The Family in the Contemporary American Society in
Diana Abu Jaber’s *Birds of Paradise* (2011)

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Abstract

This study discusses the concept of family in Diana Abu Jaber’s Birds of Paradise. It examines the cultural changes that happened to the Muir family, a modern nuclear American Family. As it is known, family is the bearer of culture. So, this work sheds light, too; on two emergent cultures, associated with family, in the contemporary American society: the adolescent’s independence and the food industry. Felice the daughter of the Muir runs away from her family and causes an immense suffering to them. Her brother Stanley works in the food industry. The depiction of his business is an implicit criticism of it. Dealing with cultural issues in an American culture marks the shift in Diana Abu Jaber’s themes. She changes the scope from issues concerning the Arab-American culture into problems that are related to the whole society. It can be a starting point for Diana Abu Jaber to choose the American identity.

Key Words: American Family, the city, Food industry, adolescent’s independence-
Diana Abu Jaber
ملخص

"طوير الجنة" هي رواية لديانا أبو جابر تناقش مفهوم العائلة. هذه الدراسة تفحص التغيير الثقافي الذي حدث للعائلة النموذجية وهي عائلة أمريكية حديثة. من المعروف أن العائلة هي قلب و حامل الثقافة. لهذا العمل يسلط الضوء على ظهور ثقافتين مرتبطة بالعائلة في المجتمع الأمريكي الحديث ألا و هي استقلالية المراهقين والأكل المعاصر الحديث (الصناعي). فليس هي ابنة العائلة الأمريكية تهرب من المنزل و تحدث معاناة كعبرة لأهلها و عائلتها. ستاللي يعمل في المخازن و المتاجر الصناعية للأكل الحديث تجسد تجارته هي نقد غير بارز و ظاهر للأكل المعاصر. التعامل مع المشاكل الثقافية في الثقافة الأمريكية يبرز التغير و التحول في مواضع أبو جابر. وقد غنبرت وجهتها من أزمات تخص الثقافة العربية الأمريكية إلى مشاكل المجتمع ككل. من الممكن أن تكون نقطة بداية لدى أبو جابر لاختيار الهوية الشخصية الأمريكية.

الكلمات المفتاحية:
المجتمع الأمريكي المعاصر المدنية الأكل المعاصر استقلالية المراهقين ديان أبو جابر
Dedication

I dedicate this work to:

My caring father and my dearest mother.

My husband, Hamza, thank you for always seeing me the best one.

My sisters, nephews, and my brother.
I would like to thank Miss. Haddad, my supervisor, for her support, guidance, and feedback.

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General Introduction

In the last decades, the literature of minorities especially the Arab-American one emerged as a new body in American literature. Most of those minorities found themselves in a clash between the culture of their ancestors and the one of the modern American society. This big issue of hybrid life becomes the center of their writings. Diana Abu Jaber is an Arab American writer whose most work deal with multi-cultural subjects associated generally with the quest of identity and the Arab culture in the American society. Then, in her latest novel *Birds of Paradise*, she changes the scope from Arab American Families to American modern family.

This novel is about an American family living in Miami. This family suffers because it loses, Felice who runs away from home and destroys her family’s stability. So, this work will address the Family in the contemporary American society in Diana Abu Jaber’s *Birds of Paradise*. It will tackle the main issues facing the family in the modern times with a particular reference to the city. It will also display the emerging new culture introduced to the American society.

The aim behind choosing this novel is to question Diana Abu Jaber’s writings that have changed from a complete deep portrayal the Arab culture into profound projecting image of the American culture in general.

This research raises many questions about the family in the contemporary American society. First, what are the characteristics of the contemporary society and
the culture depicted in the novel? Second, to what extend the character of Felice, the adolescent girl resemble Miami city.

To answer the study’s questions, Birds of Paradise will be analyzed through a cultural approach in order to evaluate the American modern life of families. This study will be divided into three chapters: the first chapter will define the family, and discuss the traditional family Vs the modern one to show in the next chapter how this new family form is depicted in the novel. It will investigate the factors that led to the emergence of the modern American family. The second chapter will discuss the aspects of modern family life in Birds of Paradise. The first part of the chapter will be devoted to a new culture that is called Independence of adolescence. The second part will devoted to the second aspect that is to say the spread of food industry as a part of modern culture. The third chapter will tackle the shift in the writer's work. It will be displayed through comparing Birds of Paradise to the previous novels.

In fact, there are important books that will help in this research, for instance: the Making of an Idea, an Institution, and a Controversy in American culture. Indeed, this book focus on defining the concept of Family, the changing culture in American society from traditional to modern with a rich explanation why. On the Other hand, there some dissertations like The Power of Conceptual Metaphor in Diana Abu Jaber’s the Language of Baklava and Birds of Paradise by Kimberly A Gratz that gives information in the context.
Chapter one: Family as a social system of Culture

Culture is an important ingredient in building strong civilization; as well as strong communities. Generally; culture is a large umbrella which undermines: customs, rituals, traditions, beliefs, art, music, literature, knowledge….. It simply refers to a way of life of a society. As a part of society, family is the best practionner and preserver of culture.

Clearly, Family is an institution that preserves the culture produced by a given society. It is a means of protecting culture. In this chapter family and culture are two sides of the same coin. So, this chapter will focus on defining the concept of family, and its role in preserving the culture. It will deal with the American family in the contemporary society

1-American Traditional Family VS Modern One

Family is a complicated term to define; because its meaning differs from one field to another and it has changed over time due to many reasons.

Commonly, the word “Family” is derived from “the Latin familia, a term which in classical Rome applied in the entire group living in the house –husband, wife, small and grown up children and servants” (Martinson and Adolphus 16).

Family is the subject matter of many fields: anthropology, sociology, history, economy……. Julie Nelson, an anthropologist, defines family as: “a unit made up of two or more people who are related by blood, marriage, or adoption; live together; from an economic unit; and bear and raise children.”(4). The United State Census Bureau gives another definition of family “as two or more people living together who are related by birth, marriage, or adoption and residing together.”(Qtd in Nelson 4)
Also, “Social Value of Parents and Children in Joint and Nuclear Families” (2008) provides the same definition as Nelson’s one: the family may be broadly perceived as a Unit of two or more persons united by the ties of marriage, blood, adoption or consensual union (Bahadur and Dhawan 74).

These three traditional definitions are the most formal and legal statement that can be stood as an appropriate basis for defining the concept of family, because it denotes the nature of family relationships.

Historically, family was defined either as “married partners and children residing in a household” (Denstow, Tinkham and Willer 1), or as “A group of related persons who usually reside together” (Bahadur and Dhawan 16). It can be said that the focus is on the family as the basic unit where, we find all family members are living in the same house.

Bronislaw Malinowski (1884-1942), a polish anthropologist who introduces family as: a bounded set of people (a father, a mother, children) who recognize each other and are distinguishable from other groups. He adds that family is: “a domestic group of people typically affiliated by birth or marriage, or by analogous or comparable relationship – including domestic partnership, cohabitation, adoption, surname and in some cases ownership” (Qtd in Denstow, Tinkham and Willer 15). Clearly, the first definition reflects the reality of parents and children as one family. The second one differs in naming the case of cohabitation that is to say two partners living together without formal marriage.

In addition, in Family: the Making of an Idea, an Institution, and a Controversy in American Culture(1999) Betty G Farrell clarifies that: “A family defined not so much by a particular set of people as by the quality of relationships that
bind them together.” (12) In other words, family life is not a specific form or structure as many thought, it is a set of personal relationship provided to secure effectiveness of the family. Also, Farrell goes further to define family as “an important source of social continuity because they are most often the setting in which children are cared for and raised.” (11) That is to say, family is important in the sense that, parent are there in order to provide care, food, physical and emotional help for their children. The family enables its members to be close emotionally from one another.

Moreover, Lanie Denstow, Mary Tinkham and Patrichial Willer explain that family as “complex structures consisting of an interdependent group of individual who have a shared sense of history; a shared emotional ties to one another, devise strategies for meeting the needs of individual family members and the group as whole.” (3) That is to say, family members and persons are making up a family; all have duties, purposes and tasks that make their family strong. Thus, family for them might be viewed as “being compromised of a stable and harmonious group of people, monolithic in form, operating on the principles of harmony and love.” (4) This metaphorical definition prescribes how a specific group of people consider themselves family, and how they feel happy with experiencing safety as well as physical and emotional needs.

More broadly, family might be defined by other forms not just parent and their children, it can include a number of families which habitually camp together (Martinson and Adolphus 15), it addresses those farm families who are living together as one community, they create a sense of neighborhood in the place they settle. According to Nelson Julie’s book Changing Family (2006) the definition of family could also include a Fictive Kin: “nonrelatives who are accepted as a part of the family because they have strong bonds with biological family members and
provide important services and care. These ties may be stronger and more lasting than those established by blood or marriage.”(8). The best example of Fictive Kinship is that the neighbors, best friends, and our colleague whom, we find them beside us in the time we need. They serve by giving physical help or psychological support. For her, family can be introduced into categorized groups such as “primary group” and “secondary Group”. The first group consists of our family and close friends (8). It means that our parents, our sisters and brothers, the best friends who we consider as equal as to our real sisters and brothers. The second one includes friends such as co-workers and class mates. So, the second covers people who we just attend courses, and spending long hours of work. (8)

However, there are other definitions that contradict with the first ones. There are other views that argue that the first view excludes some groups that also consider themselves families. In fact, the definition of Nelson: “a family is an intimate group of two or more people who live together in committed relationship, care for one another and any children, and share activities and close emotional ties” (5) opens the door for other family structures. For example, the inclusion of grandmother and her son, single mothers, free couples as families. 

At the same time, this new definition faced many disagreements (challenges) because; it does not “explicitly include marriage, procreation, or child bearing” (Nelson 4). This reason led the concept of the Family to become more complicated especially in the future. Since the advance of technology is always in develop, the scientist predicts that a baby might have several “parents” that is: “an egg donor, a sperm donor, a woman who carries the baby during the pregnancy, and the couple who intends to raise the child.”(Nelson 6) This is might results many problems especially if the real father may be dead because, at that time the child will find
himself in front of a big dilemma to solve, and the only victim will be the baby no one else. The concept of family is generally complicated, what if we place it in a complicated society such as America.

In fact, the family life in America is like a protean, it cannot take one form or one structure; it is by definition related to the social changes. Societies across different countries may undergo change that will affect both the individual as well as family life. Contemporary American family’s long history of Family has gone through various periods. These periods can explain what an American family is? Family in Society (2001) is one of the books that explain the notion of family in accordance with the periods as: “colonial period, revolutionary period, and the period of emergence of America as an industrialized urban nation.”(Martinson and Adolphus 27)

Generally, the colonial period occupied nearly one half of the course of American history from the founding of the first colony to present, aspects of Puritans thought became one of the continuing factor in American culture. In which, Puritan social system provided a major role for the family. It was believed that God creating a system of control began with the family and everything in puritan life was religiously devoted to family’s responsibility.( Martinson and Adolphus 12) As Floyd Mansfield Martinson and Gustavus Adolphus declare that: “colonial period left a heritage of religious and moralistic values in personal and family life” (26). So during this period, the family life was religious rather than humanistic. Puritanism becomes a dominant way of life in American society because, the Puritans and their descendants are the primary leaders emerging in American society during the colonial period (Martinson and Adolphus 17) Puritanism makes the Americans adapt to this environment including their life style, values and thought.
Then, the revolutionary period was during (the 18\textsuperscript{th} and first half of the 19\textsuperscript{th} c), initiated the birth of freedom and democracy; as well as the development of liberalism and democratic tradition, it was the period of American independence. (Martinson and Adolphus 12) During this period Americans get rid of puritan culture. As a result, the puritan family became meaningless because they moved from a “theoretical model of society to an ideology of freedom and democracy” (Martinson and Adolphus 12). At this period, individualism grew as a consequence to the liberal life and movements (ideas) where, women began to call their independence from the family and moving outside home to built their future and guarantee their freedom. Establishing a home (marriage) was not the interest for many young people as both Martinson and Gustavus show: “Young people were prepared for self disciplined individual accomplished in the world of farming, business, and industry”. (94) During this period, American society witness the influx of rapid change that makes the American family experience a different life that was a threat to their conservative and traditional thought. So, in some ways a new form of family appeared that is to say the “nuclear family” which should continue as a strong and coherent unit for the fundamental changes of the 19\textsuperscript{th} C. (Martinson and Adolphus 98)

Later on, the period of emergence of America as an industrialized urban nation was a period of confusion and disorganization for the family, as members found difficulty in defining their new roles as individuals and family members in the urban setting. The urban life of American society provides a good and stable life concerning the majority of families and, at the same time contributed to the economic and cultural poverty of many others. The aim behind urbanization was that the movement to the city, having comfort, opportunities for work, but in fact the city serves by giving discomfort, nosy, dark, and gloomy. The development of industry led
both the individuals and families to emigrate from small towns to large cities and America became an urban nation. In fact, the life in the city did not form an integrated community than it initiated some of the major disharmonies. (Martinson and Adolphus 17-21).

So, we can say that the history of modern America has been called “a story of the impact of industrialism on every phase of human life, and family”. (Martinson and Adolphus 87) Thus, technological advance and urban growth contributed a lot in making the change be easy to take place in American life, change that affects the family setting and its basis of culture. It leads the patriarchal family to disappear and give rise to a modern one.

So, in our research we will be guided by two definitions of Family. The first definition which is the most common family forms in the world, this family form is well known for its name the “Extended Family”, and it consists of parents and children as well as other kin, such as Uncles and aunts, nieces and nephews, cousin and grandparent (Nelson 10). And the second is “the Nuclear One”, which consists of only parents and one or two children.

The first type is known for the famous family or the traditional family, it was a dominant form of family before the acceleration of the industrial revolution of the 17th, 18th that is to say the pre-industrial period. This period was characterized by the adoption of the society to this specific family form, in which the family life was highly different from that of the Contemporary Period.

Generally, the life of American traditional family base upon strong relationship between husband and wife, marriage was organized by older where; we found the parents are the responsible for choosing the appropriate husband as well as
wife for their sons and daughters. This idea generally refers to that; the purpose of
traditional marriage is base on the economic relationship rather than emotion. The
best example introduced by Edward Shorter and reflects this idea: it is the peasant
couple, when the wife is ill, the husband commonly spared the sense of the doctor but,
if his cow or bull got sick, he automatically will run and bring the veterinarian,
because a cow was worth much more than a wife. (Qtd in Elwell 17)

Moreover, the Traditional American Family was characterized by its
fundamental lack of privacy or “separateness” from the rest of society i.e. the family
was not directly a unit stand isolated from its society. It means that there was no real
boundary between the family and the rest of society (Farrell 20). In parallel, as Dr
Frank Elwell mentions in his book Industrial Society: the Family that: “the traditional
family was basically an economic sub system of the larger society, much more a
productive and reproductive unit than an emotional unit.”(25). So, the traditional
American family was most concerned with transmitting traditions from one
generation to another, protecting and preserving the customs that the elders live
according . Also it concerned with giving birth for new born and makes sure that the
culture of parents still alive.

In the past, American families widely shared belief in that families must be
large and extended. They all live together in the same house and enjoy having strong
and close ties with their parents than today. Simply, their life past was like what the
sociologist Goode (1963) calls “the classical family of western nostalgia.”(Qtd in
Farrell 13) In other word, they produce a stable life far from conflicts. The culture of
the ancestors and their way of life was dominated, the father was a breadwinner and
the wife is full time housekeeper. It is the golden old days, where the family stands for
the comfort home for young people to learn the different symbols, rituals of their
grandparents. And, for all the members of family to gather for eating, discussing problems and trying hard to solve them, watching and imitating what the parents do. For example, we find in the home a little girl standing beside her mom, behaving and acting cooking the same. From this unconscious and small action, children learn the culture of their families. This proves a lot for many that the family is the first step for the children to acquire many customs.

In addition, the traditional American families were conservatives and too restrictive i.e. they were all under the authority of the culture of elders which includes their thought, clothes, and values. They were farm families because the setting was rural areas in which their life was based on agricultural sources and products: consume natural foods (vegetables). They depend on nature as their labor force. Beside of all this they were strong and happier than today.

The second definition which is the most adoptive family forms in Western societies particularly the US. This family structure is called the “Nuclear Family” and is: “made up of married parents and their biological or adopted children.”(Elwell 12) This family form is also called the “modern family”. In our research this definition describes the Muir family who settle in modern American city “Miami”. This family consists of married parents: a father called “Brian”, a mother called “Avis” and their two children: a son called “Stanley” and a daughter called “Felice”.

The nuclear family appeared in modern American society as a result of the industrial revolution. As Sidney M. Greenfield argues in his article “Industrial Revolution and the Family in Sociological Theory” in November (1961) that “The small nuclear family found in western societies and US emerged as consequence of urban industrial revolution” (312) Then after the Industrial Revolution, American
society adopt the nuclear family with its new values to be most adaptive family form to the great change that US has witnessed in the late of the 18th c and the beginning of the 19th c.

In fact, the industrial revolution was a significant reason led the disappearance of the patriarchal and conservative American society with its traditional family and gave birth to urban and industrial family life as declared “the industrial revolution starting in the 19th C going into the 20th C is seen as the force changed the farm family and is basically responsible for the modern American family” (Greenfield 314). It was a life of machine and factories which caused a cultural breakdown and transition with the past.

Actually, industrialization had many several consequences; it worked equally with urbanization to change the American society. First, it isolates many farm families through the adaption of the machine and spread of factories. Then, it draws many labor farmers to the cities and sparkle the demographic change i.e. the industrial revolution forced the rural people to move into the cities to work. Also, it helped people to interact and to build relationships. The most important result was the emergence of the nuclear family with its distinctive form that is to say: “the small nuclear family is caused by the industrialization and urbanization”. (Greenfield 312)

During this period of huge rapid social change (migration), many writers like Margret Mead become argued that: “the life witness a moment of cultural breakdown of old forms of legal marriage (454) This indicates that, the industrial revolution bought a set of prominent belief that is to say the modernization process which led to the values of contemporary American culture to appear(Greenfield 314). As Andre Isimic and Glynn Custred in their article “Modernity and the American Family: a Cultural
Dilemma” (1982) explain that modernity means opposing the traditional values and adapting modern stereotype, it is an urban society with its social life. (162)

With this radical change, the American Nuclear family becomes organized around the central theme of modernization; it is expressed by its cultural theme of individualism, Universalism and Rationalism. These themes tackled by Bron B Ingoldsby in “civilization –Building Role of the Nuclear Family in his Historical perspective” (June 1998) as: Individualism means the period of establishment of an independent home by young people, self improvement and self-realization (152) i.e. the emergence of new values by adults centers around the creation of free life due to their strong desire for complete independence and isolation from older people. These principles set as a means that threatening the entire American style.

Universalism means society becomes larger and complex and Rationalism, means the life is subordinate to economic and bureaucratic tasks (164) i.e. the society lack governmental interference. To sum up, the life of the nuclear family is characterized by new values of modernity and urban culture, “culture of self interdependence where, the traditional familial mentality is out of modernity” (Isimic and Custred 167).

Moreover, Brigitte Berger explains the nuclear family from her point of view as the following “Nuclear family all mother centered system”; mother plays a significant role in its basic of family life. She adds that it gives chance for individuals to start search for new horizon which enables the family members to establish a life that permitted the growth of liberty (21). Clearly, Nuclear family life’s aspect differs from the patriarchal one, “has marriage based on love, easy divorce, falling birth rate. Adults speak about the plan of their own family life and lives; they expect to provide their own establishment” (Berger 455). So, the idea of family life and home is
designed and planned by the young couple in nuclear modern family life where
“children are born, growing up and leave home” (Berger 130)

The existence of nuclear family is not available in all societies, because it
seems absent in some cultures like Chinese whom they usually identified with their
possession to the extended family. For this purpose, George Peter Murdock in Social
Structure (1949) postulates that the nuclear family is universal because; it has four
essential functions to fulfill. These functions were socialization, economic
cooperation, reproduction and sexual relation (Qtd in Riess 443). First, socialization
indicates that family is an important institution where we find the parent dominate this
area and the focus on Family role in help rearing children and enable them built a
contributing performance in their society. (451) Second, economic cooperation
means that family can stand for an economic, political and religious institution in
terms of both its important and essential function. Third, reproduction and sexual
relation means that it is responsible for the continuation of the rearing children. (453)
Nuclear family is somehow ambiguous especially in its cultural life, that is to say
People’s attitudes and beliefs is change according to current life style. (455) At this
light it becomes evident for both Marxist and functionalist such as Parson, Moor and
Zaretsky that: “the nuclear family represented an adaptive response to the needs of
industrial capitalism”. (Qtd in Noble 136)

In addition, writer Trevor Noble predicts that nuclear Family life is undergoing
widespread change due to modernization, and it will witness the transition from one
culture to another, from modern to post modern (127). Besides to this, Carle
Zimmerman in “The Future of the American family: Revolution”, adds that: “the
nuclear family has entered a post modern phase, in which its family life reflects
changes in peoples’ ideas about the relationship between husband and wives and
about life styles”(136) This reflects that, American family has undergone radical changes which Zimmerman called the crises or revolution of change. Thus, Zimmerman in Family and Civilization (1947) and Family of Tomorrow (1949) predict that Us American family will reach the final phase of great family crises at the end of the previous century. But, he adds that change comes earlier means that it’s a breakdown of basic society. (Qtd in Zimmerman 2)

Subsequently, Michael Murphy in his article “Measuring and Analyzing Household and Families in Contemporary Developed Societies” (2006-2007) convinced by “what Family and household changes result from the first demographic transition from a high morality and fertility regime to a low fertility and morality patterns seen in developed contemporary societies”(02) ,he adds there are couples “Living- Apart – Together” (Murphy 2) .Michael wants to draw attention to changing life in the developed contemporary societies with an emphasis on the increase in the numbers of people establishing implicit relationship with their partners, friends and relatives without being formally married to each other. This new pattern of thinking emerged because the modern family (the Nuclear Family) encouraged the hope of individual’s freedom to stay away from the control of older generation. At the light of this explanation, we can notice that there is a shift of the American society from adopting the traditional family system toward a modern one and this was especially in the 18th c.

After dealing with explanation of nuclear family it becomes essential to shed light on its setting which is modern time that is characterized first by rebellion. Young people start to reject parental interference in the choice of their marriage. So, marriage became in itself seen an effective Unit rather than an economic one (Elwell
28), it became decides by the emotion and the sentiments of the partners not by their families.

The second characteristic is that the social life became so relative to the past; it is “highly eroticized” (Elwell 30) that is to say the modern life became profoundly and significantly different from that of the traditional one especially in term of developing close relationship between males and females. Dr Frank Elwell announces that saying “in the pre-modern life premarital sex appear to have been Uncommon” (32), the spread of couples living in the same house without even getting married to each other was not welcomed in the traditional family world. Unlike the modern one where, people accept this act and adapting to it as successive stage for marriage, not as threat to the traditional life. For modern American family the idea of cohabitation helps a lot those whom are not ready yet to get married. So, People start to change their life through building personal relationship.

The third characteristic is that the family life became independent from society, it starts to call for its total separation from the outside world as Shorter calls this “the rise of domesticity” (Elwell 33). In which the member of family enjoyed this kind of closed environment that they create it through their adaptive to the change that happens to the society, and which makes them standing away from that of the past.

The fourth characteristic is that family life “ has marked decline in fertility or women’s childbearing activities” (Elwell 47) In other words, married women shows little interest to take care of their children because outside work took all their time. The economic change offers their independence by allowing them has rights to get jobs. So, Woman starts to feel that there is no need for their marriage because their
dependence on their husband has decreased. All those characteristics were consequences that open the chance to changing family life in America.

We can say that the western family has known profound changes. As a result, these changes touch the culture that most family member and especially young adult must live with to feel and understand the essence of family. Therefore, the family change has attributed a lot in changing values and attitudes of family life which leads us to deal with its cultural role.

2- The Role of Family in Preserving Culture

Family and culture are two concepts that cannot be survived without the help of each other in which; family is part of culture that identifies the society. This may be true with defining culture as a way of life for a society. According to the British anthropologist sir Edward Taylor defines culture as “that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, and customs.”(Qtd in Lemoudaa 2) In other words, culture is based on the traditional thought that can be learned and passes from one generation to another via the institution of family. Largely family is the central concept which defines the reality of culture through the communication with the whole society.

Moreover, Culture can be defined by specific aspects such as food; celebrations, communication, language that are only part of person’s cultural identity. Culture can be characterized by: “the shared cultural heritage (values, customs, and histories) bonds the members of the group together and creates a sense of identity and belonging through community” (Farrell 25) i.e. Family can be defined as a feature of
our identity and it holds the role of preserving cultural connection. Highly culture is related to family; likewise family is important to pass culture. The society relies on family to preserve its traditions, its identities, it basic life. This helps a lot in building strong mutual relationship between the two because family is a culture in itself, and its role is to preserve its recorded history through the various traditions, behaviors, customs and way of life performed by its members.

Furthermore, family has always been an important element in building strong societies as well as defining their culture especially in time; traditional American culture including (patriarchal family, traditional food, clothes, and way of thinking) is progressively disappearing due the modern aspects of life that have completely changed due to many economic forces like industrial revolution which has been perceived as a turning point in the American history. According to Trevor Noble in “The Nuclear Family and Post modern Theory” (December 1995): “the contemporary American society is characterized by its diversity and complexity of family relationship in senses that cultural belief varying as well as traditional way.”(129) The American society is well known for its diversity of many races which resulted in variety of different cultures. So, the clash between cultures in American society leads the American people to be in need to family to fulfill its cultural role.

For this, family is viewed by both the sociologists Mansfield and Adolphus Gustavus as “an isolated phenomenon but as a unit significant and essential to society” (5). They add that the family is a social system that is responsible for the cultural and social milieu in which it operates (5), that is to say family in any given society has a function and responsibility to fulfill toward the culture and social life of the place it surrounds. Family can determine the past history of each individual as Ruther Benedicts points out in Patterns of Culture (1934): “the family is the occasion
which any society may seize upon to express its important cultural intentions.” (Qtd in Martinson and Adolphus 6) i.e. the family does not determine only the past history of individuals but also their future life.

Family life is dependent on the culture of its society. In the American society a particular family system, the Nuclear Family comes to be recognized as an important element of this society. According to what Floyd Mansfield Martinson and Gustavus Adolphus declares concerning this: “Families deal with basic human needs—sexual, economic, reproductive, educational, and disciplinary.” (p17).

Subsequently, family in all societies whether in the Arab community or in the American one seeks to have the same functions. Broadly speaking, the family as an institution fulfills an important cultural function in preserving all the traditions, it is a social system.

However, what creates a controversy about this idea is the variation of the family system in the American society. There are rural and urban families, Jewish, catholic, and Protestant families; immigrant and others. But, all fulfill five important functions which are stated by Parsons & Bales (1955): regulation of sexual activity, procreation and socialization, economic security, emotional support, social class placement (Qtd in Nelson 11). The first function is to regulate the sexual relation, parents and family defines rules that the children must follow concerning their marriage. It means that the parents are responsible for cultural marriage of their sons and daughters (with whom and what age should be suitable for them to marry). For example, “in the US the decision to marry with someone under 18 is a crime, but some societies permit marriage with girls as young as 8” (Nelson 13). This indicates
that the culture that exists in the various families across the world is different but the aim is the same presenting the cultural traditions.

The second function is that procreation and socialization, this function achieved by the ability of family’s role to make children sociable i.e. family help children learn different element of his culture: language and knowledge, attitude, beliefs and values. As Ellis argues that children learn the social and interpersonal skills they need if they are function effectively in society (Qtd in Nelson 19). It means that children learn all the culture of their society from their parents because the responsibility is limited with mother and father since they are the leaders of the family they establish. So, the first place that the children depend on to learn the cultural matters is the family. Finally “Families are important role teaching agents” (Nelson 43) because it regulates the relationships between mothers and fathers, parents and children and other people outside the family pattern (grandmothers; grandfathers; uncles; aunts; cousin; friends and neighbors).

The third function is that the economic security, in which the family’s role is to provide financial security and stability means that families provides the food, shelter; clothing.; love; guides and comfort that the children need to be both happy and healthy. One of the main roles provided by the family based on helping adults to conceive their culture because, the period of adolescence is the most difficult in which, most of the adults deviate from the culture of their parents and to be independent from the family. The independence here means the abandoning of the principle of family as well as its culture. So, families act as the brain to regulate the rebellion of their member and make them reckon with their mistakes.
The fourth function is the emotional support, in which the family gives its members warm emotion, support and love. American sociologist Charles Horton Cooley (1864-1929) sees: “the family as a critical primary group because it provides the nurturance, love, and emotional substance that its members need to be happy, healthy and secure” (Qtd in Nelson 5).

In addition, Broderick states that family as a social system must execute common purposes and tasks including first order task and second order task (Denstow, Tinkham, and Willer 4). First order task considered as the essential business of the family that is to say family is responsible for “managing identity tasks, regulate boundaries, regulate the emotional climate of the family and devise strategies for maintenance of the household”. (Denstow, Tinkham, and Willer 6)

First, Identity task, centered on family themes and elements: attitudes, belief, values and emotional aspects (Denstow, Tinkham, and Willer 8-13) means that family help people feel and posses an identity as an individual or as group as a whole. It contributed to build a sense of self and cultural heritage. Second, Maintenance task that is to say family is responsible for the physical environment of the family i.e. it provides the needs of family members including: food, shelters, and education. Third, managing the family’s emotional climate, family in responsible for ensuring emotional and psychological necessities that all family members require to be very close to each other, to be accepted in the external world, and to be involved in the daily life and activities. This function requires the family to establish methods of dealing with conflict and distributing power within the family. (Denstow, Tinkham, and Willer 14)
Second order –tasks include adaptability and managing system: means that family as a social system must adapt to change that comes from the internal body of the family or outside it. For this purpose, family have the capacity to change its way of life according to the situation and stress that happens to society. This is equal with the Nuclear family in America in which really it proved its ability to adapt to changing the social life of the society as Diana Abu Jaber in her novel *Birds of Paradise* (2011) shows. She portrays a typically American family who are trying to cope with the loss of their teenage daughter Felice who left home for good and making trouble in the heart of all her family.

Moreover, the family has a great role concerning children, Ira L. Riess clarifies about by stressing that Family enables children to “asses a cultural identity” (446) means allow them to feel the sense of having a specific culture and being a part of individuals and community. “Preserve child’s cultural connection” (150) i.e. family preserve the relationship and connection between the child and his family that is to say ensure the preservation of child’s history, culture and identity. Family is the best way that ensures and preserves the child cultural connection with his parents and his relatives. Family enables children to speak about “cultural issues and to acknowledge various celebrations and events” (206). Family helps children to identify and to understand the cultural tradition and event that the family and the community is base on. Family “ensure mother –child attachment” i.e. ensure parent –children relationship “relatedness”, close ties between them.

In *Culture in Family* (2004), Family role is to “save the rich histories, values and core belief of the past” (Farrell 5) i.e. Family, control and save the history, values and belief that the ancestor’s role is to pass it from one generation to another. It is impossible to separate between culture and family because, Family is a means of
preserving cultural identity; it played a great role in exchanging the culture from one community to another.

Finally and from what has been stated above, we can say that Family is a cultural institution established in all societies to present and preserve the culture especially in a society that undergoes rapid changes like the US. The period of appearance of America as industrial society makes it lost much of its traditional culture and, at the same time helped a lot in the breakdown of its patriarchal or traditional family to a modern one which calls for the nuclear family. The life of the American nuclear family is based on trouble more than stability. All member of the family seem living a happy life from the outside but, in fact, they suffer a lot because they lack the sense of unity. The change that was associated with the life of modern American family is present in *Birds of Paradise*. This novel deals with the culture of independence of adolescents that has destroyed the entire family organization. It also deals with the food industry as part of modern culture that invaded the family.
Chapter two: American Modern Family life in *Bids of Paradise*

In modern times, family in American society witnesses and experiences both different and complex life from that of the past. The domination of modernity upon the whole country gave opportunity for the acceleration of modern family life style with its new values such as “Independence of Adolescence” and the “Food Industry”. The two latters are the most subtle characteristic of our novel. So this chapter will explore the use of these two themes in *Birds of paradise*.

1-Independence of Adolescence

Evidently, Many Americans believe in the culture of “individualism” in which children are encouraged to live alone without their parents in order to depend on the self in taking decision, solving problems without the help of others. On other hand, parent convinces that this culture is helping their children to develop their self and to build their identities. According to Stewart and Bennat who claim that “American society implicitly accept that children should be encouraged to make their own opinion, solve their own problem, have their own possession, and in general, learn to view the world from the point of view of the self.”(Qtd in Lemoudaa 20).Subsequently, American family place more emphasis on both, the development of individual and individual freedom as their primary purpose in which, parents gave the opportunity for children to be the judges of their life. According to Stewart and Bennat : “from an early age, the American are encouraged to believe that themselves are the best judges of they want and what they should do.”(Qtd in Lemoudaa 20)

The Arab American writer Diana Abu Jaber has expressed the culture of individualism as a theme related to the “Independence of adolescence”. She explores it through the prism of family situation. Her aim in the novel Felice, the adolescent
girl, her independence represents two main changes in the American society. First, she represents the family change. Second the city change. Before dealing with this element is worth dealing with what is adolescence.

First, “Adolescent” is a term refer to all youth ages 10 to 19. It includes young people of all cultures and ethnicities, abilities and disabilities. (Arnett 470) It is highly marked by physical growth, increase and change in body composition in which adults develop a strong recognition of their own personal identity including a set of personal values. So, the notion of adolescence identifies with the biological, psychological and cognitive change that begins during puberty and continues through adolescence. (Stang and Story 1) Where psychological and cognitive change is best understood when divided into three periods: Early adolescence (11-14 years), adolescents develop a new body image and start have a concrete thinking. Middle adolescence (15-17) they establish emotional separation from family, and have abstract thinking. And late adolescence (18-21) is characterized by the development of personal sense of identity, further separation from parents. (Stang and Story 5-6)

In addition, adolescence is characterized by the change and exploration of life opportunities “is a period of profound change and importance for young people in term of various possibilities in love, work, and world views that are explored” (Arnett 469) that is to say, it is a distinct period in term of identity exploration in which, adults made effort to run away from home and sought their independence from their parent. This what we call the independence, it emerged mostly in industrialized societies like the US where we find, most young American leave home by the of age 18or19 in order to be associated with the formation of identity that become a central crisis of their life stage Arnett argues that: “Emerging adulthood has become a distinct period of the life course for young people in industrialized societies.” (476-477)
With the spread of adult rebellion in American society, the family had to pay the costs of their children strikes for the search of their identity achievement. This subject of teen runaway is explored as a social issue in *Birds of Paradise*. She focuses on treating such issue to signals that, is a tragedy that associated with the instability of the modern American family and at the same to reflect the changing culture in the American society. It is cultural in America for adolescents to live away from their parents. But, not all adults in any society do so. So, it is a new culture practiced by most teens which its major cause is individual variation.

In the novel, Felice’s life has radically changed when she becomes adolescent at age 13. Before, in her childhood period, she lived a comfort and stable life with her sweet mother, father and brother (attending courses, go to parties with her friends, playing, eating, and helping her mother doing pastries in the kitchen). Till reaching her 13 years, things start to be different; she decides to run away from home for reasons that are not clear at the beginning of the novel. The parents try hard to understand Felice’s departure, and her changing behavior (being sad, lonely, sleeping all days in bed, and being in nightclub), and wearing clothes her mother never seen before “a mesh blouse that adhered to her skin and a pair of faded jeans with a belt of leather petals like daisy chain”(*Birds of Paradise* 30). They all fail neither to stop her, nor to know what happening. Despite all the solutions that afforded to Felice to make her return back home, nothing feet. Almost by the end of the novel, an Arab character appears to justify the ambiguity of Felice’s decision “... reminded Felice of Hannah, and a wave of dizzying sickness and guilt rushed over her.”(*Birds of Paradise* 30) She was Hannah Joseph who becomes Felice’s best friend upon her arrival to the school. Hannah’s death was the source of Felice’s punishment as this passage explains this:
I have found away to make up, if I can, for horrible thing I did to Hannah Joseph (Hannah Yusef). I confess I killed her. I was horrible to her and I did sign the letter that made her do it. I have to try to make up for it. That means I have to be judged. I have to make sacrifices whenever I can. Big or small. I have to be punished. It has to be the worst punishment there is. I have to go away to leave everything and everybody. I have to be completely a different person from who I was when I sing The letter. If there is a way to help someone in bad trouble, I have to do it. If something awful is going to happen to me I will let it happen, until the judging is over. Whenever that turns out to be.

Murderers get the death penalty, so maybe that will happen to me. (*Birds of Paradise* 295)

This was Felice’s manifesto that affirms that the only reason for her runaway was her feeling guilt after Hannah took her life. She cannot forget about her because she thinks that she is the only responsible for her friend’s suicide. In her own way she committed murder and she should punish. The letter that Felice’s friends: coco, Yeni, Marisa, and Bella send it to Hannah in order to make her stay away from Felice, hurts her a lot, and leads her to die. Hannah pessimistic psyche was complicated somehow; she looks scary and dark, talks about death in casual way as she did with informing Felice about her brother’s death “Semir”. Not only this she smokes a lot, in her mind all what they are doing is just wasting time until they died. This surprises and influences Felice, makes her afraid, trouble, dreaming with Hannah’s ghost even in the morning. So, Felice decides not talk to Hannah and ends her relationship with her. In fact, Hannah did not correspond to this and still approaches Felice between
classes. When Felice’s friends observe this they decide to help Felice get rid of Hannah’s relationship by writing the letter and singing at the end Felice Muir.

*Birds of Paradise* centers on the Muir family that consist of four major characters: the protagonist is the mother “Avis”; she is a talented pastry chef. The father “Brian”; he is a real-estate attorney. The son, “Stanley” who owns an organic market, he is a Foodie-entrepreneurial. The daughter “Felice” is a thirteen year old teenage who left home and leaving the fear in the hearts of her parents and her brother. The novel describes the suffering of each of those characters in deferent chapters. In order to show the changes that happened to Felice’s family Abu Jaber uses a narrative technique through which she shows the family status before and after Felice’s runaway.

Before Felice runaway, the Muir family seems living a perfect middle class life. All the members were stable, enjoy being together in their lovely home; they have great jobs and beautiful children. In the novel, these happy days were just memories because the novel set when Felice reached her Eighteenth birthday. Abu Jaber describes the best vacations and trips made by parents and their children to reflect the stability of their life, starting with the father’s memories: “Still, there were many good moment: the hunt for shells on Sanibel, long weekend in the keys, the spring break when Felice stood at the end of the pier beside Brian and her brother . . . Those long warm afternoon of blue diamond skies, . . . those belong to Brian and his children. (*Birds of Paradise* 107) she adds that:

Brian watched his children watching, craning forward, pacing the sea turtle, fanning away any little stones and shells. In that warm, salty night , he felt as if the texture of time itself were thickening, settling over them, as if they would be held together in the fourth of air, its silky
threads attaching and keeping them safe, everlasting family. (*Birds of Paradise* 107)

So, it can be said that the souvenirs shows that the family was happy before.

Then with mother’s ones, she spent good moment by her children: “Avis is pleased that Stanly would remember-they were on sort of family vacation … Avis had taken the kids on a day trip … The children helped Avis picked out the paper-fine china” (*Birds of Paradise* 188-189). With all this explanation, the narrator moves deeper toward family connection through depicting all its members together being happy with the warm nights and days that were covered the entire family as the following passage exploring:

The children were small and Brian and Avis still young holding each other inside shining nets, in equipoise. Early spring nights where they sat together on the hood of the car eating ice cream, watching for the red pulse of a passing space station. Is that what a happy family looks like? He would have sworn it was. A family likes any happy family. (*Birds of Paradise* 102)

Also, the narrator shows us the soft and good relationships that exist between the father, mother and their daughter. She makes Brian appear very close and attached with his beloved daughter:

Like the time Felice waited up past her bedtime for him to come home from work- three, four, and five years old. He’d loved her more than even Stanly . . . he’d read her bed time stories, her small, warm head resting against the cove of his chest (*Birds of Paradise* 101-102).

And depicts Avis very responsible toward her teen “she put her daughter bed and read and placed a cool washcloth on her bed and read her from *The Magic Garden,*”
(Birds of Paradise 88). It is an examination for both fathers, mother-daughter-relationships in which the Muir family is too strong and united, and this idea is reinforces by the writer saying: “Stanley and Felice rushed from their bed, and Brian and Avis followed laughing. They handle around a stacked, tapped-off section of beach, waiting with small crowed as the sand trembled, gray under the moonlight.”(Birds of Paradise 107)

After her absence, the family has entered a phase of crises. They lose those big smiles even though they try to go to voyages but still the sadness dominated: “It was after Felice had run away for good, the summer . . . A good trip. Still the three of them look gaunt, their smiles vaporous_ all photos post-Felice looked like this.”

(Birds of Paradise 111) Her vanishing act led the family life to take another direction far from that of the previous ones; their life becomes based on searching for their missed beloved in many different ways. Avis and Brian created their own protocol “call the Gables police, the sheriff’s department, the highway patrol. Contact the local FBI, the missing children help lines, her school. They send alerts to the National Runway switchboard.”(Birds of Paradise 84)

They did not be satisfied with those restricted authorities, but they did their personal effort for the hope to her coming back “they spend hours in their cars searching in the streets of Coral Gables … staring into yards and windows, spying on the other lives and families. Avis approached stranger on the street with photographs—which horrified Brian” (Birds of Paradise 84) this leads the mother to accuse her husband for his caring more about their appearances than about their own daughter, “…. Some of the worst fights to their marriage were over those snapshots” (Birds of Paradise 84). Everything after Felice had changed from good to worse; it really touched even the daily habits: “After Felice had left, Avis had to stop watching local
news because it was too awful, more than she could stand. Her teenage daughter was out there.’ (Birds of Paradise 34) Even after Felice had separated from her parent but, the mother still thinks about her health because losing a child is not an easy feeling to cope with, “She was always thinking whether she was hurt or hungry or in danger.” (Birds of Paradise 87)

Beside this, the novel shows how the family has broken after Felice disappearance. The parent and brother live an internal conflict to make sense of Felice’s departure, and the writer describes that heartbreak individually from mother, father, and brother and run away herself. First, the mother’s struggle appears in her questioning the end of her deep sadness:

How many times is a person supposed to lose her children? Is this why she went through motherhood? The morning sickness that lasted all day, the swollen ankles, the all-night feedings, the fevers and crying and vomit? The anxiety and the waiting up, and on and on. All for what? A moment where you stand there and watch your child close the door in your face. (Birds of Paradise 189)

Not only this, she had suffered from her fear of entering a long tunnel of dreams, From the cold pressure on her body, from her hands that waving through frigid darkness, “when she slept, those were night-curved; they wound around her” (Birds of Paradise 86). From heart break “I have a daughter who_ she doesn’t live with us. She hasn’t, for years. It breaks my heart, every day.”(Birds of Paradise 271) Avis also fears from anybody asking help concerning his missing beloved, this makes Avis’s stomach tightened with dread and her desire to shake her head and flee into the house, because, she had her own private losses to contend with. Avis’s despair does not stop at this level as:
She suffers from her remembering how she dreaded sleep in the months after Felice left. But her dreams were light and oddly pleasant, heartbreaking only upon waking. There were certain things she couldn’t say or think or hear in those months. Like daughter or child. Or lost. That was the worst of all, a . . . She woke from dreams in which said it over and over, as if she were squeezing it from her body. She remembers the way she felt when she finally understood that Felice was not going to return, the sense of leadenness, the elemental weight of it filling her bones.” (Birds of Paradise 280)

The nights that the mother lives after her daughter’s disappearance affects her lot, she becomes unable to sleep in the nights and be happy and comfortable in her bed as Abu Jaber describes:

“Avis remembers the three nights and days without her daughter—the sheer panic of driving around, searching. At home she couldn’t sleep more than ten minutes at a time; instead she stood at her marble slab rolling pie crusts that shattered and crumpled, filling the freezer with crusts lined with flour and parchment, stacked in towers”. (Birds of Paradise 29)

Second, the father’s pain and suffering appears from his morning fight with Avis and from hearing her crying through the bathroom door, from his feeling visited by the old grief, and from holding himself aloof from participating in development, as the writer said:

. . . the attaching hamstring and hip, the tender inner forearm, his inability to sleep through the night without one trip after another to bathroom, the subtle pressure abdominal pressure that teases and
torments him—seeming to play tricks, eluding his doctors, frequently appearing coincident to the midnight bathroom visits, the occasional heightening (not quit squeezing) pressure on his chest. (Birds of Paradise 251)

Really Felice leaves a hole in the hearts of her parents both were suffering almost from “nightmarish: like a dream of spiting teeth into the sink.” (Birds of Paradise 177)

Third, the son’s heartbreak was in his living years trying to find answer to his daughter’s disappearance that went without explanation, without saying just a word “All those years in free fall, living through her plummeting fear, living through her inexplicable loss.” (Birds of Paradise 320) His physical body weakened and his eyes become without hope “Stanly looked almost beatific, his eyes like glass, as if he’d been at prayer.” (Birds of Paradise 117) He feels ignored, neglected and unevaluated in his family. Fourth, the runaway herself, Felice’s heartbreak accrued with her feeling lonely, sad, missing the worm of the family and house, she suffers from crying, sleeping outside in street as:

She feels she is falling into canyon of vaporous sadness. . . She becomes angry with herself for her sadness. Sorrow is a luxury, like that of home and school like living in the gentle, indoor world. . . For all she knows, everyone from her old life could be dead like Hannah used to say. Everyone that she’s ever loved vanished.” (Birds of Paradise 208)

She felt alone and no one from her happy family is still alive in her new life in Miami Beach. She suffers from being away from her comfortable home, from missing her beloved parents and their help to save her from danger. She missed old days, cookies
of her mother “For a second she feels . . . like fear or anger, like a remnant of nightmare, surfacing at the center of her chest.” (*Birds of Paradise* 358) she suffers from nightmare too.

After the huge consequences that Muir Family faces, all found themselves forced to deal with her loss by focusing on their work. Whenever Brian felt anxiety, he’s always been able to hide in his work “Work rescued him and Avis both when Felice left. They submitted to hard labor: there seemed a genuine sanity in it” (*Birds of Paradise* 235). They found work a kind of escapism to their fear. The mother’s grief is understood by the day long labor of gateau “she dusted her pastry slab with jets of flour and began. The daylong process of making *mille-feuilles*. . . .,Knowing that this work _the most challenging and imperial of pastry creation_ might have the power to save her.” (*Birds of paradise* 87) So, the work for Avis becomes her attribute to her daughter and the unknown into which she disappears. She concentrates and calms herself with. Whenever, she returns to the kitchen, she tries to plan the day’s baking schedule “After Felice left for good. Avis had worked methodically, a piece or two a day, destroying her prized possessions, the satisfying crunch, like flinging robin’s eggs.” (*Birds of Paradise* 189)

Concerning Stanly, he cope with his daughter’s disappearance the same as his mother and father did “Whole days on end, Stanley spend working his garden.” (*Birds of Paradise* 200) He too submits to long day of hard labor. He also finds a way to replace his sister by getting married, building a family and having a baby.

In fact, the loss of Felice has affected the entire family and leads each member of the family to lives in isolation, “After Felice left home Stanly moved outdoors as well. He started an herb garden,” (*Birds of Paradise* 117) ultimately her runaway distanced each of them from the other, first by Felice then by Stanley. The son prefers
to become a street boy as his sister in order to forget, “Normally Stanley comes to their house only on the holidays. Avoiding his sister’s ghost,” (Birds of Paradise 188) Her disappearance affects her brother’s relationship with his parents: “He rarely spoke to his parent_ perhaps he’d blamed them for Felice’s disappearance. (Birds of Paradise 117) Felice breaks the family connection and makes her family unable to be strong and happy again. It is a tragedy that comes from the source of her leaving home.

Birds of Paradise explore the silence fear of parent and the ability of children to destroy them. So, Abu Jaber wants to tell that living without a missed individual that we love makes us so weak. She reflects the destructive feeling that includes the life in the family and in the city. So, within the family, Felice reflects the modern American Family. And outside her family, She shows another facet of the American modern cities. It is the face of Miami city. While, she’s living in the streets of Miami, for five years makes money modeling, and spends her time doing drugs, alcohol with her homeless friends, she projects modern and the changing life of the city “Miami”. Her chapter contains a lot of danger, because the writer wants to draw attention to greater risk facing the adults, and which can be understood as part of their identity exploration. As it argued “Emerging adult’s risk behaviors can be seen as one reflection of the desire to obtain a wide range of adult life.” (Arnett 475)

Generally, Adolescent is characterized by the increase in health risk behaviors including “drinking, drugs, smoking, suicide, and sexual experimentation, most type of substance use, accidents, crimes, depression, unprotected sex, violence” (Arnett 130). These problems resulted as a consequence to their struggling toward maturity.

In this research, these risky behaviors describe the life of the city that is related to Felice’s adolescence and her living in Miami Beach as she declares:
After she got to the beach; she napped in a wooden booth at the back of an Internet café, and that night Felice partied with the kids out on the sand. This become her regular practice_ stealing naps in café, partying on the beach, along with spring-breakers, drunks, transvestites, homeless kids, bums, skate punks, illegal bonfires, tarnishing the beach grasses and dunes *(Birds of Paradise 126)*.

This extract reflects the drug and ridden life of the street, the suburb that surround Miami. , it is a reality of the daily life in Miami, parties, drunks. The changing life in the city was not reflected only on the central character Felice, it was too on her 14 years old friends Alma and Bethany which she meet them when she was working as a temp in several of the Miami Beach, “they talked about something called it “baby” that was a code for crack cocaine,”*( Birds of Paradise 127)* Felice and her friends become addicts to those qualities, “A few minutes later, Felice, Alma and Bethany sat at the table in the corner with a dusting of white powder on a ceramic plate like the one in her mother Kitchen.”*( Birds of Paradise 130)* this reflects the dirty life of the Beach and eating drugs become a normal habit there.

In the novel changing Miami city was associated with Felice’s adolescence and her development. With the time Felice’ birth, Miami city was purely good and the air was fresh “Felice was born, a Miami angel: it was as if the perfumed air and sifting fronds had pervaded his and Avis’s genes,” *(Birds of Paradise  116)* but after her growing up Miami life had changed completely she starts to notice the garbage and changing people’s behavior, and spread of multiple culture which pollute the air and gave bad smell due to their smoking and drinking “she sees people behave here in ways they never would back in Naperville and Houston and Scranton. The night swishes with languages: Portuguese, French, Russian, Arabic, intertwined with
cigarette smoke and the smell of alcohol and perfume.” (Birds of Paradise 239) She also observes manicures in their jeans and tank tops, cigarette smoke streams between them. In addition to the spread of drug, there were also the spread of bars, nightclub which contains nicotine and old beer, the spread of smoking and cigarette between the street kids in Miami beach “The cigarette pack bounces on the floor . . . more cigarette butts reeking in the sink, empty bottles with their own sour yeast stink,” (Birds of Paradise 38). So, the life of the city changed completely, it becomes plenty with the spread of various type of drug as Abu Jaber declares:

Now Felice is almost eighteen, and she’s tried so hard to turn into something new. But every day there’s dancing and drugs spread hand to hand, silver pipes, tabs that melt away on the tongue, medical-looking hypodermics, capsules and all names, letter _ E, H, and MDA.”(44)

Also the spread of alcohol, serious drinker, the spread of model catalogues, the disappearance of help as when Felice wants to save her friend from a man hurting her, no one correspond. There were also the spread of crime and theft, the kidnapping as in the novel, “Is it possible she’s been kidnapped? These city_ things happen all time.”(Birds of Paradise 227)

Profoundly, the writer had treated her American origin from her point of view she described it saying that: Down town Miami: warren of back alleys, bodegas, hidden office, stories from the beach rats, place for the deeply crazy and dangerous, drop points for drugs cartels, vanished children, human trafficking.”(247) this passage shows clearly the life of modern American city Miami.

The independence of adolescence was the first aspect of the life of modern American Family. Abu Jaber in her novel represents it as a new culture which shows the changing life in family as well as the city. Food is another aspect that treated as a
part of family culture that shows the development of food industry in the contemporary American society.

2-Food industry as a part of culture

Generally, food stands as a symbol for defining Culture in a given society. In American society, the food industry defines the life of modern family culture and reflects the changing culture of its traditional family. It emerges to substitute the organ food that all is natural; base on pure ingredient, the source is gardens and farms. Where, food industry base on the source of factories, the basis is chemical ingredients.

It fact, Food industry emerges as a result to changing culture in modern world like modern American world, and this evident with the spread of multinational fast- food restaurants like MacDonald’s or Kentucky Fried chicken has come to symbolize Globalization. Food industry may associate with such American food such as Hamburger. Americans are so famous with MacDonald that is the largest purchaser of beef, pork and potatoes in the United States. This term MacDonalization was first related to Ritzer George in his text “the MacDonalization of Society”. (Qtd in Lemoudaa 24) Moreover, Stephen and Lyon Phil (1995), they define MacDonalization as “the process by which the principles of the fast food restaurant are coming to dominate more and more sectors of American society as well as the rest of the world”. (Lemoudaa 24)

So, the various types of food that we found in the world are the reflection to the form of particular society. Thus each society has its specific food choice consumption. For instance, the conception of food in the Arab families differ from that of the modern American one, they differ in the way they consume it. The Arab
families eat together as one unit because they think that food saves social gathering; reflect the traditions and culture. Americans do not do this; they lack that sense of sating around the table together and enjoying with the sense of family gathering.

More importantly, food is considered as one of the most significant element of culture. It plays a great role in protecting tradition and defines identities. In particular, American families do not prepare their lunch and dish at home, they base their daily life on consuming fast foods in restaurants which its source is the supermarket. Furthermore, Abu Jaber’s writing focus on food, food for her defines and reflects identity and character as she said “food is such a metaphor for everything, every aspect of life and identity. People identify with this; they built their sense of self around these kinds of issues” (Qtd in Gratz, 63). The theme of food in Bird of Paradise was associated with family relationships and refers to its culture that characterizes it. For the writer, food is very important; she makes from it a theme that gives her writing a particular touch. In the novel, the major theme is not only food but food industry in which the writer expressed it through two members of family Avis and her elderly son Stanley. The aim behind featuring food in the character of Avis was to show the big effect of pastries on health. And Stanley’s one was to show the development of food industry in American society.

In the novel, Avis, is a pastry Chef, prepares various types of pastries including tarts, cookies, cakes, and cup cakes, croissants and mill-feuilles decorated by chocolate and creams. Pastries can be part of food industry because its preparation requires some chemical ingredients like: Vanilla powder, creams, and gelatin. It defines by everything prepare with sugar, it is a delicious deserts consumes a lot by American in their homes and especially in birthday parties. Abu Jaber draws attention to that eating a lot of pastries may cause disease, when Stanley sends nutrition with
reports and newsletter talks about obesity and diabetes. Further, he links sugar with death to show the big effect of working with sugar as his mother’s work need “She always devoted her finger to work with pâté sucrée and crème fraiche.” (Birds of Paradise 65) For her, sugar is a luxury and her work based a lot on its use, which make the entire neighbor hates her because she works with sugar. The writer does not show the effect of delicious food but, also the salty ones when Felice feels ““the burger sits in her stomach: she falls drugged and groggy and wipes a line of sweat in her hairline.” (Birds of Paradise 56)

Pastries are really very harmful to health, they cause serious problem as shown in the novel when Hannah told Felice that her mother’s pastries, meringue and Palmiers will make her fat, and that ‘s her mother is trying to poison her .Avis prepares her pastries from list includes: egg, brown, sugar, vanilla, butter, sweetness flour, chocolate chip.(347) All Avis’s bakery business requires crème work of a pâté feuilletée and pate à choux, caramel and crème patissière as well as crème Chantilly.

In the novel, Stanley’s business represents the development of food industry in American society. When he was child he starts first with small herb garden such as tomatoes and onions, and makes it food preparation, “He made them stews, pastas, salads filled with crisp vegetables from his garden”. Then he takes from it first a grocery store and food shopping, as mention in the novel “His business was at the beginning a kind of the grocery store” (Birds of Paradise 118), the whole store was just organic food and vegetarian committed to natural and alternative approaches. It was healthy and nice good food when he was teen of 14 years old. With the evolution of his adolescent, he opens a market “When Stanley first opened the market, the only cheeses they carried were flavorless bricks of organic jack and rubbery, casein-free, vegan cheddar.”(Birds of Paradise 338) he still bases on natural food. The business
of food organic market for Stanley was a dream from his childhood; he sets his principles to live by that as follow:

To offer clean, healthy food. To make the food available. Affordable. To offer the food in a clean, appealing environment. To get the food only from local, small, independent growers. Grass-pastured meats. Cageless. Produce in season only. Sustainably-grown. Not genetically modified foods. Heirloom seeds and produces. No Monsanto, no corporate food. Hand-crafted. No factory-processed. No transfats or high-fructose corn syrup. (*Birds of Paradise* 294)

His aim is to make people healthier, happier, and smarter by bringing them better food: to contribute to the restoration of the earth, to make it better, safe place for all people especially children on planet earth, to live and play in. This was Stanley’s manifesto that mainly base on the idea of organic food market, and the list of goals sets for years.

With the spread of food corporation in American society, the whole country become dominates by “the imperialistic legacy of big-food industry” (*Birds of Paradise* 119), and genetically modified food organism. So, the restaurants in Miami city rise to witness the coming of tourists with shopping bags in order to eat plates of ground beef and cubed fork and fish in blanket of white gravy. The waiters in restaurants offer “glasses of burgundy proclaim plates with thin, peppery steaks redolent of garlic, scoops of buttery grilled Brussels sprouts, and a salad of beets, walnuts, and Roquefort.”(*Birds of Paradise* 348) These conditions lead Stanley too, “after years of working in food industry, he had a near-telepathic ability to detect vermin and pests of all sorts,” (*Birds of Paradise* 335). He went working with modern food like bottled water, canned food. Really Stanley’s mind changes from his old
principle of Organic food market into food industry in which the mother notices this when:

She followed him back into the kitchen and watched him remove chilies, onions, garlic, and tomatoes from the cooler. A whole chicken. He opened the refrigerator and slid in cartons of cheese, bunches of lettuce, broccoli, and cauliflower. He closed the fridge, the flipped the cooler shut. (Birds of Paradise 189)

It is the spread of canned food and dry goods stuff (bottled water, bulk foods) It is the whole world that had change, whole community, whole society and the family. Traditional American family used to eat sandwiches for breakfast made from tahini, organic banana, and local wildflower honey on whole wheat whereas, modern one base on eating breakfast contains butter, eggs, chocolate, and lemon_colored cheese because the chemicals become control the farmer’s seed production.

In fact, it is the whole culture that had changed, and which the writer of the novel had succeeded to explore this with the family relationship of Muir family that associated with new culture of food industry, and independence of adolescence. In our purpose, it serves to indicate the change in the culture of family in modern American society. So, Bird of Paradise is considered as a turning point in Diana Abu Jaber’s writing because it is the best example to show the strong breakdown with her Arab American culture comparing it with her previous ones.
Chapter three: From the Arab to the American Origins

Abu Jaber is one of the most notable Arab authors in the United States. She is a professor of creative writing at Portland University. She is a food critic, too. Her father is Jordanian, her mother is an American. So, she grows up between two cultures. In her novels she always writes about her Arab identity.

She has published several articles and four novels focusing on Arab American experiences and cultures: Arabian Jazz (1993), Crescent (2003), The Language of Baklavas (2005), Origin (2007). One can say that the common point in her first three novels is the attempt to write about the experiences of hyphenated people. Abu Jaber tries to describe the character’s conflicts with one another and within themselves, as they struggle with their American and Arab selves. In Birds of Paradise, Diana quits the representation of characters and their origins, and opts for the depiction of the modern American Family. So, this chapter will discuss the change that happens in the writer’s carrier.

1- Abu Jaber: the Arab American writer Vs the American one

Abu Jaber with all her previous novels naming: Arabian Jazz, Crescent, the Language of Baklavas, Origin. She seems an Arab American writer because she tackles the theme of quest of identity between two different cultures. The characters are always from either Iraqi or Jordan.
First, *Arabian Jazz*, the theme is search of home for the Arab American Immigrants. This novel centers on characters who try to cope with their double cultural identity and their inability to choose which one of them.

In this novel, the setting is New York City. The main characters are Fatima and her brother Matussem who left their home country Jordan and settle in the United States. They create a new home that is empty from the Arab tradition. Matussem marries Nora, from an Irish-American origin. They give birth to two daughters Jemorah and Melvina. After Nora’s death on a trip to Jordan, the family lives in trouble and struggle to identify itself as belonging to only one culture: Jordan or American. (Qtd in Motta Reis 18-34)

In the novel, Fatima tries to preserve her Arab identity. As the extract shows:

She lived among Americans, in places they had built, among, their people, but despite this, she wanted to keep herself, her family, and a few friends apart from the rest. She wanted that the American had, but at the same time, she would never relax her hold on herself. It was not appropriate to mingle. Americans had money, but Arabs, ah! They had the food, the culture, the etiquette, the ways of being and seeing and understanding how life was meant to be lived. (Qtd in Motta Reis 360)

She is so aware about her culture and identity including her love to her family and friends. Fatima is belonging to Arab world and she is so proud of being a member of that community in sense that she refuses to change her way of life, because she struggles to keep her culture alive and to prove her identity as an Arab woman. (Qtd in Motta Reis 75)
On the other hand, When Matussem marries Nora, his life devoted just to Nora, his daughters and his sister. But, after his wife’s death, he changes his mind; he joins and accepts the American culture in order to remember and to fell that Nora still alive in his heart “Nora had been his history once; now only the land was left” (Qtd in Motta Reis 260). Nora’s death makes Matussem refuse totally to return to Jordan because he cannot believe she had died because he remembers her face when he go works, he thinks a lot about her. (Qtd in Motta Reis 88) So, returning to Jordan for Matussem means forgetting his history with Nora, America is the place where he could stay in contact with his wife.

Despite the fact that, Melina made efforts base on convincing her father to visit Jordan because it is his original land saying that: “this is your homeland, your people; this is a journey to your past, to call our pasts.” (Qtd in Mott Reis 255) But, he refuses and still attached with US in order to save his memories with his wife. Nora’s death influences Matussem a lot and makes him unable to return back to live with his family in Jordan. So, it seems that Matussem adapts to American way of life in order to forget about his wife. (Qtd in Motta Reis 65-89)

Concerning Jemorah and Melvina, after their mother lives them, they start feel not American because, their belonging to American society ends with their mother’s death. This reason leads them to become closer to their father’s origins. So, their identity becomes in conflict because they are not able to understand the two cultures: the culture of mother and the culture of the father. In the novel, Jemorah is not able to stand either by being neither too Arab nor too American; she cannot avoid cultural conflict in her life.( Qtd in Motta Reis 67-98) Melvina helps her sister Jemorah to understand their hyphenated situation and convincing her that belonging to two different worlds does not mean losing one, but gaining more power to accept and to
be familiar with both cultures as Melvina said “In the book of the life every page has two sides and finally will be able to feel home” (Qtd in Motta Reis 6).

Melvina understands her hyphenated name. She searches for job that later becomes a means defines her personality. She accepts her double identity and her job as a nurse solve the difficulties of being “Arab-American”. Melvina lives in comfort not in trouble because; the problem of identity issue is not an obstacle stand in her life. She incorporates the American culture easily. (Qtd in Motta Reis 43-68)

Jemorah on the other side, she differs from Melvina due to her inability to accept the loss of her mother. She suffers because she cannot accept her belonging either to America or to Jordan. Jemorah questions: “So it shouldn’t matter if I choose America or Jordan . . . It is the same either way” (Qtd in Motta Reis 330). She still suffers from the problem of being culturally doubled and splits. These difficulties lead Jemorah to have no life. In Jemorah’s mind her life had stopped when her mother died and her America origin becomes a problem, she can only see herself as Arab. (Qtd in Motta Reis 38-94) Jemorah declares that the source of her trouble comes from her mother’s death. She blames her mother for her suffers to own one culture and identity and to understand her American side:

I’m tired of fighting . . . You don’t understand. I’m tired of frightening it out her. I don’t have much idea of what it is to be Arab, but that’s what the family is always saying we are. I want to know what part of me is Arab. I haven’t figured out what part is our mother, either. It’s like she abandoned us, left us alone to work it all out. (Qtd in Motta Reis 307)

Jemorah is torn between her Arab self and American self. She lives in conflict that led her life completely without a meaning.
Second, in *Crescent*, Diana Abu Jaber does not change the theme of the Arab American experience. The setting is US and exactly Nadia’s café’, that considers the heart of Middle Eastern immigrant. There in the café’ they eat the Arab food. Serine is the protagonist of the novel; she is an Iraqi- American, comes to live in America with her Arab uncle after her parent passed away. She suffers from the struggle of being away from her origin. (Qtd in Limpar 17-19) She is isolated from her Arabic culture.

In the novel, Serine wants to learn about her Arab culture and its food. She learns this via the character “Han” who makes her realizes how she is far completely from her Arab roots. Han make Serine fell in need to visit Jordan and to remember the life of her childhood, as well as to fell that she has an Iraqi origin (Qtd in Limpar 29). Serine follows many strategies to learn more about her cultural origin: “she listens to the Arab poet Aziz’s poetry readings and Han’s lecture on Arabic literature at the university, attends the exhibition that shows photos of Iraqi, taken by the Han’s strange student.”(Qtd in Limpar 34) But, her most successful strategy was cooking to moderate between her two identities , As Brenda Mehta argues that “Crescent establishes the important link between cuisine and identity in which the preparation of food provides the protagonist Serine with the basic ingredients for healthy negotiation of her mixed-race, Arab American identity” (Qtd in Limpar 48). Serine faces disability consists of her of remembering few memories of her parent. She remembers only their cooking the Arabic food together because her father was always saying that her mother is an American but cooks Arab dishes .So, Serine’s food and dishes identifies her as Arabic. (Qtd in Limpar 51)

Third, in her culinary memoire *The Language of Baklava*, the theme is the same as the previous ones, the conflict to define the identity. The characters are
Diana herself and her father. The setting is both the Jordan society and the American one because; the writer narrates the event in two different worlds to show the big hybrid life that she has. She tells her life story using food as a means to present her identity, as well as her father’s struggle to define his own identity as Jordanian living in America. Abu Jaber’s identity was formed around the dual cultural experience of having an American mother and Jordanian father. In the novel Diana seems that she is trying to maintain one culture with the existence of both of them. She splits into two parts the east and the west. The marriage of the cultures that Diana lives makes her suffers from the difficulties to learn the Jordan language and to adjust to the Arab way of life. In Jordan she lives with an extended family: aunts, uncles, cousins, friends and neighbors. She eats Arab dishes and cooks that are completely deferent from that she consumed or prepared in American society. (Qtd in Gratz 24)

In this memoir, Abu Jaber gives reference to Middle Eastern food, and this starts from the title of the book “Baklava”. It is a pastry of disputed origins with different spellings, ingredients, techniques and shapes. (Qtd in Gratz 213) Initially, Abu Jaber treats her Arab origin in the character of her father who prepares Jordan recipes. She describes some delicious dishes of Jordan culture that prepared like the Shish kabob, Maglouba, Mensaf and other are all symbols for the Arabs and Middle East foods. She narrates about the Jordan food to allow her reader understand her ancestor land (Qtd in Lamaada 51).

On the other hand, Diana Writes about the American culture through the character of her mother, through her cooks particularly the meals such as: Conforting, Grilled, Velveet a sandwiches, and the Tenderest Angel food cake. The writer describes Diana’s mother and her preparation of sandwiches of cheese in order to express her American side (Qtd in Lamaada 52)
Diana seems influenced by two cultures i.e. Jordan and American; she feels lost between the two cultures that lead her to search for her identity. She expresses this influence through some Arabic music like the songs of Abdalhalime hafed and these songs are elements to preserve the father’s identity, and to express his homeland. Not only this, She gives a reference to Middle Eastern cooking and recipes such as Magloubah, a casserole of lamb, rice, onion, eggplant, and cauliflower as well as other recipes which related to the American culture particularly the mother culture such as sandwiches and cakes(Qtd in Lamaada 56). Through this process, Abu Jaber tries to moderate between her American mother and Jordanian father as she recalls “only or certain amount of space in my brain and the more space for Jordan takes up, the less room there is for America” (Qtd in Gratz 58). She feels confused with the marriage of the two cultures that she has.

Finally, we can say Language of Baklava witnesses the development of Abu Jaber’s cultural identity. Where we find Diana struggle to understand her hyphenated name, she is in search of her identity that is mixed between Jordan culture and at the same time the American one. At the end, Diana realizes that the best way to live is to adopt both cultures, where she gives a pure treatment to both her Arab culture and American one through food to express her dual identity as an Arab-American individual.

Fourth, Abu Jaber with her latest novel Birds of Paradise takes a different outlook from her previous novels. She breaks from treating her mix race concerning her Arab American identity to move completely toward treating her American origin where, she captures both Miami’s insiders that is to say the family, and outsiders that is the city. In Birds of Paradise, Abu Jaber seems more American than Arab because she reflects the American way of life. She projects how modern family in America
lives, the relationship that exists between the members of the family, the culture that identifies their life concerning food and children behavior. So, the theme is the changing culture in American society. The setting is Miami city. The characters are pictured into one family: Avis, Brian, Stanley and Felice. In the novel all the members of the family are in search of their stability and their struggle to cope with the new culture introduces to their family as well as to their city.

*Birds of Paradise* signal the culture of American society where, the writer describes the life of Muir Family who is typically Americans. We can say that the writer is still grappling with the subject of family, however; this time she does not deal with the theme of identity. The idea of home is still there but in a general meaning or concern- everybody needs a home. Also, the idea of food is still explored by the writer. In *Birds of Paradise*, she deals with this subject from a global, economic point of view not from an identity angle. The importance of the theme of food can be illustrated as the use of food metaphor, because food for her is such human connecter that makes them appear as one family. Starting with her saying “her skin is a sanity caramel with notes of mocha and chocolate, her eyes black almonds” (*Birds of Paradise* 188)

The writer here uses food to describe the characters and therefore gives her writing a unique style. The entire ingredients are caramel, mocha, chocolate and almonds that we need to prepare a cake or a patisserie that the American are famous with. Besides this, the writer uses such metaphors to describe the profession of preparing food and to indicate that is not an easy task to work with or to understand its essence as she describes: “Avis has always knows her hunt. She believes that her work is hard and essential, like that of the nurse, firefighter, carpenter: she will be needed after the collapse of civilization.” (*Birds of Paradise* 352)
Working in/on food is not less degree than other works such us: nurse or fight fighter. Also, she adds that “It seemed as if the life of the body: poets ascetic, hollowed-out by thinking; her professor seemed almost deliberately ugly especially the women.” (Birds of Paradise 352) She links the body of life with Poets.

Through this novel she wants to write a new literary project without repeating herself as she did with the first works before. So, *Birds of Paradise* is her new breakdown with her audience. The aim behind is to show that American society has its own specific culture that differs from the Arab one. They have a culture that based on the rebellion of adults, has a life style concerning the city. The culture that exists in other countries is disappeared in this country especially the culture of food. America does not have the sense of gathering around table, eating together as one body, discussing their ideas and solve their problem.

The indicators that make Abu Jaber look more American in this novel, her profound treatment of everything related to American society: culture, Family, Food and the City. When we talk about food we talk about American dessert and pastries. The culture that can be referred to here is the independence of adolescence. Then, dealing with Miami seems to be another theme: the city itself.

Diana Abu Jaber focuses on describing the beauty and the taste of Miami city through projecting the different aspects of change that surround it. So, the most important point that Abu Jaber has dealt with is the city’s change. She portrays the changing life of the whole Miami city not a part of it “Miami Beach” as she states “The entire city seems to vibrate with the roar of the cranes, as if its core is being disemboweled.” (*Birds of paradise* 256) This indicates that the change spread among all the small parts that exist inside the city: individuals, family, and culture.
Then she goes further to explain that the change is a result of the millions of tourists that come to America for different reasons like baking, “But on first, the city reveals itself—a mess of check-cashing and pawnshops, Latin bakeries, and stunned, displaced tourists milling around.’’ (Birds of paradise 256) In addition, the writer tackles the side of politics in America the various flags like the Cuban and Colombian ones, for her everything has change even people do not look the same as she says:

Even people look different- darker skin tones, hair beaded, nails long and decorative, the cares dustier, rearing mirrors festooned with prayer beads, baby shoes, dice; there are dashboard saints and virgins of Guadalupe, Cuban flags, flags of Colombia, Haiti, El Salvador, Lebanon. (Birds of paradise 256)

Miami city is well known for its beauty that attracts people to make business; it opens its door for the opportunity of work and investments as the following passage indicate:

At the light on Northeast fifty-fourth, he takes a left, following direction included in a folder from a commission hearing. It’s grim, working-class city street with hand-lettered signs for local businesses: Gonaives Car Wash, Chez Italienne Fried chicken, bonjour Travel, the battered Église Haitienne, every window covered with bars and scrolls of iron work, metal dumpsters covered with the sort of graffiti that looks like vicious slashes, rows of rusted metal spear fencing, sailing plastic bags, and weed-riddled torn-up lots. (Birds of paradise 256)
Moreover, Abu Jaber introduces some hints to the American country by naming some famous figures like Martin Luther king Jr. and Bob Marley; she describes their standing beside the paint which essence is asking God for protecting America:

At the corner, pulled up beside King Stable Bar-B_Q lounge, its sing faded to near-invisibility, he makes a right, passing a natural of Martin Luther king Jr. and Bob Marley and above them in sky-blue paint, *God bless the United States of America* (256)

It seems that Dian is so proud of being a member of the American society because she depicts the American towns and small areas like Florida, Coral Gables, Miami, and The South Beach.

For the variety of the practices which cover Miami’s land in recent time that is to say the modern is, the rise of the development that performed by the developer’s profession whom hopes by their projects to realize the legality in the American society: “These days, Miami is a skyline of towering developers’ cranes operating in varying degrees of legality.” (*Birds of Paradise* 72) In the novel, the narrator shows that Miami in the past was not plenty of population as now in the contemporary time in which introduced that “The city was lonely then, populated mostly by old folks. God’s waiting room.” (*Birds of Paradise* 76) And the only cause as it is mentioned in the novel is universality of Miami city, its ability to help people realizing their dreams. This is very evident in *Birds of Paradise* as one of Brian’s friend asking about what is Miami? And Brian’s answer was: “Unlike New York or Boston, Miami was a place really you could go to and really create something new. Best of all, its boom-or-bust energy, a penchant for dreaming: a dream of the city in a dream of a
state.” *(Birds of Paradise 76)* Through this statement we can draw a conclusion that Abu Jaber makes Miami appear in the novel as a star that has got qualities that many other cities lack like, New York and Boston. Beside, the full description of the life of the city, Abu Jaber turns back to deal with the multiple immigrant that involves in the pot of American country including the Cubans , The African-American, Arab, Italian, Swedish. Each one of them settles in specific area and has its own accent “Everyone filtering, accents magnetically attracted to accents,” (73).

In fact, the life in America in modern time seems very difficult especially in Florida where the father of the Muir family Brian feels that “living in Florida is an act of both rebellion and willful perversity like rebuilding a house on the train tracks.”(97) Not only Brian who notices that, Avis too feels that Miami frightening, it differs from their first arrival, the coming of the German tourists, the spread of murder, theft, kidnaps of babies, the lack of the sense of gathering around the table in the houses for eating, as the novel illustrates:

Miami seems as frightening to Avis now as it had when they’d first arrived _a lawless and where cabbies kidnapped young coeds on spring break, German tourists were shot in broad daylight, gangs of young blacks and brown men roved around in their thin white tanks, long baggy jeans, hands jammed in their pockets. There were “home invasion”, in which thieves would simply rampage into houses and murder the inhabitants at their dinner tables. She’d seen a fistfight break out at the local video store, twice watched police run across neighbors’ lawns with guns drawn; and too many times to count she’s had to slam on her brakes to avoid a careening drunken driver_ her heart seized up, throbbing in her chest. *(Birds of Paradise 80)*
This reality of the changing life in America can be generalized as a condition for the modern American city. South Beach area is also depicted as: “the worst of the worst_ slums and junkies and thieves. Now all is, beautifully revitalized: gleaming buildings, wooden walkways through plumes of beach grass, and the ocean just beyond.”(Birds of Paradise 99) it means that one time the Beach was too dirty with all the deep meaning but, it turns to be repaired. The city in Birds of Paradise changed completely even the essence of neighborhoods, home, and family. All has vanished due to individual’s occupation with development, investment as Abu Jaber writes:

He knows the essence of the city is its neighborhoods, most of which are being systematically broken into developers_ their constructions driving out the old homes and families, ushering in nonresident owner-investors, ant-communities made up of transients and tourists_ no personal history or investment in the place where they’ve landed.( Birds of Paradise 184)

She adds that Miami appears to be “Shut down_ the traffic lights are out, the storm drains matted with debris, the avenues swamped. There are heaps of wet branches blocking the streets, beautiful old trees split into pieces or just overturned, root ends up.”(347) This was Abu Jaber’s final treatment in her novel concerning the city that was worth of meaning for the writer American origin that is associate with her mother origin.

Finally, from the analyses of Abu Jaber three novel naming: Arabian Jazz, Crescent, and the Language of Baklava. We understand that the essence was dealing with same theme that is to say the search of identity that is lost with having two different cultures belonging to either to the Arab world and American one. Whereas, 2012 Arab American book award winner Birds of Paradise, the heart is purely
treatment of one origin the American root. Through *Birds of Paradise*, we can define Diana Abu Jaber as an American writer.
General Conclusion

Family is a social system that guarantees the life of culture in any given society. Since they are tightly related, family and culture are two sides of the same coin. The concept of family is so complex in the American culture. It cannot be clearly defined, first, due to its melting-pot nature, second, to the rapid social changes in the global age.

In the middle of the social changed, the traditional American family faded away and turned into a modern one. A new type, called the Nuclear Family, has emerged and witnessed new cultural aspects. In Birds of Paradise, the Muir family is a good illustration of modern American family. Like all modern families, the Muir is destabilized and fragmented because of the emergent new culture of adolescent’s freedom. This family suffers a lot from the disappearance of their adolescent daughter, Felice. Also, this family displays a modern mode of life especially the one related to the food culture.

Miami is the setting of the novel and it is an important factor in explaining the suffering and destabilization of the Muir Family. The writer uses Felice as a mirror to reflect the deep changes that happened to Miami City. The innocence of the city is corrupted by the spread of crimes, dirt, pollution and drugs. It is not anymore a safe place especially for kids like Felice.

In fact, in dealing with American culture and American family in Birds of Paradise, Abu Jaber changes her scope from her origins and the Arab culture. This novel can be considered as a turning point in this writer’s career. In her earlier novels, she centers on the dual cultural identity that all the minorities are facing. In Arabian Jazz, the characters’ depiction emphasizes on the problem of belonging to two worlds
with an inability to choose one identity over the other. Then, *Crescent* focuses on bridging the gap between the two identities, to continue with the same idea in her culinary memoir *The Language of Baklava*. However, in *Birds of Paradise*, she deals with a purely American culture, that leads us to conclude that Diana Abu Jaber, subsequently; has chosen to be American.
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