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# The Problem of Identity and Belonging for Second Generation Immigrants in Laila Laalami's The Other Americans 2019

*Dissertation Submitted to the Department of English in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master in Language and Culture"*

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# DEDICATION

All thanks and appreciation go to Allah, the Most Merciful, who gave me the power to complete my research.

I dedicate this effort to myself. To the one who worked hard and stayed up late, but never gave up. Thank you for your perseverance.

To my family. To my mother, my father, and my siblings. Thank you for your support and understanding. Your presence was a blessing beyond measure.

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***karima***

## Abstract

This dissertation examines issues of identity and belonging among second-generation immigrants in Laila Lalami's *The Other Americans (2019)*. It combines Teun van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) with Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial concepts of hybridity, the third space, mimicry, and ambivalence. The study adopts a qualitative analytical approach. It investigates immigration literature in America, tracing migration over four centuries and focusing on key concepts such as diaspora, displacement, alienation, and the condition of second-generation immigrants. The analysis shows that second-generation characters, particularly Nora Guerraoui, experience exclusion not through explicit hostility but through subtle linguistic strategies. Van Dijk's CDA reveals how discourse constructs an "us versus them" dichotomy and produces otherness. However, it does not fully capture the lived experience of in-betweenness. Bhabha's concepts address this limitation, as Nora occupies a "third space" where she belongs fully to neither Moroccan nor American culture. Her hybrid identity is expressed through jazz music, which she describes as neither purely Moroccan nor purely American but "something in between." Her experience of mimicry reflects the instability of assimilation, while ambivalence defines her emotional condition between attachment and estrangement. The study concludes that integrating van Dijk's CDA with Bhabha's postcolonial theory provides a more comprehensive understanding of second-generation immigrant identity, combining linguistic analysis of discourse with an exploration of lived cultural experience**.**



**Keywords**: Second-generation Immigrants, Identity, Third Space, *The Other Americans*, Teun van Dijk, Homi K. Bhabha.

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# *General Introduction*

## 1.Background of the study

In the United States today, there exists an entire generation of immigrants' children who were born in America but raised in homes carrying their parents' original cultures. These individuals are known as the "second generation." They hold American citizenship alongside the values and memories inherited from their ancestral cultures, which places them in a difficult existential position: they are not exactly like their parents (because they grew up in America), nor are they exactly like other Americans (because their society does not fully accept them as "real" Americans due to their names, origins, or religion).

The importance of this study stems from its examination of Laila Lalami's novel *The Other Americans* (published in 2019). The novel begins with a hit-and-run accident in a small California town, the victim of which is Driss Guerraoui, a Moroccan immigrant and restaurant owner. Gradually, the reader discovers that this incident is not merely a crime, but a window into deeper issues of immigration, identity, and belonging in contemporary American society.

Through nine different narrative voices, Lalami weaves a novel that shows how a single accident reveals the hidden tensions, racial divisions, and identity crises simmering beneath the surface of everyday American life. The novel aims not merely to tell a mystery story, but to deconstruct complex social and cultural structures, raising profound questions about justice, identity, and the possibility of coexistence in a multi-ethnic society.

This study does not read the novel as merely a crime story, but as an analytical document that deconstructs for us how "the other" is constructed through everyday speech and behavior, and how the second generation of immigrants (such as the character Nora Guerraoui, the victim's daughter) lives this experience from within.

## 2. Statement of the Problem

A review of previous studies reveals that most research on "the other" and immigration has focused on only one aspect. Either it has focused on discourse analysis (how the powerful speak about the weak) without paying attention to the immigrant's internal experience, or it has remained within the framework of general cultural theories without precise analytical tools for deconstructing texts.

The fundamental problem addressed by this study is that the phenomenon of "the other" cannot be fully understood through discourse analysis alone, nor through cultural theory alone. Discourse analysis (such as Teun van Dijk's approach) tells us how "the other" is constructed from the outside (through language, categorizations, and comparisons), but it does not tell us how this person classified as "other" lives the experience from within. Cultural theories (such as Homi Bhabha's concepts), on the other hand, provide philosophical depth for understanding hybridity and the third space, but they often lack the analytical precision necessary for deconstructing texts at the linguistic level.

Thus, this study asks: How can we build an integrated methodological framework that combines critical discourse analysis (to uncover the linguistic mechanisms of exclusion) with postcolonial theory (to understand the experience of living between cultures), so that we can provide a more comprehensive reading of the suffering of the second generation of immigrants as it appears in contemporary American literature?

**3. Research Questions**

To achieve its aim, this study seeks to answer the following main questions

_ Based on Van Dijk's model of Critical Discourse Analysis, how are otherness and the "us/them" binary constructed in The Other Americans (2019)?

_ Based on Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory, how is Nora Guerraoui's identity struggle constructed, and how does her transformation of exclusion into hybrid creativity operate in the Third Space?

_ How does the integration of Van Dijk's CDA and Bhabha's postcolonial theory provide a more comprehensive analytical framework for understanding second-generation immigrant identity than using either approach alone?

**4. Objectives of the Study**

This research aims to achieve three main objectives:

_Uncovering the discursive mechanisms employed by characters in the novel (such as Anderson, AJ, and Jeremy) to construct the image of "the Other" and reproduce the "us/them" binary, by applying Van Dijk's analytical tools (strategies of representation).
_Exploring how the character Nora Guerraoui (as a model of the second generation) lives her

identity struggle between her Moroccan home culture and American society, and how she transforms this exclusion into hybrid creativity within the Third Space, by applying Homi Bhabha's concepts (the Third Space, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Ambivalence).

_Demonstrating that the integration of Van Dijk's CDA and Bhabha's postcolonial theory is more effective for analyzing second-generation immigrant literature than using either approach alone.

**5. Significance of the Study**

The significance of this study manifests on three levels. On the theoretical level, this study presents a new integrated methodological framework that combines Critical Discourse Analysis (Van Dijk) with Postcolonial Theory (Homi Bhabha), an integration that has not been tested on a literary work in such a systematic methodological manner, demonstrating that this combination is more effective than using either approach alone. On the applied level, it provides a practical model that can be used later to analyze other literary works dealing with issues of immigration, identity, and diaspora, and it establishes clear analytical tools that any researcher can use to deconstruct exclusionary discourses in other texts. On the human and social level, it sheds light on the suffering of the second generation of immigrants, a large demographic group that lives a silent crisis of identity and belonging yet is rarely the focus of academic studies, and it contributes to understanding how literature can serve as a gateway to building empathy across cultural differences, as Laila Lalami's novel *The Other Americans* demonstrates that writing can be an act of resistance and self-reconstruction.

**6. Methodology**

**6.1 Research Design**

A Qualitative Descriptive Design will be employed. This approach was chosen because it provides a flexible and in-depth exploration of the linguistic, discursive, and existential dimensions embedded in the novel, and directly aligns with the central aim of the research: To investigate how exclusion is discursively constructed and how hybrid identity is lived through second-generation experience in Laila Lalami's *The Other Americans*. Thus, it directly facilitates answering the research questions that focus on deconstructing the discursive mechanisms of othering (through Van Dijk's framework) and understanding the internal experience of identity struggle (through Bhabha's concepts).

### 6.2 Research Instrument

Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) will be the general approach of analysis for this qualitative study to answer the previously structured research questions and objectives. The sample will comprise selected passages from Laila Lalami's novel *The Other Americans(2019),* which will be analyzed through two frameworks: Van Dijk's strategies of representation, to uncover the discursive mechanisms used to construct "the other" and reproduce the "us/them" binary; and Homi Bhabha's postcolonial concepts (Third Space, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Ambivalence), which highlight the construction of hybrid identity and the lived experience of exclusion from within.

### 6.3 Sampling Material

The sampling materials for this study consist of selected passages from Laila Lalami's novel *The Other Americans (2019),* which serves as the primary source, along with secondary sources including theoretical books such as Van Dijk's *Ideology* (1998), and Bhabha's *The Location of Culture (1994),* as well as peer-reviewed academic articles. Using purposive sampling, main characters are selected from the novel to represent different positions within the discourse of exclusion and identity negotiation. Passages involving these characters will be analyzed sequentially: first through Van Dijk's framework to uncover the discursive mechanisms of constructing "the other" and reproducing the "us/them" binary, then through Bhabha's concepts to understand the lived experience of hybrid identity and the transformation of exclusion into creativity within the Third Space.

## 7. Structure of the Thesis

This thesis is devided into three main chapters. Chapter One establishes the conceptual and historical context of immigration literature in America, discussing theoretical definitions of key concepts (identity, belonging, diaspora, displacement, alienation, and ideology), reviewing the history of immigration to America over four centuries, addressing issues of racism and discrimination through an analysis of the film *Hidden Figures (2016)* as a case study, focusing on the second generation of immigrants and the difference between first and second generations, and introducing the author Laila Lalami, highlighting her most prominent literary works, notably *The Other Americans (2019),* which serves as the primary focus of our study.

Chapter Two presents the theoretical framework, presenting Van Dijk's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis alongside Homi Bhabha's key concepts (Third Space, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Ambivalence), then presents a table integrating the two approaches showing how each complements the other, and discusses how Van Dijk's tools can be applied to the literary text with the necessary methodological adjustments.

Chapter Three provides the analytical application to *The Other Americans,* beginning with a summary of the novel, then moving to Van Dijk's approach to analyze exclusionary discourses in the novel through selected analytical categories, then to Bhabha's approach to analyze Nora's existential journey through the concepts of Third Space, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Ambivalence, and concluding with an integration section discussing how Van Dijk and Bhabha together provide a more complete picture than each can provide alone, followed by answers to the research questions.

# *Chapter One:*

# *The Conceptual and Historical Context of Immigration Literature in America – The Problematic of Identity and Belonging*

## Introduction

The dialectic of identity and belonging is among the most prominent major issues in contemporary thought (Hall, 1990). It is not merely fixed data but a continuous process of construction between the self and the other, where the legacies of the past oscillate with the challenges of the present (Bhabha, 1994). In the spaces of diaspora, this knot continues to escalate, creating a new existential reality that forces the immigrant to relinquish their roots, finding themselves in direct confrontation with alienation and a persistent feeling of loneliness and incomplete belonging (Safran, 1991). This drives them to settle in an interstitial space where the two cultures intersect and collide, from which hybridity emerges as a cultural condition that blends elements of different identities (Bhabha, 1994). It transforms identity into a composite structure constantly attempting to reconcile a distant past with a present in the process of formation, aiming for balance amidst the struggle of affiliations and the pressures of living. Accordingly, this chapter discusses this dialectic in detail in terms of its terminology and historical development, introduces the novel The Other Americans and its author, and dedicates a section to racism within which the hidden faces of racism are analyzed through a practical example consisting of a brief analysis of Theodore Melfi's film Hidden Figures, The Terminological And Conceptual Framework

## 1.1 The Terminological And Conceptual Framwork

### 1.1.1 Identity and Belonging

Identity, according to Stuart Hall , is not a fixed thing, but rather something that constantly changes through our relationship with others. Belonging, on the other hand, is the feeling of being accepted as a real member of a society or group, and this requires emotional attachment and recognition from others ( Yuval-Davis, 2006).

### 1.1.2 Diaspora

Diaspora is a phenomenon that goes beyond mere geographical movement to deep psychological dimensions. According to William Safran, diaspora means that the immigrant maintains a living memory of their original homeland and feels not fully accepted in the new society (Safran, 1991, p. 83). Homi K. Bhabha adds that diaspora creates an "interstitial space" where a new identity is made, rather than simply transferring the old identity as it is (Bhabha, 1994, p. 53).

### 1.1.3 Displacement

Displacement means the separation of a person from their original culture due to forced or voluntary movement (migration, exile, refuge), or due to the imposition of a foreign culture on them as happens in colonialism. This is confirmed by Angelika Bammer, who describes displacement as "one of the most formative experiences of the modern century" (Bammer, 1994), because it combines both the spatial and psychological dimensions.

### 1.1.4 Alienation

Alienation is the feeling of isolation when a person is culturally torn between two identities. According to Teun A. Van Dijk, alienation is produced through media and political discourse that divides the world into "us" and "them," thereby marginalizing immigrants (Van Dijk, 2005, p. 9). João Pina-Cabral defines it as "a loss of presence," meaning that the immigrant doubts their relationship with the world and with others around them (Pina-Cabral, 2022, p. 85), which goes back to the concept of "subjective alienation as a reflex of objective alienation" (de Martino, 2005, p. 321).

### 1.1.5 Ideology

According to Van Dijk "Ideologies are the basis of the social representations shared by members of a group."Van Dijk, (1998). Ideology.

## 1.2 The Historical and Social Context of mmigration in America

Understanding the history of immigration in America is essential to grasping the country's cultural, economic, and social identity. From the first colonies to the present day, each wave of newcomers has reshaped American society while facing distinct challenges, including the displacement of Native populations, the forced migration of enslaved Africans, legal restrictions, and struggles over assimilation and belonging. This section presents the major periods of immigration to the United States, highlighting the origins, motivations, and reception of different immigrant groups over four centuries.

### 1.2.1The Colonial Wave (1607-1775)

In the early colonial period, many people came to America from Europe (Jones, 1992). Most of them were from Britain, but there were also Germans and Dutch (Galenson, 1981). The first English colony was called Jamestown, and it was established in 1607 (Library of Congress, n.d.). These people left Europe for different reasons. Some wanted religious freedom. Others wanted to escape poverty. Many also wanted to own land because owning land in Europe was very expensive and difficult. Most of these immigrants could not pay for their ship ticket. Instead, they worked for someone who paid their voyage (Galenson, 1981).

One famous ship was the Mayflower. It brought the Pilgrim Fathers in 1620. These people were very famous because they wanted religious independence (Johnson, 2020). However, not all migration was voluntary. In 1619, many Africans were brought to America by force and sold as slaves (Library of Congress). At that time, the immigrants lived in 13 colonies located along the eastern coast of the Atlantic Ocean.

### 1.2.2 Old Immigration (1820-1880)

Between 1820 and 1880, more than 7.5 million immigrants arrived in America, mostly from Ireland, Germany, and the Scandinavian countries (U.S. Department of Homeland Security, 2019). The Irish fled the Great Potato Famine (1845-1852), while the Germans escaped the political upheavals of 1848 (Jones, 1992; Hansen, 1940).

### 1.2.3 New Immigration (1880-1920)

During the period from 1880 to 1920, the sources of immigration changed significantly. Immigrants were no longer only from Northern and Western Europe; most came from Southern and Eastern Europe, as well as from Russia and Jewish communities (Jones, 1992). They were escaping hunger, poverty, and wars (Hansen, 1940). At the same time, America was in great need of workers in factories and mines because of the Industrial Revolution (U.S. Census Bureau, 1975).

These immigrants arrived at Ellis Island in New York, where they underwent medical and mental examinations (National Park Service, 2024). They settled in poor neighborhoods with people from their own countries to preserve their language and religion. However, with the beginning of World War I, America began to place limits on the number of immigrants, especially after the Immigration Act of 1924 (Johnson-Reed Act) (U.S. Congress, 1924). This law put pressure on older immigrants to abandon their native languages and prove their loyalty to America through "Americanization" policies (Higham, 1988).

### 1.2.4 From 1965 to the Present

After 1965, immigration to America changed completely (MPI, 2018). Immigrants were no longer mostly from Europe; instead, America became a destination for people from all over the world (Pew Research Center, 2015). Many Latinos and Arabs came to America during this period (Pew Research Center, 2015). This change occurred because the United States passed a new law in 1965 called the Hart-Celler Act (Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965), which ended the National Origins Formula that had favored European immigrants (MPI, 2018). The law opened the door for people from other countries to come to America (U.S. Congress, 1965). Immigrants came for various reasons: some wanted to escape political conflicts in their home countries, others sought better education or improved living conditions, and many came to join family members already residing in America. In fact, family reunification became a legal priority for immigrants (MPI, 2018).

## 1.3 Belonging and Identity Gap

Having gone through the history of the phenomenon of American immigration, we can assert that the recent period, till now, has been the era during which the problems of belonging and identity appeared. During the previous eras, the immigrant had to fully assimilate himself or herself with the host culture (melting pot). However, there was a reversal with the appearance of multiculturalism, which was in the demand of the immigrant for political rights without losing his or her identity.

Indeed, the global progress and convenience of traveling and communications caused another phenomenon called cross-border diaspora (transnationalism), which meant the immigrant's possibility of reaching home and family with no trouble. Therefore, the twodimensional nature of such existence, namely, the necessity to be physically located in

America and spiritually in the home country created a constant belonging problem and thus led to the interstitial state between one's root and reality.

An imposed identity phenomenon abroad arose among Arabs and Latinos, which compelled them to define themselves as a reaction to stereotypes presented by the host society, including the mass media and politics. Such an understanding of belonging transformed it into an existential issue within the framework of the Other.

The term "1.5 generation" first appeared in academic literature in the late 1960s. It was coined by the Cuban-American sociologist Rubén Rumbaut in 1969 (Rumbaut, 2004) . The term refers to immigrants who arrived in a new country during childhood or early adolescence. They possess all the rights and foundations of being American, yet this comes after the deep-rooted memories and values of their original homeland had already taken hold. They are classified as facing the most difficult belonging crisis, resulting in a hybrid and unstable identity (Migration Policy Institute, 2018) .

The period has also witnessed the consideration of religion as a cultural barrier. In the past, most immigrants shared the same religion as the native population. However, over the years, new religions arrived in the country with significant presence, most notably Islam, making religion a distinctive marker that sets the immigrant apart and places them in the category of the Other, rather than integrating them.

**1.4 Racism and Discrimination**

The United States of America is a global meeting point and a host to numerous nationalities and religions. However, within its social practices, it is not free from instances of racism and discrimination. These practices have shifted from traditional, explicit forms such as slavery in the past to more complex forms, where discrimination is now practiced based on cultural, religious, linguistic, and physical differences. This has made the process of belonging conditional upon the immigrant's ability to conform to American cultural standards and abandon their distinctiveness.

Among the most prominent forms in which racism has manifested are the systems of work and housing. New immigrants, especially Arabs and Muslims, face difficulties accessing the same job opportunities and wages despite their high qualifications. Waves of fear have also emerged toward immigrants who do not adhere to the Christian faith, viewing them as a threat to the "pure" American identity. Additionally, they face discrimination due to their accent or their choice to speak their native language in public spaces, which immigrants perceive as a form of racism that denies their right to preserve their identity.

Among the pivotal events of this period were the September 11, 2001 attacks (9/11 Commission Report, 2004) . These tragic events resulted in the loss of nearly 3,000 lives and became a pivotal moment in modern history. In direct response, the United States launched what it called the "War on Terror," beginning with the invasion of Afghanistan. Following investigations into the nationalities of the alleged perpetrators, it was reported that the majority were of Arab nationality and of the Islamic faith. This entrenched the idea that Arab

Muslims are terrorists, turning it into a pretext for practicing systematic racial discrimination against Arabs and Muslims under the guise of counterterrorism. An Arab name, an Islamic appearance, or Islamic religious practices became sufficient to place individuals on watch lists or subject them to interrogation and arbitrary detention. This cast doubt on their sense of belonging, led to the isolation of entire communities, and created a climate of fear around expressing Arab-Islamic identity. This fear was not limited to the generation that witnessed the events but extended to their children, who were born and raised in America, and persists to this day.

Thus, the effects of that period did not come to an end with the passage of time; rather, they were reproduced within contemporary systems and political discourses, particularly during the current presidency of Donald Trump, which has witnessed an escalation of racist attitudes toward immigrants residing in the United States of America. Trump has repeatedly employed descriptions of immigrants and their regions of origin that carry clear racist connotations. Among the most notable examples are his remarks describing countries in Africa and Latin America as "shithole countries" (The Washington Post, 2018), while questioning why immigrants from Norway are not welcomed instead. He has also characterized immigrants from Somalia and other regions as "garbage," claiming that they "contribute nothing" (The Washington Post, 2019) .Moreover, he has repeatedly used the phrase "poisoning the blood of the nation" (The New York Times, 2023). He further launched personal attacks against Muslim Congresswoman ILHAN OMAR, stating that she was "trash" and that she does not belong to the country (New York Daily News, 2019) .

Trump's racism was not confined to inflammatory rhetoric; it was also translated into stringent legal measures. These included the imposition of strict restrictions, most notably the "travel ban," which directly targeted countries with Muslim and African majorities, along with the suspension of immigration applications from nineteen other countries. In a significant shift in asylum policy, the annual refugee admission cap was reduced to historically unprecedented levels, while priority was granted to specific ethnic groups, such as Afrikaners from South Africa. Consequently, immigration policies under President Trump were not merely administrative procedures aimed at regulating borders, but rather reflected a radical transformation in the concept of "American identity."

As you analyze various forms of discrimination in American society, it would be important to know that many academic studies have found this topic very interesting, and have made it a core aspect in the study of culture and art. Neither literature nor cinema has been immune from representing this phenomenon in different artistic expressions, which go from past to present times, showing the hardship of the minority people and their fight for acceptance.

Among the most prominent of these works is the film Hidden Figures, directed by Theodore MELFI. This film was meticulously analyzed by Dr. ELBAH ZOULAIKHA in her research titled: "American Dream for African-American Women: A Reality or an Illusion The Case Study of Theodore MELFI'S Film Hidden Figures (2016)."

### 1.4.1 Elbah's Analysis of *Hidden Figures* (2016) Between Discrimination and the American Dream

The film *Hidden Figures* (2016), directed by Theodore Melfi, recounts the true story of three African-American mathematicians at NASA in the 1960s: Katherine Johnson, Dorothy Vaughan, and Mary Jackson. They worked in the "Human Computers" department, facing both racial segregation and gender discrimination while contributing to the Space Race (Elbah, 2024, p. 456).

The three protagonists face different forms of discrimination (Elbah, 2024, pp. 457-461) Katherine Johnson experiences workplace discrimination despite working in the white sector, she cannot touch their coffee pot or use their toilet; Mary Jackson faces discrimination in education, needing a judge's permission to attend night classes at an all-white high school, and even in the courtroom there are "Coloured" seats; Dorothy Vaughan, head of the West Area Computers, is denied promotion as a supervisor in NASA's program. Despite these obstacles, the three women achieve their goals. The turning point comes with Al Harrison's famous quote, "Here at NASA we all pee the same color," when he tears down the "white toilet" and "colored toilet" signs.

In her study titled "American Dream for African-American Women: A Reality or an Illusion The Case Study of Theodore Melfi's Film *Hidden Figures* (2016)," the researcher Zoulaikha Elbah presents an in-depth academic reading of the film, stemming from a fundamental problematic: Is the American Dream a reality that African-American women can achieve, or is it merely an illusion? The study is based on two main hypotheses: (1) The American Dream for black women is merely an illusion; (2) Black women can achieve the American Dream through hard work and determination. The researcher employs the Thematic Analysis approach, according to the model of Braun & Clarke (2006), identifying key themes: the American Dream, racial segregation, gender segregation, revolt against segregation, and discrimination as a catalyst.

According to the researcher Elbah Zoulaikha, the film shows the courtroom as a place of justice to be discriminatory. Nonetheless, the appeal of Mary Jackson proves that the courts can become a tool for change through a just and unbiased judge. In particular, the researcher highlights that the film has managed to portray a positive picture about black people as it seeks to show that "skin color does not make a difference in the sense of being human." She concludes by stating that "ethnic diversity is one of the major strengths of America." Another key message that the researcher sees in the film is that "discrimination affected both black people and America's goals."

Furthermore, the researcher highlights the patriotism of black people and their love for America. They choose peaceful struggle over violence, sending the message: "We belong to this land just as much as you do." The researcher also provides a profound interpretation of the title: "The word 'figures' might refer to the numbers the heroines work with, but '*Hidden Figures*' also refers to black people themselves, whom white society rendered 'hidden'

despite their great achievements." She also reads a deep paradox in the characters' use of the word "Negro." They use it not because it expresses their true identity, but because white society imposed it upon them. However, through their achievements, they redefine this word to become a symbol of pride and resilience.

From the thorough analysis, it is clear that African-American women, just like any other American, had their American Dream. Even though they faced discrimination because of race and gender, having a strong character, being courageous, and having determination helped them to accomplish their American Dream. This analysis is very relevant to the topic of my thesis research since I want to explore how second-generation immigrants in American literature face discrimination and identity crisis and use literary writing as a tool for resistance.

## 1.5 The Second Generation of Immigrants and the Identity Problematic in America

Sociology is the study of how people live together in societies and how their relationships shape their lives. One of the most important questions that sociology asks is: "Who am I in relation to others?" This question is at the heart of what we call the "identity problematic." The identity problematic refers to the confusion and difficulty a person feels when they belong to two different cultures at the same time. For example, the children of immigrants in America often grow up speaking one language at home and another at school. They celebrate holidays from their parents' country as well as American holidays. This double life may make them feel that they do not fully belong anywhere.

This problematic is not just an individual feeling; it is a widespread social phenomenon. The identity crisis experienced by children of immigrants from the second generation in America cannot be understood in isolation from the demographic and social reality surrounding them. According to data from the American Community Survey (U.S. Census Bureau, 2019), the second-generation population (U.S.-born children of immigrants) represents approximately 12.5% of the total U.S. population of the United States. They are a massive demographic group living a unique social reality. According to Farley & Alba,( 2002 )they outperform the first generation in levels of education, English language proficiency, and economic integration. However, this "success" has not protected them from feelings of alienation.

### 1.5.1 Second generation

#### 1.5.1.1 Biologically

They are the children who were born in the host country (America) to immigrant parents, and they are citizens by birth and immigrants by virtue of the culture they receive at home.

#### 1.5.1.2 Culturally

They are the generation of children who were socialized between two cultures the parental heritage and Western life values which makes them experience a duality of belonging.

#### 1.5.1.3 Biculturalism

Biculturalism refers to living between two different shores as the most prominent existential challenge for the children of the second generation, where the individual finds themselves compelled to reconcile a family heritage laden with values and memory, and a societal reality that imposes different behavioral patterns. As Berry (1997) states, individuals "maintain their original culture while simultaneously adopting the dominant culture, leading to a bicultural identity that allows effective functioning in both cultural contexts" (p. 9). This duality results in identity fragmentation and a constant feeling of alienation; yet it generates within them a capacity for cultural absorption and grants them a dual consciousness that helps them adapt to both cultures, thereby transforming it into an epistemic experience.

### 1.5.2 The difference between First- and Second-Generation Immigrants

The first generation refers to the individuals born outside the United States of America, and they represent the solid carrier of a fully-rooted identity, as the first-generation immigrant is considered a station of spatial alienation; thus, their identity remains linked to the origin.

Meanwhile, the second generation consists of the individuals who were born inside the United States of America and are considered the heirs of the diaspora they did not choose, opening their eyes to a struggle between what they found their fathers upon and what their American reality imposes. So, while the first generation suffers from the loss of the homeland, the suffering shifts and escalates into a loss of belonging and the search for identity among the children of the second generation.(Rumbaut,2004).

### 1.5.3 The Dialectics of Second-Generation Identity: Pressure, Negotiation, and Creativity

Building a composite identity among second-generation individuals passes through psychological and social challenges, where the individual faces dual pressures: pressure from the family, which continues to monitor and remind of origin and traditions for fear of drifting away from heritage, and pressure from the outside society, which may treat them as the

"Other" despite legal belonging. This creates an internal conflict between integrating into society or remaining faithful to one's roots, which, in turn, generates a feeling of alienation or guilt.

Nevertheless, the second-generation person is a proactive factor when it comes to constructing a complex identity for himself. The person engages in a deliberate and selective process during the everyday interaction between the two cultures that he can choose from freely depending on which one fits his concept about himself. For instance, he holds on to festivals and food as a way of maintaining an emotional attachment to his culture, but at the same time, he adopts values that come from his immediate surroundings, hence resulting in a blend that can comfortably navigate the world of cultures.

The space occupied by the second-generation individual, as an interstitial space (Bhabha, 1994), and despite the challenges and problems it poses, grants him a cultural fluency that enables him to navigate between the symbols, languages, and behavioral patterns of his original world and the American world. It also helps him expand his horizon from two different cultures into a critical vision; as he becomes capable of seeing the negatives and positives of each culture from multiple dimensions, and finds himself more able to confront the challenges of both cultures.

From this perspective, innovative cultural production emerges in the fields of literature, art, and music, where works have been produced that embody unprecedented scenes, particularly in the field of literature. Literature has witnessed a noticeable revival in the contemporary American intellectual scene, largely because it has been adopted as a means to express migration experiences among second-generation writers, whose works have contributed to enriching contemporary American literature.

### 1.6 The Representation of the Identity and Belonging Crisis in Second-Generation Literature

Migration, identity, and belonging are among the most influential experiences shaping our world, as they constitute some of the central issues that preoccupy most contemporary writers. These writers have excelled in producing literary works that marked a turning point in the contemporary literary scene. This literary output was not merely a transient phenomenon, but rather a reflection of their personal experiences of suffering and their ongoing struggle with issues of identity and belonging within societies where cultures

intersect and affiliations overlap, particularly among second-generation writers who find themselves torn between the culture of origin and the culture of the host country.

### 1.6.1 Second-Generation Writers and Their Literary Project

The second generation of immigrants in American literature represents a unique cultural and literary phenomenon, as writers of immigrant descent find themselves in a singular existential position: they are not fully part of their parents' original cultures, nor are they completely integrated into the mainstream American cultural fabric. This grants their works a character of double alienation, where writing becomes a means to explore the tension between nostalgia for heritage and the pressure of integration, offering a profound vision of contemporary identity transformations .

Second-generation immigrant writers are characterized by being born and raised in the United States, having been exposed to the mainstream American culture through school, media, and society, which explains their fluent mastery of the English language while their native languages may be limited. Nevertheless, they were raised in homes that carry the values and traditions of their parents' original cultures, placing them in a struggle between family expectations and the expectations of American society, to forge a unique creative experience from this contrast.

The works of these writers address profound themes, such as cultural negotiation: the process of reconciling two different and sometimes conflicting cultures, accompanied by a sense of alienation resulting from not fully belonging to either. They also highlight the invocation of memory and history to explore the complex relationship with the homeland of their parents and ancestors, alongside a constant striving for representation and resistance to simplified stereotypes of their identities, reaching the employment of language not only as a means of communication, but also as a barrier and a fundamental element in identity formation.

Among the most prominent contemporary names in the literature of identity and belonging in America, Laila Lalami stands out. In her writings, she explores themes of dual identity and the experience of Moroccans in the diaspora.

### 1.6.2 Who Is Laila Lalami?

Laila Lalami is a contemporary Moroccan-American writer and novelist, considered one of the most prominent literary voices. She was born in 1968 in Rabat, Morocco , She moved to the United States in 1992 to pursue her university studies, later settling there and beginning her academic and literary career. She writes her works in English ,She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics and works as a professor at the University of California, Riverside. Prominent themes in her works include issues of identity and cultural hybridity, immigration and exile, belonging and alienation, and the experiences of Arabs and Muslims in the West.

### 1.6.3 Major Works

*Hope and Other Dangerous Pursuits (2005)* was inspired by news of Moroccan immigrants drowning in the Strait of Gibraltar. The novel follows four characters who try to cross illegally to Spain, driven by economic and social despair, highlighting the issue of "AlHarqa" (illegal immigration).

*Secret Son (2009)* traces the psychological and social transformations of its protagonist Youssef El Mekki, who discovers his wealthy father after living in poverty, experiencing a class shock that leads to an existential breakdown. Youssef finds himself in a world that does not fully recognize him, making the novel a social critique of class, power, and identity.

*The Moor's Account (2014)* restores the voice of Mustafa al-Zamuri, a Moroccan slave erased from European records. After surviving a failed Spanish expedition, he lives with Native American tribes, caught between his origins and his new reality, surviving slavery but not marginalization.

*The Dream Hotel* follows Sara Hussein, an American woman of Moroccan origin, who is arrested not for a crime but because of a dream she had, in a society capable of analyzing dreams to predict intentions. The novel argues that discrimination has not disappeared but merely changed its form from clear racist laws to veiled exclusion, creating a feeling of not belonging for Sara.

Laila Lalami offers another acclaimed work in the contemporary literary scene: the novel *The Other Americans(2019)*, which sheds light on the fragility of coexistence in contemporary American society, and which will serve as the central literary text for the analysis in this study.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, this chapter has established the conceptual and historical groundwork necessary for examining the dialectic of identity and belonging in American immigration literature. It began by defining key concepts: identity as a fluid construct (Hall, 1990), belonging as an emotional process (Yuval-Davis, 2006), diaspora as a living memory of the homeland (Safran, 1991), displacement as a formative modern experience (Bammer, 1994), alienation as a product of exclusionary discourse (van Dijk, 2008, p. 9; Pina-Cabral, 2022, p. 85; de Martino, 2005, p. 321), ideology as the basis of social representations shared by members of a group (van Dijk, 1998, p. 8). The chapter then traced the historical waves of American immigration from the colonial period to the present, highlighting how shifts from the melting pot ideal to multiculturalism and transnationalism have intensified the belonging crisis, particularly for the "1.5 generation" and second-generation immigrants. It further examined contemporary manifestations of racism and discrimination in America, from post9/11 policies to the Trump era, and illustrated these dynamics through Dr. Zoulaikha Elbah's analysis of the film *Hidden Figures(2016),* Finally, the chapter introduced second-generation literature as a site of identity negotiation, presenting Laila Lalami as a case study and her novel *The Other Americans (2019)* as a literary embodiment of these struggles. Having laid this conceptual and historical foundation, the next chapter will present the theoretical framework that will provide the analytical tools for a deeper examination of Lalami's novel in the final analytical chapter

# *Chapter Two*

# *The Theoretical Framework_ Binaries of Discourse and Spaces of Identity; An Integrative Approach to Van Dijk and Homi Bhabha*

## Introduction

This chapter aims to establish the theoretical and methodological foundations upon which the analysis of Laila Lalami's novel *The Other Americans* is built. Given the nature of the narrative, which addresses cultural conflict and the reproduction of identity within the context of migration, this framework is divided into two integrated paths, each serving a distinct yet complementary purpose, such that neither is complete without the other ,The first path proceeds from Teun van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis, focusing on the analytical categories selected from the novel based on the Ideological Square. Here, this path primarily uncovers the mechanisms of identity construction that is, how characters use language to classify themselves and others, to draw dividing lines between "us" and "them," and to implicitly legitimize power dynamics through the discourse they weave ,The second path turns toward Homi Bhabha's cultural theory, venturing into concepts that transcend rigid binaries such as "Hybridity," the "Third Space," "Mimicry," and "Ambivalence." While van Dijk deconstructs discursive strategies from the outside, Bhabha provides us with an interpretive vocabulary to penetrate the internal experience of identity.

## 2.1 CDA Origins and Van Dijk's Framework

The field of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was initially known as Critical Linguistics at the University of East Anglia since the 1970s through academics like Fowler, Hodge, Kress, and Trew (Fowler, Hodge, Kress, & Trew, 1979). The phrase "CDA" itself became popular in 1989 through Fairclough's classic book Language and Power (Fairclough, 1989) where CDA was informed by sociolinguistics, the Frankfurt School, and Foucault. From the early 1990s onwards, CDA started examining the construction of "us" and "them" in discourse, and how language legitimates or stigmatizes certain groups. The evolution of CDA is credited to some prominent contributors Van Dijk (ideological square), Fairclough (three dimensional model), and Ruth Wodak (discourse-historical approach).

Among these pioneers, Teun A. Van Dijk stands out for his "Socio-Cognitive Approach," which emphasizes the "missing link" between social structures and textual structures through "Mental Models" stored in memory (van Dijk, 1998). His intellectual project spans over five decades, passing through several stages: text linguistics in the 1970s (van Dijk, 1972), the psychology of text processing with Kintsch in the 1980s (Kintsch & van Dijk, 1978), media and news discourse analysis in the late 1980s (van Dijk, 1988a, 1988b), the relationship

between discourse and racism from the 1980s onwards (van Dijk, 1993), before developing an integrated theory of ideology in the late 1990s (van Dijk, 1998).

At the operational level, Van Dijk developed the Ideological Square, one of the most famous frameworks in CDA. Its primary goal is to reveal how speakers use language to present themselves in an ideal light while marginalizing others. This square is based on four fundamental strategies: emphasizing Our good things (focusing on our achievements and values, e.g., "We support democracy"), emphasizing Their bad things (magnifying the opponent's mistakes, e.g., "They threaten stability"), de-emphasizing Our bad things (hiding or justifying our mistakes, e.g., labeling a mistake as a "side effect"), and de-emphasizing Their good things (ignoring or undermining the opponent's successes, attributing them to luck). Based on the four strategies of the Ideological Square, Van Dijk developed a systematic set of (44) analytical categories (ideological categories) distributed across different levels of discourse (semantic, argumentative, and rhetorical). From these categories, I have selected those that suit the nature of the novel *The Other Americans*, which will be applied later in Chapter Three.

## 2.2 Analytical Categories Used in the Study

Based on Van Dijk's theoretical framework, this study adopts analytical categories, selected for their suitability to the nature of the literary text and their ability to reveal the mechanisms of identity construction, categorization, and discrimination in the characters' discourse:

### 2.2.1 Categorization

The way characters classify themselves and others within specific identity categories (American, Moroccan, Muslim, immigrant, citizen…). This includes self-categorisation and other-categorisation.

### 2.2.2 Euphemism

The use of a "soft" or "polite" word or phrase instead of a harsh, direct, or embarrassing one, in order to soften the impact of speech on the listener and avoid shock or offense.

### 2.2.3 Comparison

Placing the self and the other in a comparative relationship to highlight the superiority of the former or the inferiority of the latter. This includes explicit comparisons (e.g., "we are better than them") and implicit ones (through implication).

### 2.2.4 Generalization

Transforming the characteristics of an individual or a small group into universal attributes attached to an entire group. This is often used in racist discourse to justify discrimination against entire categories.

### 2.2.5 Amplification and Mitigation

Exaggerating or downplaying certain events or attributes to serve the ideological vision. Amplification involves exaggerating negative events about the other, while mitigation involves downplaying positive events about the other or negative events about the self.

### 2.2.6 National Self Glorification

The speaker praises his country, its history, and its traditions to show that "we" are better, more righteous, and more deserving than "they" are.

### 2.2.7 Negative Other-Presentation

Describing "others" using negative terms and applying standards and values to them in a biased manner in order to make them appear inferior or bad.

### 2.2.8 Victimization

When "others" are presented as a threat, "we" are shown as victims of that threat.

### 2.2.9 Disclaimer

The speaker first mentions a positive quality about themselves or acknowledges another point of view, then uses "but" to shift the focus entirely to the negative aspects of "others."

### 2.2.10 Polarization

It is the division of people into only two opposing groups: "us" and "them," where our group is portrayed positively, while the other group is portrayed negatively or as a threat.

### 2.2.11 Burden

Portraying the Other (immigrant, refugee) as a "weight" on society

### 2.2.12 Hyperbole

Exaggerating facts to make something seem bigger and more dangerous than it really is.

Van Dijk's ideological categories were designed to analyze media and political discourse, which claim objectivity. The novel, however, is a fictional text that makes no such claim. Therefore, applying these tools to the novel requires a methodological adaptation based on two principles ; First: We analyze the characters' discourse, but we do not attribute their words directly to the author, Second: The narrator's stance toward the characters reveals the author's true position. If a racist character appears and the narrator mocks them, this means the author is criticizing racism, not promoting it. Thus, the presence of racist discourse in a novel does not mean the author is racist. The goal may be to expose this discourse or critique the society that produces it.

## 2.3 Homi K. Bhabha's Theoritical Framework

The Third Space theory, developed by the Indian-American theorist Homi Bhabha, is considered a cornerstone of post-colonial studies (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture, 1994*). His ideas have sparked a paradigm shift in our understanding of cultural relations and identities in the post-colonial world (Bhabha, 1994).

The Third Space theory serves as the foundation of Bhabha's intellectual project, which aims to deconstruct the binary rigidity inherited from colonial thought (Bhabha, 1994). Bhabha describes cultural identity as a process of continuous change, where an intellectual and liminal (in-between) space emerges from the conflict and negotiation between two different cultures (Bhabha, 1994). This process culminates in the production of a 'Third Space' that belongs to neither of them (Bhabha, 1994).

A correct understanding of Bhabha's Third Space theory necessitates linking it to the core concepts he himself formulated, namely:

### 2.3.1 Hybridity

It is the direct result of the Third Space. Instead of one culture absorbing another, a hybrid mixture emerges that does not fully belong to either (Bhabha, *The Location of Culture, 1994)*. Bhabha argues that cultures are not pure, self-contained entities, as portrayed by colonial thought which divided the world into 'center/periphery' or 'civilized/savage' but are rather in a state of continuous interaction and blending (Bhabha, 1994). Hybridity is the new cultural product arising from this interaction; it does not merely mean mixing, but is a process that creates something inherently different and original (Bhabha, 1994).

In the "Third Space," hybridity becomes an element of power rather than one of lack thereof. Hybrids become sources of power since they have been contributing to the destabilization of the power balance. When the subaltern subject borrows language from the colonizer and makes use of it within his or her cultural environment, this action destabilizes the dominant position of the initial language user (Bhabha, 1994). The "Third Space" also acts as the "laboratory of culture" where the latter has never before existed (Bhabha, 1994).

### 2.3.2 In-between Space

Bhabha explains that cultural innovation does not stem from fixed or central identities, but rather emerges from the spaces located between identities, where differences collide and overlap, and meanings are reshaped to generate something new that no one has experienced before (Bhabha, 1994).

In particular, he notes that cultures are neither closed nor static entities but are always changing through their engagement with each other. It is on this basis that Bhabha asserts that when cultures meet each other because of colonialism, migration, or globalization, one culture cannot obliterate the other but will instead create an intermediary a space of "inbetweenness" (Bhabha, 1994).

This zone is the Third Space. It is a space of "disruption" that does not fully conform to the rules of the original culture nor to those of the incoming culture, and it rejects complete belonging to either side (Bhabha, 1994).

Within this space, masks fall away and identity becomes fluid and mobile. In other words, the individual is no longer forced to cling to a rigid identity or imitate ready-made molds;

instead, they can freely redefine themselves and create a new identity that emerges from the interaction of cultures rather than from complete belonging to any single one (Bhabha, 1994).

### 2.3.3 Mimicry

This concept indicates the colonizer's endeavor to push the colonized to adopt their style and resemble them, while maintaining a distance that prevents them from being exactly identical (Bhabha*, The Location of Culture, 1994*). The colonized is required to be close to the colonizer's model, but without equalling it (Bhabha, 1994). This mimicry produces a flawed resemblance, which makes it a source of threat to colonial authority because it creates a version that is similar yet different, unsettling the colonizer and instilling a sense of insecurity (Bhabha, 1994).

### 2.3.4 Ambivalence

Ambivalence means that the immigrant feels two contradictory things at the same time: attraction and rejection (Bhabha, 1994) , Colonial discourse views the immigrant from two angles: on one hand, as "desirable" because they are a labor force or a source of cultural diversity. On the other hand, as "threatening" because they might corrupt the "purity" of national identity.

For second-generation individuals, this ambivalence creates constant anxiety. They are not fully "native" (because they grew up in America), nor are they completely "American" (because society does not accept them as real Americans due to their names or origins).

Bhabha transcends the rigid binary model used by Edward Said in his book *Orientalism*, where Said divided the world into a controlling "West" and a subordinate "East" (Said, 1978/2003, p. 3). Bhabha asserts that there is no pure or authentic culture; all cultures are the product of continuous interaction (Bhabha, 1994).

From this perspective, Bhabha's theory complements what Van Dijk's approach offers. Van Dijk analyzes language from the outside, while Bhabha understands the human experience from the inside.

**Table 1.**

*Integrative table between Teun van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis and Homi K. Bhabha's Postcolonial Studies* (based on Van Dijk ,Ideology (1998) ; Bhabha,The Location of Culture (1994).

| ASPECT | TEUN VAN DJIK | HOMI. K BHABHA | HOW EACH COMPLEMENTS THE OTHER ? |
|---|---|---|---|
| **FIELD** | Critical discourse Analysis | Post colonial studies | Precise linguistics Analysis + Deep Cultural Interprétation |
| **MAIN CONCERN** | Uncovering power and ideology in discourse | Dismantling rigide binaries and understanding hybrid identity | Revealing mechanisms of domination + understanding forms of resistence |
| **TOOL** | •Ideological square •representation strategies •Analytical categories | •Third space •Hybridity •Mimicry •Ambivalence | Precise analytical tools + comprehensive interpretive concepts |
| **TYPE OF ANALYSES** | Precise linguistic analysis (quantitative+ qualitative) | Philosophical hermeneutic analysis ( qualitative) | Methodological precision + Philosophical depth |
| **VIEW OF IDENTITY** | Discursive construction based on categorization (Us/ Them ) | Continuous process of hybrid fluidity | Identity = discursive categorisation + Existential experience |
| **VIEW OF THE OTHER** | Object of discrimination and exclusion in discourse | Space for Negotiation Resistence and Hybridity | The other = victim of discrimination + Agent of resistence |
| **LIMITATIONS** | Does not explain the existential dimention | Lacks precise analytical tools ; remains theoritical | Each approach fills the |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | of identity ; does not give inner voice experience | in many cases | gap of the other |
| **HOW EACH COMPLEMENTS THE OTHER ?** | Bhabha complements Van Dijk : adds human and existential dimention ; explain the experience of living between cultures | Van Djik complements Bhabha : adds analytical and linguistic precision; provides concret mechanisms for text analysis | Bhabha adds depth And Van Dijk adds precision |
| **APPLICATION TO THE NOVEL** | Van djik analyzes character strategies in categorizing self and other | Bhabha interprets character's position in the third space and how they experience Hybridity | Integrative Reading : Understanding the character's on two levels linguistic + behaviors existential depth |

## Conclusion

This chapter has established an integrative theoretical framework combining Teun van Dijk's Critical Discourse Analysis and Homi K. Bhabha's postcolonial theory, not as separate approaches but as complementary tools for reading Laila Lalami's *The Other Americans.* Van Dijk provides analytical precision through the Ideological Square, , and analytical categories that deconstruct how characters linguistically construct "self" and "other" through mechanisms of categorization and exclusion. Bhabha, in contrast, offers existential depth through concepts of Hybridity, the Third Space, Mimicry, and Ambivalence, illuminating the lived experience of characters who inhabit the in-between zone between cultures. As the comparative table demonstrates, each approach fills the gap of the other: Van Dijk without Bhabha remains technically precise but existentially shallow, while Bhabha without Van Dijk remains theoretically rich but methodologically elusive. The integrative outcome, summarized in the equation identity = how it is said + how it is lived, provides the operational foundation for the next chapter, which will apply this dual framework to selected passages from the novel in order to reveal how the image of the "other American" is shaped and negotiated within the narrative text.

# *Chapter Three*

# *The Dilemma of Belonging in The Other Americans 2019*

**Introduction**

This chapter aims to analyze Laila Lalami's novel *The Other Americans(2019) ,* focusing on the character of Nora Guerraoui as a model of the second generation of immigrants. The analysis will draw on two integrated theories: Teun van Dijk's theory of exclusion discourse analysis, and Homi Bhabha's theory of hybridity and the Third Space ,The chapter will demonstrate that exclusionary discourse does not always appear in the form of explicit hatred, but rather through subtle, everyday linguistic strategies (such as categorization, generalization, and justification) employed by characters like Anderson, AJ, and Jeremy. It will also reveal that Nora's experience differs radically from that of the first generation; she does not suffer from the alienation of place but rather from the alienation of identity, being born in America yet not recognized by society as fully American ,We will see how Nora transforms this exclusion into creative power through jazz music, establishing a hybrid identity in a "Third Space" that transcends the native/foreigner binary. Thus, this chapter answers two questions: How is the Other discursively constructed? And how is the self reconstructed from within this discourse?

**3.1 Summary of *The Other Americans (2019)* by Laila Lalami**

The novel revolves around a mysterious hit-and-run incident in California involving a Moroccan immigrant named Driss Guerraoui, who owned a simple cafe in the Mojave Desert. The novel is not merely a police mystery; it is treated as a possibly contrived incident, where the psychological and social repercussions on those surrounding the victim begin, and here lies the focus of novelist Laila Lalami. The events are narrated from the perspectives of nine different characters, including the victim's family, an undocumented eyewitness, neighbors, and others. This narrative multiplicity reveals that truth is not singular but fragmented and contradictory, allowing for an exploration of the racial and class divisions that govern American society.

The novel highlights the psychological level of trauma and loss within the immigrant family context, especially the daughter Nora, whose grief and questioning are compounded by a constant feeling of insecurity and fragile belonging. She emerges as a character embodying the model of identity conflict between Moroccan roots and American reality. After experiencing the stages of grief and a persistent feeling of incomplete belonging, Nora deals with her sorrow by transforming it into a drive to understand the truth and explore gaps she didn't know about her family and herself. This helps her understand her complex identity,

choosing to express her feelings through jazz music, making it a distinctive third space of her own.

In presenting her novel, Lalami relied on a quiet and deep linguistic style, far from the usual suspense in crime novels. She used the mystery template as a means to unveil the dysfunctional social structure within American society, aiming to amplify the voice of immigrants. She emphasizes that the real division lies not only in cultural differences but in the absence of empathy and justice.

Lalami began writing the novel two years before Donald Trump was elected president, which strengthened the connection between the novel and American reality amidst the rise of nationalist rhetoric concerning immigration and identity. The novel has won several awards, including the National Book Award in 2019 and the Arab American Book Award in 2020.

### 3.2 Van Dijk's Exclusion Discourse: The Manufacturing of Otherness in *The Other Americans (2019)*

The exclusionary discourse, proposed by Teun van Dijk, does not necessarily involve direct acts of aggression or hatred but emerges in the form of linguistic techniques that help reproduce the binary of "us" and "them." It consists of several analytical categories developed based on the Ideological Square ,That that work in conjunction as part of a concealed process of accentuating the positive attributes of the self and the negative aspects of the other, whereas negative attributes of the self and positive attributes of the other are minimized.

In the novel titled *The Other Americans,* the nine characters speak either from the position of those who have the ability to define the "real American," or from the perspective of those who are marginalized by such a definition. By applying the aforementioned analytical categories to the discourse of the key characters of the novel, it will become clear how otherness is created not in the open hate speech but through the accumulation of innocent statements.

Drawing on the selected analytical categories derived from the Ideological Square, the following analysis will examine selected quotations from the novel, classifying each quotation under its relevant category and explaining the exclusionary mechanisms they employ.

### 3.2.1 National Self Glorification

Anderson consistently highlights the virtues of the "native" American community. He emphasizes his family's deep roots in the land to establish moral superiority. He asserts: "I was born here. My father was born here. His father before him" (Lalami,2019, p.73). Here, Anderson magnifies the authenticity and legitimacy of his lineage, presenting "us" as the rightful inhabitants with a long history of belonging. This chronological precedence is transformed into a perceived moral right to ownership and dominance.

### 3.2.2 Victimiszation

Anderson continues to portray immigrants as outsiders who infringe upon the rights of the "native" American community. He presents "us" as victims who were neither consulted nor given the right to choose. He states: "They didn't ask if we wanted them there, they just came" (Lalami, 2019, p. 68).

In this statement, Anderson depicts "them" as individuals who crossed into the native community without respecting its wishes or consent. Moreover, the phrase "they just came" conveys a sudden and unwelcome action, reinforcing the image of "us" as victims whose agency has been ignored, while immigrants are framed as aggressors who imposed their presence by force.

Efraín, the undocumented witness, reveals how fear reproduces exclusion from within. He says: "I saw everything. But if I speak, they send me back. My children need me" (Lalami, 2019, p. 142). Efraín knows the truth ("I saw everything"), but fear of deportation prevents him from speaking. Even though he did not commit the crime, he still becomes a victim of the system. When he says "my children need me," he tries to justify his silence because he is afraid of losing his family. This quotation shows that exclusion creates fear, and fear can turn a witness into someone who stays silent and an innocent person into a victim.

### 3.2.3 Burden and Comparison

AJ, Anderson's son, adopts an even more aggressive tone. He frames immigrants not merely as intruders but as an economic drain on the nation. He states: "They come here, take our jobs, and don't even want to be American" The Other Americans (Lalami, 2019, p. 156).

In this statement, AJ describes immigrants as the reason Americans lose their jobs, while also accusing them of refusing to integrate into American society. The phrase "our jobs" sets up an implicit comparison between "us" (Americans who deserve the jobs) and "them"

(immigrants who take them). This comparative logic presents any gain for immigrants as a direct loss for Americans. Furthermore, the use of present tense verbs such as "come" and "take" makes the issue appear as a continuous threat. As a result, "they" are portrayed as a burden on society, whereas "we" are presented as the victims.

Maryam, Nora's mother, reflects on the loss of identity through a direct comparison between her past and present. She says: "Back home, we knew who we were. Here, we are nobody" (Lalami, 2019, p. 78). This quote shows the big difference between Maryam's life in Morocco and her life in America. In Morocco, she knew her identity and it was stable, but in America she feels that she has lost everything and become "nobody." The phrase "we are nobody" is not just an ordinary expression; it reflects the depth of suffering experienced by the first generation of immigrants. Maryam left her homeland, but she could not find a new home in America; her identity remained tied to Morocco, and this is the alienation of place.

### 3.2.4 Disclaimer

Anderson tries to present himself as understanding and balanced by first mentioning a positive opinion about immigrants before revealing his actual stance. He states: "Some people say I should be grateful for the business that the newcomers are bringing to the town, but the way I see it, they're changing this place"(Lalami, 2019, p. 68). Here, Anderson uses a disclaimer: he first concedes a positive aspect of immigration ("business") to appear fairminded. The conjunction "but" then signals a shift to his true focus: the negative impact ("changing this place"). The word "changing" carries a negative connotation here, implying unwelcome transformation. This strategy allows him to express exclusionary views while maintaining an image of reasonableness.

Anderson also uses a classic disclaimer to deny racism before expressing a discriminatory condition. He says: "I'm not racist. Some of my best customers are immigrants. I just think they should follow the rules like everyone else" (Lalami, 2019, p. 92). The opening phrase ("I'm not racist") is a face-saving strategy. The mention of "best customers" serves as false evidence of his fairness. However, the clause that follows ("they should follow the rules") presupposes that immigrants do not already do so, subtly reproducing discrimination while claiming neutrality.

### 3.2.5 Polarization and Categorization

Anderson uses a sharp "us vs. Them" distinction to create polarization and exclude immigrants from the national community. He states: "These people? They just showed up yesterday and think they own the place"(Lalami, 2019, p. 73). In this statement, the phrase "these people" distances immigrants and classifies them as a separate and different group. The accusation that they "think they own the place" reinforces their image as overstepping outsiders, in contrast to Anderson's view of himself and his community as the rightful owners with deep roots. In this way, a clear polarization is constructed between "us" as legitimate inhabitants and "them" as intruders, deepening the divide and turning the relationship into one based on exclusion and opposition.

A neighbor expresses a fixed and essential view of belonging that goes beyond legal status. He says: "I don't care that he's got papers. He's still not one of us. You can't wash off where you came from" (Lalami, 2019, p. 101). In this statement, legal citizenship ("got papers") is dismissed as insufficient for belonging. The phrase "not one of us" draws a clear boundary between "us" and "them." Meanwhile, the idea that "you can't wash off where you came from" presents identity as fixed and unchangeable, which permanently excludes the immigrant regardless of any efforts at integration.

Jeremy, a former soldier, rejects immigrants by arguing that they have different values. He states: "They're not like us. They have different values. They don't respect women. They don't believe in freedom" (Lalami, 2019, p. 98). In this statement, Jeremy divides people into "us" and "them." He attributes negative traits to immigrants, such as not respecting women and rejecting freedom, while assuming that "we" hold better values. In this way, he justifies his rejection of them and presents them as less human.

### 3.2.6 Negative Other-Presentation + Generalization

Anderson describes Driss, a Moroccan immigrant, by focusing on his cultural differences and treating them as something negative. He says: "That Moroccan guy thought he was better than us. His food, his music, his way of talking" (Lalami, 2019, p. 112). Here, Anderson reduces Driss to his nationality and sees his culture (food, music, speech) as proof that he is different and even superior. By listing these elements, he presents Driss's whole identity as something strange and unacceptable simply because it is different.

The generalization lies in linking negative traits to "that Moroccan guy" as an individual, then implicitly extending them to all Moroccans or immigrants. When Anderson criticizes "his food, his music, his way of talking," he is not merely judging Driss as an individual but passing judgment on an entire culture through one person. This transforms one person's differences into supposedly inherent traits of a whole group.

A customer in Driss's restaurant judges him through his accent. The customer says his accent is "heavy" and that he "was not from here" (Lalami, 2019, p. 34). The word "heavy" conveys a negative sense of foreignness and difficulty. Saying "was not from here" denies belonging, even if the person lives there. In this way, the way someone speaks is used as "proof" that they are an outsider.

The generalization lies in turning an individual feature (a heavy accent) into decisive evidence of non-belonging. The customer does not stop at describing Driss's accent; he concludes that he "was not from here," as if anyone with a different accent cannot be part of the community. This generalizes the idea that linguistic difference equals permanent alienation.

### 3.2.7 Hyperbole and Amplification

Anderson exaggerates the effects of immigration to make it seem like a serious threat. He says: "They're taking over. First the donut shop, then the diner. Next thing you know, we'll all be speaking Arabic" (Lalami, 2019, p. 88). In this statement, the phrase "taking over" suggests invasion rather than ordinary business competition. The sequence "first… then…" makes the process seem gradual but unstoppable. The final hyperbolic prediction "we'll all be speaking Arabic" wildly exaggerates the cultural impact to provoke fear. Thus, amplification lies in these three elements working together to turn normal social and economic changes into something threatening and alarming.

### 3.2.8 Euphemism, Disclaimer and Mitigation

AJ attempts to minimize a racist act by repositioning it as harmless. He says: "It was just a prank. Kids being kids. It's not like we burned down a church" (Lalami, 2019, p. 157). Here, AJ uses a euphemism by calling the act a "prank" (a playful joke) rather than a hate crime. He then justifies it through normalization ("kids being kids"). Finally, he employs a comparison with a more extreme hypothetical act (burning a church) to make the actual crime seem minor. This combination of euphemism and false comparison serves to de-emphasize

"our bad things" while deflecting responsibility. The mitigation lies in these three elements working together: euphemism, normalization, and false comparison, which collectively reduce the seriousness of the racist act and portray it as harmless.

### 3.3 From Language to Experience: Rethinking Identity Beyond Discourse Through Homi Bhabha

Van Dijk's analysis shows that exclusion in *The Other Americans(2019)* is not only based on direct hatred. Instead, it is built through many small everyday ways of speaking. It starts by limiting a person to one narrow identity and treating their difference as a weakness or defect. It also includes constant comparisons that make "us" seem better and morally superior, while "the Other" is seen as inferior. In addition, this discourse distorts reality by presenting the aggressor as a victim, increasing fear of outsiders, and reducing their humanity. As a result, "the Other" is always seen with suspicion and must constantly prove that they belong.

However, this leads to a bigger question: how does the "Other" actually live inside this discourse? How can a character like Nora continue without breaking down when she is always told that she does not belong? And how does she build her identity not only despite these conditions, but sometimes because of them?

Nora is chosen because she is a key example in this study as a second-generation character. In the previous section, characters such as Anderson, A.J., Jeremy, Maryam, and Efraín were studied to show how exclusion works in different ways. But the question of how exclusion is experienced from inside does not apply to all of them. Anderson and A.J. practice exclusion but do not suffer from it. Jeremy suffers from war trauma, not cultural exclusion. Maryam is stuck in the past and does not try to build a new identity. Efraín is focused on fear and survival and has not reached identity formation. Nora is different. The first generation feels alienation from place because they left their country. The second generation feels alienation of identity because they are born in a country but do not fully belong to it. Nora tries to connect two cultures. She experiences exclusion but does not collapse, and she turns her pain into music. That is why she is the best example to understand the inner experience of the "Other."

At this point, we can see the limits of Van Dijk's approach. He explains how the "Other" is built from the outside through language and discourse, but he does not explain how it feels from the inside. This is why we need Homi Bhabha's theory. Unlike Van Dijk, Bhabha

focuses not only on discourse but also on lived experience in in-between spaces. His concepts the Third Space, Hybridity, Mimicry, and Ambivalence give us tools to understand how Nora lives between two cultures. For this reason, we will focus on Nora alone as the core of this study.

### 3.3.1 The Third Space

The Third Space, as Homi Bhabha explains, is a space between two cultures that does not fully belong to either. In this space, fixed oppositions disappear and new identities emerge (Bhabha, 1994). Nora embodies this feeling when she says: "I felt like I was watching my own life from outside a window. Not quite inside, not quite outside" (Lalami, 2019, p. 203). Nora is not fully Moroccan because she was raised in America, nor is she fully American because society does not accept her due to her name and origin. This suspended position between two identities is the Third Space.

Nora explains her struggle with two languages: "At home, I speak Moroccan with my mother. At school, English with everyone else. Sometimes I feel like I have two tongues but no real voice" (Lalami, 2019, p. 67). This linguistic split reflects the Third Space as a painful everyday experience.

Nora's experience with difference began in childhood. She remembers how her classmates mocked her because she brought Moroccan food (zaalouk) to school:

> At recess, the kids fanned out and gathered again in small groups—military kids, church kids, trailer-park kids, hippie kids—groups in which I knew no one and no one knew me. I stayed behind by the blue wall that bordered the swings, and watched from a distance. In the cafeteria, I ate the zaalouk my mother had put in my lunchbox, while the other girls at my table whispered among themselves. Then Brittany Cutler, a pretty blonde with plaited hair and a toothy smile, turned to me and asked, 'What are you eating?' I looked up, immensely grateful for a chance to finally talk to someone. 'Eggplant!' 'It looks like poop (Lalami ,2019)

Her food, which was normal at home, became a reason for mockery and rejection. Nora adds: "They called me a poop-eater for the rest of the day, and no one wanted to sit next to me" (Lalami, 2019, p. 19). This is the rejection of difference in its simplest and most painful form.

Nora does not express her hybrid identity through words alone, but finds in music, especially jazz, a deeper way of expressing herself. She connects her choice of jazz to her story when she says:

"Jazz was born from pain. From people who were taken from their homes and forced to live somewhere else. That's my story too" (Lalami, 2019, p. 250). For Nora, jazz is not just a musical genre, but a history of pain, displacement, and cultural mixing. She connects this history to her own experience, as she also feels a form of displacement not physical, but cultural and psychological living between two identities without fully belonging to either.

She reinforces this idea when she says: "When I play, I don't feel torn anymore. For those few minutes, I am whole. I am both. I am neither. I am just music" (Lalami, 2019, p. 259). When she plays, she is no longer confined to fixed categories such as "Moroccan" or "American." She becomes "both" and "neither" at the same time, which reflects the nature of hybrid identity. Thus, jazz in Nora's experience can be understood as a symbolic Third Space, where fixed identities are destabilized and reconfigured. For Nora, music is not merely a form of entertainment, but a means of survival and self-construction, where pain is transformed into creativity.

### 3.3.2 Hybridity

Hybridity, according to Homi Bhabha, does not simply mean a mixture of two cultures. It is a creative process that produces a new identity different from its original sources. It breaks down the boundaries between "native" and "foreign," and between "us" and "them," showing that identity is not fixed but constantly changing and being reshaped. Bhabha presents this concept in his book *The Location of Culture (1994)*, where he links it to cultural interaction within "in-between spaces," where new meanings and identities are formed.

Nora embodies her hybrid identity through her engagement with jazz music, which she sees as the form of expression closest to her personal experience. She says: "I played jazz because it was the only music that made sense to me. It wasn't Moroccan. It wasn't purely American either. It was something in between, like me" (Lalami, 2019, p. 245).

For Nora, jazz does not belong fully to Morocco nor entirely to America; instead, it exists in an in-between space, just like her identity. Moreover, jazz itself is the result of multiple cultural influences (African, European, and American). By choosing it, Nora expresses a hybrid identity that goes beyond fixed and singular forms of belonging.

Nora clearly expresses her new identity when she says: "I was not the woman my mother wanted me to be. Nor was I the woman America expected me to be. I was something else. Something I was still writing" (Lalami ,2019, p.278).

This statement reflects Bhabha's idea of hybridity. Nora is neither the woman her mother wants her to be nor the image expected by American society. Instead, she is "something else," still in the process of becoming. In other words, Nora does not choose between two fixed identities. She creates a new one of her own, an identity that does not depend on others' approval but is continuously shaped and constructed by herself.

### 3.3.3 Mimicry

Mimicry, according to Homi Bhabha, is when a marginalized person tries to imitate the language, behavior, or appearance of those in power. However, this imitation is never complete, because there is always a small difference that makes the person "almost the same but not exactly the same." This difference is important because it reveals that power is not as stable as it seems. Instead, it exposes contradictions within the system through this imperfect resemblance.

Bhabha develops this concept in his book *The Location of Culture (1994)*, where he explains that mimicry is not simple imitation, but a way of revealing the weaknesses of dominant power structures. This mimicry is reflected in Nora's attempt to behave like an American, as she says: "I learned to speak English without an accent. I learned to dress like them, laugh like them, even think like them. But the moment I said my name, the mask fell" (Lalami, 2019, p. 188).

Nora puts a great effort into becoming like "them." She learns to speak English without an accent, dresses like them, laughs like them, and even tries to think like them. However, all of this collapses in a single moment when she says her name. The name alone breaks the mimicry and reveals her difference.This is precisely Bhabha's idea of mimicry: the attempt to fully resemble the Other never succeeds completely, because there is always a small sign that exposes the difference and prevents total sameness.

This idea is further reinforced when Nora says: "I am American. But when I say my name, they ask: 'No, where are you really from?'" (Lalam,2019, p.201). Nora defines herself as American, but society forcibly redefines her. Her name alone leads others to question her belonging, as if her American nationality is not real or not fully valid, as if there is another "true" identity hidden beneath it.

This shows that the failure of mimicry is not due to Nora's lack of effort or insufficient imitation. Rather, it is because society itself refuses to acknowledge this resemblance. It

insists on maintaining difference, as having a "distinct Other" serves its social structure and sustains ideas of superiority and exclusion.

Not only Nora engages in imitation; her father, Driss, does the same. Nora says about him: "He put up a huge flag outside his restaurant, like he had to prove he was one of the good ones" (Lalami ,2019, p.56). Driss, the Moroccan immigrant, places a large American flag in front of his restaurant. Why? Not simply because he loves America, but because he feels the need to "prove" that he is "one of the good ones." This is mimicry: Driss is trying to tell society, "I am like you, I am American, I am one of the good ones." Yet the very need for proof reveals that he is not fully accepted as such. If he were seen as a "real" American in the eyes of society, he would not need to prove it through a large flag. Nora adds: "God only knows why" (Lalam ,2019, p. 56) an expression that reflects her confusion and sadness. Her father loves this country despite everything: despite the burning, despite the racism, despite still being seen as "that Moroccan man." This is the depth of the tragedy.

### 3.3.4 Ambivalence

Ambivalence, according to Homi Bhabha, is a psychological state in which both the society and the migrant experience contradictory feelings at the same time. Society may benefit from migrants in terms of labor or productivity, yet it does not fully accept them as complete members of the community, especially in everyday social life such as relationships, marriage, or cultural belonging. In other words, migrants are welcomed when they are needed, but rejected when it comes to identity and full belonging.

On the other hand, the migrant feels a desire to integrate and belong to this society, but at the same time faces rejection or discrimination that makes them feel only partially accepted. Thus, acceptance and rejection coexist simultaneously, without any clear resolution to this contradiction. Nora illustrates how society experiences ambivalence when she describes the way migrants are viewed, saying: "They wanted us to work, to pay taxes, to serve their coffee. But they didn't want us to live next door. They didn't want us to marry their daughters" (Lalami ,2019, p.212).

This statement clearly reveals a state of ambivalence: society depends on migrants and needs them for work, taxation, and services, yet at the same time rejects them in everyday social life, such as living nearby or accepting them as marriage partners. Thus, migrants are accepted as an economic necessity but denied as equal members of social and human belonging.

As for Nora's experience, she loves America but also hates what it does to her. She says: "I loved this country. I really did. But I hated how it made me feel like a stranger in my own home" (Lalami ,2019, p.256). This statement clearly reflects a state of ambivalence, as Nora holds contradictory feelings toward America. She genuinely loves the country, yet at the same time rejects the feeling of being a stranger in her own homeland. The contradiction lies in the fact that the place that is supposed to be her home makes her feel like an outsider, which captures the tension between belonging and exclusion at the same time.

She adds: "I wanted to belong. But every time I tried, something reminded me that I didn't" (Lalami ,2019, p.167). Nora tries to belong and become part of the place, but every time she gets closer, something pulls her back into a feeling of estrangement: a question, a look, or even her name. Thus, non-belonging becomes a repeated everyday experience.Nora further reveals how ambivalence operates at the level of cultural and religious stereotyping. She says: "Growing up in this town, I had long ago learned that the savagery of a man named Mohammed was rarely questioned, but his humanity always had to be proven" (Lalami, 2019, p. 23). This quote shows how a person lives in a state of ambivalence. Society assumes that "Mohammed" is savage, and this assumption needs no proof or questioning. But in return, his humanity needs to be proven.

In other words, it is easy to accuse a Muslim person of savagery, but it is difficult to acknowledge that they are a normal human being. This puts Nora in a difficult situation. Her identity is always in doubt. Even if she does nothing wrong, she must constantly prove that she is not savage. She carries the burden of proving something she never did. This means that ambivalence is not a condition that can be easily resolved or overcome. Nora cannot separate her love for America from the rejection she feels within it. Instead, she lives this contradiction in a constant and ongoing way. This is exactly what Bhabha means:

ambivalence is not a problem to be solved, but a continuous lived experience.

### 3.4 Nora's Resistance: From Exclusion to Self-Definition

Nora's experience represents a clear example of how exclusion can be transformed into a force for rebuilding identity, where the individual is no longer trapped by marginalization but actively reshapes the self within it. Nora does not surrender to exclusion; instead, she develops different forms of resistance that allow her to rebuild her sense of self. One of the first forms of this resistance is her rejection of external classification. She refuses to let others define her identity or question her belonging, as she states: "I am American. I don't need to

prove that to anyone" (Lalami ,2019, p. 202). Through this statement, Nora asserts her identity as something already existing, not something that needs validation. She does not seek social approval; instead, she declares her belonging as a firm and direct reality.

In addition, Nora begins to reconcile with her personal and family past, gradually understanding her parents' experiences and limitations, especially after her father's death. She reflects: "My father wasn't perfect. But he tried. And maybe that's enough" (Lalami ,2019, p.280). This shift reflects her movement from strict judgment to understanding, and from internal conflict to a more balanced and compassionate view of human experience. Through this reconciliation, she frees herself from the burden of the past and develops a more stable sense of self.

Finally, Nora takes control of her own life by making independent choices regarding her relationships and artistic path, especially through music. Her decisions are no longer shaped by family expectations or social pressure, but by her own agency. She expresses this clearly when she says: "This is my life. Not my mother's. Not my father's. Not America's. Mine" (Lalami,2019,p. 290). This statement marks a turning point in her journey, as she reclaims ownership of her life and identity, separating herself from externally imposed definitions. Her life becomes something she actively constructs rather than something imposed upon her.

From a theoretical perspective, Nora's experience can be understood through Homi Bhabha's concept of identity formation within the "Third Space." Bhabha argues that identity is not fixed or complete, but is formed within in-between spaces where cultures interact and meanings are constantly negotiated. In this sense, Nora's resistance does not merely reject exclusion; it transforms it. Her identity emerges within a hybrid space where contradictions are not resolved but lived and continuously reworked. This aligns with Bhabha's idea that the "Other" is not only produced by systems of power but can also reinterpret those systems and generate new forms of subjectivity from within them.

Thus, Nora's journey reflects a process of self-definition that goes beyond imposed categories. She transforms exclusion into a space of creation, fragmentation into coherence, and displacement into identity formation, embodying Bhabha's view that identity is an ongoing, incomplete, and constantly evolving process.

### 3.5 Homi K. Bhabha and Van Dijk: Mechanisms of Operation and Rationale for Integration

In this analysis, I present a methodological integration between Van Dijk's approach to Critical Discourse Analysis and Homi Bhabha's postcolonial theory. This integration offers a rich analytical framework that surpasses the capacities of each approach if used alone.

I explain the mechanisms of operation through Van Dijk's approach (van Dijk, 2008), which works on three interconnected levels: the macro level (the overarching themes of the text), the micro level (fine linguistic structures such as sentences and vocabulary), and the contextual level (analysis of power relations, dominant ideologies, and social structures). Bhabha's theory (Bhabha, 1994), on the other hand, works on a different level; it deals with the "Third Space" where identities are formed in moments of cultural hybridity, the concept of "mimicry" which reveals the contradictions of power, and the mechanisms of "performative identity" through which the individual reshapes the self in spaces of alienation.

I see that the foundation of this integration is that any serious analysis of discourse in postcolonial contexts cannot be satisfied with the linguistic dimension alone, nor with the cultural dimension alone. The integration between the two approaches is based on the principle that each complements the other: Van Dijk's approach provides precise tools for analyzing texts at the linguistic level, while Bhabha's approach provides depth for understanding the complexities of identity and its psychological and cultural dimensions.

I identify the rationales for this integration on multiple levels. At the theoretical level, Van Dijk views discourse as a social practice that produces and reinforces power, while Bhabha views identity as a product of negotiation within spaces of difference. Together, they can examine cultural phenomena from two complementary angles: the angle of power and ideology, and the angle of identity and cultural hybridity. At the procedural level, this integration allows the researcher to move easily between detailed linguistic analysis and the analysis of identity and cultural experience. At the applied level, this dual framework is capable of analyzing complex texts such as the postcolonial novel, where it is impossible to separate linguistic structure from psychological and cultural dimensions.

I finally affirm that this integration is not merely a mechanical collection of tools from two different approaches; rather, it builds an integrated analytical framework in which the textual, discursive, and identity levels intertwine. This enables the analysis to understand the relationship between text, power, and identity simultaneously. In this sense, the joint

operation of Van Dijk and Bhabha constitutes a model of multi-level analysis that responds to the complexities of texts in the age of globalization and cultural hybridity.

**Conclusion**

In this chapter, we have seen how exclusion does not always come through obvious hatred, but through simple everyday words used by characters like Anderson and AJ. They emphasize the good things about "us" and the bad things about "them," while de-emphasizing the bad things about "us" and the good things about "them." In this way, the immigrant is transformed from a human being seeking a better life into an "Other" who is constantly threatening, even if they work hard and contribute to society, But Nora, the second generation daughter, is completely different from her father Driss. She does not suffer from the alienation of place like the first generation who left their homeland. Rather, she suffers from the alienation of identity. She was born in America, but society does not recognize her as fully American. Her name alone is enough to make people ask her: "Where are you really from?", Despite all this, Nora did not give up. She did not accept remaining a victim. She transformed her pain and frustration into creative power through jazz music, which she saw as an expression of her own experience. Jazz, as she says, was born from pain and displacement, just like her story. Through music, Nora built a new identity in a space between two cultures, neither fully Moroccan nor fully American, but something third, different, and creative, Thus, exclusion in Lalami's *The Other Americans* turns from a destructive force into an opportunity for creativity. The novel becomes a real voice for those who have no voice, and evidence that immigrant literature is not just a documentation of suffering, but an act of resistance and rebuilding the self.

# *General Conclusion*

After analyzing *The Other Americans (2019)* through the integration of Van Dijk and Bhabha, this study has reached several fundamental findings that contribute to a deeper understanding of the identity and belonging crisis among the second generation of immigrants in American literature.

The study has proven that the exclusionary discourse faced by second-generation individuals rarely comes in the form of explicit hatred or direct violence. Rather, it seeps in through subtle, everyday linguistic strategies. These strategies are more dangerous than explicit hatred because they hide behind words that appear "natural" and "neutral." When someone asks Nora "Where are you really from?" despite her being American, or when a customer describes her father's accent as "thick," these simple phrases daily reproduce exclusion, making the immigrant feel like a stranger even in their own country.

The study revealed that the second-generation character differs radically from the firstgeneration character in their relationship to the identity crisis. The first generation lives the alienation of place: they have migrated from their homeland and live in another country, but their identity remains tied to their origin. The second generation, however, lives the alienation of identity: they were born in the host country, but they do not feel they fully belong to it. This second alienation is deeper and more painful because the second-generation immigrant has no homeland to return to, nor can they be a full citizen in the country where they were born. They are suspended between two worlds, belonging fully to neither.

The study showed that the second-generation character, represented by Nora, does not stand as a passive victim of exclusion. Rather, they build a third hybrid identity, which is neither the parents' culture nor the host society's culture. This hybridity is not a weakness or a deformity; it is a source of strength and creativity. Nora does not choose between being Moroccan or American; she creates something third and new. This creation is evident in her choice of jazz music as an expression of her identity music born from pain and displacement, which is neither purely Moroccan nor purely American, but something in between. This means that the identity crisis of the second generation is not merely a crisis; it is also an opportunity for creating new and unprecedented identities.

The study proved that the methodological integration between Van Dijk and Bhabha is the most effective for analyzing second-generation literature. Van Dijk alone can deconstruct the linguistic mechanisms of exclusion, but he cannot explain how the immigrant lives from within. Bhabha alone can explain the experience of hybridity and the third space, but he lacks

the precise analytical tools to deconstruct discourse. Together, they provide a complete picture: Van Dijk analyzes the wound, and Bhabha follows how the wound heals or how the wound becomes a source of strength.

In light of these findings, it can be said that second-generation immigrant literature in America is not merely a social or historical document; it is a creative act of resistance. Through writing, the children of immigrants rebuild their fragmented identities and create a third space that is subject neither to the laws of the parents' culture nor to the laws of the host society. Writing becomes a means of survival, a means of self-affirmation, a means of saying "I exist" in the face of a discourse that says "you are not from here." Lalami's *The Other Americans (2019)* is a living example of this: Lalami does not offer solutions, but she offers a voice, a space, and a testimony.

Finally, the study concludes that the problem of the second generation of immigrants is not a passing or marginal problem; it is a fundamental problem that reflects the transformations of contemporary societies. In a world of increasing mobility and migration, and in societies becoming more diverse, the experience of the second generation those born in the host country but who do not feel they fully belong to it will become a paradigmatic experience for understanding the meaning of identity and citizenship in the twenty-first century. For this reason, studying second-generation literature is not an academic luxury; it is a necessity for understanding the future of multicultural societies.

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**Résumé**

Cette étude cherche à comprendre comment le discours d'exclusion est construit contre les immigrants dans le roman *Les Autres Américains* (2019) de Laila Lalami, et comment Nora, fille de la deuxième génération, vit son conflit entre la culture marocaine et la société américaine. L'étude utilise deux approches complémentaires : l'analyse critique du discours de Van Dijk pour révéler les mécanismes linguistiques de l'exclusion, et les concepts d'Homi Bhabha (le Troisième Espace, l'Hybridité, le Mimétisme et l'Ambivalence) pour comprendre l'expérience intérieure de l'identité. Elle adopte une méthodologie qualitative descriptive et analyse des passages choisis du roman. Les résultats montrent que le discours d'exclusion ne repose pas sur une haine explicite, mais sur des stratégies linguistiques quotidiennes subtiles qui reproduisent la binarité "nous" et "eux". Ils révèlent également que Nora ne reste pas une victime passive de l'exclusion; elle construit plutôt une identité hybride dans le Troisième Espace à travers la musique jazz, transformant l'exclusion en créativité. Son mimétisme échoue non pas à cause d'un manque chez elle, mais parce que la société refuse de l'accepter, tandis que l'ambivalence devient un état existentiel permanent d'attraction et de rejet. Cette étude démontre que l'intégration des deux approches offre un cadre analytique plus profond pour comprendre la littérature de la deuxième génération d'immigrés.

**Mots-clés** : Immigrés de deuxième génération, identité, tiers espace, *Les Autres Américains*, Teun van Dijk, Homi K. Bhabha.

**الملخص**

تسعى هذه الدراسة إلى فهم كيف يبُنى خطاب الإقصاء ضد المهاجرين في رواية الأمريكيون الآخرون، وكيف تعيش نورا، ابنة الجيل الثاني، صراعها بين الثقافة المغربية والمجتمع الأمريكي .تستخدم الدراسة منهجين متكاملين: تحليل الخطاب النقدي لفان دايك لكشف آليات الإقصاء اللغوية، ومفاهيم هومي بهابها) الفضاء الثالث، الهجنة، المحاكاة، والتردد (لفهم التجربة الداخلية للهوية، تعتمد الدراسة على التصميم الوصفي النوعي، وتحلل مقاطع مختارة من الرواية، تشير النتائج إلى أن خطاب الإقصاء لا يعتمد على الكراهية المباشرة، بل على استراتيجيات لغوية يومية خفية تعيد إنتاج ثنائية "نحن" و"هم"، كما تكشف أن نورا لا تقف كضحية سلبية، بل تبني هوية هجينة في الفضاء الثالث من خلال موسيقى الجاز، محولة الإقصاء إلى إبداع، وتفشل محاكاتها ليس بسبب نقص فيها بل لأن المجتمع يرفض قبولها، بينما يعيش التردد كحالة دائمة من الجذب والرفض، تثبت هذه الدراسة أن دمج المنهجين معا يوفر إطارا تحليليا أعمق لفهم أدب الجيل الثاني من المهاجرين.

**الكلمات المفتاحية**: المهاجرون من الجيل الثاني، الهوية، الفضاء الثالث، الأمريكان الاخرين، تيون فان دايك، هومي كا بابا.