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### Homogeneity and Hybridity in Selected Plays by Betty Shamieh and Diana Son

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# **Homogeneity and Hybridity in Selected Plays by**

**Betty Shamieh and Diana Son**

**Sherine Mostafa El Shoura**

**Associate Professor at English Department- Faculty of Art**

**Benha University**

**Email : sherine\_shoura@yahoo.com**

## **Abstract**

The American society was described as a melting pot capable of fusing all ethnic cultures into a single one. However, today the United States proves itself to be a collection of Europeans, Native Americans, African Americans, Arab Americans and Asians fragmented within the borders of the country. This fragmentation of the American social structure has been noticeable by the development of notions; there is a complex development of the Ethnic American term. The term 'Ethnic American' is used to describe each Americanized immigrant to the United States and his or her descendants. However, the complexity of the rapid social integration and interaction among the Ethnic American diverse descendants had led to the appearance of a more complicated term. Thus the 'Multi Ethnic Americans' described the ethnic American descendants who celebrate a unique complex identity of more than one Ethnic culture. They endure an American identity of free will beside their ethnic background cultures. Ethnic American immigrants have faced great challenges in being regarded as fully Americans. Up till now hyphenated Americans are being excluded, marginalized, and discriminated according to their ethnic looks and ethnic cultural background. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the unheard voices of two playwrights: Arab Palestinian American Betty Shamieh (1969) and Asian American Diana Son (1965). Both of them flourished through raising the contemporary Multi-ethnic American women's voices in the contemporary American society. They have agreed on showing the dilemma of being "the other", who have minority groups to mainstream culture against "the others". This study also shows how Shamieh and Son differ in suggesting "Hybridity" as a solution to Ethnic-American dilemma.

**Keywords:** Ethnic American, Multi Ethnic, Hybridity, Homogeneity, American Society, Palestinian and Asian American

## المستخلص

التجانس والتهجين في مسرحيات مختارة لكل من بيتي الشامية وديانا سن

شيرين مصطفى الشوري

استاذ مساعد بقسم اللغة الانجليزية - كلية الآداب - جامعة بنها

Email: sherine\_shoura@yahoo.com

وُصف المجتمع الأمريكي بالبوتقة التي تنصهر فيها الثقافات العرقية لتصبح ثقافة واحدة ، ولهذا أثبتت الولايات المتحدة أنها الدولة التي تضم علي جنسيات متعددة مثل الأوروبي الأمريكي، العربي الأمريكي، الآسيوي الأمريكي و الأمريكي الأصل داخل حدودها وتتجمع هذه الأعراق المختلفة بما لديها من ثقافات متعددة تحت مسمى "العرقية الأمريكية". يستخدم هذا المصطلح للمهاجرين إلي الولايات المتحدة للحصول علي الجنسية الأمريكية وقد أدي هذا الإنتشار السريع للعرقية الأمريكية إلي ظهور عددة مسميات أكثر تعقيدا من سابقتها، فمثلا وصف مسمى "تعدد العرقية" بمجموعة العرقية الأمريكية التي تحتفل بهوياتهم المعقدة والتي تشمل أكثر من ثقافات عرقية حيث أنهم يحملون هوياتهم الأصلية بجانب الهوية الأمريكية. وقد واجهت هذه المجموعة تحديات كثيرة حتي ينظر إليهم المجتمع الأمريكي علي أنهم أمريكيين أصليين ، وحتى الآن يعتبر المجتمع الأمريكي مجموعة العرقية الأمريكية مستبعدين، مهمشين، وعنصرين طبقا الأشكالهم وتعدد ثقافتهم المختلفة. ولهذا تهدف هذه الدراسة إلي إبراز الأصوات الغير المسموعة للكاتبتين الأولى بيتي الشامية (1969) ( الفلستينية الأمريكية والثانية الآسيوية الأمريكية ديانا سن (1965). لقد تميزتا هاتان الكاتبتان علي إظهار نظرية "الأخر" التي امتدت في المجتمع الأمريكي المعاصر في مسرحيتهما المختارة والتي توضح إعتراضهما علي ما يسمى بالتجانس في المجتمع الأمريكي كإحدى الحلول المعضلة للعرقية الأمريكية.

**الكلمات الدالة:** العرقية الأمريكية، التهجين، التجانس، تعدد العرقية، المجتمع الأمريكي، تعدد الثقافات

## **Homogeneity and Hybridity in Selected Plays by**

**Betty Shamieh and Diana Son**

The American society was described as a melting pot, capable of fusing all ethnic cultures into a single one. However, today the United States proves itself to be a collection of Europeans, Native Americans, African Americans, Arab Americans and Asians fragmented within the borders of the country. This fragmentation of the American social structure has been noticeable by the development of notions; there is a complex development of the Ethnic American term. The term 'Ethnic American' is used to describe each Americanized immigrant to the United States and his or her descendants. However, the complexity of the rapid social integration and interaction among the Ethnic American diverse descendants had led to the appearance of a more complicated term. Thus the 'Multi Ethnic Americans' described the ethnic American descendants who celebrate a unique complex identity of more than one Ethnic culture. They endure an American identity of free will beside their ethnic background cultures.

Ethnic American immigrants have faced great challenges in being regarded as fully Americans since up till now hyphenated Americans are being excluded, marginalized, and discriminated according to their ethnic looks and ethnic cultural background. Therefore, this study aims to reveal the unheard voices of two playwrights: Arab Palestinian American Betty Shamieh (1969) and Asian American Diana Son (1965). Both of them flourished through raising the contemporary Multi-ethnic American women's voices in the contemporary American society. They have agreed on showing the dilemma of being "the other", who have existed in the contemporary American society. Their plays have shown the resistance of minority groups to mainstream culture against "the others". This study also shows how Shamieh and Son differ in suggesting "Hybridity" as a solution to Ethnic-American dilemma.

Hybridity is one of the transitional concepts that has appeared within Postcolonial sociological studies. However, it has been developed to go beyond the relationship between colonized and the colonizer. Hybridity has become a sociological multicultural trend that has extended beyond the concepts of assimilation, diaspora and white-centric homogeneity. Whereas these concepts focused on the issues of diasporas and Eurocentric communities defending their

homogeneity, hybridity has paved the way for a more multicultural American society. From Ethnic-American diasporas to hybridity, the American Multi-Ethnic society has believed in the power of hybridity towards a multicultural harmonic society, where the American multicultural characteristic flourishes. These ethnic diasporas include a great power of “internally homogenizing perspective of the nation-state” (Ang 143). Every First Ethnic-American generation fought to keep its ethnic culture, creating boundaries and fragmentation in the American society. According to Ang, “the limits of diaspora exist precisely in its own assumed boundaries, its inevitable tendency to stress its internal coherence and unity, and logically set apart from “others”” (143). Thus, ethnic diasporas such as Arab and Asian American immigrants have created homogeneous groups.

According to sociologists celebrating in the multicultural societies, boundaries and restrictions created to save these minorities from the alienated effect of attempting to melt in the outer White-Centric society. Hence, homogeneity had led to more loss, alienation and fragmentation in the Ethnic-American second and third generations. Therefore, diasporas’ identities gain much attention in the face of “the abject position of ethnic minority in an oppressive national hegemony” (Clifford 225). This attention has helped Ethnic-American communities, especially Arab-American and Asian-American, to go beyond their homogeneous and diasporic towards forming an American new heterogeneous identity. So, heterogeneity is the dream of Ethnic-Americans to form a well-built American identity that celebrates their ethnic culture and American one on the same level. As result of that, the second and third Arab-American and Asian-generations have fought to break the fetter of the diaspora’s stereotypes and boundaries, in order to be recognized as a unique Multi-Ethnic Americans.

As a result, this fight of identity led to an increase in the inner conflict of the Ethnic-American youth. For example, the Palestinian-American and the Korean-American descendants encounter inner and outer complicated conflicts towards their journey to their new multicultural identities. These new generations have to find a way to defend their ethnic marginalized communities and to prove their Americanization. Hybridity has become the reasonable solution, away from the myths of melting, assimilating or pluralizing to form a Multicultural American identity. Hybridity represents to hope to Multi-Ethnic American society, where differences are recognizes as a main feature of the Multicultural American society. So, hybridity appears to turn the American

identity into a Multi-Ethnic one, “blending, combining, syncretism and encourages the composite, the impure, the heterogeneous and the eclectic” (Guignery 4). This concept of hybridity appears in works of Betty Shamieh and Diana Son.

According to Shamieh, the Palestinian American diaspora lack an opportunity to be part of the American identity. This belief has increased with the consequences of the September Eleven attacks on her Ethnic-American community. Therefore, her plays under investigation defend the Palestinian-American diaspora in face of the discrimination and stereotypes created by the American mainstream. The Ethnic-American homogeneity appears to be a main theme in her plays, as she focuses on declaring the inner Ethnic-American issues that challenges the Palestinian-American identity to be recognized as American. She also highlights how the American mainstream marginalizes and rejects the Arab American community, attempts to hybrid for a Multi-Ethnic American identity.

In her play *Chocolate in Heat: Growing Up in America*, Betty Shamieh focuses on the problems of homogeneous Arab-American community in face of the homogeneous mainstream. By “chocolate” she refers to the Arab-American who are in great “Heat” by the challenges created by their Ethnic cultural backgrounds and the American mainstream pressures of discrimination, marginalization and stereotyping. She introduces her belief towards the achievement of the melting case of the chocolate Arab-American generations. Thus, Shamieh seems to challenge the Arab American stereotypes in an attempt to convince her audience of the impossibility of any assimilation process. She also introduces the society’s resistance to any sort of hybridity. However, she supports hybridity as the best method for achieving a coherent Multi-Ethnic American identity by the Palestinian-American youth.

Shamieh has written this “play with Arabs that focused on how their identity took shape within the current political climate”(Sassa *The Tech* ). They drank, partied, enjoyed their sexual freedom, attempted to create their own American lifestyle, and the women in the play were not in hijab. Thus, the characters of play appear to exert much effort to become recognized as an American rather than Arab. They break the homogeneous boundaries to mingle in the heterogeneous. This appears from the opening scene of the play; Aiesha’s attempt to melt in the college society is exploited by the surrounding American college fellows in the society. According to Aiesha, it is okay to accept Jackie’s invitation to the ball, even though she admits: “Jackie didn’t sponsor me as her

guest for the ball because she liked me (though incidentally she did), but because I could play the part of the local exotique” (Shamieh, *Chocolate in Heat* 303 ). These words reveal the great challenge of American homogeneity towards the achievement of any sort of ethnic assimilation creating a Multicultural American society. Shamieh stresses the fact that the American mainstream homogeneity is the weasel under the cocktail table. That is because the White community fights for its homogeneous culture, to keep it as the main soul of the American identity, creating fragmentation and alienation in the American society.

On the other hand, Aisha rejects any aspect of her ethnic homogeneous community. She refuses to acknowledge the Arab prince as a noble man, however, she criticizes him and his royal family as an attempt to prove their brutal, racist and exploited personalities. She even recalls her action, “I said something nasty about his father’s regime once, something I shouldn’t have said, something I wouldn’t have said if I had known he was in earshot” (304). This rejection action of Aiesha symbolizes the rejection of the Arab-American second-generation female to Arab men. Aiesha attempts to break the fetters of the Arab-American homogeneous groups, in order to become a source of attraction to an American typical man, who sees her American identity rather than her Arab ethnic background. Betty Shamieh uses this denial and rejection of Aiesha towards her Arab community to reflect the great will inside the Arab-American generation to be recognized as Americans rather than Ethnic-Americans. She also emphasizes that Ethnic-American communities are more flexible and eager to compromise for the sake of Multi-Ethnic American identity than the American White-centric mainstream.

Moreover, this rejection and ethnic identity denial appears in the characters of the Prince himself. The Prince’s rejection to homogeneity appears in his judgment to Aiesha. He disrespects Aiesha for being “the president of the Arab society---who visited her homeland only once” (307). Though he refuses to admit his belonging to the Arab community, he disregards the fact that Aisha is not a pure Arab and takes the lead in the Arab society. Betty Shamieh wants to ensure the fact that the ethnic cultural identity of an Arab can hardly be left behind him when he lives abroad, or as she puts it: “the prejudices of the old country were alive and well in America” (307). Through this, Shamieh persuades her audience that the idea of a melting pot is a myth. As Ethnic-Americans, such as Arab-Americans, cannot easily overcome or eliminate their background culture and replace it by another.

The discrimination within the Arab diaspora is reinforced through the characters of the Prince's body guards. The Prince and his bodyguards look down to Aiesha just because she is of a lower economic class and of the same ethnic group: "The few Arabic words she spoke revealed her family spoke the unmistakable dialect of a peasant. My bodyguards Riad and Ramzy teased me when she left, saying I travelled all the way to America to find a village girl" (307). This shows the suffering of the middle-class Arab-American society is not only with American mainstream but also with Arab higher classes as well. On the other hand, Aiesha also shows bad emotions towards him and his royal family just because she taught "his father might be an Arab king. But he certainly hasn't done much good for the Arabs" (307). Shamieh uses both characters to reflect the inner conflict in the Arab-ethnic diaspora that occurs between their ethnic culture, which is attached with homeland, and the American culture. This circumstance forces them to deny their ethnicity to belong and integrate and this also proves the impossibility of achieving equality and coherence through homogeneous communities' boundaries.

The Jordanian prince in Shamieh's *Chocolate in Heat* appears to seek a love relationship with an American girl, believing that this is much better than getting involved with an Arab American girl. Shamieh reassures her belief in the eagerness of the second Arab-American generation to hybrid with the American mainstream to be recognized as Americans away from their diversities created by the Arab-Ethnicity. The American girl refuses to hybridize with him, for not accepting his ethnic background, and shows how low interest in identity. The American girl, representing the mainstream homogeneous community, refuses to fall in love with him because she expects that he would force her to move back to his fathers' country. She believes in the Arab stereotypes created by her mainstream, where there is no difference among Arabs nor among their lands, as she misjudges the Prince's identity: "love just don't exist, honey. It's all about positioning yourself in the word. You're a prince and all, but I don't want to move to Saudi Arabia" (306). Betty Shamieh reflects the brutal rejection and stereotyping created by the American mainstream in face of any attempt of the Arab ethnic community to melt in the society or hybridize to achieve a multi-ethnic equal society. Thus, the audience are persuaded to comprehend the source of the Multi-Ethnic American dilemma as cored in the mainstream's fight for homogeneity over nationality.

Shamieh also uses the American girl to introduce the homogeneous ignorance of the American mainstream society, as a main challenge for the



Arab-American society to pluralize in the American society. This ignorance is stressed in her words; “Jordan. My mama says to think of almonds when I want to remember what country you’re from. But if I took the time to think of something as random as almonds, I might as well take the time to remember a name as random as Jordan. Plus, I don’t even like almonds” (306). These words signify the great gap between the Anglo-American homogeneity and the Arab-American identity. It illustrates also how the white homogeneity refuses all sorts of Ethnic hybridity in order to protect their homogeneous culture.

Though all sorts of hybridity with the white mainstream are rejected, hyphenated American fight for their right to hybrid and integrate with the mainstream. Thus, throughout the play, the audience is aware of Shamieh’s belief that one can change to adapt, and in order achieve a multicultural society without discrimination all social groups should cooperate with a sense of compromise. She attempts to prove hybridity as the only hopeful transit for the Arab-American ethnic youth from their homogeneous marginalized and alienated community into a multicultural American society. This is declared as the Prince laments his loss of his American beloved. His words on stage reveal great loss of hope for an American identity away from the Arab girls who have “sense of vision, that makes them unable to see me, they can’t look me in the eye without seeing past me to a future of riches and pomp in which everyone says ‘her highness’” (306). Thus, hybridity can be the only unachieved hope for all Arab-Americans.

Continuing to criticize the homogeneity in the American society, Shamieh declares much of inner Arab-American issues that reject hybridity within the Arab ethnic community. Aiesha estimates that The Prince’s mother was killed by his father just because a Palestinian; “they didn’t want a Palestinian queen in Jordan. She became too popular. Jordan is seventy percent Palestinians who don’t swear allegiance to any Jordanian king, so the king -his father- got nervous. He had to get rid of his mother” (307). These words declare how the middle-eastern clashes back home are inherited by Ethnic-American and their descendants. These clashes appear to form a rejection wave between males and females of the Arab-American community, leading them to flee to gain more hybrid relationships with other Ethnic-American groups in the society. So, Shamieh condemns the way homogeneity as a source of a coherent identity.

Shamieh condemns the way homogeneity fragments the American society. Aiesha announces; “everybody’s got a group and they stick to it. The Blacks stick together, the Latinos stick together, and the Asians hate each other in their

countries but here in America, they stick together too” (310). These words indicate the fragmentation and loss of identity Arab-American suffer in today’s American society. Through Aiesha, Shamieh raises the voice of the marginalized Arab-Americans to prove the failure of any attempt to assimilate into another ethnic community. But, Shameih throughout the play introduces another level of hope, through Ethnic-American hybridity. She believes that the way for a Multi-Ethnic America is better achieved through the cooperation and hybridity of Ethnic minorities. Though these minorities suffer on the same level, Shamieh believes in the empowerment hidden in their hybridity.

Betty Shamieh’s *The Black Eyed* is another significant evidence on the Palestinian American dilemma towards hybridity. From the title, one can estimate that the play is concerned with the challenges and hopes of an Arab homogeneous community, who have a great ability to endure all sorts of discrimination and exploitation in favor of their dream of winning prizes such as the black eyed. However, the play’s incidents develop from the particular to the general in attempt to “capture the complexity of being a Palestinian-American woman living in New York in the wake of September 11” (Shamieh *The Black Eyed* 267). Shamieh tackles the challenges and fetters inherited in the Palestinian society and its negative impact on the second and third Palestinian-American generation to hybrid with other Americans.

Shamieh brings Palestinian characters together to stand on the same ground, as they complete each other’s statements and ideas. From the beginning, the characters declare how all the members of the Palestinian ethnic community share the same aim of finding peace and being accepted. These ethnic members come to the land of dreams of America, represented by the martyrs’ room, to search for a long-lasting state of peace and to get rid of the menace and sufferings that have been inherited along generations. This appears in the words of Delilah and The Architect as “no one who goes in...comes out” (278). These words prove the dream of the Palestinian-American community of being recognized as Americans, as well as the strong will of becoming part of the multicultural American society and not being excluded or marginalized again. Shamieh uses Delilah to set a hybrid common privilege; “my indifference made me different. So, he began to prefer me” (288). Delilah gives an important evidence of difference as a humanitarian aspect that could exist inside each one even if he or she seems familiar. Shamieh stresses her belief that who can be indifferent and melt in a society can seem different and not belonging to another

society as well. So, hybridity appears to be the suitable solution towards the Multi-Ethnic American society, that praises differences.

Shamieh reveals one of the great challenges that face Palestinian-Americans, to form a coherent multi-ethnic identity. This challenge is the misunderstanding between the Palestinian immigrants' ancestors and the following Palestinian-American descendants. This appears in the misunderstanding situation between Aiesha and The Architect;

AIESHA. Like I said, it's a long story.

THE ARCHITECT. Why is everybody always talking about length? There are other factors to consider. (Pause.)

AIESHA. What? 290

TAMAM. Excuse her. She's not very articulate.

DELILAH: You'll get used to her. (291)

Accordingly, this miscommunication indicates the great conflict between the Palestinian-American's ethnic identity and his or her American one. Shamieh declares this conflict as one of the great fetters that leave the Palestinian-American youth stuck between their ethnicity and the proof of their American multicultural identity.

Therefore, Shamieh's characters picture their heaven land as a multicultural land, where all members share equal rights and sufferings. This appears as the characters describe ethnic members, who form the idealistic multicultural land. These ethnic members include, beside them as Palestinians, "the Japanese women", "Iranian mothers", "Tamil women", "the Buddhists", "the Irish girls", and "the Jewish ladies" (299). This collection of ethnicities in one place after their distinctive sufferings in homeland, remarks an ideal multi-ethnic society where all sufferings come to an end. As The Chorus (Delilah, Tamam and The Architect) suggest; "There is no hatred here. Each of us wishes each of them well" (299). Thus, Shamieh uses this heavenly picture to reflect the inner dream of her audience for a Multi-Ethnic American society; free from any sort of discrimination, prejudice and exploitation.

However, this heavenly dream is shattered with the harsh reality of ethnic marginalization and discrimination. This brutal reality is declared by Tamam; "Somehow we have managed to separate ourselves. Into the groups" (299). This action of society's separation into homogeneous ethnic groups appear to be the main challenge confronting the dream of a Multi-Ethnic and Multicultural harmonious society.

Moreover, this homogeneous dilemma and its impact on the society is cleared in the conflict between Aiesha and Delilah. Shamieh uses this conflict to show how homogeneity raises great amount of discrimination and prejudice in the society. This amount of discrimination appears as Aiesha asks Delilah: “So why don’t you go join the Jewish women , Delilah?” (301). The repetition of Aiesha’s offer for Delilah to go and hang out with the Jewish women shows the religious tension within the same ethnic community. Therefore, menace is raised to its highest point in *The Architect* as she keeps shouting “Hands!”. Shamieh wants to declare that one of the main reasons behind the Arab multi-ethnic identity crisis is the religious inner tension. She convinces her audience that hybridity is the relief for all the inner tension created in the Ethnic-American communities, and the solution for the outer alienation and fragmentation.

Furthermore, Betty Shamieh juxtaposes the Palestinian-Israeli conflict with the American- Iranian one. This appears in Aiesha and Delilah’s argument over differences and acceptance of one another.

AIESHA. Go hang out with the Jewish women

DELILAH. Religion doesn’t mean anything here.

I was born before your religion even existed.

(TO THE ARCHITECT and TAMAM:). Let’s go speak with those Iranian mothers,

CHORUS (TAMAM and THE ARCHITECT). No. ( 303)

Through this conversation, Shamieh uses both the Jewish and the Iranian examples to declare the common factor between those two ethnicities. She shows that as the Palestinians reject the Jews, the Americans reject the Iranians. However, all are humans and should deal with each other on a humanitarian basis rather than a religious one.

Shamieh aims to make her audience identify with the characters and believe that it is time to overcome all sorts of ethnic differences and discrimination to achieve a heavenly future form of a Multicultural American society. Also, through Delilah’s reaction to the rejection of Aiesha, Shamieh stresses the fact that rejection among Americans based on religion, ethnicity or color could lead to the search for hybridity as a rescue plan to exist as Americans. Delilah seeks to communicate with the Iranians, who are also rejected by other homogeneous groups, to illustrate how hybridity between marginalized and excluded ethnic minorities can be a reaction to this discriminatory treatment. However, through the chorus Shamieh raises her inner

voice of refusing such marginalized hybridity that could lead to more marginalization and exclusion along generations.

In addition, Shamieh continues to declare other challenges encountering the achievement of hybridity. As she aims to confine the success of a well multi-ethnic hybrid process for the American society, she gives a deformed image of a Palestinian-Israeli hybrid attempt.

DELILAH. Yes, Aiesha. The Palestinian-Israeli problem was solved ages ago.

CHORUS (DELILAH, TAMAM and THE ARCHITECT). One state called The United States of Israel and Palestine.

DELILAH. Pal-rael for short. (318)

This deformed image makes the audience believe in the power of the American society. Hybridity is a limited solution for the unique Multi-Ethnic American society, where differences can disappear in favor of a new coherent multicultural society. In a word, Shamieh raises great hope and enthusiasm in her audience to hybrid on all American levels in order to achieve the Multi-Ethnic American dream.

This coherent image of the Multi-Ethnic American dream appears as the characters gives a utopian image of the new state.

TAMAM. The posters for travel agents everywhere boast first-class packages. To Pal-rael that say

CHORUS (DELILAH, TAMAM and THE ARCHITECT). Come to Pal-rael. It's sad because the Palestinians and Israelis are now real pals.(318)

Betty Shamieh uses this Palestinian Israeli state as an objective correlative to the product of hybridity in the United States. This new Multi-Ethnic American society would embrace all ethnicities on the same level, ignoring diversities as a tool for fragmentation.

On the contrary, by the end of the play Betty she tends to bring her audience back to ground, where American hybridity is challenged in favor of ethnic homogeneity. Betty Shamieh uses The Architect to highlight the difficulty of achieving any step towards a Palestinian-American dream of belonging to Multi-Ethnic American society. The Architect's identity dilemma makes her unable to achieve any dream of developing relationships in her homogeneous ethnic community or forming a hybrid Multi-Ethnic American relationship, which can bring much hope to be recognized as a full American. Through the Architect's failed experiences of hybridity, Shamieh emphasizes

the importance of hybridity with the pure white American rather than the hybrid or the marginalized.

Furthermore, Shamieh's rejection to the hybridity with the "half breed" appears in The Architect's failed relationship. Though she "was always falling for the half-breeds" (322), The Architect has been sought for her ethnicity rather than her inner identity. This relationship has left The Architect in great inner struggle. As she recalls, she has stood half way between her American identity and her ethnic background; admitting that "Meeting that son of a bitch led to my murder" (322). Thus, the audience recognize how dangerous could the hybrid process be on the coming generations, if it is applied among lost and marginalized minorities.

This dangerous effect appears as The Architect offers a fake identity of herself to prove her suitability for the hybrid process. She offers "I will raise them (our children) in the culture you do not know...I don't speak hardly a lick of the Arabic language either, But I can make out the morsels that count" (326,327). All these fake gestures leave her lost between her real American identity and the ethnic identity the other seeks for. This resulted deformation of The Architect's American identity appears in her words; "I am a Palestinian. I lived like an Arab in America. I even only dated my own kind" (341). This proves the great fetters such fake hybrid relationships put on the Ethnic-American identity. This type of relationships restricts the Palestinian-American multi-ethnic identity rather than freeing it .

Another experience of The Architect destroys her dream to belong. The Architect's main crisis of identity and alienation appears as she first sees the terrorist on the plane. She describes: "He passed me and knew I was an Arab" (280). As the first thing she has noticed in the terrorist that he was an Arab, she explains her struggle of acceptance and existence. Shamieh uses the character of The Architect as a representative for her. The Architect, as Shamieh who has struggled all her life to melt to the American society without any feelings of discrimination or differences.

The Architect summarizes Shamieh's approach of hybridity to celebrate both the Ethnic and the American identity of the Arab-American descendants. She admits that "I knew if I was not proud to be a Palestinian. I could not live a life with dignity. I knew if I did not love my people, no one would" (342). Shamieh shows the great power of the ethnic background on the identity of the multi-ethnic society. It is difficult to separate the ethnic aspects from the Arab-American identity. So, she appears to reject the notion of assimilating into the

society by losing all the ethnic aspects which appear Non-American. Therefore, she shows the inner conflict created by any attempt to create a multi-ethnic identity on equal bases. This appears in the Architect words; “I would no longer resent being a bridge between two cultures” (342). Clearly, Shamieh brings on stage the inner conflicts, loss and alienation felt by the Arab-American youth- “I’ve been in limbo all my life” (362). She tends to prove that hybridity is the only secure solution towards a stable multicultural society.

Diana Son is another playwright who has believed in the great power of hybridity for a better Korean-American generation future. She began her writing career with the clarification of the Asian-American homogeneous group’s inner issues, as well as the challenges facing the Asian-American young women towards assimilating or belonging as an American. She held great responsibility to shed the light on the diversity and break the stereotypes related to the Asian-American diaspora, in general, and the Korean-American ethnic community, in particular. She has attempted to persuade her audience that Asian-Ethnic community melting or assimilating in the American society is a mere myth.

However, Hybridity becomes a main theme in her plays, as they include hybrid relationships with smoothness and a satisfying amount of acceptance. Son has focused on hybridity as a means of fighting against the American mainstream homogeneity. She has believed that hybridity empowers Ethnic-Americans, specifically Asian-Americans, to create their stable and coherent Multi-Ethnic identity. Through hybridity, Son attempts to prove that ethnic communities cannot be accepted by the mainstream, except if they accept one another. For example, Son uses the conflict between the white Asian-American community and the African American community, to show the dilemma of achieving assimilation among multi-ethnic American groups. Her plays behold the theme of hybridity as the solution of the Asian-American identity crisis. Hence, hybridity is the hope for a fair and coherent Multi-Ethnic America, where difference and ethnicity are a main feature of being an American and an Asian at the same level.

Through her play, *R.A.W. ('Cause I'm a Woman)*, Diana Son clearly shatters the stereotypes of the Asian-American community. One of the main subthemes is to break the homogeneous concept related to the Asian-American ethnic society. This appears in her choice of characters. She introduces her characters on stage as homogeneous Asian girls who are unnamed but rather numbered. By numbers she aims to picture them without differences, however, as they begin their monologues every character reveals her unique and different

identity. She aims to criticize homogeneity, diaspora and marginality through the alienation of her characters. The four Asian-American women of youth fight for their freedom from their homogeneous group and are eager to form a heterogeneous society with the American mainstream. They try their best to build relationships outside their Ethnic community, however, these relationships fail because of their ethnic background.

The play appears to be a revolt against homogeneity. This is declared in Son's use of comedy to criticize Asian-American men. Comedy is used by the playwright to lighten the stress held on stage. For example, the characters make fun of the misjudgment of the American mainstream to the Asian-Ethnic community. They say:

2. Because he wants to hear:
4. I'm from a fishing village off the Yangtze river.
3. Where my mother was a shaman who taught me shiatsu.
1. Where my father made musical instruments out of fish bones and moss.
2. Where I invented tai chai. (292)

This comic incident reflects Asian-American descendants reject any adherence to her ethnic background. Son proves the alienation and loss of identity created by the celebration of the homogeneous factor in the American society over the heterogeneous nature of the American dream. She criticizes how marginality, fragmentation and exclusion from the American mainstream homogeneous community has led to the loss of the Asian-American identity. She declares the Asian-American dilemma of being recognized as Americans without being outcasted for the Asian looks.

Accordingly, the four women in the play seek relationships with other ethnic Americans, just to mingle and prove their American identity. For example, Character 3 is urged by her Korean immigrant parents to hybrid with the American mainstream to prove her Americanization and get rid of her Korean ethnic culture. Her mother wants her to "have an American boyfriend" (297), just to become fully American. The mother's eagerness to hybrid with the white mainstream makes her treat her daughter as an American just to ease her way out of her Korean ethnicity and into the White-Centric American mainstream. This incident proves the identity conflict for the first Korean-American generation as they attempt to assimilate.

The mother warns her daughter, "Don't bring him (Paul the white boyfriend) in the house! It stinks, I've been cooking daddy's food. It smells like



Kimchee” (296). She refuses her daughter to appear in front of Paul, the White American boyfriend, as a Korean girl of any aspect; as she believes that this could ruin her chances to become an American. Through the awkward reactions of the mother, Son criticizes the belief in the assimilation theory which requires the elimination and disappearance of any ethnic aspect of identity to be recognized as an American. As she believes that it is impossible for an Asian-American descendant to fully get rid of his background culture and features, as the Asian physical look will always prevent such Americanization.

In addition, Son raises menace on stage through the withdrawal image of the Asian-American to the Asian ethnic standards. She declares this action of giving up on the American identity image through Character 1. This character is involved in a bad relationship with a Korean man. She feels lost and shattered as he turns out to shatter her American identity and bring her back to the Korean ethnic fetters, that her ancestors suffered back home in Korea. She declares that conflict of identity in herself; “Men who have been attracted to me for being Korean were interested in who I am only on the surface without knowing who I am not in the deepest part of my heart” (299). This shows the increase of menace and alienation as the Asian-American attempts to belong to his homogeneous ethnicity, ignoring his or her surrounding American culture. Briefly, Diana Son condemns the idea of celebrating one identity over the other in the Asian-American self, paving the way for her audience to recognize hybridity as the only hope for a well-built Asian-American identity.

Thus, she continues to modify the death of Character 1’s Korean-American reality by getting into a relationship with someone who is fully Korean. She announces: “I didn’t want you to think of me as a Korean woman... I am not ashamed of the presence of my heritage on my face but I mourn shamefully for the absence of Korean in my heart” (299). These words show the great inner suffering in a Korean-American youth, as he or she is regarded as ethnic rather than an American beyond the looks. Thus, Diana Son highlights the importance of going beyond the ethnic self and moving towards hybridity with the white American mainstream; to enforce the American identity in the coming Korean-American descendants.

On the contrary, *Satellites* has been written to reveal the importance of hybridity for a better coming future. Diana Son portrays the image of a hybrid multicultural society, in Nina and Miles’ household. Diana Son uses Nina, the second-generation Korean-American, and Miles, the Multi-ethnic American as a perfect example for a hybrid couple. Whereas, the new born baby represents the

American dream of a Multi-Ethnic ideal American society, where differences are accepted to be mingled in one crucible producing a well coherent outcome. This appears in Nina's look to her new born, Hannah; "Look at her, Miles, chocolate skin, almond eyes... she's the best of both of us" (250; sc.1). Nina's words reflect Son's own belief that the result of the hybrid American process is a Multi-Ethnic perfect generation which cannot be separated, hyphenated or marginalized, as differences become a main aspect of being American.

Son's description of Hannah in the eyes of her parents and Eric show the American contemporary vision for a multicultural American future. Nina sees her daughter as "the perfect mix of the both of us" (264, sc.3). This view emphasizes the fact that the result of the hybridity process contains Multi-Ethnic American features; with the disappearance of the ethnic factors. However, Son uses Eric to introduce another view, as he declares "She's herself" (294; sc.3). Eric's words reveal how genuine and unique the new Multi-Ethnic American generation will be.

According to Son the coming Multi-Ethnic Americans resulting from the hybridity process, would hardly be framed and coined by a certain ethnicity. As Nina illustrates; "my family thinks she looks like my husband and my husband's family thinks she looks like me" (271; sc.4). This unique outcome makes these generations more able to "grow up around (,) all kinds of kids", as Miles says. Thus, Son's hybrid Multi-Ethnic American society is featured by its acceptance of diversity and the other as main components of the American social structure and culture. Diversity is what makes the Multi-Ethnic an American.

This eagerness to break the fetters of the homogeneous ethnic community towards the heterogeneous American society, appears in the way Nina has been brought up. Son reveals the reason behind Nina's alienation and self-struggle, through her conversation with Mrs.Chae.

MRS.CHAE. Your mommy wants you to have American boyfriend?

NINA. That's all we had where I grew up. Except for this one Filipino boy.

MRS.CHAE. I SEE. That's why she doesn't teach you the Korean language. (283, sc.7)

These words reflect how Nina's parents' trials to melt into the American society has turned in vain. It has appeared that the result of such assimilating attempts is an alienated and lost identity of Nina. She failed to have a White

American boyfriend and failed to keep her own Asian American background. Hence, Son criticizes the assimilation theories through Nina and Miles characters. However, she introduces their hybrid relationship as a matter of strength in the face of the homogeneous Ethnic-American misjudgements of the other.

Moreover, Son uses Mrs. Chae's character to shatter the belief in the return to the ethnic rather than the building of the Multi-Ethnic hybrid. This appears as Nina suggest to hire a Korean nanny for Hannah.

NINA. What do you think about hiring a Korean woman to be her nanny? So, she could speak Korean to her.

MILES. (Distracted by crying baby) Is that important to you?

NINA. I just started thinking about it. I can't speak Korean so she's not going to hear it from me.

MILES. All right, sounds like a good idea. (Re: baby) You want to take her? (251; sc.1)

This conversation shows how Nina is lost after her pregnancy. She is a Korean-American who has been disconnected with her heritage. However, she seeks to find her daughter a Korean nanny to reconnect her with the ethnic features she has lost. It appears that Nina's disconnection with her ethnic background did not make her anyway a pure American. This impurity and alienation make Nina and Miles a prey to Mrs.Chae's and Reggie's discriminatory and ethnic views.

With Mrs. Chae's declaration of her point of view of Mile's parents as being nice to accept to adopt a black infant, great menace is brought into the Act. This menace is felt by Nina towards her daughter's future identity. She appears to panic and become very tense in reaction to Mrs. Chae's words. These words about different ethnic stereotypes, raises Nina's madness. This menace changes Nina's mind about going back to her homogeneous community; "I'm not going to hold out for a Korean woman. I'll take anyone who isn't going to poison my baby with racist thought" (302, 303; sc.10). Through Nina's feelings of menace, Son reveals the amount of menace homogeneity can impose on the hybridity process leading to its failure. Thus, the audience are aware of the danger of celebrating the ethnic over the Multi-Ethnic.

It appears that there is some hidden part in Nina's background where she experienced discrimination and Mrs.Chae's words has shown it to the surface again. This old ethnic discrimination experience is clarified in Nina's final words to Mrs. Chae;

I know people like you. Some of my mom's friends, they came to this country in the sixties, people taunted them, told them their food stank, their faces were flat, called them gook, chink, chingaling-...Made them feel like shit for what, for walking down the street, for sending their kids to school, for starting a business. For that they got beaten up, their stores got vandalized, right? You went looking for someone you could feel superior to. And you picked black people... it makes me mad, it makes me ashamed of being Korean, fucking racists. (314; sc.10)

These words indicate the inner anger and menace felt by Nina towards the Korean racism and their exclusion for the African-Americans.

Correspondingly, Diana Son refers to the Asian-American conflict with African-American. She revolts against the ethnic discrimination between the ethnic communities, revealing the depth of the ethnic identity crisis. She declares that the problem is not only between ethnic and white but between ethnic and ethnic as well. Diana Son suggests that the solution for the ethnic identity crisis begins with the acceptance of the other ethnic communities and that the best hybridity process occurs among these Ethnic-American communities. As this level of hybridity shatters all the stereotypes, discrimination, fragmentation, alienation and loss of identity created by homogeneity.

Likewise, Miles is shown as an African-American who has no idea of his ethnic background but seeks to bring connection for the sake of his daughter. As Son declares; "I wanted him to be American and yet [be] disconnected from his heritage. I didn't want it to be another identifiably ethnic heritage, so you know, I chose him to be African American" (Wu 7). Therefore, as Nina looks for a Korean connection for her daughter, Miles chooses an African-American neighbourhood to grow his daughter in. The play opens with Nina and Miles' are convinced of growing Hannah as a Multi-Ethnic American character who can adapt to any community with all its diversity. However, this homogeneous thought would shatter their dream as Mrs. Chae and Reggie reveal their discriminatory homogeneous vision towards each other's ethnic communities.

Though, Miles tries to connect with the new community by making friendship with Reggie. He is shocked with Reggie's reveal for his true ethnic discriminating identity. This appears in the following conversation;

REGGIE. ...But you gotta be like one of them new niggas who always think-

MILES. No, man. No. I'm not any kind of nigger. You hear me?

REGGIE. Man, I ain't mean it like that. Over here when somebody says new nigga we mean somebody who turn they nose up at something 'cause it ain't or good enough-

MILES. I don't care what you say it means, man. I don't want to hear it in my house. (298,299; sc.9)

At this point, Miles regrets his trust that reconnecting to his ethnic background would overcome his daughter's exposure to words and actions of discrimination and racism.

Miles feels more alienated not only within the American society but within his ethnic one as well. Again, the playwright confronts her audience with the real fragmentation and alienation created by homogeneity in the American society. Also, she helps them identify with Nina and Miles' mission of creating a new Multi-Ethnic American generation, which celebrates being ethnic and American on the same level. So, Son's audience become easily convinced by the importance of hybridity rather than Americanization to manage a Multicultural America, in which being different is common.

Like Nina and Miles, Kit seeks to belong to the mainstream, believing that hard work and education could make them melt into such mainstream and be accepted as an American with no difference. However, she refuses to compromise for any relationship with a mainstream American man. She has hybridity but with a little less menace and tension than that created in Nina and Miles' characters. She explains that

Last night, I went to a Salvadoran restaurant with this guy. I kept telling him in a nice way. "It's not El Salvadorean food. It's Salvadoran." But all night he kept saying "I've never had El Salvadorean food before,". "I have to tell my friends I went to an El Salvadorean restaurant. (277; sc.5)

She refuses to be in a relationship with someone who thinks about her as different or exotic.

Hence, Kit's strength appears as rejects to get involved in an exploiting relationship with Eric, just to belong to the white society. Kit reflects the strength with Diana Son herself to belong but without being used or making any kind of compromising. Kit's character signifies Diana Son's belief in the efficiency of hybridity among minorities more than that with the mainstream. She declares that hybridity with the mainstream encounters different challenges and struggles that can be decreased with the beginning of hybridity between

minorities. By the end of the play, Son's audience believe in the power of hybridity among Ethnic-American minorities. As it empowers these ethnicities into a heterogeneous community that soon forces the mainstream to enter the hybridity process to belong to the Multicultural American society.

To wrap up, *Satellites* shows the difficulties and challenges that can face the hybridity process. These challenges are represented by Mrs. Chae and Reggie, as Nina puts it; "The Korean nanny is denying her blackness, the black neighbours are throwing rocks through our window" (303; sc.10). These challenges appear to be the rejection of the first and second Ethnic-American generation to the new hybrid Multi-Ethnic generation. However, she still insists "we're not failing" (303; sc.10), declaring that the success of the hybridity transnational process depends on the empowerment of the American generations seeking hybridity.

Both Shamieh and Son agree on considering the Melting Pot Theory as a myth. Moreover, they criticize the pluralisation theories of considering the American society as a mosaic or a salad bowl, as such theories have celebrated homogeneity over the national heterogeneous American society. They clarify in their plays how homogeneity has led to fragmentation and alienation of the American identity, generally, and the loss of the Ethnic-American identity in particular. They reveal these obstacles of homogeneity, assimilation and fragmentation as their characters fail to assimilate in the mainstream dominant community.

Similarly, they agree on sharing the suggestion of hybridity as the rescue tool to the shore of inner security through the creation of a new Multi-Ethnic American identity. Accordingly, their characters do their best to hybrid on two levels. These levels are declared as the hybridity on the Ethnic-White level, or the attempt of enforcing the Ethnic-American communities by hybridity among Ethnic level. They succeed in suggesting empowerment of the Ethnic-American young generations through hybridity. Thus, hybridity is the main means towards a Multicultural American society, where the American citizens beheld a Multi-Ethnic American community.

Differently, Son and Shamieh differ in their contribution to the hybridity process. Whereas, Betty Shamieh calls for the importance of hybridity with the mainstream. As she believes the Arab-American dilemma can hardly be solved away from the conquer of the borders of the mainstream community. Also, this level of hybridity would empower the new Arab-American Multi-Ethnic descendants to be able to belong and associate with the Multicultural American

structure. On the other hand, Diana Son enforces the importance of hybridity on the Multi-Ethnic level before it reaches the mainstream hybrid level. Therefore, she makes Nina and Miles the perfect example of the hybrid relationships that offer the national hope in Hannah's Multi-Ethnic American character. As Hannah is accepted by Eric, she believes that the product of the hybrid ethnic level would empower itself to be accepted by the mainstream. So, the mainstream would be urged to hybrid with these Multi-Ethnic or Ethnic-Americans developing a strong Multi-Ethnic American identity.

Furthermore, Betty Shamieh and Diana Son agree to suggest hybridity as the successful means to achieve a Multi-Ethnic American society. Nevertheless, both playwrights differ in the way they approach hybridity. This contradiction appears as Betty Shamieh focuses on hybridity with the American White-Centric mainstream. Introducing this level of hybridity as the most important for the achievement of a multicultural American society, that coins citizenship beyond ethnicity and gender. However, Diana Son has introduced the level of hybridity among Ethnic-American communities as the remarkable step towards a coherent Multi-Ethnic American identity. Son believes that achieving this hybrid Multi-Ethnic level would empower Ethnic-American descendants and encourage the White mainstream to hybrid and to become fully American. In conclusion, Betty Shamieh and Diana Son introduce hybridity as a better solution than the failed Melting Pot Theory and Mosaic Theory to achieve a coherent and equal Multi-Ethnic American society.

On the form level, the plays under investigation are one-act plays with an absurd setting and time. Both Betty Shamieh and Diana Son choose one limiting setting within the time of one day for each play. However, Betty Shamieh and Diana Son's plays hold different forms and techniques to illustrate their three main themes. Though they agree on using the monologue technique they differ on its application. In *Chocolate in Heat*, Betty Shamieh introduces five monologues. These monologues remark the scenes of the play. Also, Shamieh insists on using one male performer and one female character to perform the monologues successfully, however, the male performers two monologues of different characters. Thus, she uses the monologue to give direct identification between the character's struggles and opinions and the audience; making them more identified with Aiesha, the female character. Shamieh did not use any other stage tools to comment on these monologues, as she rejects any interruption to the identification process.

Nevertheless, Diana Son has used the monologue technique in *R.A.W.* accompanies with the use of changeable word Slides on stage. The use of Slides on stage gives denser to the four women's monologues. The Slides unites with the music from the song "I am a Woman" to shatter the stereotypes imposed on Asian-American females. Also, the characters completed one another's monologues to support the idea that they share the struggle and oppression. All of these stage techniques enforce Son's Ethnic-female empowerment; and help the audience to identify easily with the oppression and inner loss of identity of the characters on stage.

In addition, Betty Shamieh and Diana Son agree to divide their plays, *Chocolate in Heat* and *Satellites*, into scenes. However, Son's division is greater as she divides the act into twelve scenes, in order to declare the great fragmentation and discrimination that the contemporary American society beholds to challenge the Multi-Ethnic hybridity movement. In addition, Shamieh and Son attempt to share with their audience bibliographical experiences and thoughts. However, they use different techniques to pass these experiences and visions to their audience. For example, Betty Shamieh uses Aiesha in *Chocolate in Heat* to give some flash backs of her school days and how she felt as a misfit. Also, in *The Black Eyed* she uses the chorus technique to comment on her characters suppressed feelings to reveal her opinion. As she uses the sound of her characters to reveal her thoughts, she makes well use of Aiesha's character to reflect an example of the members of her Ethnic-American female community.

Nonetheless, Diana Son uses Nina to reflect on her bibliographical experience of hybrid relationship with her husband. Though she is married to a White American, Michael Cosaboom; she uses Nina to introduce another level of hybridity. As she believes in the great power of the hybridity created within the Multi-Ethnic American communities. In short, Betty Shamieh and Diana Son appear to be engaged with their characters, to reveal life like experiences from the Multi-Ethnic American society.

In conclusion, Betty Shamieh and Diana Son's plays appear to reflect their living Ethnic-American struggles to belong. They stand on the same ground of oppression, alienation, fragmentation and discrimination. Hence, they suggest hybridity as the rescue way to the light of the Multicultural and Multi-Ethnic American identity. On the contrary, they differ on the way they trace such road. They also differ in the tools they use to for offering this road to the Ethnic-American suppressed generations.



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