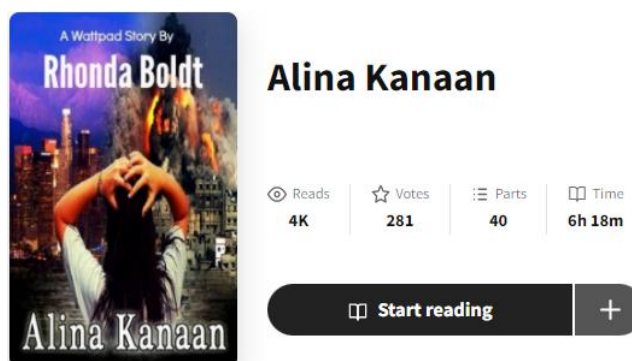


Fig. The cover of the novel of *Alina Kanaan* on Wattpad (Boldt, 2021).

1) Hybridity

Alina is a young woman around 18 years old who was born and raised from an Eastern society in Palestine that adheres to Islamic teachings. Alina and her family moved to California when she was at the age of 14. She can make friends in

America as her new environment and has many friends in California from different backgrounds including from migrant community and Muslim community.

Alina's identity is known as a migrant Arab Muslim woman. Being an American resident means that she must adapt to the hostland cultures. During her interactions in the new community, she has no problems for adaptation especially in her school where she learns how to study and interact with the others in the new environment. She can also mingle with her new friends, teachers, and others during her school through adaptation, mimicry, and acculturation, multiculturalism.

Through the adaptation, she tries to be an American resident, but at the same time does not leave her identity as a migrant Arab Muslim woman as her new identity called hybrid identity. The process of hybridity can also be seen in Alina and Francisco's marriage in California, which apply mixed cultures between Alina's culture: Arab Muslim culture, Francisco's culture: Mexican culture and the society culture: American culture. They combine their cultures from clothing and food to wedding ceremony and party but still uses Islamic culture since both of them are Muslims therefore they marriage in Islamic tradition.

However, even though she has no problem with the new cultures that she can selectively choose and participate that can be adapted to be an American resident, she still has problems in with her hybrid identity. Some people in the society look her discriminatively because of her religion as a Muslim especially when she becomes a candidate and later the winner of American Idol where her identity is published by media and known by public as the audiences of American Idol. Even though, she faces many problems through her migration and integration process, she maintains both of her identity as a migrant Arab Muslim and American resident as her new identity called hybrid identity.

2) Adjustment and Ambivalence

Alina's ambivalence experiences in America can be seen through her reactions towards any confusing, complex, or enduring emotion on attitude, condition, situation, and social phenomena. Her ambivalence experiences can be seen through three issues of ambivalence and adjustment, namely language barrier, food and drink selection, and avoiding "free sex culture." During the migration process in America, Alina encounters a variety of different cultures that she has to adjust and to adapt in the new environment. The first issue is language barrier. Alina's first process of adapting herself to the new environment is started from language adjustment. Her mother tongue language is Arabic but she has to learn other languages to survive in other countries. She has to learn some languages to be able to communicate with other people in the areas where she lives, as in America she struggles very hard to learn English and Spanish.

"Nassif and I were put into classes that also had English language learners. Even though we knew a lot more English than we did when we lived in Egypt, we both still struggled with it. Despite that, we were put into sciences, history, and elective classes with people who were already fluent in English. Our teachers were patient with us" (Boldt, 2021).

The process of adjusting mother tongue to a second language is not easy for migrants. They need quite a long time to become fluent in their second languages. It also happens to Alina who faces difficulty in learning English and Spanish in America. She learns English and Spanish through language classes at school, hangs out with other students who are fluent in English, and then practices it. As a result, she can speak English fluently and can communicate and adjust to the society.

“Ever since, I became friends with the three of them (which was basically right after I came to the USA). I started to study Spanish. I wanted to be able to talk to Francisco's and Rosa's parents. I also want to talk to other people since there are many Latinos where I live in Santa Rosa. I'm almost fluent in Spanish after studying for four years. I had to become fluent in English first before really studying Spanish” (Boldt, 2021).

In Santa Rosa, California where she lives, besides English, there are also a lot of people who speak Spanish, therefore she also learns Spanish and makes friends with Spanish speaking community. In other words, she is able to encounter language barrier problem by her efforts for language adjustment and her good language skills.

“Yeah, basically. Parlez-vous français?” Her face has a surprised expression”

“Oh, oui. Je parle à la maison parfois parce que ma famille sait aussi” I tell her (in French) that my family really only speaks Arabic at home. Sometimes we speak French, though. I do it every once in a while so I don't forget it (Boldt, 2021)

In short, In short, Alina does great efforts for adjustment in language by learning some languages. The language adjustment process carried out by migrants not only makes it easier for them to communicate with the natives, but also makes it easier for them to participate in their environment. The language adjustment made by migrants helps them to be accepted by the local community, taking part in political, economic, and social aspects (Krumm & Plutzar, 2008, p. 28).

As a result, Alina can speak five languages, namely Arabic as her mother tongue and the other languages are French, Spanish, Indian, and English. By this language adjustment achievement, she can communicate and interact with her friends and the local residents as well as can participate in the environment. By speaking and understanding the same language, it can foster a sense of closeness and make it easier to integrate in the community.

The second issue of ambivalence and adjustment is food and drink selection. As a Muslim, Alina knows what is forbidden (*haram*) and lawful (*halal*) in Islam for food and drink. However, as a Muslim minority in a Western county where the majority is non-Muslim, it is quite difficult for her to get *halal* food. Therefore, she is quite selective in making her choice, starting from determining the restaurant, menu, to food ingredients in order to have food and drink that is not forbidden in Islam.

“Let's order pizza and then practice,” Kim suggests. We agree.

“Can you guys order the pizza? I have to pray quickly” I ask.

“Sure. What do you want?” Kim asks.

“Anything without pepperoni, ham, or sausage” I say. In Islam, it is forbidden to eat pork (Boldt, 2021).

In addition, Alina also avoids *haram* drink, like alcohol. Alina is angry with her boyfriend named Aman who is a Muslim from Arab-India background, but he drinks and offers alcohol for her. Eventhough it is common in the US to drink alcohol, but as a Muslim, she reminds him that it is forbidden. In addition, Alina also avoids *haram* drink, like alcohol. Alina is angry with her boyfriend named Aman who is a Muslim from Arab-India background, but he drinks and offers alcohol for her. Eventhough it is common in the US to drink alcohol, but as a Muslim, she reminds him that it is forbidden. In other words, in terms of food and drink, eventhough she lives in a non-Muslim country, she is selective for food and drink and keeps herself away from *haram* food and drink that is forbidden in her religion.

“Aman comes back with two red cups. He takes a huge sip of his cup and hands the second one to me”

“Try some,” He says. I sniff it and it smells like beer. “Are you kidding me?! Alcohol is haram!” I exclaim (Boldt, 2021).

The third issue of ambivalence and adjustment is about avoiding “free-sex culture.” In Western countries particularly in America, it is common and not prohibited by the country law to have sex without marital status, however for Muslim it is forbidden in Islam. Free sex is called *zinah* in Islamic term, which means a relationship between a man and a woman who are not bound by a marital relationship (Hidayat, 2016, pp. 44–45). In Islam, free sex or *zinah* is strictly prohibited. In this case, Alina experiences a process of ambivalence when she faces the situation related to the act of free sex.

“He [Aman] leans in to kiss me [Alina]. We end up kissing more and more until I feel him lift up my shirt. I quickly pull away from him.

“Aman, no. We’re not married yet. We’re not even engaged” Boldt, 2021).

Alina knows that *zinah* is prohibited in Islam, however she falls in *zinah* when she has a relationship with her boyfriend named Aman, a migrant Arab-India muslim. Then she is pregnant without marital status. She and Aman know that doing *zinah* is a big sin and their family will be angry with them. However, her pregnancy is not long, because after that she has a miscarriage. After she realizes that her boyfriend is not a good person because he is a drunker and involved in illegal drugs, she then ends their relationship and cancels her marriage with Aman. Then she regrets her sinful act, returns to her family and begins to learn again the teachings of her religion. In the end, she avoids free sex acts and finally marries Fransisco, a migrant from Mexico who becomes a Muslim (*mualaf*).

3) Abandonment and Return

Alina as an Arab-Muslim woman who migrates to Santa Rosa, California from Palestine also experiences the feeling of abandonment and return as a migrant. In America, she encounters some difficulties in the society who many of them hate Muslim people because of some terrorist acts that happen in the world particularly in America done by some Muslims. This problem creates the feelings of abandonment and return as a migrant.

In America, Alina experiences a lot of discrimination and racism for being an Arab Muslim particularly as a Muslim. When she first moved to America, she does not wear *hijab* (head cover for Muslim women), because it is hard for her coming to America as a young migrant Arab Muslim woman that has to adapt in the new environment that many people are racists particularly toward Arab Muslims and Muslims in general. Wearing *hijab* is common phenomenon in Middle East countries and Muslim countries for Muslim women since it is one of the obligations in Islam, however in America the majority is non-Muslims and Islam identity through *hijab* is a another challenge to show identity of Muslims in the society. Her mother and sister wearing *hijab* also have an experience to be called terrorists and to be thrown with an apple by someone who hates Muslims.

“... but sometimes when people found out that I’m Arab and Muslim, they start treating me differently, in a bad way” (Boldt, 2021).

Moreover, she experiences discrimination and racism mainly during being a contestant and then the winner of American Idol. When she becomes famous, many people know her identity as an Arab Muslim from Palestine. After that, many people particularly the audiences of American Idol bombard her with hate comments through the internet, Television, and other media because of her identity. It can be seen through her *Facebook* and her Fans Club account that receive hateful comments, racism, and discrimination. However, the discrimination and racism does not happen inside American Idol among the contestants and the judges, as a result she becomes the first winner.

“Why is terrorist allowed to be in American Idol anyway?”

“What if she blows up the stage with a hidden bomb she has?”

“She should go back to the Middle East where she belongs! We don’t want Muslim in our country”

“Her accent makes her sound like a donkey!” (Boldt, 2021).

The discrimination and racism toward Alina also happens when Alina as the contestant of American Idol is invited to the Fox News talk show program to give her opinion towards the terrorism tragedy in America and the protests against Muslims. In the TV show, she is also treated discriminatively with racism toward Muslim called as terrorist by the host: *“Well, the Palestinians deserve to be treated this way since Palestine has sent in terrorists to kill Israelis” (Boldt, 2021)*, as a result she defends Islam in front of many people through television. After that, many people praise Alina for having such a great brave to defend Islam in television and on the other side, many people are unhappy with Alina’s act and continue treat her

badly including death threats not only through social media but also in her singing tours after winning American Idol. In other words, no matter what Alina does to defend Islam and proves that her religion does not teach terrorism and Muslims in general are not terrorists, a number of American people still do not like Islam and Muslims including her.

In the aspect of abandonment, Alina feels that as a migrant Arab Muslim she is not fully accepted in the society even though she wins American Idol as the biggest singing competition in America. She also tries her best to adapt to the new environment as a migrant and she never does anything bad to other people and the society. She thinks that America is the best place for her and her family to live as migrants, however in fact many people treat her badly, discriminatively, and racistly not only through social media by also directly with bad comments, humiliation, and death threats or terror. Alina's experiences represent many Muslim migrants' experiences in America.

The abandonment aspect is also related to the return aspect. Alina's experiences related to abandonment make her angry, sad, and disappoint also her family. Her family even wants her to give up for continuing to be a contestant of American Idol and suggest her to move from America with her family because it is not safe anymore for her and her family to live in America. However, Alina refuses the idea because she wants to achieve her dream to a successful singer. Besides that, they can not go back to their homeland in Palestine because of the ongoing war between Palestine and Israel. Therefore, Alina decides not to move anywhere but just trust God that He will protect her and her family.

“Were we ever safe really? We lived in Palestine with rockets being blown over our heads every day! Every day going to and from school we walked by Israeli soldiers with huge guns. They could've killed us! We lived in Egypt during the revolution and we could've been killed then too! Have we ever been safe really? What's the difference? I mean I understand that the man on the video targeted me, but I'm still here. He's behind bars. Allah guided us all here for a purpose. If my dream wasn't meant to be fulfilled, then I would've been off the show by now or never had a chance to even audition. Allah will protect us. We have to trust in Him. I need to be on this show, I really do” (Boldt, 2021).

In the aspect of return, eventhough Alina experiences bad threatment in America, she does not want to move from America. She still wants to live in America to achieve her dream as a singer. Eventhough her family asks her to move from America, she refuses it. Furthermore, when she becomes a finalist of American Idol, she has a chance to visit her homeland in Palestine as her temporal return and she is very happy when she is in Palestine because she loves Palestine and she remembers her childhood memories living in Palestine with her family as her social return, however she does not want to go back to live in Palestine because the situation is still in conflict. Therefore she continues to live in California that gives her the path to reach her dream as a singer. What is more, in America she also has a bestfriend who loves her and later becomes her husband named Fransico. She then becomes a

mother with one child and becomes a professional singer with her identity as a migrant Arab Muslim.

“I remember thanking God for helping us live here. Don't get me wrong, I love the Middle East, but I think there are more opportunities for people here.”

“Plus, there are no wars in the country. Living in Palestine and sometimes in Egypt was basically living in a war zone. My family did make the best out of it. I had many good times over there” (Boldt, 2021).

In short, eventhough Alina experiences abandonment, she does not fell dilemma between coming back to the homeland or staying in the hostland. This is because she wants to continue her singer career in America. Therefore, she continues her life as a wife, a mother of one child, and as a singer in America. In other words, Alina's experiences in facing problems of abandonment does not go to spacial return because she does not want to go back to Palestine and decides to continue to live in America. In term of kinds of return, based on her migration, it can be called return as one-time occurrences that end the migration trajectories.

CONCLUSION

The novel of *Alina Kaanan* shows many diaspora issues especially through the main female character, Alina as a young migrant Arab Muslim woman in a western country. She experiences many issues in the hostland America where she struggles to integrate to the new society. On one hand she maintains her identity as a migrant Arab Muslim, on the other hand she also adapts to the new cultures and environment to be an American resident therefore she has a hybrid identity as a young migrant Arab Muslim woman and American resident at the same time. In the process of creating new identity called hybrid identity, she struggles to survive through some ambivalences and adjustments. Her ambivalence and adjustment experiences in America can be seen through three issues namely language barrier, food and drink selection, and avoiding “free sex culture.” Alina as an Arabic native speaker is able to learn foreign languages namely French, Spanish, Indian, and English for her language adjustment therefore she can communicate and participate well with people in the hostland. For food and drink, eventhough she lives in a non-Muslim country, she is selective for food and drink that is not forbidden in her religion. For “free-sex culture” that is common in America, she knows that having sex without marital status is illegal in Islam, however she once falls in this situation, therefore she regrets it and tries to be a better Muslim by avoiding or not doing free sex anymore and marriage with Fransisco, a mualaf Muslim migrant from Mexico.

For the aspects of abandonment and return, Alina experiences bad treatments from a number of people in the society because of her identity a Muslim. She feels that she is not fully accepted by the society and feeling abandonment as a migrant, however she decides to continue to live in America with her family for to continue her life as a wife, a mother of one child and her career as a singer as her dream. The abandonment experiences do not push her to experience special return but only experiences temporal return and social return when she visits Palestine and remembers her childhood life in Palestine. In short, the novel

potrays Muslim diaspora issues, which many Muslim migrants experience the problems in western countries but they still uphold their identity and religion as Muslims and American resident at the same time.

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