LIVING THE EXILE: HISTORY, INDIVIDUAL AND THE NATION IN SELECT WORKS OF PALESTINIAN WOMEN WRITERS

Thesis submitted to the University of Calicut for the award
of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English

by

Shijila K.

Under the Supervision of

Dr. Praseedha G.

Assistant Professor

Department of English

Mercy College, Palakkad

Research Centre for Comparative Studies

Post Graduate Department of English

Mercy College, Palakkad

Affiliated to the University of Calicut

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DECLARATION

I, Shijila K., hereby declare that the thesis titled “Living the Exile: History, Individual and the Nation in Select Works of Palestinian Women Writers” is a bonafide research carried out by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Praseedha G., and it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Place: Palakkad

Date: Shijila K.

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that the thesis titled “Living the Exile: History, Individual and the Nation in Select Works of Palestinian Women Writers” submitted to the University of Calicut for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy is a work of bonafide research carried out by Shijila K. under my supervision and that it has not previously formed the basis for the award of any degree, diploma, associateship, fellowship, or any other similar title or recognition.

Place: Palakkad

Date:

Dr. Praseedha G. (Guide)
Assistant Professor and Research Guide
PG Department of English &
Research Centre for Comparative Studies
Mercy College, Palakkad

CERTIFICATE

This is to certify that no changes were recommended to be made by the adjudicators of the thesis submitted by Ms. Shijila K., titled “Living the Exile: History, Individual and the Nation in Select Works of Palestinian Women Writers.”

Place: Palakkad

Date:

Dr. Praseedha G.
Assistant Professor and Research Guide
PG Department of English &
Research Centre for Comparative Studies
Mercy College, Palakkad.

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CONTENTS

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PREFACE

I reached the area of Palestinian literature from partition literature. It was Dr. Meena Ma'am who suggested that I take up Suad Amiry's books, fresh and poignant as they are. Then I plunged into the search for another contemporary Palestinian woman writer and settled finally in the rich, poetical cadences of Susan Abulhawa's fiction. My research supervisor, Dr. Praseedha Ma'am, helped me extract the exilic predicament of Palestinian lives and see for myself how big and uncontained a tragedy theirs was, even as I struggled to limit the nuances of their existence to the finite mould of this thesis.

Both the writers, Susan Abulhawa and Suad Amiry, have other professional careers besides writing. They have resorted to their flair for writing when confronted with the ultimate dead-ends of Palestinian lives like their own as well as million others, scattered, separated and blocked out from vision by the military hands of Israel and the world's indifference. For them, writing is as much a part of activism as that of literature. In the initial years of my research, when I read Amiry's statement in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* that "Having a thesis to write felt like having a monkey on my back; I was trying hard to release its hands and legs, but to no avail" (45), I readily chimed in. But now, at the threshold of completion, I hope that this humble thesis becomes one among the many voices raised in solidarity to oppressed peoples around the world. I admire the courage and steadfastness of the Palestinian people, and all peoples, near and far, in and across, who hold on to their displaced selves and fractured roots.

Shijila K.

Chapter 1

Introduction

"Every point of view is, simultaneously, also a point of blindness."

-Eve Spangler, *Understanding Israel/Palestine*

The ever-increasing flux of refugees across the globe makes the question 'who is a refugee?' highly pertinent. According to the UN Refugee Agency, refugees are persons forced to flee their country in the wake of persecution, war or violence. Differing from internally displaced persons, this category of people are initially asylum-seekers before they are given the identity and rights of a refugee whereby they can receive legal protection and material assistance in host countries. Beyond the immediate task of seeking sanctuary, the main aim of refugees is either a return to homeland or resettlement.

When the heat of two World Wars in the first half of the twentieth century 'cooled down' to the Cold War of the latter half which was accompanied by many military incursions in Asian and African countries, there occurred an alarming increase in refugee population. With mass displacements and migrant crises precipitated due to the Syrian civil war, the dire situation of political turmoil in Afghanistan, the intolerance towards the Rohingyan community as an ethnic minority in Myanmar, the socio-political collapse in South Sudan, the economic and political instability in Venezuela and numerous other conflicts, the demographic account of refugees today has multiplied to several millions. According to the UNHCR, there are 82.4 million refugees worldwide at the end of 2020.

The acute identity crisis felt by refugees as forcibly displaced people is different from that of voluntary migrants, the expatriate and all others who have

embraced diasporic lives. Edward W. Said has depicted how the banishment of peoples in the primitive times has visibly transformed to the large-scale, geopolitical, forced displacement of people in the modern era (177). Refugee predicament, from this angle, turns into an existential struggle fought to defend one's individual identity and dignity. This sense of self and identity in turn is sheltered under the stretched canopy of a strong cultural backdrop. While their collectivity is reinforced through food, celebrations and other means, refugee literature also emerges as a steady foothold upon which a whole array of dislocated consciousness gets reflected on. There have been several writers whose writings mirrored the angst of exile felt by themselves or their communities or both. Anne Frank's autobiographical diary accounts of her life to escape Nazi captivity that end abruptly after her capture, subtly reveal the precariousness of existence once the bygone shelter of home is left off in the distance. Writers such as Vladimir Nabokov, Isabel Allende, Khaled Hosseini and Hannah Arendt have had to seek refuge elsewhere, to name but a few. Many books like *We Are Displaced* by Malala Yousafzai, *Exit West* by Mohsin Hamid etc. penned by authors who are/were refugees themselves, are unflinching portrayals of fugitive lives. Apart from written works and movies, the dangers of losing home and the pain of the world's almost indifferent gaze poignantly converge in the photograph of Alan Kurdi, the Syrian refugee boy whose little body washed ashore, or the graffiti sprawled on international barriers and walls. The Nobel Prize in Literature 2021 awarded to the Tanzanian exilic writer, Abdulrazak Gurnah, proclaims the need of the hour to address the fate of dislocated lives.

Relatively an older cause that lingers on from several decades ago, the Palestinian refugee crisis points to homeless millions scattered across the Middle East nations. The Palestinian issue resonates with several other crises in the Middle East,

like the tremors of political unrest in neighbouring countries as Egypt, Lebanon and Syria. The Palestinian condition of statelessness is compared with that of the Armenians (before they achieved the status of independent statehood) and the Kurds (Khalidi 194). This thesis focuses on works written by two Palestinian women writers, Susan Abulhawa and Suad Amiry, that revolve around the aforementioned refugee crisis, its causes and continuing consequences.

Palestine

"The word *Palestine* is of Roman origin, referring to the biblical land of the Philistines, which today encompasses Israel, the West Bank, Gaza, and parts of Jordan and southern Lebanon," the geographical land lying between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River (*The Middle East* 16). Ceasing to exist as a legal entity in 1948, Palestine still lacks the international status of nationhood. However, Palestine is a full member of the Arab League and has observer status at the UN general assembly. Palestinian nationalism was developed and promoted "partly in response to the Zionist threat to their patrimony, although forms of Palestinian nationalism existed before the advent of Zionism" (16). Palestinians today exist as scattered communities, some of them living within the 1948 borders, i.e., within Israel as Israeli Arabs who happened to be internally displaced, and others living in the Palestinian territories, majority of whom happen to be refugees of the 1948 war, or else, exist in various communities throughout the Middle East and beyond. In the first chapter titled "States" of his book *After the Last Sky*, Edward W. Said writes that, "Wherever we Palestinians are, we are not in our Palestine, which no longer exists" (11). Palestinians not only demand freedom from the military occupation of Israel and insist for an independent state of their own, but also claim the right to return to their original places in historic Palestine which have since then become part of Israel.

History of the Israel-Palestine Conflict

The beginning of the Israel-Palestine conflict can be traced back to the early decades of the twentieth century, when Israel as a nation was conceived but not born, and Palestine, not yet expired. “With a complex mosaic of religion and history as backdrop, the fundamental nature of this conflict is easy to overlook: a modern struggle between two peoples making claims to the same piece of land – historic Palestine” (*The Middle East* 5). Holy alike for Jews, Christians and Muslims, and situated at the crossroads of the three continents of Asia, Africa and Europe, Palestine was a place that held a unique magnetic charm as “the inheritor of five thousand years of history” (12). Integral to the region’s history are the ancient connections of “the people of Israel to the land of Palestine” and of the Palestinians, who trace their origins to the Canaanites (12). The forced dispersal of the Jews from Palestine in the early centuries after Christ made them assimilate into the many countries of their diaspora. “The prophetic concept of an eventual gathering of the Jewish exiles into the land of their origin,” however, lay dormant within the Jewish collective consciousness (12). While the first Jewish settlements arose in Palestine as early as 1882, Zionism, the political movement among European Jewry that led to the mass Jewish migration to Palestine, was formed in 1897 under the leadership of Theodor Herzl. The movement emerged from “the ferment of nationalist, socialist, populist, and utopian ideas that were inflaming the youth of Europe in the nineteenth century” (13). Marking Jewish settlement, numerous waves of immigration brought Jews to Palestine who bought land for cheap prices and settled in the region eventually.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Palestine, with a Jewish population of 25,000 and a largely Arab Muslim population of 6,00,000, was part of the Ottoman Empire. The disintegration of the Empire after the first World War brought Palestine

under the British Mandate which lasted for thirty years (1918-1948). The Balfour Declaration on November 2, 1917 sanctioned the Zionist goal of a Jewish homeland in Palestine (given the condition that it would not prejudice the right of the non-Jewish community in the region). Anti-Semitic persecutions in Europe that reached a crescendo in the Holocaust occasioned an ever-increasing influx of Jews to Palestine and gave impetus for a Jewish political national movement. Christopher Catherwood in his book *A Brief History of the Middle East*, sums up this in the chapter "The Creation of Israel and After…" as, "Jewish immigration to Palestine increased exponentially, as Jews felt that only with their own state would they be safe from future Hitlers" (198). When the British decided to relinquish its mandate, the UN issued a partition plan of Palestine in 1947, according to which 43 percent of the land was to be given to the Arabs and the lion share of 57 percent to be allotted to the Jews of far lesser number than the Arabs, in anticipation of further Jewish immigration. Larry Collins and Dominique Lapierre evaluate this decision in their classic *O Jerusalem!* as, "A mapmaker's nightmare, it was, at best, a possible compromise; at worst, an abomination" (3). The declaration of the State of Israel on May 14, 1948 by the Zionist Movement was accompanied by the outbreak of war and the forced eviction of native Arabs by Zionist troops. Thousands of Palestinian villages were destroyed and more than seven million people had to flee their land, hunted down by persecution and death. The events of this dispossession and exile, including the loss of their majority status in the region, are collectively "inscribed in the Palestinian memory and historiography" as the *nakba*, meaning catastrophe, while Israel celebrates it as the War of Independence (Khalidi 178). Eve Spangler, in her work *Understanding Israel/Palestine,* describes the plight of Palestinians after 1948:

> The Palestinian people were reduced to dependent status. In the West Bank they were subject to Jordanian rule, in Gaza, Egyptian rule. Many more were crowded into refugee camps, not only in the West Bank and Gaza, but also in the surrounding countries: Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt. Even in the new Israeli state very few Palestinians remained in their own homes; many of them were internally displaced, that is, still in areas under Israeli control, but not where they had always lived. (9)

By 1949, 78 percent of the total land of historic Palestine had been turned into Israel while Palestine, shrinking to the two territories of the West Bank and Gaza, dwindled to the remaining 22 percent.

The Six-Day War of June 1967 brought these two territories under Israeli occupation, which the Palestinians call the *naksa*, meaning disaster. The *naksa* is described by Edward W. Said as, "a relapse, a temporary setback, as in the process of recovery from an illness" (47). This again resulted in the displacement of some four million Palestinians. Eve Spangler explains the Palestinian predicament under occupation as, "Today, the Palestinian population is controlled both by an occupying army and by an army of bureaucrats who give or, more often, withhold permits that allow Palestinians to go to school, go to the doctor, marry and live with their spouse, deepen wells, build houses, move goods, access bank accounts, etc." (16). Said calls the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza as "brutal" in his essay "Identity, Authority, and Freedom" in the book *Reflections on Exile* (397). The Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) that was formed at the Arab Summit in 1964 came to be accepted as "the political representative of the unabsorbed refugees" (*The Middle East* 47). Two decades of stringent military rule that controlled Palestinian lives and suppressed their political expression made them erupt out in the first *intifada* or

uprising in 1987. “A massive and popular reaction,” it was “also an expression of Palestinian frustration at the failure of Arab diplomacy to reach an acceptable resolution to the Arab-Israeli conflict” (65). The various peace agreements including the Oslo Accords of 1993 signed between representatives of the Israeli government and the PLO shows the involvement of the international community in attempting to resolve the Israel-Palestine conflict. However, peace has not yet dawned in the Holy Land as power relations remain unbalanced.

Gaps in History: A Palestinian Rethinking

The idea of history as a construct in the recent theoretical paradigm has paved the way for exploring alternative historical spaces in all four works. Writing counter history has become an act of reconciliation with the forcefully subjugated voices, perspectives and traumas in the histories of various peoples. Counter narratives with their emerging, strong voices pose a serious challenge to the authenticity of established historical narratives as well as socio-political standpoints. Landmark historical events are looked at in a fresh light and reinterpreted from multiple viewpoints so that many hidden truths turn up unraveled and naked for the world’s scrutiny.

When history repeats itself, the biblical exile of the Jews gets mirrored in the exile of Palestinian Arabs upon the formation of the Israel state that anchored the ancient wanderers finally in their promised land. However, this fact is smothered beneath the Zionist slogan that proclaimed the Jews to be a people without a land for a land without a people. This campaign that stressed the landlessness of the Jews also put forth the invisibility of the native Arab people toiling on Palestinian soil. “It is ironic that [Zionism] born in response to the hatefulness of anti-Semitism, would be

blind to the rights and existence of another people – the Arab population of Palestine" (*The Middle East* 13). Christopher Catherwood's book *A Brief History of the Middle East* aptly presents the waves of Jewish immigration from the Arab perspective: "The problem, as we know, was that the long-standing Arab inhabitants of the region had different feelings about an enormous number of foreigners coming to their part of the world, and as exculpation for European sins of genocide of which the Arabs were innocent" (198-9). In one of his important essays on exile called "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said calls the Palestinian exile as, "the most extraordinary of exile's fates: to have been exiled by exiles – to relive the actual process of up-rooting at the hands of exiles" (178). This repetition of the exilic journey is forgotten quickly over the jubilant celebration of the newly established state; completely destroyed Palestinian villages were rebuilt and renamed as Jewish settlement areas and colonies, and farmlands were appropriated. The exodus of Palestinian Arabs resulted in mass displacement and refugee crisis: while many were forced to move into the existing Palestinian territories as refugees, many others got internally displaced within Israel and remained as second class citizens of the new state. In the growing refugee crisis, the question of return to their original villages and homelands got no ears; the claim to their rightful identities still remain unheeded.

The Six-Day War of 1967 that brought the Palestinian territories under Israeli occupation further re-channelized the nature of the conflict. The questions of human rights and freedom of living and expression revolved around the solidified images of the two groups as the oppressor and the oppressed. The original issue of exile from land and a possible return to it thus disappeared behind the new concerns. The very agenda and policy drawn in the peace talks of the nineties also reverted the Palestinian issues to those arising out of Israel's strict domination over life in the Palestinian

territories of the West Bank and Gaza. The peace agreements began from the mutual recognition of Israel and the PLO and progressed towards a division concerning varying degrees of Palestinian and Israeli control in the aforementioned Palestinian territories. Nothing was ever said on the 1948 invasion of Palestinian land, the return to which a whole people still hope and aspire. Wars, military attacks, occupation and settlement issues serve to reroute the Israel-Palestinian conflict from the basic problem of the loss of land and home. In this way, the momentous event of the Palestinian *nakba* or catastrophe has been made to vanish from the concerns of an international psyche. It is to fill this gap in historical memory that Palestinian writing strives for. The principal aim of Palestinian literature is to shed light on the gaping wound of the partition of Palestine – that of the *nakba* – and gain acknowledgment for the right to return to their places of origin.

Palestinian Literature

Palestinian literature is part of the vibrant body of Arabic literature, inherent with the "*al-hakawati*" or storytelling tradition and unique verse forms of poetry (Masalha 27). However, the momentous changes in the socio-political history of Palestine have significantly influenced the indigenous literature as an important way of ethno-cultural expression. Edward Said, in his essay, "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948," sees the year 1948 as having "put forward a monumental enigma, an existential mutation for which Arab history was unprepared" (46). Sharing and interpreting ideas from Constantine Zurayk's 1948 book, *Ma'na al-nakba,* Said characterizes the *nakba* as "a rupture of the most profound sort" that brought a rift between "the Arabs and the very possibility of their historical continuity as a people" (47). Hence, the future vision of "the specter of national fragmentation or extinction" prompted Palestinians to restore historical continuity and forge a historical possibility

through cultural revival and writing (47). The primary task of any Arab writer, especially Palestinian, became, "one of *making* the present in such a way as, once again, to *make* it in touch with past authenticity and future possibility" (49) (italics in original). Identifying the past with loss and the future with uncertainty, writers rendered the present as disaster. "[T]he very act of telling, narrating, uttering," guaranteed actuality and affirmed the historical rupture and stagnation brought in by the terrible events and conditions of the *nakba* (50). Palestinian literature today incorporates writings produced by the internally displaced Palestinians living in Israel as Israeli Arabs, by those residing in the Palestinian territories, mostly as refugees of the *nakba*, and by those scattered across the Middle East and beyond as the Palestinian diaspora. Thus, Palestinian literature is transnational rather than being territory-bound.

The hallmark traits of Arab writing after 1948 that Said identifies as 'contemporaneity' and 'periodicity' (both of which make writing itself an actual historical process) are to be found in the prose and prose fiction of writers as Ghassan Kanafani, Mourid Barghouti, Emil Habibi, Raja Shehadeh, Jabra Ibrahim Jabra and others. The themes they dealt with were the Palestinian longing for lost land, pain of uprooting and non-belonging, and identity crisis as refugees. Most of their writings could not be divorced from the intense crisis of the socio-political history of Palestine. Kanafani's masterpiece *Men in the Sun* (1963) shines brightly by an indifferent sun under which Palestinians as displaced people must struggle to find a living. Emil Habibi's *The Secret Life of Saeed, the Ill-fated Pessoptimist*, a fine exercise of irony in Arabic fiction, depicts the wise fool Saeed "coping in his unique way with the crushing realities of the life of a Palestinian living in the State of Israel" (Allen 189). The novels of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra show "the alienation and nostalgia of the

Palestinian intellectual community condemned to a life of exile" (189). The fertile, evergreen meadows of long-standing Arab poetic tradition were replenished by twentieth century Palestinian poets such as Mahmoud Darwish, Samih al-Qasim, Rashid Husayn and Tawfiq Sayigh. "Questions of land, home, and identity, confrontations with violence, injustice, and exile, these cogent factors prompted a number of poets to adopt the defiant voice of resistance" (129). Even before the *nakba*, earlier poets like Ibrahim Tuqan had warned Palestinian people of the imminent danger of turning exiles and had exhorted them to defend their land and identity. In the wake of the Palestinian exodus, Mahmoud Darwish arose as the greatest poet who captured the pathos of dislocated selves in his lines. While some of his poems are intensely lyrical, some others are directly confrontational such as his "Identity Card" which begins with the lines, "Write it down! / I'm Arab, / and my card number is fifty thousand; /…/ Does that annoy you?" (qtd. in Allen 129). The collective works of the above mentioned Palestinian poets are examples of "the sorrow, frustration, and anger that accompanied the continuing loss of identity" (Allen 129). In his article, "Half a Century of Palestinian Folk Narratives" (2007), Sharif Kanaana talks about the two types of narrative that emerged after the *nakba*: one, the "narratives of war and loss of homeland" and two, narratives on "the immediate political situation under Israeli occupation" (qtd. in Saloul 7). The historical turn of events following the partition of Palestine that brought in several socio-political changes thus got reflected in the literature of the region.

Palestinian Women's Literature

Women's writings have also contributed significantly to the literary scenario of Palestine. The works of women writers not only deal with issues of marriage and family, but also express different political, economic, and moral points of view. They

address national issues at large and tackle issues of war, peace, justice and human rights violations. Although works like Ghassan Kanafani's *Umm Sa'ad* had featured Palestinian women as central characters, works by women authors lent an authenticity to the representations of average Palestinian women and offered an in-depth analysis of their concerns of family and society during wars and other strife. Prominent among early twentieth century Palestinian women writers are Fadwa Tuqan, Salma Khadra Jayyusi, Samira Azzam, Ghada Karmi and Najwa Kawar Farah who have excelled in literary fields as wide-ranging as poetry, translation, children's literature, criticism etc. Later on, novelists such as Sahar Khalifeh and Liana Badr, with their detailed treatment of the plight of ordinary Palestinian women, pioneered the fictional boom that was soon to set in. This trend of voicing Palestinian women's predicament branched and diversified in the subtle and complicated themes of diasporic women writers belonging to Palestine as Selma Dabbagh, Susan Abulhawa, Suheir Hammad, Ibtisam Barakat and others. These writers also wrote mostly in English, thereby reaching out to a wider readership. The prominent Egyptian writer Radwa Ashour (1946-2014), who was married to the Palestinian poet Mourid Barghouti, wrote historical fiction mixed with the political oppression in Palestine. While most women writings directly deal with the Israel-Palestine issue, some of the recent Palestinian writers like Adania Shibli prefer to focus on the conflict obliquely in their works. Today, the literary arena of Palestinian women has turned considerably broader with the addition of films and other audio-visual media.

Review of Literature

Palestinian literature has come to be studied as postcolonial literature, transnational literature, war literature, resistance literature etc. The proliferation of fiction penned by Palestinian writers created fresh, unexplored avenues with which to

engage in the socio-political conditions warranted by the Israel-Palestine conflict. Today, research has been done not only on the great stalwarts of Palestinian literature like Darwish or Kanafani, but also on the huge corpus of works on Palestine penned by writers from within and without. The themes of home, exile and displacement have amply been studied in the context of several Palestinian works. Ghassan Kanafani's "Study from Palestine: Resistance Literature in Occupied Palestine" in the late 1960s situated Palestinian literature in the subversive ground of resistance writing. Palestinian women's literature has been subjected to various studies in order to etch out hitherto underrepresented stances on the socio-political situation. The thesis titled "Waging War on the Womb: Women's Bodies as Nationalist Symbols and Strategic Victims of Violence in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*" (2018) by Noora Badwan studied nationalism as a patriarchal construct and its delineation of women's role in the social structure of Palestine. The formation of Palestinian national identity in *Mornings in Jenin* in the American diaspora was analyzed in "Cultural Trauma and the Formation of Palestinian National Identity in Palestinian-American Writing" (2020) by Maeed Almarhabi. Abulhawa's second novel, *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, has not been worked upon, except as a stylistic analysis. The avenues of research on the works of Suad Amiry are mostly unexplored. This thesis aims at filling the gap perceived in the studies of modern Palestinian women's literature. It takes the existing area of research on Palestinian fiction a step ahead by incorporating the emerging voices of two women writers, Abulhawa and Amiry, who communicate the Palestinian identity crisis and collective predicament through the different channels of fiction and creative nonfiction respectively.

In tracing Palestinian history from the individual to the nation, this study touches on groups such as generations of families and communities, each constituting

its own collective memories. The focus on the individual is owing to the fact that analyses of historical tragedies often foreground the collective in disregard of the personal. In this way, the thesis simultaneously views the collective Palestinian predicament even as it zooms in to the identity formation of individuals. The application of trauma and postmemory to the embedded time-space angles of the select works is carried out with the aim of finding newer ways to interrogate the Palestinian predicament.

Research Problem

This study seeks to analyze how Palestinian individuals in the select works by two contemporary women writers, second-generation descendents of the *nakba* survivors, continuously negotiate and redefine their identities based on their experiences of trauma and the intergenerational transmission of the same. The thesis also intends to look into how the mainstream construction of the history of Palestinian dispossession and exile has been problematized in the texts by employing diverse, alternative conceptualizations of the Palestinian space and time.

Explanation of the Title of the Thesis

Consisting of two parts, the title of the thesis is "Living the Exile: History, Individual and the Nation in Select Works of Palestinian Women Writers." The initial segment in the title refers to the historical event of the Palestinians' exile that occurred in 1948 and its ongoing continuity owing to the still unresolved Israel-Palestine conflict. The word 'living' also points to the perpetual trauma of Palestinians as a people cut from their land and roots. The second part of the title lists out three terms, history, individual and the nation, which are considered to be interconnected in the context of the research problem. While the thesis intends to shed

light on the historical revisionist strand in all four select works, it focuses simultaneously on the flux of identity (and identity crisis) of Palestinian individuals (or characters) and consequently, progresses to the larger issue of their nationhood and freedom. The choice of women authors arose out of the desirable thrust to elucidate the recent contribution of women's works to Palestinian literature. Suad Amiry was opted for being a contemporary voice from one of the Palestinian territories whereas Susan Abulhawa was preferred on account of her diasporic Palestinian identity. Two works written by each of these authors have been selected from the available range of their writing so that the scope of the research gets neatly trimmed in a balanced and constructive way.

About the Writers:

Susan Abulhawa

Susan Abulhawa is one of the Palestinian American women writers whose works strive to compensate for the lack of in-depth fictional narratives on Palestine. Born in 1970 in Kuwait to Jerusalemite parents who were refugees of the 1967 war, Abulhawa migrated to the States in her teens. Alongside her medical career and political activism, she turned to writing and has since become an unwavering voice that upholds the rights of Palestinians. The novels *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015) and *Against the Loveless World* (2020) and the poetry collection *My Voice Sought the Wind* (2013) mainly comprise her unexhausted literary output. Her novels give a protracted picture of Palestine from the past to the present, capturing the pain and trauma of people, especially women, in lyricism and poetry. A signatory of the BDS (Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions) movement standing for Palestine, Abulhawa has founded a non-governmental organization

'Playgrounds for Palestine,' that builds playgrounds in Palestine for children, giving due attention to the rights of Palestinian children to play and grow up in the strife-torn area.

Suad Amiry

Suad Amiry's works are lively caricatures of people around her, bound as they are to the detrimental effects of living under Israeli military occupation. Born in Damascus in 1951 and brought up in Amman, she became an architect by profession and settled in Ramallah in the West Bank. She is the director of RIWAQ, a centre for architectural conservation which she founded in 1991 to protect, maintain and reconstruct architectural heritage sites of Palestine often blown or demolished by Israel. She was a member of the peace delegation in Washington D.C. from 1991 to 1993 and served as the assistant deputy minister in the ministry of culture of the Palestinian Authority. Amiry turned to writing after realizing the need to mouth the injustices suffered by Palestinians on a daily basis. Each of her works takes on a different theme, written in the casual conversational tone which is a unique hallmark of her writing. Her works are also largely autobiographical and provide kaleidoscopic views into a motley set of persons and their everyday lives. With catchy titles, her works such as *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, *Menopausal Palestine*, *Nothing to Lose But Your Life* and *Golda Slept Here* deal with personal, social, political and economic effects of Israeli oppression. Defying categorization, her works also depict the strength and potential of ordinary women for bringing in social change through political activism. Her first book *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* won Italy's Viareggio-Versilia Prize. In addition to literary works, Amiry has penned several books on architecture.

A Note on the Select Works

This study focuses on a total of four Palestinian exilic narratives, two each by both the authors. The first two novels of Abulhawa, namely *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, and two of Amiry's books, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* and *Golda Slept Here*, are the select works. All the four works feature the exile of Palestinian characters outside the boundaries of what became the State of Israel. While some characters remained refugees in camps, some others have migrated to neighbouring countries and settled there.

Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*: Plot Summary

Mornings in Jenin (2010) tells the multigenerational story of the Abulheja family whose lives became the flotsam and jetsam in the seemingly endless currents of Palestinian exile that occurred in the 1948 *nakba*. This debut novel, initially titled *The Scar of David* and published in 2006, got its thread of reverted identity from Ghassan Kanafani's work *Returning to Haifa*. The story begins in a small village east of Haifa called Ein Hod in the years before the *nakba*. Yehya Abulheja is a farmer with vast olive groves inherited down from ancestors. Despite the small scale clashes between immigrant Jews and Palestinian Arabs, the novel depicts Yehya's elder son Hasan sharing an amicable friendship with a Jewish boy, Ari Perlstein, whose family were Holocaust survivors. When Jewish Zionists treacherously attack and conquer Ein Hod and force native Palestinians to move miles away to places like Jenin in the West Bank, the Abulhejas lose their land only to be bundled away as refugees. A Zionist soldier slyly kidnaps the six-month-old Ismael, Hasan's younger son, marking the beginning of trauma for the Abulhejas thenceforth. Perturbed by the impossibility of return to the confiscated village of Ein Hod, Yehya daringly returns twice to his

farmlands and gets killed by Zionists in the second attempt. While life in the refugee camps limps forward with the birth of a daughter Amal, the kidnapped child Ismael is raised David by the Jewish couple Moshe and Jolanta and is taught to hate all Arabs.

The family undergoes further trauma and scattering in the Six-Day War of June 1967 when the victorious Israel brings the Palestinian territory of West Bank under its military occupation. Hasan disappears after the war and his wife Dalia sinks into a deranged mental state. Though Hasan's elder son Yousef returns devastated after forty days of remaining in Jewish captivity, he soon leaves to join the PLO, unable to support his mentally frail mother and young sister. After her mother's death, Amal is sent to an orphanage in Jerusalem from where she earns a scholarship to study in the US. A long interval of thirteen years passes before she moves to Beirut in Lebanon to rejoin her brother Yousef and his wife Fatima. Yousef, an active member of the PLO by then, had been living in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut where the exiled political organization thrived in the 1970s and early 1980s. Though Amal marries her brother's friend Majid, she is forced to return to the US, given the worsening political situation in Beirut. The Israeli Defence forces were launching attacks on the PLO base in Beirut to provoke them into retaliation. In yet another cruel stroke of fate, Majid is killed in a bomb blast, and Fatima and kids are brutally murdered in the Shatila massacre that took away the lives of innocent women and children who belonged to the families of PLO fighters.

Again all alone, Amal gives birth to her daughter Sara in the US and becomes just the sort of mother that her own trauma-stricken mother Dalia had once been. Nearly two more decades pass before Amal finally receives the call of her long-lost brother Ismael/David. This unexpected family reunion kindles yet another Jewish-Arab bond in the story. When Amal returns to Jenin followed by her daughter's

request, she gets shot by an Israeli soldier in the 2002 Jenin massacre and dies. The novel ends with Sara, David and Yousef commemorating Amal and commenting on each of their Palestinian identities.

Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water*: Plot Summary

The Blue Between Sky and Water (2015), like Abulhawa's first novel *Mornings in Jenin,* is a work that touches upon the lives of a Palestinian family from the pre-*nakba* years in the 1940s to the present. Gaza, the smallest Palestinian territory lying beside the Mediterranean Sea, is the chief setting of this novel, markedly different from the first which focused on the Jenin refugee camp in the West Bank. The choice of such a setting serves well to discuss the major historical events that have solely affected this "open-air prison" (Abulhawa ix), especially Israel's mission named Operation Cast Lead that showered death upon Gazans in late December 2008. Abulhawa enlists Ramzy Baroud's book *My Father Was a Freedom Fighter* as having provided her with the basis for the two places of Beit Daras and Gaza in the novel. This second novel is also a work of magical realism, progressing partly through the stream-of-consciousness ramblings and interior monologues of the child narrator, Khaled.

The novel begins with the lives of the Baraka family – the fatherless teenagers, Nazmiyeh and Mamdouh, living with their little sister Mariam and mother Um Mamdouh – in the agricultural village of Beit Daras. Eager to learn to read and write at a time when girls were denied the opportunity to education, little Mariam finds an imaginary friend Khaled awaiting daily by the river to teach her the alphabet. Meanwhile, the catastrophic *nakba* in 1948 marks the Barakas' traumatic journey of exile and loss; both Mariam and Um Mamdouh get killed and others who survive end

up refugees in Gaza. While Nazmiyeh bears many sons and waits for the prophesied daughter, her brother Mamdouh, dissatisfied with the life of a refugee, travels to Cairo and Kuwait and finally to the US. Mamdouh dies in America without being able to return to his homeland, leaving his granddaughter Nur as his sole descendent. In Gaza, Nazmiyeh's elder son Mazen is captured by Israel as a political prisoner soon after the Six-Day War in 1967 and kept detained for more than four decades. Her youngest daughter Alwan marries Abdel Qader and has two children, Khaled and Rhet Shel. Caught in the turmoil of Israel's missiles and bombs in the Operation Cast Lead, Khaled is affected by locked-in syndrome and after two years of remaining in almost a comatose condition, he finally succumbs to death. During the time he remained an invalid, his mind journeys back to the pre-*nakba* days where he comes across his grandaunt Mariam as a little child and teaches her to read and write. Their friendship and bonding taking place in 'the blue' between sky and water permeates throughout the novel.

Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*: Plot Summary

Sharon and My Mother-in-Law (2005) by Suad Amiry is important as a piece of self life-writing from the conflict zone of Palestine. Beginning with the curious title, it strongly represents the Palestinian female voice negotiating a highly contested identity politics with respect to the social, geo-political and ethno-cultural aspects of the still unresolved Israel-Palestine conflict looming large upon the international scenario. Subtitled 'Ramallah Diaries,' the work ensues as a string of related anecdotes narrated by the author, a poignantly outspoken expression of the troubles of living in the Palestinian territories under the strict military occupation of the Israeli army. It tries to define the finely nuanced identity of a Palestinian and rectify the often misconceived images and stereotypical notions of who a Palestinian really is. There is

also the negotiation with various forms of violence encountered in everyday life, thereby, situating the contemporary Palestinian reality in historical, geo-political, socio-cultural and intellectual contexts and conveying the complex nuances of pain, memory and resistance.

Referring to her narrative as "personal war diaries" spanning from 1981 to 2003, Amiry states clearly in the "Preface" that what follows are accounts of her life under occupation and her "frequent encounters with the Israeli 'Civil Administration' and soldiers" (xi). In terms of geographical territory, the book focuses on the occupied territory of Ramallah in the West Bank where the author resides. Divided into two unnamed parts, the first consists of ten chapters which recount events from the author's life beginning with her arrival in Palestine in 1981 to the late 1990s. The second part includes the remaining eight chapters which were actually emails sent to her friends by the author during the second *intifada* or Palestinian uprising that happened from late 2001 onwards. It is, therefore, composed mostly of the author's experiences till late 2003. Though the book is highly autobiographical, the stories of other people around her which include those of her family, friends, colleagues, neighbours and other acquaintances also feature in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, the sum total of their collective experiences communicating the reality of Palestinian life in the occupied territories.

Amiry's *Golda Slept Here*: Plot Summary

Divided into five named, unequal sections most of which are further subdivided into small chapters, *Golda Slept Here* (2014) shows the author undertaking a journey through the lives of a few kindred spirits – both through their past and present – who, despite losing their homes long ago in the *nakba*, still cherish

deep love for their homes. The title refers to Golda Meir, a former prime minister of Israel, who lived for a while in an erstwhile Arab house in Jerusalem. Recounting one after the other the traumatic stories of certain individuals from a few Palestinian families who nurture an inseparable bond with their lost houses situated in West Jerusalem, this intergenerational life-writing has its twin focal points on the Palestinian trauma and postmemory, experienced respectively by the *nakba* generation and the postgenerations.

The first part titled, "Suad: Remembering and Forgetting," comprises the author's own traumatic memories of a lost home and her renderings of the past from oral tales that are mixed with elegiac songs regarding the loss of Palestine in general. The fifth and the final part, "Homage to My Mother-in-Law:1911-2005," is a slice of life showcasing Amiry's mother-in-law's life during the *nakba* and the resultant exile. Sandwiched between these two parts are the other sections consisting of the stories of a few other Palestinians who are the author's friends and acquaintances such as Andoni Baramki, a prominent Arab architect and his son Gabi Baramki; Huda al-Imam, director of al-Quds University whose tale inevitably includes those of her father and grandmother; and of Elie Sanbar, an expatriate Palestinian friend of Amiry living in Paris. Except for the anecdotal history of Andoni and Gabi given as the second section of the book entitled, "Andoni: A Master Builder's Passion," the author herself appears along with Huda and Elie in the present as they gather the painful threads of their own past as well as chart the course of their ancestral exile. In the chapter on Elie named, "A Businessman from Tel Aviv," the author sincerely reproduces the exact details of the conversation she had had with him. In the ten chapters that deal with Huda's life given as the third and longest section eponymously titled, "Huda," Amiry is seen as an active participant in the protagonist's creative

venture to redefine her past including house visits and confrontations with the present occupants of the houses.

Theoretical Framework of the Thesis

Main Concerns

This study intends to approach the Palestinian condition as one of social, political, cultural and ethnic conflict. In order to come up with the treatment of history, individual and the nation in the select works, the thesis focuses mainly on the theoretical fields of trauma and postmemory. The inadequately addressed Palestinian historical picture that includes its momentous exile, an unresolved refugee crisis and a still unrealized aspiration to nationhood has served to direct attention to the works of Edward Said and Rashid Khalidi. Furthermore, the individual predicament submerged in the larger, Palestinian collective identity pointed to an inevitable explication of trauma. The theories of Cathy Caruth, Judith Lewis Herman and Dominick LaCapra have been used for delineating trauma in the study. Analysis along the lines of postmemory has been triggered by the considerable time frame covered in each of the four texts from the 1940s to the present, with several transitions in generations. Marianne Hirsch's works on postmemory have profusely aided in this study. In addition to these, the idea of Palestine as a geopolitical entity torn by conflict and wars over a sizeable span of time has laid the groundwork for the thesis.

Beyond Borders: The Exile in Theory

The late Palestinian American postcolonial critic Edward W. Said's corpus of writing on Palestine informs the methodological structure of this thesis. Less theory and jargon, Said's works such as *Reflections on Exile*, *After the Last Sky*, *Peace and Its Discontents* etc. are subjective and intense as memoirs, capturing the Palestinian

predicament exactly from an insider's perspective. The self-explanatory title of Said's 2001 book *Reflections on Exile* lays bare his ponderings on the current status of Palestine, sagging under the double yoke of the historic weight of exodus and displacement as well as the claustrophobic oppressiveness of its unbearable present. Many of the essays in this collection refer to the exile and subsequent refugee status of the Palestinian people, herding the various topics of their socio-political history, memory of trauma and indigenous literature into the same narrative fold. *The Question of Palestine*, *Covering Islam, The Politics of Dispossession* and *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* are some of Said's authentic works on Palestine, which proclaim his disjointed identity on behalf of millions of fellow beings sharing the same ethnicity. The Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi's works such as *Palestinian Identity* and *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine* have also been incorporated into the study.

Trauma: From Silence to Speaking the Unspeakable

Trauma studies grew up from the turbulent historical ground of the twentieth century that saw two World Wars and a multitude of social, political, economic and cultural changes on the international level. Wars, genocide and the horrors of partition that mushroomed in the threshold of world history extended far back to the issues of slavery and colonial oppression. In the 'Preface' to the 2014 edition of his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra writes that, "[t]he very meeting of history and trauma" is of importance in recent trauma studies (ix). With attention focused on hitherto unacknowledged areas such as war trauma and Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), in spite of various contestations and critique, trauma studies got established as a major critical field.

The trauma boom erupted out in literary theory in the 1990s with the publication of Cathy Caruth's two influential texts, *Trauma: Explorations in Memory* (1995), an edited collection and *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* (1996), a monograph. Caruth's arguments on trauma such as its repetition, its inevitable latency/belatedness and its incomprehensible/unrepresentable nature springing from the paradoxical imperatives of silence and speech are developed from Freud's theories. While it is debated as to whether the supposed failure to encode an extreme experience in the psyche attests exclusively to traumatic memory, the classic model of trauma upheld by early theoreticians as Caruth, Geoffrey Hartman et al. put forth the elisions, interruptions and reinventions of traumatic memory as its characteristic features. Following a psychoanalytic poststructural approach, this earlier model of trauma theory stressed the Lacanian idea of a recurring sense of absence and visualized the traumatic experience as a pre-linguistic event that universally causes dissociation (Balaev 6). Along with the idea of trauma as an inherently indecipherable, unspeakable event that haunts the victim/survivor repeatedly at a later time, it was also considered as a universal experience. "The turn in traumatic memory that precludes knowledge of the past for the individual also applies to the function of "historical memory" regarding a collective or cultural traumatic experience (Caruth 15-6). This standpoint indicates trauma's inherent transhistorical or intergenerational quality that can be transmitted across time.

The foundational claims of trauma theory such as its incomprehensibility, timelessness and universality, however, came to be challenged and revised by later theoreticians who held pluralistic models of trauma. According to this recent trend, trauma is understood as variably representable (rather than unpresentable), specific (as opposed to being universal) and locatable (rather than permanently lost). This shift

in trauma theory that identified plural and varied approaches to the subject showed a disregard for the initial conceptualization of silence. Meaning came to be located through a greater consideration of the individual, social and cultural contexts of the traumatic experience. Presently, trauma is discerned not only on the basis of any particular event, personal, historical or both, but also as a result of "insidious trauma," a feminist model put forth by theorists like Laura Brown and Maria Root that pays heed to the everyday situations of abuse and violence occurring to women that are nonetheless traumatic (qtd. in Stepanian 5). Furthermore, the recipients of trauma have come to be widely categorized to include not just victims and survivors, but also other affected categories as perpetrators, witnesses, implicated subjects etc.

Postmemory: The Invisible Weight of Embedded Memory

The growing relevance of trauma theory in the nineties brought in "an evolving ethical and theoretical discussion about the workings of trauma, memory, and intergenerational acts of transfer" (Hirsch 1-2). Marianne Hirsch came up with the concept of "postmemory" in her work *Family Frames* which she further developed in *The Generation of Postmemory* (3). She elaborates on the theoretical concept called postmemory as:

> "Postmemory" describes the relationship that the "generation after" bears to the personal, collective, and cultural trauma of those who came before – to experiences they "remember" only by means of the stories, images, and behaviours among which they grew up. But these experiences were transmitted to them so deeply and affectively as to *seem* to constitute memories in their own right. Postmemory's connection to the past is thus

> mediated not by recall but by imaginative investment, projection, and creation. (5)

Hirsch further explains the concept by asking how do children who were not even born at the time of parents' suffering possess "memories" of such events (31). Claiming that postmemory, therefore, cannot be identical to memory, she says that, "it approximates memory in its affective force and its psychic effects" (31). In the first chapter of her book *Family Frames* titled "Mourning and Postmemory," Hirsch opines that, "In my reading, postmemory is distinguished from memory by generational distance and from history by deep personal connection" (20). She details various names allotted to the term as "'absent memory' (Ellen Fine), 'inherited memory,' 'belated memory,' 'prosthetic memory' (Celia Lury, Alison Landsberg), … 'vicarious witnessing' (Froma Zeitlin), 'received history' (James Young), [and] 'haunting legacy' (Gabriele Schwab)" (*The Generation of Postmemory* 3). Major theorists of this field, other than Hirsch, include Geoffrey Hartman, Susan Sontag and others.

Borrowing the term "acts of transfer" for postmemory from Paul Connerton, Hirsch says that such acts "not only transform history into memory, but enable memories to be shared across individuals and generations" (31). As an embedded traumatic experience, there is "an uneasy oscillation between continuity and rupture" which arises due to "the continuities and discontinuities between generations, the gaps in knowledge" (6). Hirsch also draws attention to the fact that postmemory is "particular to traumatic recall" and not "happy or otherwise transformative historical moments" (6). The idea of postmemory is incorporated in the methodological framework of this study because the process of intergenerational transmission has become, as Hirsch says, "an important explanatory vehicle" in the context of massive

historical trauma such as the Holocaust, the American slavery, South African apartheid, and various dictatorships, partitions, genocides and wars occurring in many parts of the world (19). Ensuing as "the ethics and the aesthetics of remembrance in the aftermath of catastrophe," the concept of postmemory inherently carries the quality of belatedness or "post-ness" of traumatic memory (2). However, postmemory is distinct from the Caruthian concept of latency in that this later recall happens to those removed at least one generation from the real victims of the traumatic event.

Reflecting on several works that have dealt with the concept of intergenerational transfer of trauma, Hirsch presents the family as "a privileged site of memorial transmission" (32). The legacy of trauma gets affixed through family images and narratives. She classifies postmemory into two: "familial" and "affiliative" (32). Familial postmemory, as the term suggests, is the gravitational pull of the constantly hovering traumatic memories of those in one's own family. Affiliative postmemory, on the other hand, has a much wider compass in that it embodies the knowledge of, and identification with, a historical traumatic past that had affected a large group. The addition of gender to the theoretical evolutions of postmemory illumines "feminist approaches that explore the rhetoric and the politics of memory and transmission" (17). Presenting the introduction of gender as a constructive intervention, Hirsch argues that, "[G]ender, as sexual difference, can fulfill a number of functions in the work of memory. It can serve as a figure that can mediate the ways in which certain images and certain narratives have been able to circulate in the culture of the postgeneration" (18). The inclusion of gender affords such a position as to analyze memory transmission between women, especially, mothers and daughters.

Palestinian History Delimited in Space and Time

The study of trauma and postmemory has been linked to the view that Palestine is a geopolitically contested space. In his essay, "Of Other Spaces," Michel Foucault says that, "it is not possible to disregard the fatal intersection of time with space" (1). The first chapter of Rashid Khalidi's book *Palestinian Identity* begins with the following set of questions: "What are the limits of Palestine? Where does it end and where does Israel begin, and are those limits spatial, or temporal, or both?" (9). Conscious of the dimensions of time and space in the Palestinian context as covered by the four texts under study, the thesis attempts to fix the event of the *nakba* as the point of central traumatic crisis. "A crisis or catastrophe that disorients and harms the collectivity or the individual may miraculously become the origin or renewed origin of the myth and serve an ideological function in authorizing acts or policies that appeal to it for justification" (LaCapra, "Preface" to *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, xii). This study that evokes the subtle temporal and spatial dimensions inherent in the representations of Palestine is rooted in the belief that such an attention to time and space is highly necessary in the historical revisionist background of the select works.

Purpose and Significance of the Study

The thesis has narrowed down its area of study to Palestinian literary works only. This is done with the view that Palestinians weigh on the weaker side when the power equations of the Israel-Palestine conflict are considered. The process of historical revision designed by contemporary women writers has been the chief consideration behind the following study. The four works have been chosen as the literary groundwork based on their act of illumining the historical pathways of Palestine from the insiders' perspective.

Outline of the Chapters

This introductory chapter outlines the history of Palestine and the conflict with Israel, the picture of Palestinian literature and the role of women's writings in it, and the theoretical framework of the study undertaken in the thesis. The second chapter titled, "Trans/Historical Trauma: Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*," which forms the first main chapter, is an analysis of the novel *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa. The focus on trauma and postmemory of characters is aimed at highlighting the historical revisionist trend of the work in recent Palestinian literature. Titled "Traumatic Imagination: Susan Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water*," the third chapter pays attention to the combination of trauma and postmemory with magical realism in the work and its historical relevance. The next two chapters focus on the semi-autobiographical life-narratives written by Suad Amiry. The fourth chapter, "Scriptotherapy: Suad Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*," analyzes Amiry's debut work as one of scriptotherapy. The fifth chapter, titled "Houses as Memory Sites: Suad Amiry's *Golda Slept Here*," is an exploration of the Palestinian ways of coping with the sorrowful remains of the past through the house visits undertaken by former residents. The final chapter of the thesis, "Conclusion," gives an analysis of the various inferences that surfaced during the study and ends on a note about the scope and limitations of the thesis.

Chapter 2

Trans/Historical Trauma: Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*

"Indeed, the history of Palestinian diaspora effectively begins with the events of 1948."

-Judith Butler, *Parting Ways*

A ready alignment with the land's history of a turbulent past and a tumultuous present can be seen in most of Palestinian literature. *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), the first novel written by the Palestinian American writer Susan Abulhawa, encompasses a broader space-time plane in order to tell a multigenerational story that involves the Palestinian exile, subsequent refugee crisis and many other wars that have further ripped the integrity of the Palestinian identity apart. This chapter looks into the conception of Palestinian trauma in the novel, with the time-to-time additions of newer historical episodes to the existing legacy of historical trauma. The attention on characters like Yehya Abulheja, Hasan, Ari Perlstein, Darweesh, Dalia, Yousef, Amal and Ismael/David traces the effects of trauma based on the varying degrees of their individual potential to resist oppression. The fine contours of postmemory intrinsic to the selves of those in the post-*nakba* generations as Yousef, Amal, Ismael/David and Sara have also been brought into study. The chapter also intends to find out how the parallel placement of the Palestinian crisis of indigenous dispossession with the Jewish Holocaust offsets the Palestinian predicament in the context of the novel.

Theoretical Framework

The chapter studies Palestinian trauma in *Mornings in Jenin* as Nancy Van Styvendale's concept of trans/historical trauma. The theories of Cathy Caruth, Judith

Lewis Herman, Dominick LaCapra also inform the analysis of individual trauma. The idea of postmemory carried by the characters belonging to the successive generations of traumatic survivors is scrutinized with the help of Marianne Hirsch's work on postmemory. The chapter leads the detailed study of the trauma and postmemory of characters to the historical revisionist trend found clearly in the novel. Michael Rothberg's notion of multidirectional memory supports the complex ethnic framework in the novel with respect to the Israel-Palestine conflict. The ideas of Edward W. Said and Rashid Khalidi also serve as the theoretical foundation of this chapter that seeks to interpret the subtleties of Palestinian refugee identities in the novel.

Mornings in Jenin as a Palestinian Narrative

This debut novel traces the Abulheja family tree in its branching and re-branching through four successive generations. It presents a kaleidoscopic picture of shifting Palestinian landscapes where characters are exiled and scattered amongst places such as Ein Hod, Jenin in the West Bank, Israel, Beirut and the US. The time frame of the novel captures the pre-*nakba* period of the early 1940s to 2002 when Jenin was sealed off in a poorly reported massacre. The story places all members of the Abulheja family through landmark episodes of Palestinian history such as the *nakba*, the *naksa*, the Sabra and Shatila Massacres in 1982 and the Jenin massacre in 2002. As Edward Said postulates in his essay, "Reflections on Exile," the different stages or categories of exile such as forced migration, refugee crisis and the comparatively better condition of diaspora can be found in this novel. Though mindful of the heterogeneity of individual Palestinian experience, the novel presents the group sentiment and collective predicament of Palestinians in their exact cultural context.

The individual and collective identities of Palestinians that have been drastically altered by the sweep of several historical events marking the Israel-Palestine conflict need to be mended only by tending to the distorted or unaddressed wounds of Palestinian history. “Do we exist? What proof do we have? The further we get from the Palestine of our past, the more precarious our status, the more disrupted our being, the more intermittent our presence. When did we become a people? When did we stop being one? Or are we in the process of becoming one? What do those big questions have to do with our intimate relationships with each other and with others?” (7). These questions raised by Edward Said in the first section called “States” in his book *After the Last Sky* are, therefore, of high relevance even today in the backdrop of this study.

The trope of return is seen to recur throughout the novel. With just one or two exceptions, all the main sections of *Mornings in Jenin* end with some sort of a return. The first section “El Nakba” celebrates Yehya’s bold return to his own land, in fierce disregard of the stringent Israeli prohibition against the same. The second section, titled “El Naksa,” ends with the return of the detainees of the Six-Day War in 1967, including Yousef, to the Jenin camp. Though the next section “The Scar of David” features both Yousef and Amal leaving Jenin for different purposes, it invariably ends with Amal making a visit to the camp after her studies at the Dar-al-Tifl Orphanage before leaving with a scholarship to the US. The fourth section “El Ghurba” dealing with Amal’s experiences in the US comes to a close with Amal’s return to her brother Yousef residing then at Beirut. In the section titled, “Elly Bayna,” there is the reunion of Amal with her long-lost brother David/Ismael. The subsequent section “Baladi” is a call unto one’s own country, where Amal returns to Jenin for the first time in decades, taking along her grown-up daughter Sara. The final section “Nihaya O

Bidaya" ends with Sara's visit to Ein Hod, their native village, the maiden journey becoming a return in its own right.

Eventful and Uneventful: Trans/Historical Trauma

Mornings in Jenin portrays the individual identities and predicaments of characters as those that are intricately tied up with the historical events they had to traverse through. One of the ways in which the writer tries to foreground the wounded psyche of Palestine as a nation is through the traumatic changes that affect the characters from time to time. It is no wonder that *Mornings in Jenin* with its clear aim of a re-historicization of Palestinian history, relies on infinite loops of traumatic memories. Cathy Caruth, in her essay "Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History," remarks as follows: "Traumatic memory thus totters between remembrance and erasure, producing a history that is, in its very events, a kind of inscription of the past; but also a history constituted by the erasure of its traces" (20). That memories of trauma can inscribe a new and authentic version of history, has been the driving force of bringing out a traumatic analysis of the characters in the chapter.

As mentioned above, the novel interlaces individual trauma with the collective historical tragedies that have affected Palestine from time to time. The essay "Toward a Theory of Cultural Trauma" by the American sociologist Jeffrey C. Alexander begins by defining the term cultural trauma, "Cultural trauma occurs when members of a collectivity feel they have been subjected to a horrendous event that leaves indelible marks upon their group consciousness, marking their memories forever and changing their future identity in fundamental and irrevocable ways" (1). In *Mornings in Jenin*, the *nakba* of 1948 is presented as the magnanimous national trauma that was followed by a series of wars and other historical wounds, the *naksa* of 1967 as the

beginning of trauma for Amal and Yousef, and the Shatila massacre confirming the repeated onslaught of trauma in their lives.

The acknowledgement of the specificity and variability of trauma in its recent reconceptualization arose from the fact that "trauma occurs to actual people, in specific bodies, located within particular time periods and places" (Balaev 9). *Mornings in Jenin* not only differentiates between the trauma of individual characters in its subtle varieties, but also situates it in actual geographical spaces and time periods. Trauma is depicted in the novel in a variety of ways – as the intense descriptions of the events themselves, as the characters' varying responses in the aftermath of those events including their survival strategies and their deliberate lapses into the unaffected past, as the witnessing of trauma, as the deliberately distanced coldness and anonymity of traumatic suffering in newspaper reports and so on. Trauma is not portrayed as synonymous to violence; rather, it is made to permeate the novel's consciousness through memory, memory lapses, repression, repetition compulsion and the like.

Another important nature of Palestinian trauma as found in the novel is its trans/historicity. In her influential paper, "The Trans/Historicity of Trauma in Jeannette Armstrong's *Slash* and Sherman Alexie's *Indian Killer*," Nancy Van Styvendale sheds light on this different sort of trauma which she calls "trans/historical trauma," or trauma that continues into the present or exists for a long period of time (qtd. in Stepanian 6). The claim of the traditional trauma theory that the traumatic event lay in the bygone past prevented the recognition of this type of trauma. Van Styvendale postulates trans/historical trauma as "cumulative, collective, intergenerational, and intersubjective" trauma that is not fixed in one single event "even as it demands our attention to historical specific atrocities" (203). This is the

point from which trans/historical trauma deviates from theories of collective or cultural trauma. While the latter focuses on "how people in the present are *affected* by the past trauma of their ancestors, trans/historical trauma pertains to those who still suffer from traumatic incidents that [Van Styvendale] describes as 'ongoing domestic colonization' or 'neocolonial oppression'" (qtd. in Stepanian 6) (italics in original).

The concept of trans/historical trauma that Van Styvendale allocates to the issues of Native peoples in North America is applied to the Palestinian context. Based on this idea, the chapter intends to argue that the trauma faced/felt by the diverse Palestinian characters, both as individuals and part of a collectivity, can be identified as trans/historical trauma. In the "Introduction" to *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*, Nahla Abdo and Nur Masalha present the *nakba* "as a process and not as an event" which can be linked to the idea of trans/historical trauma (1). Van Styvendale's concept "gestures toward a trauma that takes place and is repeated in multiple epochs" (204). In *Mornings in Jenin*, the *nakba*, the *naksa*, the Shatila Massacre, the Israeli torture during the first *intifada* and the Jenin massacre of 2002 follow one another as catastrophic epochs in the history of Palestine. The trauma of the violent events of the *nakba* did not end with their exile, nor did the brutality of war during the *naksa* subside down in the deadly grip of the subsequent military occupation. In the same way, the plural expressions of individual characters that the novel offers with respect to each of the historical tragedies like the *nakba* or the *naksa* points to the fact that the catastrophes are not to be pinned to a singular location in historical space and time. In other words, the events did not take place in a day or at a certain place. It affected as well as continued to affect a multitude of people and their descendents. Thus, the trans/historicity of Palestinian trauma exceeds the limits of a fixed geographical space and historical time.

Trauma is explored in accordance with the characters' varying capacities to react to it. What immediately follows is an analysis of how three characters belonging to different generations, namely Yehya, his elder son Hasan, and Yousef, Hasan's elder son, actively react to the catastrophes that topple their lives. It is followed by an explication of how certain other characters like Dalia, Amal, Darweesh and Ari choose not to react outwardly to magnanimous trauma even as they are much shaken within. The latter part of this analysis deals with the Jewish characters in the novel, enunciating perpetrator trauma and implicated subjects.

Trauma and Resistance

Yehya Abulheja represents the first generation among the exiled Palestinian characters. Apart from being a loving father and grandfather, he is presented as a landowner who was also a peasant or *fellahin* who toiled upon soil. In the agrarian sub-consciousness of the older characters like Yehya, it is land that endowed a person with his individual identity and connected him to the chain of forefathers. Yehya claims to know his land "better than the lines on his hands" (43). Former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir's dismissive remark that "there was no such thing as Palestinians… they did not exist" is vehemently refuted in the portrayal of characters like Yehya (qtd. in Khalidi 147). In the initial chapters, the pastoral beauty and self-sufficiency of Palestinian land with its vast stretches of olive and fig trees are conjured up as another Eden garden, thickly populated by Palestinian Arabs. From this perspective, land and its loss becomes a key element in the novel, signifying belonging and rootedness.

After the bombardment of the village at the time of the *nakba*, the land is described as "burnt" and "lifeless" (29). Assembled together for their fated journey

into exile, Yehya thinks that they could have been assembled for harvest. The bitter after-taste of forced separation from land lasts long in characters such as Yehya and Haj Salem, rather than Hasan and Darweesh who had immediate duties at hand such as settling their families in whatever refuge they found in the camps in Jenin. It was mainly for older folk to live on with the "memories and love of the land" (35). Edward Said explains the pathos of exile to be found in "the loss of contact with the solidity and the satisfaction of earth" (179). Epitomized in Yehya's trauma is the very fate of living that a Palestinian had never dreamt of – to be exiled from their land and home. If men were worried about the harvest and women with their domestic issues in their pre-*nakba* lives, such worries and woes seemed silly in the frightening reality that engulfed them.

In the refugee camps, Yehya is described as "a withering refugee in the unfamiliar dilapidation of exile," diametrically opposite to the earlier image of the sturdy man he used to be (42). Thinking of his lost land and identity, he struggled in the camps like a fish taken out of water. Accustomed to the daily routine of a farmer's life, the aimlessness of life in the refugee camp made him restless like a caged animal. He longed for death in his own land, which was the closest he could have achieved to his dream of permanent return to his home. In his article, "Transformations in Palestinian Literature," Faisal Darraj elaborates on how Palestinians hope for a better future after returning to their lands and how this act of hoping takes on a continual postponement. Among the refugees in the novel, only this old patriarch is depicted as bold enough to penetrate the cloud of exile – he visits Ein Hod twice despite the stringent watch of Zionist soldiers. If his first visit was to check on his olive groves and harvest, his second trip was made with much more defiance and resolve, that of return to his land and nothing less. Temporary tents of refugee camps turning into

brick houses only cemented his fears of dying a refugee and this made him take his last and courageous move. Death was the place he carved out for himself, rather than living in a paranoia of belonging and non-belonging. Yehya's daring attempt is to subvert the refugeehood imposed on him. This subversion is done through legitimization of land and property as one's own by crossing forbidden territories. Yehya's revolt is an individual instance of Palestinian peasant resistance. According to Rashid Khalidi, peasants of the region were the first who understood "the nature of the process of colonization affecting Palestine" (7). Apart from Yehya who makes a bold return to his land, none of his immediate successors make such a journey; only David, Sara and Jacob are able to visit Ein Hod after many decades. The agony of not being allowed to enter one's own homeland is effectively posed as a rhetorical question in the novel, "How was it that a man could not walk onto his property, visit the grave of his wife, eat the fruits of forty generations of his ancestors' toil, without mortal consequence?" (48). Though he had been shot for trespassing, Yehya's death is valourized in the camps as martyrdom.

Yehya's return to Ein Hod within the first few years of Palestinian exile has to be read against the still unrealized Palestinian dream of return. His return also served to show the Israeli appropriation of Palestinian spaces – that the arrival of Jews in Palestine resonates with foreign invasion. Returning to the camp "from the paradise of realized nostalgia" with hands full of olives and figs, he calls to everyone to taste their land one more time (44). While the Israeli narrative stressed on the virgin territory of soil made fertile and "blooming" by European Zionist settlers (hence the reiterated slogan "land without a people for a people without a land"), the counter-hegemonic Palestinian narrative likens the massive dislocation in the *nakba* to the Fall of Man from the Eden who rightfully belonged to it and wished to return as well (Masalha

15). Yehya complains that the usurpers had no attachment to land. He narrates to an eager audience of fellow refugees about the changes that have come over Ein Hod since they left it. The mosque had been turned into a brothel and with the setting up of the French artist colony, the agricultural lands were mostly abandoned.

Yehya's son Hasan is presented in the novel as "a descendant of the original founders of Ein Hod and heir to great stretches of cultivated land, orchards, and five impressive olive groves" (12). His cross-cultural friendship with a Jewish immigrant boy named Ari Perlstein is foregrounded as the peaceful co-existence among native Palestinians and Jewish immigrants that ought not to have been destroyed by the tumultuous events of the *nakba*. Months before the *nakba*, when Hasan's Jewish friend Ari warns him of the Zionist campaign and the imminent danger that is to threaten the very existence of Palestinian Arabs, Hasan does not pay heed to what his friend says. Not knowing the gravity of the issue, he looks around the farmland he would one day inherit, pondering whether they would have good crops that year. Later, he admits to his friend how the establishment of a Jewish homeland in Palestine seemed a far-fetched idea to him. Much as the land had been championed against the Palestinians, Abulhawa depicts them as cherishing a deep bond with land, working on and living in it generation after generation.

After the *nakba*, Hasan is depicted as a typical Palestinian male, the head of the family upon whom is vested the responsibility of the whole family, now living in a refugee camp. What Edward Said says about the heroes of Ghassan Kanafani's works in his essay, "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction after 1948," can be applied to define Hasan's predicament after their expulsion in 1948. In Said's words, "Impelled by exile and dislocation, the Palestinian must carve a path for himself in existence, which is by no means a "given" or stable reality for him" (52). Believing firmly that boys

mature into men to work on their lands, Yehya forbade Hasan from continuing his education with Ari years before the *nakba*. Yehya's guilt over not providing Hasan with an education follows from his realization of the command wielded by written records in the process of historiography. Rashid Khalidi cites illiteracy as one of the reasons for the poor historical representations of Palestine as the native land of Palestinians (89). While Yehya regarded education as an antithesis to land previously, the inferiority of his refugee status hammered into him the ultimate connection between land, power and the written word.

Accepting his inferior identity, Hasan settles into his role as the head of his family, refugees who lived "in the shade of international charity" (Abulhawa 63). He teaches his child Amal the value of Palestinian land and what it meant to them all; yet, he teaches her as well that land can be taken away, but not what they own as knowledge. Although he seems resigned to his fate, fitting in as the janitor in a UN-sponsored school nearby, Hasan foresees the upcoming Six Day War and collects rifles in preparation for the anticipated attack. His involvement in the fighting reveals another side of him hitherto unseen.

The eldest son of Hasan and Dalia, Yousef is just five at the time of the *nakba* and the resultant exile. He gets terrified at the huge bomb blasts in their village and also perceives the change come over the elders when baby Ismael is lost on their way to Jenin. But this early experience of trauma lies dormant in him as years of refugeehood sets its own routine in their lives. So, it is through the onslaught of the Six-Day War, nineteen years later in 1967, that Yousef comes to experience the extreme agony of war trauma. Aged almost twenty-five and employed as a teacher at the University of Bethlehem, things take an unexpected twist in Yousef's life with the war. Hearing the word 'war' yelled by one of the students, he remembers that, "The

word detonates a baggage of dread, which I have lugged on my back since I was five years old" (95). "In the refugee camps, the workplaces, the schools, and the universities where Palestinians congregated in the years after 1948 we find the beginnings […] of a new generation of Palestinian nationalist groups and movements which started clandestinely in the 1950s and emerged into the open in the mid-1960s" (Khalidi 179-80). Hasan's secret amassment of arms and Yousef's formative years he spent in university education followed by a short teaching career are examples.

Yousef's soliloquies given in fragmented form reveals what happened to him after he left the University following the outbreak of war: before reaching his mother and sister, he is pulled away by his father Hasan to join in the fight. Days of Jewish captivity and torture has a heavy toll on Yousef. After the miserable Arab defeat in the war, a depleted Yousef returns home naked and bruised along with five other boys. His encounter with a Jewish soldier David with a scar similar to the one he accidentally caused on his long-lost baby brother's face has a deep impact on him. In the same way, the sight of his dear friend Jamal being shot coolly by Jewish soldiers as an 'example' to all others shatters him. The absence of his father coupled with the pain of not being able to reveal reality to his mother and sister puts a heavy weight upon his youthful soul. The incident at Bartaa checkpoint when he was beaten almost to death by his own brother Ismael/David puts an end not only to his wish of marrying his beloved Fatima, but also takes away all purpose of living from him. Much as he would want to care for his widowed mother and orphaned sister, Yousef cannot but heed to the fire of resistance germinating within his soul. He leaves to join the PLO, leaving a letter to his little sister, knowing not that she had been shot, where he declares that, "*They have scripted lives for us that are but extended death sentences, a living death. I won't live their script*" (120) (italics in original). Yousef becomes a

guerrilla fighter in the PLO and years after leaving home, he at last marries Fatima in the Shatila refugee camp in Beirut where the PLO had shifted its exilic headquarters. He tracks down his sister in the US and invites her to begin a new life together. The next tremendous tragedy that derails his endurance of life's trauma happens when his heavily pregnant wife and one-year-old daughter are butchered like lambs in the Shatila Massacre of September 1982. He screams to his sister in the US over the phone that his family had been killed brutally. Devastated and hopeless, a furious Yousef leaves PLO forever and decides to drive the truck loaded with explosives into the US embassy in Beirut in April 1983 as the suicide bomber. When Amal is questioned by CIA agents regarding Yousef's involvement in the embassy bomb blast, she sees unfamiliar, harsh features come over his face in his photograph handed over to her by interrogators.

Yousef has always been the combination of his father's mellowed kindness and his grandfather's fiery spirit. The Palestinian historian Rashid Khalidi traces "the same use of the theme of historic Palestinian rootedness in land, the same symbols signifying Palestinian identity, and the same obsession with Zionism," by the various nationalist organizations including grassroots militant organizations launched by university students (180). This continuity of the pre-*nakba* nationalist feelings in the new generation of rising Palestinian leaders can be found in the reflection of Yehya's image in his grandson Yousef. Not once in all the encounters of war in his life does he kill another living soul – "I am afraid of violating life" (Abulhawa 100). This confession that Yousef makes while narrating his traumatic experiences of the Six Day War finally holds true: it is revealed by himself at the very last page of the novel that he could not bring himself to commit the atrocity although the world considered him a culprit. He concludes his email addressed to his deceased sister's soul saying

that, "…*I'll keep my humanity, though I did not keep my promises*" (322) (italics in original). The picture Amal snapped of Yousef, Fatima and newborn Falasteen in the warmth of love in their scanty hut in Shatila is replete with what Susan Sontag calls the photograph's "posthumous irony" (Hirsch 20). Marianne Hirsch explains Sontag's concept: "[B]ecause as we look at them we know how soon these people are going to die" (20). The fragility of life that hovers over these unfortunate people doomed to live in the perpetual shadow of armed political conflicts is hinted at by Sontag's concept of posthumous irony.

Trauma and Inward Recoil

A local Bedouin girl, Dalia as an adolescent experiences trauma for the first time when her gypsy freedom is crushed by the Arab society she lived in. In her early teens, she had had her right hand burnt by her father with a red-hot iron in the centre of the village square as a punishment to the supposed accusation of stealing one of Darweesh's horses. She had been the victim of a strict patriarchal society that demanded that she be beat and broken down. This incident, which she bore stoically without any sound escaping her lips, marks the way she endured intense tragedies later on in life: with the tight clench of her jaw and the unconscious rubbing of her right palm with the tips of fingers.

The loss of her six-month-old son Ismael during the frenzied march into exile is an extremely traumatic incident in Dalia's life. Though she had secured him well at her chest in her *thobe*, captain Moshe slyly shoves her into the human refugee sea around and catches hold of the jostled baby. As he manages to tuck him in his army sack and quickly move away without anybody noticing, Dalia frantically searches for the child that had been with her just a moment earlier. Dalia's trauma can be

explained well in the light of what Dori Laub speaks of the elusive temporality of traumatic occurrence, “While the trauma uncannily returns in actual life, its reality continues to elude the subject who lives in its grip and unwittingly undergoes its ceaseless repetitions and reenactments. The traumatic event, though real, took place outside the parameters of ‘normal’ reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time” (qtd. in Nadal and Calvo 3-4). The temporary lapse of ordinarily perceived sense of time makes Dalia replay that one instant of losing her son – “It was an infinitesimal flash of time that Dalia would revisit in her mind, over and over for many years, searching for some clue, some hint of what might have happened to her son” (Abulhawa 32). The experience of trauma that occurs “*one moment too late*,” as Marita Nadal and Monica Calvo quote from Cathy Caruth in their essay, “Trauma and Literary Representation: An Introduction,” is clearly evident in Dalia in the aftermath of losing her infant son (10) (italics in original).

The traumatic response of Dalia at this point varies considerably from her reaction towards past experiences. Having realized that her child is missing, Dalia lets out “A loud, penetrating, consuming, unworldly scream from a mother’s deepest agony,” with “the most profound desire to reverse time, just a few minutes” (33). This is in contrast to the stoicism she displayed when she was punished by her father with a red-hot iron in her adolescence. The replay of that unfathomable instant in her mind – the repetitive search for baby Ismael in the fleeing crowd of refugees – continues even after she loses a steady mind after the 1967 war and constitutes the traumatic reenactment in Dalia. Meandering the “unseen labyrinths of a deconstructed reality,” Dalia’s frequent replay of this event aptly demonstrates the failed attempts to make sense of the actual moment of trauma affliction (268). After the events of the Six-Day

War, Dalia lapses into a condition of traumatic dissociation, characterized by a severe detachment from the reality of physical as well as emotional experiences.

Dalia's progression from being a loving and gentle companion for her elder sons to the stout and severe mother for Amal who "soldiered all day at cleaning, cooking, baking, and embroidering thobes" had been the direct result of the trauma that she had been through (273). Though she silently communicates the lesson she learnt in life to her daughter, "*Whatever you feel, keep it inside*," she ardently defends the individual spirit of her little Amal whom the patriarchal refugee community wanted to beat and break down, mirroring her own childhood experiences (56) (italics in original). Her efficiency and toughness of spirit were seen not only in the many activities she involved herself in the camp like midwifery, but also in her courageous act of helping the wounded in the 1967 war that once again shook their lives.

Hasan's younger brother, the lively Darweesh, falls into the niche of his subordinate existence after the *nakba* where his body is fettered in a wheelchair but with a mind racing the winds of Ein Hod upon the memories of his horses. In a photograph taken in his youth, Darweesh is presented as "a dashing young man on a black Arabian horse peering from beneath a white turban" (135). During the procession into exile, his love for nature inherited from his father makes him beg for the life of his remaining horse Fatooma, the already traumatized animal after losing her companion Ganoosh in a recent bombing, for which both he and the animal are immediately shot at by impatient Zionist soldiers. Even though he managed to make a meagre living by making glass baubles and peddling them to tourists from his wheelchair, Darweesh, as his niece Amal points out later, had made a truce with his own fate "to keep bitterness at bay" (136). His own traumatic turn of life marked by the bullet lodged in his spine prompts Darweesh to chide Amal for her refusal to seek

better educational opportunities outside the limits of Jenin; he tells her that the future can't breathe in a refugee camp. At the end of the novel, Darweesh is an old man who survived the 2002 Jenin massacre, just like the 1967 war that he escaped. Yet the one bullet that passes through his sturdy chest at the time of the *nakba* in 1948 is shown to alter his spirit forever.

Another character who silently endures trauma is the Jewish character, Ari Perlstein. He is portrayed as the son of a German professor "who had fled Nazism early" and whose family lived in a small house rented from Palestinians in Jerusalem (8). This makes his identity as that of someone who has recently been uprooted to a foreign land where he has to consolidate his insecure position and try to 'belong.' Ari is described as the "small Jewish boy with large eyes and an unsure smile," the very features thus proclaiming his inferior status as part of a minority group (8). His limp is pointed out as "the legacy of a badly healed leg and the Brown Shirt who had broken it" (9). The friendship between Ari and Hasan is said to have been born "in the shadow of Nazism in Europe and in the growing divide between Arab and Jew at home" (9). When the still disbelieving Hasan asks Ari his opinion about establishing a Jewish homeland in Palestine, his answer becomes ambiguous, torn between the love for his friend and the earnest wish for an atonement of the past Jewish misery. Lowering his eyes, Ari speaks with the knowledge of a past memory of the Holocaust that no Jew can be oblivious about, "I don't know, Hasan. I'm a Jew. I mean, I think it's wrong. But you don't know what it was like before. It killed us, what happened, even though we escaped" (23). Ari also assures Hasan of how his father thinks of the Zionist campaign as wrong and hints at how Palestinians as well as Jews can "be fine" and "live together" if the Arabs accept a Jewish state within Palestine (24). However, Ari's statement that the proposed Jewish state would mercifully allow the Arabs to

stay on their land provokes Hasan who angrily exclaims whether the immigrant Jews who migrated to his land are the ones to decide if he has to stay or leave his homeland. As Hasan argues that it was Europe who persecuted the Jews at the time of the Holocaust and not Palestinian Arabs, Ari can only remain silent in his own Holocaust memories. There is an ongoing dilemma in young Ari's mind, for, he is torn between wishing Palestinians no harm in the imminent Arab-Jew clash, and yearning for a proper identity of a homeland where Jews like him can be safe and secure. Here, it is shown how, in the years before the formation of Israel, the Zionist narrative of history and nationalism was in a nascent stage, dreading the possibility of a failure to establish a Jewish state in Palestine. This is reflected in Ari and other Jewish characters who felt themselves insecure as yet.

In contrast to the image of the Jews as the powerful other to Palestinians, Ari is depicted as the good Jew who never intends to usurp land from the Arabs; instead, he is shown as one who ardently wishes for a harmonious coexistence. Ari who disappears after the events of the *nakba* later resurfaces as the old 'Dr. Ari Perlstein' when Hasan's children and grandchildren search for him and pay him a visit. With "a graceful loneliness" and "a gentle, grandfatherly smile," Ari is depicted as a wise old man who laments wars and the terrible losses that caused a rift between Palestinians and Israelis (284). In spite of being a victim of Nazi bigotry, Ari is nonetheless called by fellow Jewish acquaintances as the "self-hating Jew" for he was unable to feel anger and enmity towards the Palestinian Arabs (287). In his work *Quicksand*, Geoffrey Wawro states that, "Palestine in the 1930s was divided into two watertight compartments, with no fusion at all between the Arab and European Jewish communities" (36). But Abulhawa presents an antithesis to this observation by the very friendship between Hasan and Ari in the late 1930s.

The incident which marked the separation of the two childhood friends at the height of the Jewish-Arab conflicts in 1948, is recounted by Ari to Hasan's children. Hasan was helping Ari and his parents make their escape to the predominantly Jewish West Jerusalem from the Arab East Jerusalem which was filled with vengeful Arabs who attacked any Jew who passed the way. Hasan accompanied them in the ox cart in order to make the Arab fighters believe that it was only an emigrating Arab family. At the same time, he himself had painstakingly made the Israeli flag which was to be hidden till the cart reached the western side of Jerusalem where it could be taken out and waved, informing the patrolling Jewish soldiers of their Jewish identity. Remembering the trauma and anguish of those moments, spent with the fear of being caught and persecuted by Arab men, Ari reminisces how he misunderstood Hasan's honest intentions for one second when the latter waved at a Jordanian soldier. With "fear turned to suspicion," Ari reached for the hidden dagger to strike at his best friend Hasan whom he took for a cheater; he calls his own act to kill his friend as "a betrayal before being betrayed" (288). But before he could aim at Hasan, the cart had started moving again and Ari realized what a big mistake he made by doubting his innocent and sincere friend who risked his own life to protect Ari and his family even after losing "his home, his land, his son" and "his identity to the Jewish state" (289). The memory of this eventful escape carried by Ari with a tinge of guilt reveals the humanitarian side of individuals within the Israel-Palestine conflict, who are devoid of any political interests and care for people of the other religion equally as one's brethren.

Amal's trauma ensues both from direct traumatic experiences that concern herself and her family, and from witnessing the trauma of other people. Amal is a fully formed character with all the inadequate feelings of a young refugee soul. She is

very much aware of their "single tale of dispossession, of being stripped to the bones of one's humanity, of being dumped like rubbish into refugee camps unfit for rats" (78). This again echoes what Edward Said has said about "the perilous territory of non-belonging" where refugees worldwide are dumped into, in his essay "Reflections on Exile" (177). Amal senses acutely the condition of "being left without rights, home, or nation" while living under the shade of international charity (Abulhawa 78). In the deadly grip of military occupation after the Six-Day War in 1967, Abulhawa points to how all they wanted was just freedom to live their lives as it were. The hope of return that they previously harboured in their minds prior to the war was gone forever. In Amal's words, "The original hopes to return home became pleas for elemental rights" (82). Though she had always been disappointed by the lack of affection shown by Mama, she had had the comforting security of her Baba's embrace before the *naksa*. The six days of terror that she and her friend Huda experience in the hole under the kitchen where they crouched for cover from the killing soldiers and their bombs had been the life-changing experience for little Amal on the threshold of adolescence. Seeing the nail polish she had painted in her toe nails before the outbreak of the war, Amal tries to gauge the extent of change come over her life, "I calculated one week as the distance between girlish vanity and hell" (76). The guilt of pretending not to recognize Mama and abandoning her in the hospital for war victims plagues young Amal's consciousness when she realizes that her mother is no more the sane person she used to be before the war. The unknown fate of her father extremely traumatizes Amal; she prefers the finality of his death to the hovering confusion of uncertainty and struggles to keep alive the cheerful figure of Baba in memory. Hearing her brother Yousef converse with his friend that another friend of theirs, Jamal, had been killed as an "example," Amal is traumatized to think that soldiers put

a bullet to the head of the boy who frequented their house daily, played soccer and called her “ammoora” or adorable (89). The paradoxical combination of the normal with the strange, terrible and the abnormal upsets her young self. When her mother arouses herself temporarily from her deluge and announces to Amal that her brother is leaving them, she races all alone to the territories forbidden to enter as per the rules of the recent military occupation imposed on them. Little does Amal realize that she had been shot by soldiers amidst her run, because her mind had already been clouded by many other things. Amal inwardly accepts her gaping wound on her maimed belly as punishment for failing to recognize her mother’s worth. Amal’s life in the orphanage is dotted by constant feelings of guilt and shame; she believed herself to be beyond redemption of any sort.

The chapter “Traumatic Awakenings” in Cathy Caruth’s book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History* speaks about a kind of paradox involved in the traumatic experience. In Caruth’s words, “the most direct seeing of a violent event may occur as an absolute inability to know it; that immediacy, paradoxically, may take the form of belatedness” (92). The utter incomprehensibility of trauma at the time of experiencing is explored well in the fine nuances of the novel. Baby Aisha’s “calm” and “[s]eraphic” face concealing the bitter truth of her sudden, violent death, Amal’s confusion in realizing the pain of a piercing bullet and many other instances point to how trauma fails to get hold of individuals at the spot or during the event (69). Like Dalia’s almost unconscious habit of rubbing finger tips on her right palm, Amal and Huda wrapping around each other in foetal positions long after the silencing of bombs and terror is an example of trauma working out its way in latent manifestations.

Amal gets transformed by her diasporic identity. Yet the juxtaposition of the US with Palestine as a nation is not without purpose. Personal freedom enjoyed by those in the former is shown as diametrically opposite to the military occupation of the latter with its heavy travel limitations and other restrictions. Like-wise Western culture with its distant personal relationships is compared with the much more intimate and intense personal ties of the Arab culture in Palestine. Another interesting comparison is the sewage incident in Amal's college premises. An uncalled-for incident and not in the least a pleasant occasion for her American friends, the very inconvenience of smelling leaked foul sewage triggered in Amal the memories of her time at the Jenin camp when she and her friend Huda got an opportunity to sleep together on the rooftops to avoid the smell from the outflowing sewage pipes down the alleys. Though Amal tries to become the adopted daughter of her new country as Amy, it is, much to her knowledge and conscience, merely a false escape that she can attempt to undertake in vain. It is during her *ghurba* days that Amal realizes with full force her near-umbilical cord relationship with Palestine. As she aptly summarizes, "Palestine would just rise up from my bones into the center of my new life, unannounced" (175). The more she lives in the foreign soil, the more Amal hears the call of Palestine from deep within: "… I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation of the banished to no place, no man, no honor. My Arabness and Palestine's primal cries were my anchors to the world" (179). Amal's diasporic life is divided into two halves, one before her marriage to Majid in Beirut and the other, after the traumatic loss of her husband.

Amal was tormented not by the trauma of her own self but "felt depleted by the wounds of others" (278). After hearing about the extremely agonizing deaths of her husband Majid and her brother's wife and children, a fully pregnant Amal

responds by walking the suburbs of Philadelphia in a numbed state. The unperturbed state of the people in the US is juxtaposed with the extremity and enormity of the tragedy she had heard of her dear ones. She is later told that she grabbed an American woman sitting in a park and begged her to say what the latter found so funny in the world that she can laugh heartily with her friend. The devastating effect of the Shatila massacre on the individual psyche of Amal who had by then reached the safety of the US once again, clearly offsets the trans/historical nature of the traumatic impact.

Amal becomes obsessed by what Dominick LaCapra calls 'the fidelity to trauma' in his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. As LaCapra says:

> Part of this feeling may be the melancholic sentiment that, in working through the past in a manner that enables survival or a reengagement in life, one is betraying those who were overwhelmed and consumed by that traumatic past. One's bond with the dead, especially with dead inmates, may invest trauma with value and make its reliving a painful but necessary commemoration or memorial to which one remains dedicated or at least bound. (61)

Amal's act of delivering her baby soon after the tragic circumstances of the Shatila massacre shows her sincere attempt to live out the pain of all others in the pangs of childbirth. The act becomes a desperate attempt to reenact her mother's trauma who held all pain within herself and taught her to keep trauma to oneself. Here, Amal is also plagued by "survivor guilt," a term that Judith Herman quotes from Robert Jay Lifton in the third chapter, "Disconnection," of her work *Trauma and Recovery* (53). "Survivors of disaster and war are haunted by images of the dying whom they could not rescue" (Herman 54). When Fatima's pregnant belly had been brutally torn far

away in Beirut, Amal found herself guilty of delivering her own baby safely in the US.

In the US, Amal's conversion to Amy, "a woman of walls" and "a woman of few words and no friends" is a result of the memory traces that still smoulder within her inner self (245). In addition to the enactments of her repetition compulsion and fidelity to trauma, she becomes the carrier of memory traces from her Palestinian life. Caruth, in her essay "After the End: Psychoanalysis in the Ashes of History," defines memory traces as, "a form of memory" that, "originates as its own deferral and also as its later repetition, a fundamental *deferral and repetition at the beginning*" (21) (italics in original). The continuous return to the earlier times of her life points towards repetition compulsion while the sustained postponement she observed, regarding the trauma that marked her childhood and youth, in the act of withholding them from even her daughter, inevitably eschews this deferral nature of her traumatic memory. Just as Amal's mother Dalia lapsed into an alternate, "deconstructive reality" where she could make sense of the series of traumatic events on her own, Amal's adamant silence, too, can be seen as her own way of negotiating the trauma of life (274). Even though she could not be sure of what had happened to her Baba and brother Yousef, she tries constantly to make an ultimate picture of them from the trauma of confusion concerning their whereabouts. As a middle-aged woman, when she meets an aged Dr. Ari Perlstein, she stumbles before her own words that announce her father to be dead in the war. Similarly, she can only mouth these words when asked about Yousef's whereabouts, "They say he was the man who drove the truck bomb into the U.S. embassy in 1983" (286). Receiving her long-lost brother Ismael/David's call leads to Amal's emergence out of her cocooned existence.

The dissociation from the collective or the community is portrayed as deepening the internal trauma of characters. The 'isolation from the herd' is what characterizes the pain and personal conflict of the three Abulheja siblings – Yousef, Ismael and Amal. The previous generations, on the contrary, are able to react to their trauma more on a collective ground. In their case, even individualistic reactions to personal trauma become known and acknowledged by the group of refugees of which they are an integral part, as is in the case of Yehya's daring visit to Ein Hod. The exact opposite of this is reflected in the members of the later generation, who, in their isolated world, keep their pain of personal loss and suffering to themselves. Women's voices also emerge from the depths of their subjugated identities. All three women representing three generations – Basima (Yehya's wife), Dalia and Amal – die, either directly or indirectly, due to Israeli invasion and attacks.

Perpetrator Trauma and the Implicated Subject

David's trauma ensues as a combination of perpetrator trauma and victim trauma. David, who grows up as the Zionist soldier Moshe's son and becomes a soldier himself, is actually an Arab named Ismael, the second son of Hasan-Dalia who got kidnapped at the age of six months. The tragedy of David is this double and diametrically opposite edge to his identity which makes him unable to belong to either a Jewish identity or an Arab one. Though he grows up enjoying all the privileges of being a Jew (which he could not have got, had he led the life of an Arab refugee like his siblings), the doubt that lodges in his mind at the age of twelve that he is "not a real Jew" torments him (271). The scar he carries on his face from his early infant days is the only way that leads to his former Arab identity. On hearing the truth of his roots finally from his father Moshe, David's identity takes a dramatic shift into dual consciousness. Unable to digest the fact that he was not a Jew but an Arab, his wife

and his elder son Uri who was a zealous Zionist, walk out of his life forever. His younger son Jacob, however, finds the story of his father's twisted identity "palatable" and "interesting" and he helps David search for and place his long lost Arab siblings (282). Upon uniting with them, he is still called 'David' for, as his sister Amal recalls, "he had not been Ismael for fifty-three years" (262). The ambiguous identity of being both a Jew and an Arab leaves David perpetually in an identity crisis.

The role of the perpetrator of trauma too becomes one of utmost significance. As Judith Herman says in her work *Trauma and Recovery*, "When the events are natural disasters or 'acts of God,' those who bear witness sympathize readily with the victim. But when the traumatic events are of human design, those who bear witness are caught in the conflict between victim and perpetrator" (7). The perpetrator's promotion of forgetting in order to escape accountability for his crimes is done through secrecy and silence, so argues Herman (7). When he gets to see the Arab captive, Yousef, with an unmistakable similarity to his own face, David becomes troubled by the seed of doubt in his heart and he cruelly tortures the young Arab man with all his unknown fury and unbidden fears. He slaps the Arab, strikes him with the butt of his rifle and still furious and unable to stop, he kicks the Arab's groin repeatedly till the man falls unconscious. Here, the trauma of sensing that he is really an Arab triggers the urgent impulse to prove that he is not so, despite the deepest dread of being 'the other.' The Arab man, whoever he may be, symbolizes for David, at that moment, the potential threat on his very identity which he has to suppress by any means. Decades later, he writes to his sister about the double side to his brutal behaviour, "[*T*]*hough I was capable of great cruelty, so am I of great love*" (320) (italics in original). David's fear of existence and his subsequent torture of Yousef

reflects, in a wider sense, the profound fears of Jews about threats to their continued existence as a people and as a nation.

One of the other main Jewish characters in *Mornings in Jenin* is Moshe, the Jewish soldier who stole Hasan's son Ismael during the procession of Palestinians fleeing from their lands at the time of the *nakba*. The memory of the Holocaust as etched in the Jewish collective consciousness is underlined by the depiction of this character. Putting faith in his role to secure a homeland for fellow Jews in Palestine, Moshe takes up the Zionist mission of killing and torturing Palestinians. As Edward Said observes, "It is as if the reconstructed Jewish collective experience, as represented by Israel and modern Zionism, could not tolerate another story of dispossession and loss to exist alongside it – an intolerance constantly reinforced by the Israeli hostility to the nationalism of the Palestinians" (176). Moshe marries Jolanta, a Polish Jew who sought refuge in Palestine after having escaped from the German Nazi soldiers who used her sexually for years. When his wife becomes incapable of conceiving a child as an aftereffect of the sustained rape she endured, Moshe becomes aware of God's injustice, who denied his poor wife "the elemental gift of motherhood" while "granting so many healthy children to Arabs, who were already so numerous" (37). This is just an instance of the politics of demographics in the Israel-Palestine conflict. Seeing an Arab woman with children dangling from her limbs at the Arab village of Ein Hod where he and fellow soldiers were called for a truce before the eruption of the war, Moshe resolves to steal one of her children. When the baby fell into his arms from the mother's hands, he tucks the child in his army sack and keeps moving "without looking back" (37). Yet this is one moment in his life which Moshe keeps looking back, even in his death bed. With deep pain and regret, he uses "his last breaths to reveal the past and to beg his son's forgiveness"

(277). He confesses to his son David/Ismael how the eyes of the Arab woman haunted him throughout his life and how her frantic cries of "Ibni, ibni" always resounded in his ears (277).

Another instance of perpetrator trauma is given through Amal's perspective. When she returns to Palestine late in her middle age, Amal gets shot in the midst of the Jenin massacre in 2002. Even when confronted with a gun for the second time in her life, she senses the trauma and pain lived out by the teenaged soldier in front of her. Amal feels sympathetic of his fate that warrants him to take away life at such a tender age, "My eyes, soft with a mother's love and a dead woman's calm, weigh him down with his own power and I think he will cry. Not now. Later. When he is face-to-face with his dreams and his future" (305). Here, Abulhawa reflects through her mouthpiece of Amal as to how the youth are "betrayed by their leaders for symbols and flags and war and power" (306). Perpetrator trauma is captured in its subtlety through the portraiture of this nameless boyish soldier.

Jolanta is the Jewish woman character in the novel, her position being that of the implicated subject. In his essay titled "Trauma Theory, Implicated Subjects, and the Question of Israel/Palestine," Michael Rothberg defines the category of implicated subjects as, "Neither simply perpetrators nor victims, though potentially either or both at other moments, implicated subjects are participants in and beneficiaries of a system that generates dispersed and uneven experiences of trauma and well-being simultaneously." A rape victim in the Holocaust, Jolanta seemed "fragile and pretty" to Moshe on her arrival from Poland to Palestine (36). She had "wanted to escape the howls of death in her dreams" and "the unending screams of dying Jews" that she witnessed during the days of Nazi torture (36). Desperately yearning to erase her frightening memories of "sweaty German men polluting her body", Jolanta who lost

her whole family in the Holocaust embarks on a new life with Moshe (36). Receiving the stolen Arab infant from her husband, her face opens like “a spring blossom” and she names the boy ‘David’ after her deceased father (38). Jolanta sees to it that David grows up as a Jew with no knowledge of his origins. This is how she partakes in violence, in an indirect way. Fearing that her son would find out his non-Jewish identity, she unleashes her wrath towards people who threatened to reveal the truth and take away her son from her. David was the sole beneficiary of Jolanta’s love who later confesses to his Arab sister Amal that “I loved Jolanta. She was the only mother I knew” (275). Raising a stolen child, however, imprints a guilty consciousness in Jolanta. After confessing the truth of his identity, she volunteers to help Ismael/David to locate his real parents – “For if life had taught her anything, it was that healing and peace can begin only with acknowledgement of wrongs committed” (257).

The physicality of wounds is projected as an extension of the characters’ identity crisis and internal conflict. The remnants of physical wounds are shown to be the external forms of psychological trauma in the cases of Ari, Dalia, Amal, Ismael/David and Darweesh. Though David’s scar is primarily spoken of as something that leads to his real identity, it is in fact the last remaining shred of his identity which prevented him from becoming a Jew fully. The scar problematizes his authenticity of being David. When the teenaged Dalia breaks her ankle falling off Darweesh’s horse, it puts an end to her freedom to roam about. Similarly, the cut in her leg the young mother Dalia receives on her way to Basima’s grave stands for the Zionist encroachment to Palestinian spaces and bodies and, therefore, signifies the further restrictions being imposed on her as a Palestinian woman. In Dalia, the silence that cloisters her former spirited self after each of the violent attacks and subsequent personal losses has its beginning in the cruel punishment given her by her father in the

presence of the public. Hence, she is able to connect each of her intensely painful tales to the seething pain of hot iron in her right palm. Amal too connects her traumatic sense of constant inadequacy and inferiority with the maimed skin of her belly pierced long ago by the Israeli soldiers' bullet. Similarly, the limp in the Jewish Ari's leg continuing as the legacy of a gunshot from a Brown Shirt and Darweesh's paralyzed body bound to a wheelchair for a lifetime by the instant firing of Zionists, show that they are never able to escape the very physicality of their traumatic experiences.

Postmemory: The Present Refracted by the Past

The intergenerational feature of trans/historical trauma that glues the gaps between generations inevitably brings in the concept of postmemory to this study. One of the important roles played by the Palestinian postmemory is to create a counter space of Palestinian displacement and exile against that formed by the strongly rewritten Holocaust memories of the Israeli Jews. The narrative of *Mornings in Jenin* that unfolds like a memoir of a lost family history is replete with the tropes of postmemory. The catastrophic *nakba* not only affects the first generation including Yehya, Haj Salem and their families, but also reverberates in the lives of coming generations.

Yousef belongs to the younger generation in the first wave of Palestinian refugees. The eldest son of Hasan, he is the only Abulheja sibling to have witnessed the horrors of their brutal expulsion from their village Ein Hod. He is quieted by the grown-ups' answer, ever uncertain as to their return to Ein Hod. His "memories of the terrible eviction" or the *nakba* as well as the mixed reactions of fear and courage he saw on the faces of his elders shape young Yousef's sense of self and identity (44).

Though his memories and knowledge of their violent history of eviction and exile do not come under what can be called postmemory, Yousef learns about his past and heritage more from the older generation of refugees around him than from his own memories of witnessing the atrocities firsthand. The refugee subculture that marks the mornings and evenings in the camps as storytelling gatherings imparts the growing boy with a knowledge of the recent past that is subverted and challenged by the dominant culture of the newly established state i.e., Israel. The faint memories of their dispossession and displacement that he retained from the age of five years were given form and meaning by the countless remarks, stories and anecdotes he heard from such daily gatherings of refugees who wished earnestly for a return home. Finding himself in the company of elders, Yousef floated up and down in the waves of their optimism and pessimism alike. He rejoiced with the adult refugees when his Jiddo Yehya returned to Jenin after his first successful visit to the forbidden territory of Ein Hod with as many relics and souvenirs as tales of Jewish appropriation of their land. The "cloud of exile" penetrated by their "toothless smiles" added to the range of Yousef's memorialization of the *nakba* (44). On the other hand, the death of his grandfather at the hands of Israeli soldiers on his second visit to Ein Hod and the resultant sadness over the camp also made a way to his mind, though "no one noticed the trauma in Yousef's young face" (48). The impact of the elders' actions and conversations on Yousef was so tremendous although his presence went unacknowledged by them at the time. The memories and stories he imbibed/internalized from them later came to constitute the very essence of his resistance strategy.

Though Yousef and Amal are siblings, there is a huge difference between each of their ways of remembering the *nakba* because of the fact that Amal was born in the refugee camp in July 1955, seven years after the great catastrophe. This channels the

perception and sensibility of the two differently, regarding their twisted identities and usurped heritage, despite being siblings and thus belonging to the same generation.

Amal is the only Abulheja character in the novel who is born a refugee. In this sense, Jenin is her first home. She has not seen Ein Hod, the ancestral village from which the Abulheja family was expelled. Nevertheless, she is made to feel that she is an exile. She forges, or more accurately, is made to forge an inner connection with her original homeland through her father's poetry recital, her mother's stoic attitude and the tale of her grandfather's death. Reading poems along with Baba in the quiet of early mornings, instills in young Amal a sense of lost home which is out there and to which they would all ultimately return. In Amal's words, it "was a time and place where the hope of returning home could be renewed" (41). Similarly, Amal is made to sense the deep pain of uprooting and sudden exile that her family had to face through the relationship with her mother. Dalia's seemingly indifferent attitude towards Amal stems mainly from one incident – the loss of her son Ismael during their exilic journey. This, in turn, triggers little Amal's acute perception of their collective exile and loss of homeland; she equates the loss of homeland with her mother's deep pain of losing her infant.

The general atmosphere of the refugee camp in Jenin imbues Amal with a knowledge of her ancestors' past. She learns of the heroic deeds of her deceased grandfather from her brother Yousef and hears the stories of her land and its stolen history from the patriarch of the camp, Haj Salem, who was well-versed in the twists and turns of Palestinian history. The postmemory of the loss of her original homeland is made alive and internalized through the songs and poetry that her father Hasan recited to her during childhood, in the serenity and solitude of the early mornings. The verses of the ancient poets of the region like Rumi, Khalil Gibran et al. seem

"hypnotic and lyrical" to young Amal and enchants her with a vision of a far-away homeland beckoning her towards it (61). In Amal's words, "Through them, I felt my father's passions, his losses, his heartaches, and his loves. He passed all of that to me" (61). Amal remembers her Baba telling her about land and man's relationship with it: "We come from the land, give our love and labor to her, and she nurtures us in return. When we die, we return to the land. In a way, she owns her. Palestine owns us and we belong to her" (62). Thus, the instinct to love and care for land came to be inherited.

As Marianne Hirsch says, postmemory is not a recall, but a re-imagination of, and reconnection to, the events of the previous generation's past (5). When war breaks out between Israel and the Arab countries in 1967 and commotion reigns in the camp in Jenin, Amal, who is almost twelve years old at the time, becomes hopeful and takes it for the much-awaited turn to return home to Ein Hod. The eloquently cascading lines of her childhood imagination clearly depict the postmemory she carried within her almost as a legacy:

> I conjured all the places of the home that had been built up in my young mind, one tree, one rosebush, one story at a time. I thought of the water and sandy beaches of the Mediterranean – "The Bride of Palestine," Baba called it – which I had visited only in my dreams. A delicious anticipation bore visions of the old life, the one I had never known. My rightful life, disinherited but finally to be regained, in the back terrace of Jiddo Yehya's and Teta Basima's mansion, with its succulent grapes dangling from their vines, Mama's rose garden, the Arabian horses Ammo Darweesh raised, Baba's library, and our family's farm, which had sustained half the village. (Abulhawa 64-5)

The heavenly attributes of the Eden-like ancestral village inculcates or envisions automatically the postmemory of the traumatic exile from it as well as fosters the anticipation of a rightful return to the lost paradise.

Storytelling is projected as a means of creating postmemory in the younger generation of Palestinian refugees in the novel. The postmemory of a lost homeland and a thwarted identity is engraved upon the consciousness of refugee children who strive for a fulfillment of their original or rightful identities. In her first person narrative, Amal mentions about Haj Salem who "passed history on to the camp's children" (78). Describing his story as "everyone's story, a single tale of dispossession," she credits him for introducing her to the "treasure of Palestinian folklore and proverbs" (78). Postmemory, in this sense, is also a revival of one's culture from falling into oblivion. Haj Salem's personal memories turn into what can be called oral history. This oral memory is what Nur Masalha calls the "documentary evidence" that validates their identity and legal rights in Palestine (32). Regarding the stories told by Haj Salem, these are Amal's words – "Palestine and all her villages, many long since razed by Israel, would come alive in my mind as if I had lived there myself. His raspy voice, …, would spiritedly rise and fall, prodding our imaginations to live among our forefathers, watching past events unfold as if that very moment" (Abulhawa 78-9). Here the re-imagination of the past is vividly portrayed as the chief exercise of postmemory.

The ambiguous nature of the effect of possessing postmemory is exemplified through the character of Amal. Postmemory can, on the one hand, facilitate and ensure rootedness with the past and on the other, become a burdensome preoccupation that never goes off. While leading a diasporic life in the US, Amal makes a deliberate attempt to shake off the past that clings to her. She becomes eager to belong and tuck

herself into “an American niche with no past” (172-3). At this point, she earnestly desires to disentangle herself from her past and live “free of inherited dreams” (173). Yet, she is unable to detach herself from her Palestinian ties, feeling one with her Palestinian self and identity. The utterly new experiences of an American life do not for once dislodge the deep-seated Palestinian postmemory that Amal carried within herself.

However, postmemory is not portrayed as something that takes place naturally within the relation between the trauma-afflicted generation and its subsequent generation. In the Palestinian case as depicted in *Mornings in Jenin*, the traumatic events are not something of the distant past, but occur from time to time, testifying to their trans/historicity. So, one generation that retains the postmemory of the former generation may be affected freshly by another rush of trauma. In such cases, often the belatedness of acquiring the postmemory of the previous generation is shown to accentuate a gap between the two involved generations. This belatedness in acquiring the traumatic postmemory of the ancestral past creates an initial gap in adhering to the identities they are designated to possess. The belatedness can both be slow and sudden, as understood from the characters of Amal and Sara respectively in the novel.

Amal is one of the characters who lags behind initially in acquiring the postmemory of her parent generation and thus empathizing with them. In stark contrast to her brother Yousef who had been a witness of the incidents of the *nakba*, Amal’s knowledge of the ancestral Abulheja village Ein Hod and their erstwhile lives is seen to be very limited. It can be said that her ignorance of their collective ethnic past is brought out by the varying degree of distance that existed within their familial setup. In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Hirsch refers to these gaps in knowledge between generations which result in a discontinuous, ruptured way of traumatic

transfer (6). What prohibits Amal from engaging in active postmemory are the differing wavelengths of relationships she had with each of her family members. Her constrained relationship with her mother Dalia is a primary factor that hinders her from actively embracing her collective past. The silence between them is a barrier that prevents the child access to her ancestors' past and history of forced exile. She is never given the particulars of the family story regarding the fated journey into exile. Amal learns of many events in her family history from the bits and pieces she hears at many points in her life. The time she takes to weave the different strands into a complete picture results in the belated acquisition of her share of postmemory. She learns about the tragedy of losing a baby brother Ismael amidst the fated procession during the *nakba* by eavesdropping on Yousef's conversation with one of his friends. Similarly, she learns that her uncle Darweesh was shot mercilessly at the time of the *nakba* only when she later sees an old photograph of him riding on horseback as a dashing young man. Another factor that delays her falling in place with her rightful postmemory is the complete absence of her daring grandfather Yehya in her life.

As mentioned above, the constrained relationship with her mother keeps Amal back from the repertoire of the family history throughout her childhood and adolescence. If Yousef could understand mother's subdued character, Amal, uneclipsed as she is by the painful memories of the *nakba,* is resentful of her mother's stoic demeanour. The estrangement and gap that she initially feels towards her mother is paralleled by an equal amnesia of Palestine's subverted history. Here the repression of trauma by the introvert mother results at a failed transmission of postmemory to her daughter. It is only at later stages of her life, and after having gone through intense personal tragedies of her own, that Amal reads between the lines of her life story and establishes the lost connections.

An interesting parallel to Amal is her own daughter Sara. Two important things that guarantee the smooth transmission of postmemory are the proximity to the circumstances of the collective trauma of the erstwhile generation and the ready acceptance of their history sought by the parent generation from their children. In the case of Sara, these two conditions are seen to be totally absent. This second-generation migrant is born years later in the American soil, far from the conflict zone of her motherland Palestine. Amal withholds her own history and the collective trauma of Palestinian history from her daughter, for fear that it might spoil the latter's promising future life. Amal's act of reading Palestinian poetry to her daughter Sara is done not with the aim of imparting her the cultural heritage and history of the Palestinian land, but simply as an evocation of Amal's father Hasan's memories. If the storytelling in the calm and quiet of early mornings helped Amal inherit from her father the burden of bitter-sweet postmemory of her ancestral family as well as land, she reads stories to her daughter in a ritualistic way, merely to re-enact what her father once did on a daily basis and bring alive the memories of their parent-child bonding through books. Amal picks up her sleeping two-year-old daughter from bed and placing the child in her lap, reads out to her the lines which her own father Hasan used to read to her before his disappearance in the Six-day War of 1967. Then she puts the child back to bed before heading to work. Thus, little Sara came to know nothing of such a storytelling session. This early morning habit of reading out stories from Palestine was brought to an end by the time Sara turned three – that is, before the child could understand and learn anything of her cultural roots and ancestry. Juxtaposed to this image of a mother reluctant to pass on a historical sense of existence to her child is the description of Huda, Amal's childhood friend in the Jenin refugee camp, singing to her children "the folk ballads of Palestine" and lulling them

to sleep (252). Huda's songs imbued with "an unassailable freedom and unwavering faith" (252) carry forward the strong sense of homeland on to her children while Sara is totally shut out from knowing her past by virtue of her mother's silence.

The relationship between the grown-up Sara and her mother Amal is featured by a tense silence till the mother and daughter travel to their native land of Palestine and Amal's erstwhile traumatic life is unfurled for the knowledge of her daughter. In the days before Amal reunites with her long lost brother Ismael/David and the embers of her past happen to be rekindled, Sara and Amal seldom speak of Palestine. But, even before Sara learns of her mother's past in Palestine, she is shown as volunteering for the local Amnesty International Chapter in Philadelphia and actively participating in an activist group called Students for Justice in Palestine. Seeing her daughter's commitment to the upliftment of Palestine, Amal marvels at one point at "how the call of Palestine had come to live inside her American daughter" (258). Even without possessing the postmemory of her Palestinian ancestry, Sara is able to work for the Palestinian cause merely due to the fact that she knows herself to be of Palestinian origin. Yet, the way she feels a sense of belonging towards Palestine after gaining access to her rightful postmemory is indeed different from what she does earlier for the Palestinian cause. The knowledge that her mother had a long-lost brother who was raised a Jew and who unknowingly tortured his own family members is the beginning of a series of realization for Sara.

When Amal looked forward to returning to Jenin "after three decades of exile," Sara saw in it the prospect of a maiden journey to Palestine which almost felt like a going back (282). Amal is able to comprehend well her daughter's sorrow at having "So little sense of belonging. So little of a mother. A great big "so little" throbbed under her decision to go to Palestine" (281). The belated transmission of

postmemory occurs to Sara as intermittent shocks upon hearing the casual relevations of her mother Amal to old Dr. Ari Perlstein about the extremely traumatic deaths of those of her family members. Here, Amal's revelation of the traumatic past of her family in the form of short, unclear replies to Ari's questions, is marked by a deep hesitation to open up, not only in front of others, but also to herself, in the form of a narrative composed of actual words standing for her unfathomable pain. This is stated by Judith Lewis Herman, in her classic work, *Trauma and Recovery*: "People who have survived atrocities often tell their stories in a highly emotional, contradictory, and fragmented manner which undermines their credibility and thereby serves the twin imperatives of truth-telling and secrecy" (1). However, the full force of the withheld trauma breaks in to Amal's daughter as if from gushing wounds, "Sara's face opened like a wound. Disbelieving, intrigued, hungry for the full story of her life, hurt by the mother who had held so much back from her" (286). In this way, one of the strongest moments that steer the course of the relationship between the withholding mother and the unknowing daughter is their decision to go back to Palestine.

The case of the character David is a different case altogether, one of reverted/ false postmemory. He too carries the burden of postmemory, yet, one which is wrong and not his own. Being kidnapped and raised as a Jew, he is made to internalize the Jewish memories of the Holocaust. He is brought up with the burden of ever looming, awful memories of the atrocities that his parents Moshe and Jolanta and all the other Jews have had to endure during the Holocaust. This wound that throbs in the Jewish psyche is passed to David as he is raised a Jew. The postmemory of the Holocaust is integral in moulding him into an ideal Jew with a moral purpose. He is made to join the Israeli army as compulsory service, considering that "Every Jew had a national

and moral duty to serve" for Israel which was a "tiny haven for Jews in a world that had built death camps for them in other places" (94). Consciously and unconsciously, he is taught to hate the Palestinian Arabs whose existence on the land of Israel/Palestine must, at any price, be negated. In Yousef's words, Ismael is David, "a Yahoodi, a Sahyouni who fights for Israel" (104). The encounter with his real brother Yousef is something which makes David unconsciously realize his whole life as a wrongly framed narrative. Amal defines their predicament in her mind upon meeting David, "*You and I are the remains of an unfulfilled legacy, heirs to a kingdom of stolen identities and ragged confusion*" (270) (italics in original). "At least you knew who you were and where you came from," David tells Amal, comparing the legacies of trauma they both had had to carry (276). The difficulty of unlearning the acquired postmemory of a whole ethnic group is driven home by David's comparative statement.

In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Hirsch draws attention to a paradoxical situation when it becomes necessary to "keep the wounds open" in order to prevent forgetting and erasure, and at the same time, it becomes highly desirable that "a very different discourse of truth-telling, reconciliation, forgiveness, and reparation" comes into being that "former victims and former perpetrators" can coexist (19). This is of considerable interest in the context of this chapter where the opposite stand positions of the Palestinians and Israelis impart a thematic tension throughout.

Multidirectional Memory: The Rewriting of History

Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* realigns Palestinian history in such a way that national wounds and scars otherwise relegated to the background make their appearance before the world. This conscious and careful reconfiguration of the land's

socio-political as well as ethno-cultural history has been done through many techniques: the challenge of the dominant or existing Israeli historical discourse, the projection of the landmark historical events that affected Palestine at various time periods such as the *nakba* and the *naksa*, deliberate silence on the much celebrated Peace Processes, eloquence on local or miniscule historical events and finally, the treatment of history as a powerful character of flesh and blood.

The insiders' perspective of *Mornings in Jenin* throws light on some of the tumultuous chapters of Palestinian history, hitherto tuned, adjusted and finally presented to the outside world, especially the West, according to the Israeli point-of-view. When the Israeli side chooses to deny the chapter of *nakba* altogether, the Palestinians must boldly revisit it, so that alternative history developed from their perspective can combat the threat of erasure or forced anonymity. The famous Israeli New Historian Ilan Pappe, in his work *The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine* insists on the "Right of Return" and proclaims the need to revisit Palestinian history from the indigenous perspective (236). In *Mornings in Jenin*, the year 1948 in Palestine is depicted as falling from the calendar into exile, in the "sorrow of a history buried alive" (35). The novel dedicates a full section entitled "El Nakba" to demonstrate how the Palestine-Israel conflict began from the forced eviction of Palestinians which continues as perpetual exile.

In his landmark work *Multidirectional Memory*, Michael Rothberg problematizes the public sphere where the histories of victimization of different social groups confront each other. He goes on to suggest that collective memory is multidirectional in nature, i.e., "as subject to ongoing negotiation, cross referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (3). He further simplifies it thus, "This interaction of different historical memories illustrates the productive,

intercultural dynamic that I call multidirectional memory" (3). Rothberg's idea of multidirectional memory provides a wider historical space where the Palestinian memorialization of the *nakba* and resultant exile defines itself as an important historical event of the Palestinian people not in isolation, but with clear connections and overlapping junctures with the Jewish persecution in Europe. In other words, the memories of the *nakba* projects the momentous catastrophe as having clear inroads to the Jewish Holocaust lying behind. Edward Said's words in the new afterword to *Orientalism* also points toward the need for a co-existing and parallel narrative of identity, "… the development and maintenance of every culture require the existence of another, different and competing *alter ego*" (qtd. in Khalidi 10) (italics in original). The articulation of the *nakba* in the historical revisionist novel as *Mornings in Jenin* is juxtaposed with an existing narrative of traumatic Holocaust memories, the history of the powerful other involved in the conflict.

"A theory of multidirectional memory can help us in the task of 'reframing justice in a globalizing world'" (Rothberg 19). Spaces and times come to reflect one another, irrespective of ethnicity, culture, politics etc. wherein history is redefined using the impartial scale of human suffering and trauma. This nullification of the dialogic of dominance or competition ushered in by Rothberg's concept can be seen to facilitate a condition favourable for giving the acknowledgement due to the Palestinian history of exile by Israel and also by the Western world at large.

"This intertwined history, this counterpoint between two extraordinary narratives, and the interplay between two senses of identity which have certain things in common with each other, but are completely different in so many other ways, is one of the themes that stands out in any study of the emergence of Palestinian national identity" (Khalidi 5). Even as the novel depicts the hollowed-out selves of Holocaust

survivors as Ari, Mrs. Perlstein, Jolanta and Moshe reaching out in vain for the comfort and safety of life in a land as Palestine, the Zionist claim of Palestine as a land without a people is strongly refuted. This is aptly put in the words of Amal who realizes much later in her life about "the inescapable truth that Palestinians paid the price for the Jewish holocaust" (273). In a formulaic tone defining a chain reaction or so, she surmises that, "Jews killed my mother's family because Germans had killed Jolanta's" (273). This resonates with what Said has said in "Reflections on Exile" that "Palestinians feel that they have been turned into exiles by the proverbial people of exile, the Jews" (178). Nahla Abdo, in her work *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba,* theorizes the nakba as genocide, giving it a parallel alignment with the Jewish Holocaust. Another instance of multidirectional memory in the novel is how the bombing of the Twin Towers triggers emotional turbulence in Amal who sees in it Israel's bombing of her husband's apartment building much in the same way, back in Beirut in 1982.

The presentation of Palestinian history as an effective amalgamation of fact and fiction is, without doubt, one of the essential strengths of the novel. Abulhawa carefully places excerpts from important historical texts along with the fictional narrative, whereby the latter is proved and validated with the help of the former. This is, in fact, an advocacy of what Dominick LaCapra calls the "middle voice" in the first essay of his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma*. Adopting a "middle voice" in historical writing – a term LaCapra takes from Hayden White – is the proportionate blend of objective facts and subjective plotline and commentary which results in the production of a historical text that leaves room for reinterpretation (139). Juxtaposed with the intimate and violent reactions of the siblings Amal and Yousef, at the brutal killings of their spouses in the Shatila Massacre of 1982, are the passages quoted from

the historical text *Pity the Nation* by Robert Fisk, describing the cruelty unleashed upon the family members and relatives of PLO activists in the Palestinian refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut. Using the trope of reading, this historical text is aptly laced into the fictional fabric to heighten the reality of trauma. The gang-raped body of a fully pregnant woman wearing a torn blue *dish-dashe* along with her dead infant child staring at the world with vacant eyes is brilliantly equated to the tragic deaths of Yousef's wife Fatima and their daughter Falasteen as victims of the massacre. Similarly, *Mornings in Jenin* also quotes from the book by Norman Finkelstein titled *The Rise and Fall of Palestine,* in order to bring to light the atrocities meted out to Palestinians and little children in particular, in the process of curbing the popular uprising or the first *intifada* of 1987 using an iron hand. Portrayed yet again as read by Amal from the safe distance of Philadelphia, this historical text is made to connect itself to the living metabolism of the novel by making the kidnapped and cruelly muted six-year old boy turn out as Amal's friend Huda's youngest son Mansour, unbeknownst to Amal reading the whole account. The endorsement of such a "middle voice" as seen in the delicate balance between fact and fiction adds to the credibility of the critical revision of Palestinian history aimed at in the novel.

After the events of the 1987 *intifada*, *Mornings in Jenin* leaps up in time to the early 2000s. The firsthand knowledge of the Jenin massacre of 2002 spurs the writer to pen down this novel where she wishes to proclaim loudly to the world that this cannot simply be overlooked or looked at in passing as a minor event. Amidst the intensifying shooting of the attack, when Amal says that the world cannot let it go on, Huda replies with a bitter, sarcastic, rhetorical question, "The world?" (304). The indifference of the outer world towards numerous episodes of such military attacks in Palestine is vehemently criticized through the exchange that happens between the

Americanized Amal and her thoroughly Palestinian friend Huda. By placing the Jenin bombing series together with the historically significant events of the *nakba* and the *naksa*, Abulhawa projects the serious dimensions of the incident and its place in Palestinian history as yet another of its many sorrowful pages.

There is another form of historical revision in the novel using the means of intimately tying the personal and the historical. Amal wonders whether her abandonment of her mother during the time of the latter's shell-shock in 1967 could be reversed so as to get recourse to an alternative personal history of events. Similarly, David confesses that he would not have tortured his own brother Yousef at the Bartaa checkpoint had he known his true identity. Then Yousef would have married Fatima much earlier and he would not have joined the PLO. This could mean that Fatima and children do not get slaughtered in Shatila and Yousef would not have made history by becoming the suicide bomber in the US embassy of Beirut in 1983. Both Amal and David think aloud: "*Would that have made the difference? … Would history not have happened?*" (269) (italics in original). This invocation of the unuttered past by the siblings brings in a lot of questions in the vein of counter-factual historians. The first title of the novel *The Scar of David* metaphorically stands for the scar of wounded, misrepresented or inadequately represented history of Palestine as well as the juncture of human suffering involved equally in both the sides of the Israel-Palestine conflict.

Palestine as a Nation

In his essay, "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said defines nationalism as "an assertion of belonging in and to a place, a people, a heritage" and talks of nationalism's essential association with exile (176). He notes that in the intense

refugee crisis of the twentieth century, the subjectivity of solitary exile is replaced with "the abstractions of mass politics" (176). Different historical events such as the *nakba* and the *naksa* inform the Palestinian national crisis. One of the reasons why Palestinian history revolves around multiple foci is because, as Rashid Khalidi shows, "[T]he Palestinians have never achieved any form of national independence in their own homeland" (10). Spanning countries and continents, *Mornings in Jenin* tries to portray Palestine as a nation that had been subjugated, captured, exiled and occupied and yet, as the soul and essence of a land that cannot finally be extinguished.

The idyllic view of historic Palestine as presented in the initial chapters of the novel points to its essential local colour, as opposed to a single, unified national identity. Although the class differences that have existed prior to 1948 are touched upon only in the tangent, the localized identity of Ein Hod is presented as that of an agricultural village in historic Palestine. Yehya's identity of a peasant/farmer in communion with the land of Ein Hod depicts this localized texture. Referring to the existence of local identities, Rashid Khalidi says that, "these parochial loyalties served as the bedrock for an attachment to place, a love of country, and a local patriotism that were crucial elements in the construction of nation-state nationalism" (21). That the concept of Palestine as a nation was absent in the minds of people before the *nakba* is shown in the novel in the first part itself. The small village with its acres of olive groves bequeathed to them by forefathers was Palestine to them. The towns of Tulkarem, Haifa or Jerusalem are considered more or less distant by Yehya who warns his son Hasan not to go farther on a trip he once undertakes. When the villages adjacent to Ein Hod are bombed, Yehya is shocked and he curses the Zionists for their atrocities. Yet he does nothing to help out those people in neighbouring villages. Instead, he secretly surmises that his village will somehow be spared and

calls the Zionist soldiers to a truce. As Abulhawa effectively puts it: “They repulsed attacks and called for a truce, wanting only to live on their land as they always had. For they had endured many masters – Romans, Byzantines, Crusaders, Ottomans, British – and nationalism was inconsequential. Attachment to God, land, and family was the core of their being and that is what they defended and sought to keep” (27). “[T]he lack of cohesion of Palestinian society repeatedly hindered effective, unified responses to the challenges posed by the formidable foes of Palestinian nationalism” (Khalidi 25). This resulted in the enormous tragedy of the *nakba*.

Before 1917, the concept of Palestine as a nation did not exist, though the land was already called Palestine. Benedict Anderson’s comparison of nationalism to monarchy in one of the chapters of his work *Imagined Communities* makes sense here: a definitely demarcated border essentially characterized a nation while borders or boundaries were blurred during the olden times of monarchy where only the powerful centre came into focus (19). Nationalism as a feeling and movement emerged in Palestine only years after the *nakba*. “[T]he trauma of 1948 reinforced preexisting elements of identity, sustaining and strengthening a Palestinian self-definition that was already present. The shared events of 1948 thus brought the Palestinians closer together in terms of their collective consciousness, even as they were physically dispersed all over the Middle East and beyond” (Khalidi 22). Following the quick spread of Palestinian refugee camps in the remaining Palestinian territories like the West Bank and Gaza, it came to be closely identified as “the makeshift nation of the forgotten” (Abulhawa 127). In the days immediately following their mass displacement, people in the refugee camps were concerned only about going back to their respective villages. Then it does not strike them that they were all Palestinians whose very claims to nationality based on their ethnicity were

challenged in a dangerous way. Palestinians in exile can be said to form a "stateless diaspora" a term used by Thomas Faist, a comparatively newer diaspora (21). Though the war of 1967 causes the further scattering of Palestinians, "the rebirth of Palestinian nationalism [that] would put the Palestinians back on the political map of the Middle East" happened in the mid-1960s (Khalidi 27). The novel portrays the refugees picking together the strands of their scattered national identity and rising up in war against Israel in 1967.

Amal with her refugee upbringing is highly conscious of her Palestinian identity: "our bond was Palestine. It was a language we dismantled to construct a home" (Abulhawa 165). But other women characters like Dalia or Basima (Yehya's wife) probably did not think in the same way. From Yehya to Sara, each of the characters widen the perspectives regarding their national and cultural origins that make up their identity. Thus the feeling of nationalism is seen to be evolving in *Mornings in Jenin*. The individual fancies and losses make way for the mourning of a deeper absence of a national identity that would uphold and protect their cultural, religious as well as political interests.

Without focusing on just one protagonist, Abulhawa has opted for a handful of major characters, the contours of whose shifting fluid identities echo very much as that of their whole nation. The shattering and dwindling of the family is symbolic of the shrinking of Palestine itself. In his work *The Question of Palestine*, Edward Said calls "the struggle over, for, and in Palestine" as having absorbed the energies of more people than any other for a comparable period of time (4). He says that "Palestine itself is a much debated, even contested, notion" (4). To achieve the proper status of a nation requires a "positive political assertion" on the part of Palestine. The degrees of

belonging and resistance felt by the characters in the novel differ, but ultimately all are in the continual process of reconfiguring identities, loyalties and adherences.

The fragmentation of Palestine is reflected in the varied fragments of collective sentiments, views and aspirations of characters towards nationhood. In the cases of Yehya and Yousef, the nation is shown from the angle of its political exile, but from two entirely different generations and hence, different time periods and historical circumstances. Narrating through Amal's vision and voice, the nation is effectively depicted from the critical diasporic distance of the US and from that of David, the nation is depicted truthfully from the enemy's perspective.

Narrative Techniques

The various narrative techniques adopted in the novel serve to heighten its traumatic effect in myriad ways. The novel is divided into eight named sections, each of which is further divided into several chapters with titles. Except for the third part titled "The Scar of David", the rest are given Arabic titles related to the major historical event discussed in the particular sections or the relationship of characters with the nationhood of Palestine. *Mornings in Jenin* shifts from the third person narrative to the first person many a time: some utterly violent episodes as well as the seeming calmness afterwards are well narrated by two of the Abulheja siblings, Amal and Yousef, in their own voices. The novel is replete with the magnificence and wisdom of poetry springing forth from the great poets of the Middle east such as Rumi, Gibran and Mahmoud Darwish, that timely reflects the immediate predicament of the characters in those situations. Diana Allan's statement that, "Descriptions of labour, childhood, sociality, pain, joy, love, poetic performance, and so forth, archive the past in bodily practice, disrupting the trim lines of event-based histories, and even

historicality itself" holds true in the narration of *Mornings in Jenin* (76). On a different plane, there are also excerpts from historical texts like Norman Finkelstein's *The Rise and Fall of Palestine* and Robert Fisk's *Pity the Nation* that add fresh perspectives to the task of historical rewriting undertaken in the novel. The letters, emails and other correspondences among the characters are sometimes delivered and read while some others go undelivered and unread –this intensifies the tragedy of the story many a time. Though the flashbacks that constitute the major portion of the narrative seem to proceed in a linear fashion starting from the pre-*nakba* days to the more recent events, the multiple voices and viewpoints definitely break the apparent chronology of events with the evident plurality of depiction. Apart from the conversational exchanges between characters, their thoughts as well as innermost fears, apprehension and guilt are lent a voice, placing them in between the text in italics. These diverse narrative strategies subtly capture the depth of trauma in this Palestinian novel.

Conclusion

One of the most important tasks of a historical revisionist text is to reclaim its socio-cultural past that has been grotesquely disfigured by mainstream history. In the process of historical rewriting undertaken in this work of fiction, the tales and memories of individual and collective trauma reverberating on the shaky foundations of Palestinian nationhood are captured effectively. The analyses of trauma and postmemory cumulatively join in the exploration of Palestinian trans/historical trauma, both event-based and merging into the quotidian reality, as well as transcending the fixed notions of space and time. The novel shows the dialogic meeting between the two conflicting sides involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict. This is worked out in the chapter on the basis of multidirectional memory.

Mornings in Jenin depicts the various stages of Palestinians embracing the exilic identity down the passage of years. The fated journey into exile is depicted as having affected the characters in different sort of ways. If Yehya found himself wrenched away from land and nature, his younger son Darweesh lost his favourite horses Ganoosh and Fatooma and also had his wind-racing life permanently pinned down to a wheelchair because of an Israeli soldier's bullet that lodged in his spine. For Dalia the journey into exile meant the sudden disappearance and loss of her six-month-old son Ismael whereas for her husband Hasan, the journey symbolizes the loss of inner peace once and forever. Five-year old Yousef had to forget a childhood of bliss thereafter. Little Ismael is the one who had to pay a heavy price; he was made to depart from the essence of his Palestinian identity into that of a Zionist Jew who will in the future further aggravate the separation of his own family.

The belated, collective expressions of revisiting and addressing hitherto forgotten or repressed histories reflect in a parallel way the very act of tending to the most traumatic of experiences, often after quite a passage of time. The fine balance between the collective, cultural trauma and the individual, personal trauma of the Palestinian refugee characters in *Mornings in Jenin* brilliantly underlines the Palestinian refugee predicament from the insiders' perspective. The heterogeneity of their respective subject positions adds to the range of the massive impact of the human-made conflict as covered in this novel. By magnifying as well as diminishing the intensity of certain historical events through the subjective perspectives of characters, both men and women, the novel projects a new historical side to the story regarding the above mentioned conflict. It begins and ends on a hopeful note of possible Arab-Jew co-existence, a bonding between human beings rather than ethnic groups or socio-political identities.

Chapter 3

Traumatic Imagination: Susan Abulhawa's

The Blue Between Sky and Water

"The punishment of Palestinians for the crime of voting the wrong way was severe."

-Noam Chomsky, *Gaza in Crisis*

Susan Abulhawa's novel *The Blue Between Sky and Water (*2015) is an exploration of memory along the lines of Palestinian history and trauma. Focusing on the Palestinian territory of Gaza (situated to the south-west of historic Palestine) in her second novel, the author makes use of magical realism wherein the past, present and future of the characters' lives are intricately fused by means of their individual and collective memories. This chapter studies the various forms of trauma experienced by characters such as Nazmiyeh, Mamdouh, Mariam, Mazen, Nur, Khaled, Alwan and Abdel Qader as well as the propagation of postmemory and its exercise by Khaled and Nur. It is argued that the above-mentioned themes of trauma and postmemory in the subtle façade of magical realism create a unique blend of space and time such that Palestinian history is revisited from a fresh critical perspective.

Theoretical Lens

The different facets of trauma are analyzed by connecting theoretical ideas and concepts put forth by Cathy Caruth, Judith Lewis Herman, Dominick LaCapra and others. Postmemory, as a form of intergenerational trauma, is espoused with the basic tenets found in Marianne Hirsch's works. Since *The Blue Between Sky and Water*

connects the three aspects of trauma, historical revisionism and magical realism together, the idea of "traumatic imagination" as propounded by Eugene Arva is borrowed and used as a key element in the chapter. The explication of Palestinian history is aided by the works of Edward Said and Rashid Khalidi.

Memory and History

According to Dominick LaCapra in the 'Preface' to his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, "history and memory are modes of inscription that certainly should not be conflated, but neither should they simply be opposed" (xx). This is an exhortation to view both history and memory as complementary things, mutually contributing to and aiding in the construction of the other. Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water* links these two, such that one is not divorced from the other. The focus on memory – traumatic memories of survivors and postmemory of their descendents – serves to fill the gaps in the projected history of Palestinians. They are shown as people exiled from the land of their origin in the catastrophic *nakba* at the time of the founding of Israel. Their identity as dangerous terrorists scheming against Israel is dismantled while the various forms of Palestinian exilic identities – as refugees, as diasporic individuals, as second-generation survivors – are paid attention to. In following a Palestinian family through decades, there has been an equalization of the personal and the political, the familial and the historical. The common familial past is reconstructed, "in the consciousness of various members of the domestic group" by the employment of magical realism (Halbwachs 54). The historical realm is attained by progressing from the individual to the family, and then, to the community. It is in this respect that personal memories and untold stories are made use of in rewriting the erased avenues of Palestinian history and highlighting its occluded paths.

Magical Realism

Magical realism is mainly used as a narrative mode to explore counter-historical politics in postcolonial literature by virtue of its potential to counter and subvert. “Magical realist texts are subversive: their in-betweenness, their all-at-onceness increases resistance to monologic political and cultural structures, a feature that has made the mode particularly useful to writers in postcolonial cultures and, increasingly, to women” (Zamora and Faris 6). *The Blue Between Sky and Water* is a work of magical realism that exploits this subversive potential to put forth a strengthened picture of Palestine and Palestinian women. Set against the historical backdrop of the socio-political events that befell Gaza, the novel mixes Palestinian history with fantasy. Magic suffuses subtly into the otherwise realist framework of the novel in the core idea of the third-generation character, Khaled reaching out to bond with his deceased grandaunt Mariam in the 1940s pre-*nakba* period. His forays into the realm of the blue and back to the real world contribute to evident deviations from realism. The nineteenth-century German sociologist Maurice Halbwachs, in his work *On Collective Memory*, has said that, “Every collective memory requires the support of a group delimited in space and time” (36). It is this synchronization of time and space warranted by collective memory that is distorted by the novel’s magical realism in that Mariam and Khaled who lived in entirely different time periods met and befriended each other. Supernatural characters feature in the form of dead Mariam’s spirit and Sulayman, the djinni who possessed Um Mamdouh. Mariam’s mismatched eyes as well as her ability to see colours around people according to their inner moods and intentions which are somehow inherited by her grandniece Nur, born at a much later time in another continent, also point to the layer of magic surfacing above the logic of realism. Unlike Abulhawa’s earlier novel *Mornings in Jenin*, coincidences

and chance encounters (such as Nur's arrival to Khaled's home without knowing that they are her kin) are attributed to the strain of magic embedded in the narrative. The fusion of magical realism in the fictional fabric lends gravity to the unfolding counter-historical tale, yet, it never dominates over the major realistic texture of the work.

Magical Realism as an Aid to Trauma

With its primary assault on "the probable and predictable relations of cause and effect," magical realism as a narrative mode drastically alters events set in specific socio-political, cultural and historical contexts and presents them in a new light altogether (Zamora and Faris 6). The configurations of trauma developed in a book as *The Blue Between Sky and Water* is akin to the narrative rearrangement enhanced by the application of magical realism. In the second chapter of the book *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History* titled "Bearing Witness or, the Vicissitudes of Listening," Dori Laub observes that, "The traumatic event, although real, took place outside the parameters of 'normal' reality, such as causality, sequence, place and time" (69). This occurrence of traumatic events beyond the so called parameters of experiencing reality goes along with the capability of magical realism to distort the perceived dimensions of time and space. Hence, the correlation of trauma to the inlaid magical realist framework of Abulhawa's second novel cannot go unnoticed.

In "Writing Trauma: Magical Realism and the Traumatic Imagination," Eugene Arva and Hubert Roland establish a clear link between magical realism and trauma writing. Foregrounding the psychological and socio-political relevance of magical realism, they proffer the general thesis that, "magical realist writing has become one of the most effective, albeit controversial, artistic media to represent

extreme events" (Arva and Roland 9). They further elaborate that, "The writing mode has indeed demonstrated its potential to adapt and to affect literary productions belonging to various cultural spaces and representing histories of violence, such as slavery, colonialism, wars, the Holocaust, genocide and dictatorships" (9). When magical realism takes over the failure of traditional realism in literary texts of trauma, it becomes "a textual representation of the unspeakable" (9). Having established a theoretical link between magical realist writing and trauma, Arva and Roland propose the term "traumatic imagination" as the interdisciplinary conceptual tool to explore the correlation of the two modes (9). They describe it as "an empathy-driven consciousness that enables authors (and readers as co-authors of texts) to act out and/or work through trauma by means of magical realist images" (9-10). "[I]t may also be conceptualized as a consciousness of survival to which the psyche resorts when confronted with the impossibility of remembering extreme events and/or with compulsive repetition of images of violence and loss" (Arva and Roland 10). It is further explained that, "Through magical realist writing, the traumatic imagination transfers to narrative memory events that have been precluded from narrativization by trauma (10). Thus, the simulation of pain into images and objects enhanced by the technique of magical realism affords the otherwise impossible narrativization of trauma. In *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, the appearance of Mariam's spirit and the telepathic bonding among the three children, Mariam, Khaled and Nur, who belonged to different generations aptly represent the translation of traumatic pain and memory into perceivable images.

When magical realism as a narrative strategy proves itself to be "a viable media for representing historical traumata," it also develops "a highly subversive potential" by "juxtaposing or even merging apparently antithetical realities and by

exacerbating the crisis of representation" (Arva and Roland 14). The inclusion of irrational elements that undermine the ontological integrity of realism in a text also "seems to favor fresh critical approaches to historical and contemporary events by relying primarily on the creative and healing power of imagination" (14). In this way, magical realism transfers a renewed sense of historical revisionism to postcolonial texts. In the case of Abulhawa's second novel, the narrator is a child, Khaled, as, Eugene Arva argues, is the case in many other magical realist texts (12). The use of magical realism can be seen to connect the past and present of events that have affected Gaza in a unique way. "History is inscribed, often in detail, but in such a way that actual events and existing institutions are not always privileged and are certainly not limiting: historical narrative is no longer chronicle but clairvoyance" (Zamora and Faris 6). *The Blue Between Sky and Water* amply resonates with the mesmerizing power of clairvoyance from the beginning to the end. Here, magical realism is seen to facilitate the particular treatment of sidelined Palestinian history where the forgotten milestones of the Israel-Palestine conflict are revived with fresh memories of trauma. The knowledge of the history of Palestine from the British Mandate period to the present is transferred to the narrative in such a way that the upcoming events are visualized back in the past itself. And this is enabled by the use of magical realism.

Quite similar to other magical realist works of fiction, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* aptly enhances the portrayal of strong women characters. Um Mamdouh, Nazmiyeh, Alwan, Nur and little Rhet Shel become powerful sketches of Palestinian womanhood who find their own unique ways of coping with trauma. The seemingly rigid borders of gender identity are made to blur when the powerful djinni Sulayman finds refuge in the human body of Um Mamdouh, a woman. With the latent powers of the male djinni residing within her, Um Mamdouh, who used to be looked down upon

for being a single mother, takes on the dual identity of being both a man and a woman and comes to be known grandly as Hajje Um Sulayman in the retelling of her life story down generations. She is sought advice by the village elders on the matter of the impending attack of Palestinian villages by Zionist soldiers. Likewise, when the rest of the women flee from their neighbourhood to Gaza, Um Mamdouh becomes the only woman to remain along with the men, preparing to fight against the imminent Zionist siege. Similarly, as a young woman, Nazmiyeh wallowed in "*the glory of her youthful badness*" and in her old age, she became the only matriarch to be called by her first name as 'Hajje Nazmiyeh' (9) (italics in original). The enrichment of the feminine self is thus brought to focus with the aid of magical realism.

Trauma: Experiencing, Reliving and Witnessing

The seismic waves of Palestinian trauma start from the experiences of the *nakba* and extend into different issues such as refugee crisis, scattering, Israel's control of Palestine in terms of air, water and space, the continuing military assault and settler violence. The journey of Palestinians through these set of experiences is met with unanswered questions like their right of return and the national question of Palestine. *The Blue Between Sky and Water* weaves together the trauma of intergenerational characters in its multiple spatial and temporal canvas. Amidst the harsh reality of the Palestinian predicament, the individual experiences of characters intertwined in the mesh of magical realism give voice to an often understated historical crisis and ongoing injustice. This is analyzed under three heads: (i) trauma of experiencing, (ii) trauma of reliving and (iii) trauma of witnessing. In spite of this categorization, certain traumatic experiences of characters are found to be nuanced and enmeshed such that some of the claims made in the subsequent analysis overlap with each other.

Trauma of Experiencing

This is the case of the direct trauma victim. Most of the characters in the novel can be seen to experience trauma firsthand. This is sometimes physical, as sustained injuries and wounds from the war, or psychological, as the loss of dear ones or separation from home. With its evidently political framework, the novel portrays many incidents involving bloodshed and violence inflicted on Palestinian characters. This makes it important to analyze the ways in which the traumatic event as such is captured in the narrative. The repeated concurrence of such catastrophic incidents in the novel also warrants the analysis of the various coping strategies adopted by characters. Survival from traumatic events is seen to entail a change in an individual's orientation of life, making him/her negotiate with the trauma and relive the tragedy repeatedly or outlive it. The vulnerability of children in sustained political conflicts is captured well in the portraits of child characters. Unlike Abulhawa's earlier novel, many of such characters remain children throughout this work.

The journey into exile is significant for the Baraka siblings in a number of ways. Described as the "procession of human despair" from the conquered villages, the long journey into exile progressed by further dwindling the number of the Baraka family members (32). As is made clear in the novel, it was an array of innumerous dead bodies that "littered their long march to a refugee's life" (33). The fugitive lives of the Barakas and all other displaced Palestinians followed inevitably from their lost "history's wounds" (41). In addition to the loss of their native village, the lives of the two people who could look into future, Um Mamdouh and Mariam, were taken away, while Nazmiyeh and Mamdouh limped slowly as refugees. What they thought of as a temporary flight was to become a permanent farewell from their homeland. The helplessness they experienced when they began to lose the fight against the

conquerors and silently witnessed the steady slipping away of their land, in turn weakened their sense of self and identity. The unspeakable horrors they faced during the frenzied exit became traumatic memories ever haunting their souls.

Nazmiyeh's rape by Zionist usurpers during the *nakba* is an experience involving direct physical trauma. Her journey from the safety of her temporary refuge in Gaza back to the heart of trouble in her native village Beit Daras is indicative of the tragedy awaiting her. The two places of Gaza and Beit Daras during the Barakas' fateful journey to exile are described with two contrasting images; the former as, "the calling waters of Gaza's shore" and the latter, having become a part of Israel where Zionists had been busy with looting, plundering and firing Palestinian land and property, is picturized from afar as, "the distant flames" (35). Nazmiyeh's journey to Beit Daras with the aim of finding her little sister Mariam who willingly chose to remain there, when all the remaining village folk were hurrying to Gaza where Nazmiyeh had already taken refuge, comes to symbolize a reverse journey, one that breaks the linearity of exilic motion from homeland to newfound places of refuge. While it becomes an act of strength and perseverance on Nazmiyeh's part to make such a backward journey, it also becomes a path to her victimization. That she finds Mariam to her immense relief in the last searching spot aggravates the imminent tragedy to befall them. Nazmiyeh's gang-rape and Mariam's brutal death substantiate the subjugation of Palestinian women and children by those who heralded the Zionist flag victoriously over the demise of Palestine. In "A Forgotten History," the first chapter of her classic text on trauma, *Trauma and Recovery*, Judith Lewis Herman talks about how feminist movements of the 1970s identified rape as an age-old means by which men controlled women – "Feminists also redefined rape as a method of political control, enforcing the subordination of women through terror" (30).

Nazmiyeh's rape, therefore, signifies how women's bodies have been treated as objects to be conquered and plundered by the powerful other in the narrative spanning the greatest conflict of the twentieth century. That one of the two soldiers who initially pounced on them was ready to take Nazmiyeh's gold bangles while the other was only interested in her body clearly points to the objectification of Palestinian women's bodies that existed at the time of the *nakba* or even before. "The bloodied body of this voluptuous Arab woman" also stands for the violation of the vast lands of historic Palestine (Abulhawa 38). Thus, Nazmiyeh's rape is, without doubt, an instance of marginalizing Palestinian women through physical violence, victimization and traumatization.

Mariam's death follows as an extremely tragic consequence of Nazmiyeh's stubborn will to endure the act of rape and hope for their subsequent escape to safety; the victim's silence was unpalatable to the rapist soldiers who wanted to satisfy themselves with evident proofs of her victimization and suppression. The sight of Nazmiyeh after being raped at the cost of her sister's life is depicted as, "a hollow carved-out thing streaked in spent tears, crusted blood, and dried fear" (38-9). Nazmiyeh's "defiant locks were defeated and limp with sweat" (38) when formerly hers had been "a medusa's head of shiny henna-dyed coils" (9). In this way, Nazmiyeh's bodily surrender and helplessness echoes that of the former glory of Palestine spent and gone under the trampling march of Zionists.

Years later, Nazmiyeh's journey to Ramon prison once in six months to meet her eldest son Mazen where he has long been kept as a political detainee gives an intense picture of how Palestinian women and children cope with their lives when the breadwinners of their families are behind prison bars in Israel. They are not only made vulnerable by virtue of the prolonged absence of male household members but

also treated as objects to be brought under strict scrutiny and surveillance before allowing them entry to the prison premises. Having to undress twice during way in and way out, in addition to numerous check-ups and formalities of answering questions and showing ID cards, wives and mothers of Palestinian prisoners are subjected to much humiliation before they can see their dear ones for a precious few moments. In this manner, Palestinian women's bodies are turned into sites of exercising control and demanding subservience. Nazmiyeh voices her opinions fearlessly to "fill the space of humiliation carved out with nakedness and a metal detector running between her legs and over her skin by a nonperson soldier" (114). Only she chooses to mouth her protests while all other women stand as if they are resigned to their fate.

Like the rape that Nazmiyeh endures, her younger brother retains the legacy of a gunshot wound in one leg from the *nakba*. Admitting defeat and fleeing from Beit Daras along with other men, Mamdouh sees the sad demise of his village from inside the dress of a woman which Um Mamdouh had made him wear to elude the vision of rampaging Zionist soldiers. The sight of "this new world of ash and the smolder of tired fires and expired lives" that he could discern behind his veil through the sensory perceptions of sight and smell induces immediate physical responses in him (31). "A rage rising from the black earth through his feet made it hard to move, and the incomprehensible loss of life and country seeped into his lungs, making him cough" (31). In this manner, the sudden confrontation with the trauma of losing homeland and seeing mob violence primarily brings upon physical responses in Mamdouh. The bullet that flew through the teenaged Mamdouh's leg and made him fall, paved way for the scene of curious gender transformations; while his own female disguise fell apart, the djinni Sulayman residing in Um Mamdouh's body lifted Mamdouh and

thereby, exposed the gender fluidity of Mamdouh's frail old mother. When Um Mamdouh is shot by Zionist soldiers for carrying her son twice her size, the enraged look of the djinni emerging from her face petrifies the group of soldiers who burst into flames on their own, writhe, burn and die. In this way, the sight of Mamdouh lying on the ground with a severely wounded leg alongside the dead Um Mamdouh is matched by that of the twelve uniformed Zionists lying charred close by. Like Nazmiyeh's rape that is coupled with Mariam's murder, Mamdouh's gunshot wound is tied up with their mother's killing at the hands of soldiers. The wound sustained from the exilic journey gives a limp in Mamdouh's leg forever which mirrors the wounding of the land of Palestine. It also symbolizes the self of a Palestinian individual brandished by the memory of pain and loss, no matter where and how his/her life takes new roots.

The *nakba* had also put an abrupt end to Mamdouh's aspiring career in beekeeping. The uprooting from the village of Beit Daras to Gaza took a heavy toll on such traditional jobs. "Little did he know that in less than three years the centuries of bees, apiaries, beeswax, hives, honeycombs, and beekeepers that marshaled his life would be gone, as if history had never been there" (13). Mamdouh, after the loss of his mother and sister Mariam, is picturized as the anchorless male head of a household turned refugees. Mamdouh's life before the *nakba* where he lived in a family of three women also puts him in par with his grandnephew Khaled's life amidst Nazmiyeh, Alwan, Nur and Rhet Shel after the tragedy of Operation Cast Lead.

In *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, death is represented as a desirable refuge that enables the deceased ones to continue their existence in Beit Daras while the living ones, the survivors, are forced to exile in Gaza. The deceased Mariam's words

to Nazmiyeh when the latter tries to gather the former's corpse into her arms evidently portray death as guaranteeing the permanence of living in one's native place, "Please leave me here. I do not want to leave Beit Daras" (39). In the same vein, the novel shows the spirits of other dead Palestinian characters roaming freely in Beit Daras from where they had been driven out vehemently in 1948. Death, therefore, enables characters to transcend exile by means of the magical realism in the text.

As a silent and placid girl, Mariam sharply contrasts with her elder sister, the loud-mouthed Nazmiyeh in her early youth. With her ability to see colours around people according to their moods and to meet Khaled who will later be born as her sister's grandson, she becomes the embodiment of magical realism in the novel. After her death, her calm and compassionate apparition that appears before Nazmiyeh is a continuation of the magical realist framework. Nazmiyeh's confused question as to how Mariam could talk while her body lies lifeless nearby, is answered by the apparition as follows: "Everything that happens is as it should be" (39). This statement is an apt verbalization of authorial reticence, one of the defining features of magical realist novels. Mariam's words couched in the mysterious logic of magical realism here is seen to soothe and console the immense trauma before her devastated sibling, "Someday, this will all end. There will be no more hours, no more soldiers, and no countries. The most anguished pains and blissful triumphs will fade to nothing. All that will matter is this love" (39). Mariam's life that spans just a few years till her sudden, violent death can be distilled to a traumatic confrontation followed by a final resurrection. She is depicted as silent but inwardly expressive. Her invention of an imaginary friend Khaled so that she can learn the alphabet even without going "to that enchanted place with two rooms, four teachers, and many, many pencils" (8) where her brother and other boys used to go, testify to this nature. The way she curls unto

herself inside the water well on hearing the alien language of foreign soldiers is carried forward in the doll image she assumed at the time of her death. The image of Mariam as a small crouching child is once again reflected in little Rhet Shel's constant posture of having "curled into herself, sucking her thumbs raw," who would be born in the future as the former's grandniece (207). The "wooden box of dreams" that Mariam always carried with her is an extended symbol of her cocooned self (30). Her rise as a free spirit after death is suggestive of resurrection from traumatic experiences.

Nur is representative of the third generation Palestinian American in the novel. By virtue of her distanced diasporic upbringing, she becomes the most traumatized character in suffering the individual tragedy of her life. Unlike other child characters such as Mariam, Khaled and Rhet Shel who are directly affected by the tumultuous socio-political atmosphere of Palestine, Nur's childhood, away and safe from wars and tussles of military power in Gaza, becomes traumatic for the very reason that she had not been able to reach Palestine after her grandfather Mamdouh's demise. In Khaled's words, "*History took us away from our rightful destiny. But with Nur, life hurled her so far that nothing around her resembled anything Palestinian, not even the dislocated lives of exiles. So it was ironic that her life reflected the most basic truth of what it means to be Palestinian, dispossessed, disinherited, and exiled"* (89) (italics in original). Nur's stay in North Carolina with her uncaring mother, an unnamed woman in the novel, and her abusive boyfriend Sam, after the death of her grandfather traumatized her both physically and mentally. The transformation in the descriptive words or adjectives written in her notebook called *Jiddo and Me* from "Beautiful, Loving, Light of Jiddo's Life, Smart, Caring, Kind, Thoughtful" to the dark "Keeper of Seekrets," "Not Greedy," "Not A Crybaby," "Never Tattle," "Never

Squeal," "Dirty" and "Bad" clearly depict Nur's changing sense of self and identity during the years she lived with her mother (76, 83, 85, 86, 88). This book, a collaborative venture of Nur and her grandfather, is a concrete materialization of her Palestinian identity, half-developed, forgotten and later to be revived. Her traumatized childhood of neglect and sexual abuse eclipses her own sense of Palestinian identity which she had imbibed from her late grandfather Mamdouh. Her strange dreams of two unknown Arab children, Khaled and Mariam, serve as the sole link to her inner essence of being a Palestinian. The reality of nine-year-old Nur's urinary infection and delirious fever owing to Sam's continued sexual abuse is counterbalanced by her dream of Khaled and Mariam in which the former shows Nur the handsome figure of *jiddo* Mamdouh as the young beekeeper of Beit Daras. The image of an old, tattered shoe that she develops of herself in childhood echoes that of the doll image conferred upon Mariam. The gap period in Nur's life when she moved away from her Palestinian identity is shown as the most traumatic phase. On the contrary, her grandfather's love she experienced in early childhood is paralleled by the love and warmth she receives in Gaza upon reuniting with his family years later. Arabic studies that Nur begins afresh at college signals the search for one's roots and home, a redemptive strategy on Nur's part to atone for the detachment she brought in to her life with her *jiddo's* passing. This act of learning one's own forgotten language helps Nur converse with Khaled and Mariam in her persistent dreams by means of blinking, while she had not been able to blink and converse previously. In this way, the coming out of her cocooned self to embrace her Palestinian identity is presented as a way out of trauma and darkness.

Even though *The Blue Between Sky and Water* tells the story of women, it is Khaled's consciousness that permeates over the novel. The normal life he lives till he

turns ten and succumbs to locked-in syndrome after being caught in Israel's missile attack is significant for the ways he deals with his personal traumatic experiences involving physical violence. Frequent exposure to the violence of occupation, wars and military attacks takes Khaled to the verge of a precarious childhood. This sense of extreme vulnerability built up from a tender age is aggravated in the sudden violence of the war outbreak and it makes Khaled a victim of war trauma.

The first episode of Khaled's strange illness happens when he is six, which coincides with the period after Israel's perfunctory withdrawal from Gaza in 2005. Walking to school with cousins and friends, Khaled becomes immobile and petrified when Israeli settler kids, under the watch of their mothers, hurl stones and broken bottles at them. In his own words, "*Just before the world drenched me in a silent blue, I felt the hot wetness of my urine stream down my pants, against my leg"* (128) (italics in original). When his cousin pulls him away under cover, he soon regains consciousness. He thus falls into such a state for the first time when confronted by settler violence. He goes into a similar condition when his father slaps him hard for killing his sister Rhet Shel's favourite chicken. These few episodes of the rare illness happen when Khaled becomes directly confronted by physical assault.

The magical twist in life that he expected on the day he would turn ten, coincides with Israel's terrible assault. Soon after the attack, Khaled's voice as narrator from the realm of the blue affirms his former conviction about reaching the two-digit age of ten that, "Even the Jews came to celebrate with me," and that, "Great fireworks made the ground shake" (150). The innocence and ignorance in Khaled's description of his birthday contrasts sharply with the reality of the day's terrible happenings such that the resulting tension conveys the traumatic intensity and magnitude of the assault. Later on, hearing his mother recount the events that

happened on the day of the attack to a local doctor attending on him, he realizes that, "*Only now do I realize that nothing I saw then was real. There was no birthday celebration. I replay it all, roam the details of memory, and see the face of horror. Of merciless terror. The Jews had destroyed Gaza again and killed my father*" (158) (italics in original). Though he survives the attack, he fully gives in to the disease and becomes an invalid for the remaining two years of his life. While he does not lose consciousness, all muscles of his body except those of his eyes become paralyzed. The blinking of his eyes serve as the sole way of communication. The immense shock set in by Israel's missile operation on his birthday can be read according to what Caruth says in her work *Unclaimed Experience*: "What causes trauma is a shock that appears to work very much like a bodily threat but is in fact a break in the mind's experience of time" (61). His physical breakdown in trauma is equated with the magical life he lives thereafter. Losing track of the normally perceived notions of time, he is able to gain a multi-temporal perspective which enables him to delve into the blue, back to his ancestors' past in the pre-*nakba* and *nakba* periods.

Nazmiyeh's eldest son Mazen is shown as the PLO fighter who stands against the injustice of the Israeli rule imposed upon the Gazans. He bravely cuts the pipelines of Israel that encroached upon Palestinian territories. An embodiment of resistance and resilience, he is captured by the Israeli army and undergoes nearly four decades of imprisonment. Mazen's sense of self and identity as a *fedayeen* fighter is fashioned by the tension suspended between the Palestinian and Jewish predicaments. Born as the eldest son of Nazmiyeh in the months following her gang-rape by Israeli soldiers, Mazen's identity is one that is left to doubts and speculations. Seeing his gray eyes resembling those of her rapists, Nazmiyeh screams out loud at the time of his birth that he is the son of the devil. Accused at the age of twelve by one of his

friends to be the bastard son of some enemy soldier, doubt gets planted in his young soul from which he develops "a deep sense of solitude and a quiet but fierce impulse of national resistance" (57). The fear of being the other urges Mazen to fight constantly on the Palestinian side. This fear of having to align with one's enemy or oppressors is dreadful than the fear of being hunted down by the enemy. All of his attempts, thereafter, are to fill this rift in the centre of his being. In this way, Mazen's growth into one of the dedicated fighters of the Palestinian resistance is a desperate strategy to affix and consolidate his doubtful Palestinian identity. The price he needs to pay for being a true Palestinian is, however, decades of imprisonment in the prisons of Israel as a political detainee. But his willpower remains as steadfast as his words uttered loudly to his powerful enemy on the eve of his imprisonment, "[YOUR BULLET] CANNOT RIP MY ROOTS FROM THE SOIL OF THIS LAND YOU COVET! WE WILL NOT LET YOU STEAL OUR LAND" (62-3) (capitals in original). Mazen's determination and resolve to fight for justice is reverberated in his voice.

Trauma of Reliving

In "Introduction: The Wound and the Voice" that begins her book *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth explains the nature of responses that accompany the traumatic event. "[T]rauma is not locatable in the simple event or original event in an individual's past, but rather in the way that its very unassimilated nature – the way it was precisely *not known* in the first instance – returns to haunt the survivor later on" (Caruth 4). The sudden, unexpected nature of massive catastrophic events such as the *nakba* and Israel's military assault named Operation Cast Lead prevents their complete perception at the time of occurrence. Real traumatization that begins after a lapse of time affects each character in a different way. Even Khaled's encounter of

settler violence and his father Abdel Qader's shameful torture by Israeli naval forces at the sea take effect after the gravity of the incidents weighs down upon them. Like Judith Herman speculates in "Terror," the second chapter of her work *Trauma and Recovery*, "Long after the danger is past, traumatized people relive the event as though it were continually recurring in the present" (37). The current section deals with how the characters of the novel deal or cope with the traumatic incidents they experienced. Degrees of acting out or working through trauma can be distinguished in the lives of characters following their survival from tragedies.

The memory of her traumatic rape that never escapes Nazmiyeh's loud tongue is proof of its repression. Khaled's statement that, "*Teta Nazmiyeh talked to me about everything in the world, except the day Mariam was gone*," evidently points to this silence in contrast to her eloquence on the past as a great storyteller to her grandchildren (34) (italics in original). Her only reference to the brutal incident is at the time of her first child Mazen's birth when she suspects that he might be the child of the rapists. Yet, Nazmiyeh fiercely safeguards her silent repression when scandalized years later by the midwife's gossip that she bore a bastard son. By sweeping "through the Nusseirat refugee camp like a tornado" (55) and making the woman retract her 'lie,' Nazmiyeh makes a bold attempt to shed her stigmatized position in society. Just as rape victims expose their trauma bravely, it is equally a brave move on Nazmiyeh's part to erase what is left of her trauma in a society where woman's honour was considered to be extremely important. This echoes with what Judith Herman says in *Trauma and Recovery*, "To speak publicly about one's knowledge of atrocities is to invite the stigma that attaches to victims" (2). Nazmiyeh willingly refuses to acknowledge her victimhood and hence, asserts her right to reject

being branded one by the society. Rather than an unwillingness on her part to confront past trauma, it could well be one way of rewriting the undesirable past.

However, this repression is given an outlet in Nazmiyeh's dreams. Her repressed trauma of rape is enmeshed with her sister's death despite her ardent effort to save and protect her. It is this combination of traumatic memory that finds a parallel in Nazmiyeh's dream of Nur getting sexually abused as a child. Judith Herman in her book *Trauma and Recovery* eloquently ponders on the nature of traumatic reenactments: "There is something uncanny about reenactments. Even when they are consciously chosen, they have a feeling of involuntariness. Even when they are not dangerous, they have a driven, tenacious quality. Freud named this recurrent intrusion of traumatic experience the 'repetition compulsion'" (41). Replaying the trauma of her tragic mission to save Mariam years ago, Nazmiyeh goes back to Beit Daras in her dream on the fatal day, but it is in search of Nur. She finds Mariam in the same place between the walls of their house and assures her that, "This time, we will outsmart them" (Abulhawa 87). This reference to the rapist soldiers who continue to haunt her memories shows Nazmiyeh's attempt to "reenact the traumatic moment with a fantasy of changing the outcome of the dangerous encounter" (Herman 39). Then Mariam points to a little girl, Nur, standing in the centre of "an open field hemmed with smoke rising from burning life" whom she sees fondled by a man indecently (Abulhawa 87). When Nazmiyeh instinctively leaps across the distance to the field to save her grandniece, "the soldiers hidden in memory entered, reenacting an old trauma" (87). This is "the unwitting reenactment of an event that one cannot simply leave behind" that Cathy Caruth speaks of in the "Introduction" to her work *Unclaimed Experience* (2). But the truly ungraspable nature of Nazmiyeh's trauma of rape is also repeated in the slippery elusiveness of the dream, with only "the smog of

the previous night" clinging to her upon waking up (Abulhawa 87). In *Writing History, Writing Trauma,* LaCapra says that, "[I]n traumatic memory, the event is repeated in its incomprehensible, unreadable literality" (131). The unrepresentability of trauma does persist in the dream, even while adding a new plane of interconnection between the past and the present as an imaginative investment on elaboration. The chapter, "Dream and Memory Images" in *The Collective Memory* says that, "if our dream evokes images that have the appearance of memories, these images are introduced in a fragmented state" (Halbwachs 41). It can be noted that Nazmiyeh's dream consists of several fragments fused together – her traumatic rape in the past merges with the sexual abuse of Nur in the present and her former effort to save Mariam becomes the desperate yearning to bring Nur home to Gaza. The dream reveals Nazmiyeh's unconscious obsession with the extreme pain and hurt felt during the traumatic event, even though she is a cheerful woman outwardly.

Just like her dream, Nazmiyeh's constant companionship with her sister Mariam's spirit also becomes an acting out of her past trauma. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, Dominick LaCapra writes that, "the most poignant and disarming kind of traumatropism is that performed by victims who experience post-traumatic phenomena, such as recurrent nightmares, not as symptoms to be worked through but as bonds or memorial practices linking them to the haunting presence of dead inmates" (xv). Taking Mariam's spirit to be the guardian angel of the family, Nazmiyeh believes that Mariam paralyzes her legs and thus protects her from overreacting whenever Israel launches attacks against Gaza. In this way, each time she faces a tough situation that reminds her of the terrible past, Nazmiyeh converses with the apparition.

Memory is made to become a device that renders proximity and immediacy to the lived experiences of characters. It is not merely an invocation of nostalgia. Rather, as Khaled soliloquizes, memory is a "chore", a "task" undertaken deliberately by characters like Nazmiyeh in order to preserve their losses in the past that may vanish with time and due to distance (53). This is similar to what Michael Rothberg says in the "Introduction" to his work *Multidirectional Memory* as, "[M]emory is a form of work, working through, labor, or action" (4). Almost a daily undertaken chore, Nazmiyeh's journeys into memories take her to a familiar space that can be claimed as one's own, with no enemy soldier to drive Palestinians out of their land, no overpowering force to deny their roots and make them 'the other.'

Contrary to the repetition compulsion of trauma seen in various ways of acting out, some characters entertain apprehension about the possible repetition of traumatic occurrences. Appropriate to the magical realist fabric of the novel, they fear the recurring pattern of fate. Just before Israel's Operation Cast Lead struck them on Khaled's tenth birthday, Hajje Nazmiyeh had been concerned about arranging his birthday celebration. When Alwan had been busy baking a cake, Nazmiyeh went near her daughter and reminded her by way of a premonition that the last time the family threw a celebration party (for Alwan's first birthday), Mazen was taken under arrest. This is an example of the fear that fate might repeat a second time. As Dori Laub says in the chapter titled "Bearing Witness or, the Vicissitudes of Listening" in *Testimony: Crisis of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis and History*, "The fear that fate might strike again is crucial to the memory of trauma, and to the inability to talk about it" (67). This is again close to what Judith Herman characterizes in her work *Trauma and Recovery* as "hyperarousal," one of the symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder which is "the persistent expectation of danger" (35). When people around her

celebrate Israel's withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Nazmiyeh warns them against such jubilations, hinting at the newer tragedies that might await them in the wake of the oppressors' withdrawal for namesake, "Light will cast shadows" (Abulhawa 128). The ambience of foreboding that accompanies such fears as these necessarily point to the repetition of Palestinian trauma.

Mamdouh enacts the scene of getting shot in his leg through the repeated retelling of the incident to his little granddaughter Nur while living decades later in the US. The ghastly feeling of the traumatic event has deliberately been dissipated by the light comic mode adapted by Mamdouh, where the injured growth plate inside his leg gets literally transmitted, for Nur, as a painted pottery plate and the Zionist soldiers become just the "bad soldiers" as could be found in any fairy tale (70). In *The Generation of Postmemory,* Marianne Hirsch explains how the violent experiences of parents "can acquire the status of fairy tale, nightmare, and myth" (31). This narrativization thus serves to propagate the memory of the whole event while at the same time toning down the bitter trauma behind it.

Mamdouh's diasporic life of comfort in the US comes with its inevitable price of an acute identity crisis. The days before his death are spent by brooding over his life in exile that took away his home, heritage and language and "made him an old man in a place that had never become familiar" (Abulhawa 119). Sarah Jilani, in her work *Writing Exile,* characterizes exile as, "that which not only displaces geographically, but something that generates an inner dépaysement: a de-landscaping of their subjecthood, of the places that carry certain moments or selves in their lives" (2). Mamdouh's claim that America has given them a comfortable life to convince his homesick wife shows his attempts to construct a make-believe world and pacify his own tormented soul torn far from homeland. What Edward Said has said in his essay,

"Reflections on Exile," is significant with respect to Mamdouh's life in the US, "Much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule" (181). Mamdouh and his wife Yasmine long for a return to Gaza because, "even if it wasn't Beit Daras, it was still Palestine" (Abulhawa 53). Nazmiyeh too had pleaded with him saying that, "There is no dignity in life or death away from your home and family" (118). Mamdouh realizes that, "exile made him a foreigner, permanently out of place, everywhere" (71). The shadows that trampled his face are said to have borne "the weight of exile's untouchable loneliness" and "displacement had warped his soul" (98). "Exile took his son, first by extricating the homeland from his heart and trashing the Arabic on his tongue, then by taking his life in a car accident" (71). The loss of language and culture coupled with the separation of kith and kin thus scripts out the life of Mamdouh as a survivor.

The inadequate care and abusive treatment that Nur received during her stay with her mother and the estrangement and loneliness she felt throughout her adolescent years moving from one foster home to another made her fall into the abyss of identity crisis. In her adult years, she was orderly and precise not only in her hard work and neatness but also in self-loathing. The daily act of making herself vomit and thus empty her stomach after every meal shows the sense of reproach that Nur harboured towards her own incomplete and diffident self. She is said to have "tamed" the wildness of mismatched eyes with "the strict symmetry" of brown contact lenses (165). Khaled reminds readers that though Nur was American and hence enjoyed far more freedom, opportunities and other privileges than the members of his family stranded in Gaza had, she had to strive constantly to find a place for herself in the world. Fluent in the jargon of child welfare, Nur knew herself to be a case of "neglect and sexual abuse without possibility of reunification" (100). Her eventual working

through trauma helps her become a psychotherapist, "helping teens confront histories of rape, incest, abuse, neglect, drug use, and inconceivable traumas" (163). Among the internally differentiated subject positions found in trauma narratives, Nur can be said to have progressed from a 'victim' to a 'therapist.' Yet, Nur's journey to Gaza where she could finally belong, and her companionship with Alwan, Nazmiyeh and other Gazan women proclaim the actual denouement of trauma for her (170). It is worth noting that a grown up Nur becomes overcome by a rush of warmth on seeing her mother after an interval of years and feels "weak with a sense of forgiveness" (272). Seeing the gloomy figure of the middle aged Sam who had abused her as a child, she strangely feels only pity instead of anger.

Nur's hesitatation to speak about the last time she met her estranged mother comes from the fear of experiencing it all over again. "The act of telling might itself become severely traumatizing, if the prize of speaking is *re-living*; not relief, but further retraumatization" (Laub 67) (italics in original). Her former case worker Nzinga convinces Nur the need to articulate one's traumatic experience which would only lead to the "re-externalization of the event," somewhat akin to a therapeutic process (Laub 69). When she opens up to Nzinga and narrates the pain of the last meeting with her uncaring mother, Nur voices this tendency to replicate the original trauma which has, in a way, become synonymous to what she is constituted of:

> There is something extraordinary about being rejected by one's mother. It impoverishes the soul. It leaves holes everywhere and you spend your life trying to fill them up. With whatever you can find. With food. With drugs and alcohol. With all the wrong men you know will leave you, so maybe they will replicate the original hurt you felt. You do it to feel abandonment over and over because that's the only thing you know of your mother. (274)

Nur relives this trauma of abandonment through her relationship with the elite Gazan doctor Jamal, fully knowing that he would jilt her love at the end. The novel portrays Nur as having come out of the traumatic fix regarding the concept of motherhood while she embarks on her way to become a mother.

Khaled's permanent relapse into locked-in syndrome happens after the events of Operation Cast Lead on Gaza, trauma being one of the causes of the disease/medical condition. His ability to see, hear, think and reason even while remaining immobile with little muscle movement, typical of such patients, testifies to his understanding and absorption of the daily happenings around him. The normal sleep-wake cycles of patients suffering from locked-in syndrome, despite their vegetative condition, are made to correspond with Khaled's entry to reality and his frequent return to the realm of the blue.

Khaled's abandonment of the real world in the present for experiencing the historical past of the *nakba* period constitutes the crux of traumatic reliving showcased in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. By gaining access to the bygone times, he tastes the bitterness of his ancestors' surrender to the invading Zionists and their consequent exile to Gaza from the village of Beit Daras. In her essay "What Bodies Remember: Sensory Experience as Historical Counterpoint in the Nakba Archive," Diana Allan says that, "[E]mbodied memories are recursive, collapsing time through repetition and unsettling the temporal boundaries separating past and present" (74). The repeated infliction of trauma on Gazans is formulaically given in the double occurrence of events leading to the *nakba* in the lives of the Baraka family members. The events of the pre-*nakba* days that enfold before Khaled in the latter half of the novel are a repetition of those in the first part. He engages in a lot of alphabet teaching sessions with Mariam before ending up in the anxiety-filled days leading to

the *nakba*, when it becomes his duty to inform his teta Nazmiyeh about Mariam's hiding spots, first inside the water well and then between the walls of their house. The chronology of these events that unfolded back in the past is repeated in the present without disruption. Once he delivers the message, it is time for Khaled to go. Such a repetition is given through Khaled's words as the narrator, when he relives the *nakba* experiences of his ancestors after going into the blue, or in other words, after becoming an invalid. His condition of being in locked-in syndrome can, therefore, be seen as an acting out of past trauma. In *Writing History, Writing Trauma*, LaCapra describes its methods:

> …post-traumatic acting out in which one is haunted or possessed by the past and performatively caught up in the compulsive repetition of traumatic scenes – scenes in which the past returns and the future is blocked or fatalistically caught up in a melancholic feedback loop. In acting out, tenses implode, and it is as if one were back there in the past reliving the traumatic scene. (60)

In the realm of the blue, Khaled performs and reenacts trauma in the very implosive state of the tenses that LaCapra points to. The first chapter of *Writing History, Writing Trauma* further elucidates that, "Any duality (or double inscription) of time (past and present or future) is experientially collapsed or productive only of aporias and double binds. In this sense, the aporia and the double bind might be seen as marking a trauma that has not been worked through" (60). Thus, Khaled's acting out of trauma that does away with the linearity of time to reenact the past, present and future together comes from the repetition compulsion. LaCapra's also states that, "Trauma brings about a dissociation of affect and representation: one disorientingly feels what one cannot represent; one numbingly represents what one cannot feel" (81). This is why, in the midst of his narrative that challenges empirical reality, Khaled confesses many a time

as to his failure to give a rational picture of the weird intersections of his past and present, “I don’t fully understand it and don’t expect you to. But maybe you can believe, as I do, that there are truths that defy other truths, where time folds on itself” (Abulhawa 27). Khaled’s journeys into the so-called blue can also be called his way of protesting against the injustice prevailing in the Israel-Palestine Conflict. In other words, it could be his intense wish to retreat into the world of silence and peace, ‘the quiet blue,’ far from the outer world consisting of all sorts of violence and attacks.

Though mother and daughter share their grief during collective traumatic experiences, Nazmiyeh and Alwan differ in the way they take trauma in. While both of them have the ability to carry on with their lives, the difference lies in the way they allow themselves to be personally affected by traumatic incidents. Nazmiyeh never gives up her laughter and cheerful nature and yearns for more of life whereas Alwan to an extent allows herself to be wasted away in pain and sheer exhaustion.

Khaled’s words about Alwan poignantly reveal her character, “My mother loved quietly and lived as if she watched the world through slits in the curtains. People thought piety provoked her to don the *niqab* when she was young, but it was to complete her invisibility” (121). Alwan is one of the characters not endowed with anything magical; however, she is the daughter prophesied to Nazmiyeh by Mariam’s spirit and is the inevitable genealogical link between Nazmiyeh and Khaled. While Nazmiyeh’s and Khaled’s intake of socio-political trauma gets refracted through the lens of magic that regulates their physical responses and actions, the impact of trauma on Alwan is devoid of magic. Be it the misery of frequent miscarriages or childlessness or later, the unemployment of her husband or even later, his death and Khaled’s vegetative state of health, Alwan takes responsibility for all of it and keeps the suffering to herself. Much in the same way as she viewed the world through the

slits in the curtains, her intense pain is also held “in her private world behind curtains” and “alone in darkness and in memory” (181). Widowed and left with a lifeless son after the Israel’s military assault in December 2008, Alwan is likened to, “a tree in endless autumn, standing still, leaves drying, weakening, then falling. She became an island unto herself and for some time it was hard to find her in her eyes” (154-5). Her contraction of breast cancer can be seen as the cumulative result of this repression of trauma within herself. In Khaled’s case, Alwan’s fluctuating emotions progress from hope to despair to resignation and finally, to an acceptance of fate. Although she wishes the mercy of death for her immobile son, she never wants it to be at the hands of the soldiers.

Sarah Irving in her review of the Gazan writer Aitemad Muhanna’s book titled *Agency and Gender in Gaza* writes that jobless Gazan men “react to the situation with domestic violence and/or extreme apathy toward their children” (259). This is true of Alwan’s husband Abdel Qader after being deprived of his livelihood at fishing by the unjust orders of Israel’s naval forces. Ashamed of waiting in the long queues for UN rations, he blames Alwan for not bearing him healthy children so that they could have gone to buy the rations. He slaps Khaled hard for singing a rap with his friends, accusing him of refraining from household chores. But Abdel Qader knows well that he could expect neither his six-year-old son nor his delicate and pregnant wife to carry the heavy ration bags. This angers him more and off he goes to sit alone by the sea which had formerly given him a living. The heaving upsurge of this intense trauma felt by Abdel Qader is shown in the following lines, “The familiar brew of fear, helplessness, anger, and bewilderment began frothing in his body. He squeezed his eyes shut and clenched his fists to stave it off” (137). After abandoning the foolish contemplation to commit suicide, he returns home and realizes that he really ought to

be grateful for “fewer mouths to feed” (137). As Muhanna finds in her analysis of the lives of Gazan men and women where there is a nonessentializing of gender relations, Alwan as the wife chooses to, “not resist [her] subordination, but question[s] and evaluate[s] it” (qtd. in Irving 259). Abdel Qader is finally able to pull him away from the frustration of joblessness by building a hen coup and raising chickens on loan.

Trauma as Witnessing

As Ann E. Kaplan says in the introduction to her book entitled *Trauma Culture,* the specific contexts of encountering trauma generate different positioning of trauma victims with respect to the event (2). In between the direct trauma victim and the person situated the farthest geographically, Kaplan identifies a series of victims who range from the direct victim’s relative to workers, clinicians, bystanders, listeners, mass media users etc. Witnessing extreme events, therefore, becomes important for the affective potential of trauma. The basic idea of interconnectedness in *The Blue Between Sky and Water* explores the many ways in which trauma is intermingled, merged and superadded with one another and witnessing bears a strong testimony to trauma. The characters such as Khaled, Nur and Dr. Jamal occupy various subject positions as witnesses with respect to their distance from the direct experience of traumatic events.

Apart from being a mere school going kid, Khaled becomes a witness to many tumultuous experiences before reaching his invalid condition. The tunnels dug by Gazans under the border shared with Egypt when Israel sealed off Gaza and decided to put Palestinians on a diet, has a considerable influence upon Khaled’s mind. His friend Tawfiq’s narrow escape in a bomb explosion in the tunnels where he worked has an impact on Khaled who had initially longed to find work there. The fate of the

gap-toothed boy Mahmood, whom Khaled knew only from Tawfiq's accounts of him, caught in the sudden explosion and tunnel collapse overturns Khaled's imagination significantly. Tawfiq's quiet walk to the sea to find himself "alone with the blue expanse of the Mediterranean" is taken note of by Khaled as his spontaneous response upon his fellow worker Mahmood's death (145). Khaled absorbs not just the sudden arrival of death, but also ways of coping with the absence of dead ones.

Khaled's trauma also ensues from his knowledge of how his father sacrificed his life for rescuing his little sister Rhet Shel from the military assault in December 2008. He had safely brought their family to the shelter sought in the local school while he himself had gone back to the house to tend to the chickens. Khaled saw the djinni Sulayman emerge out of his father to push Rhet Shel out from under the building while father could not pull himself out from the collapsing boulder. The guilt of being the survivor also contributes in the act of locking himself thereafter in trauma.

As a Gazan child, Khaled not only lives amidst violence, but also is forced to confront violence at his home. From crying over his favourite chicken Simsim, he is ordered to stiffen his spine, grow up and be a man. He must overcome his fear by witnessing the scene constantly and face bravely the act of slaughtering chickens. At the same time, he is warned not to kill them in front of his little sister. Thus, Rhet Shel is carefully spared the act of witnessing the slaughter and it is left to Khaled to ensure the prevention of her witnessing. So, when Khaled, out of jealousy for his sister, deliberately kills her favourite chicken in front of her eyes, he is initiating the child to the process of witnessing trauma.

Khaled is positioned as the eyewitness to all the incidents affecting the lives of the Baraka family members. His introduction that begins each of the chapters hold claim to this idea. In the realm of the blue, Khaled gets to witness each of the traumatizing event a second time in his life so that his initial incomprehensibility of the original event is revisited and measured in its full force. One day, he sees his father return from the sea never to return to it. In the months before Abdel Qader found some other employment, the family struggles to live, depending upon the UNRWA rations for their daily food. But later when he goes into the blue, Khaled journeys with Sulayman, the djinni, who takes him back to the day when his father went to the sea for the last time. Khaled reveals through his soliloquy that it was he and the djinni who summoned the fish to the shallow waters near the shore, because his father and comrades were struggling to catch fish within the limits of just three nautical miles of the Mediterranean Sea, as imposed by Israel. Here he is not only diving into an incident in the past, but also witnesses for the first time what he himself had done back then. This travel back in time also helps Khaled witness how the bored Israeli soldiers patrolling the vast expanse of the sea killed time by playing cruel pranks on his father and fellow fishermen, which cost their fishing boat and two of their lives.

Abdel Qader's "unceremonious farewell to the sea" is caused by the unexpected attack of Israeli naval vessels on his fishing boat (131). While his life was spared, the sight of tragic ends that befell his fishing comrades deeply upset him. Abdel Qader, his cousin Murad and two other companions were asked to throw away their catch to the sea, strip and count repeatedly to a hundred in the extremely cold sea water. This cruel drama witnessed cheerily by the naval soldiers showed the Palestinian men how pathetic they were. Abdel Qader saw that Abu al Banat, who

stood next to him counting, was “the first to succumb to exhaustion” and sink down to the sea while the soldiers took bets over their lives (132). Murad’s death was such that he “quietly closed his eyes and melted like despair into the sea” (133). The utter suddenness of death he witnessed that day makes Abdel Qader think how fortunate his father-in-law Atiyeh had been to meet with a natural death.

As a witness of Khaled’s trauma, Nur progresses from the geographically distant relative who saw Khaled throughout her dreams to a mental health clinician assigned with his case as a Gazan child affected with locked-in syndrome. She gets acquainted with his case by watching the eight-minute documentary video that showed Khaled as an invalid boy. This vision of Khaled is completely from a detached, clinical perspective, although Nur senses the vague familiarity of Khaled’s streak of white hair from her earlier dreams. Her arrival in Gaza, however, causes her to “*watch life up close*,” to use Khaled’s words, and leads to the ultimate realization of her identity as a close relative of Khaled’s family (179) (italics in original). Dr. Jamal Musmar, a white male elite of the Gazan Palestinian society, is unaffected and unsympathetic as a witness to the poor medical treatment available to his fellow beings. Representing logic and realism in the novel, he envisions the Baraka family in a dismissive tone as a typical Palestinian family giving in to belief in miracles and magic for medical cure. His act of “look[ing] down” (168) almost guiltily when Nur mentions Khaled’s case for the first time and “look[ing] away” (175) helplessly seeing Khaled’s mother’s sorrow point to his weak absorption of others’ tragedies. While Khaled cannot be taken to Egypt for a better medical treatment due to the stringent Israeli occupation of Gaza, Dr. Jamal and his family are able to fly in and out frequently.

Postmemory: Life in the Bygone Ancestral Past

The white streak of hair on Khaled's head, in a way, symbolizes his age and wisdom beyond the limits of his apparent childhood. Seeing him right after his birth, his *Teta* Nazmiyeh had realized deep down in her that "he had been in the world far longer" (125). Khaled's answer had consistently been in the negative to his grandmother's frequent questioning as to whether he knew or befriended a girl named Mariam in his dreams. However, after going through the traumatic events of Israel's missile operation in Gaza in December 2008, Khaled abandons his life to live out an inner life built upon the foundations of postmemory. He goes back in time to the ancestral village of Beit Daras and witnesses firsthand the lives of his grandmother and her family before the arrival of Zionists.

In *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch writes about the replacement potential of postmemory – "To grow up with overwhelming inherited memories, to be dominated by narratives that preceded one's birth or one's consciousness, is to risk having one's own life stories displaced, even evacuated, by our ancestors" (5). Khaled's case is a best example of the above statement. In *Family Frames* too, Hirsch makes a similar statement, "Postmemory characterizes the experience of those who grow up dominated by narratives that preceded their birth, whose own belated stories are evacuated by the stories of the previous generation shaped by traumatic events that can be neither understood nor recreated" (20). The evacuation of the memories of his own experiences in life result in their replacement by the memories of his alternative life dwelt in the company of his maternal grand-aunt Mariam. Regarding his constant forays into the blue, Khaled seeks little to hide: "I go to Beit Daras often. Always to the river, where Mariam and I inhabit an endless place of blue. We wrote a song together. Or maybe we remembered it. Inherited it

somehow" (177). As he moves further along with his navigation in the endless space of the blue, Khaled perceives a distance from or towards his own body. Feeling it to be something foreign, he describes his own, chair-bound body as merely "a shell of a boy to which I return" to answer mother's calls (178). Thus, Khaled's life gets fully assimilated to the postmemory imbibed from the earlier generations by way of stories.

Storytelling serves as a communication strategy in the novel that is used to assert and reassert the deliberately eclipsed historical past. Both Nazmiyeh and Mamdouh of the older generation convey their experiences of the *nakba* in the form of stories to their grandchildren Khaled and Nur respectively, which is an assertion and arousal of the dormant past from the depths of their traumatic memories. There is equally the reassertion of this past by the grandchildren who validate the truths behind the stories later in their lives. Khaled "goes into the blue" and with the help of Sulayman the djinni, sees for himself what his ancestors had had to go through. Nur, on the other hand, arrives in the bosom of her homeland Palestine and watches afresh the still remaining scars of her *jiddo*'s stories. There is a clear sense that the stories being told are not fictitious or simply born out of imagination, but very much real and true incidents that happened in the lives of the elders.

Stories are a way of diving "in and out of time" for Mamdouh and his granddaughter Nur residing in America. It is through these stories that Nur learns of the roots of her identity. She asks her *jiddo* why they were being forced out of their homes, to which her jiddo replies that their country was stolen. Refugee camps are described to her as being "in the heart of national homelessness" (48). These early tales shape Nur as a Palestinian, even though she deviates from this identity for a while in her life after grandfather's death. "It suggests some of the transactive, transferential processes – cognitive and affective – through which the past is

internalized without fully being understood" (Hirsch 31). Her arrival in Gaza years later to study Khaled's case and make room for a better treatment, is triggered by the faint calling of the Palestinian roots within her. Even before setting out to Gaza, when Dr. Jamal tells her that the boy's family have a history of communicating with djinnis, she quickly asks without a moment's thought whether it was Sulayman. She had recollected the name from the distant memories of the stories told by grandfather. In the same way, she searches in Hajje Nazmiyeh's face the pair of mismatched eyes imprinted on her imagination from her young years as a child. The dream patterns of Nur with respect to Khaled and Mariam show the backspine of collective memory from which her own sense of postmemory had been formed.

Storybooks become a strong metaphor in the novel standing for the bond forged between generations of Palestinians in order to maintain the continuity of their ethnic and cultural origins and identity. Nur's storybook titled "Jiddo and Me", Mariam's papers filled with her childish scribblings and Rhet Shel's communication with the bedridden Khaled using letter charts, each from different spaces and time periods demonstrate well the importance of words and stories in joining up the scattered pieces of Palestinian identity into one whole across the gap of generations. As Mamdouh tells Nur, "Stories matter. We are composed of our stories. The human heart is made of the words we put in it" (Abulhawa 69). The bitter past is given a voice and an existence through their stories of yore that the older generation of Palestinians transmit to their grandchildren as well as through the reminiscence of bygone events in the daily gatherings of the elderly people. In the context of Khaled's response in the novel to candle flames, it can be said that the flickering flame of the unwritten past is saved from extinguishing through their conversion into stories and memories that are renewed and reinforced from time to time.

Even though he occupied the space between the living and the dead, Khaled acquired a sort of freedom and knowledge that he could not have gained otherwise. He would just be a refugee child forced to salvage the remains of history throughout his life. Khaled's journeys into the blue are also journeys into past memories that made him see things that were not seen before, "I began to remember more in the hush of my body" (207). He was being made to turn the pages of bygone history when his ancestors had to leave their land and become refugees in Gaza that over the years turned to be an open-air enclave where Palestinians could be imprisoned by Israel. Memories provide him with knowledge of his own past.

Khaled, being endowed with the special capability to go into the blue or to travel to the past of his own ancestors, is able to be the eye-witness to many of the traumatic uprooting, displacement and erasures that littered the actual pathways of his ethnic history. The journeys he embarks on in his mind makes him validate all the stories and memories that have been imparted to him by his elders. It is this journey that is symbolized in his tracing back the wrinkles of his grandmother's face, comparing them to "*lanes leading home*" (152) (italics in original). In other words, it is a sojourn back into the difficult paths of history to gain back the lost voice of a Palestinian.

Trauma: Ways of Outliving

In many ways, the major theme of *The Blue Between Sky and Water* is the reawakening to life after intense traumatic experiences. The novel begins with Khaled's words that Palestinians had found a way out to carry on with their lives despite consistent efforts to suppress their souls. The ending that signals hope and a renewed vigour for life also points towards such a resurrection from the abyss of

trauma. The symbolic realm of the blue between sky and water where Khaled finds a permanent refuge is, in other words, a comfortable niche where past wounds can be redressed with an alternative Palestine with no Zionist soldiers. The following lines, taken from chapter forty-one, opens to the scene of devastation after the Israeli attack and effectively encapsulates Palestinians' insatiable longing for life:

> … Slowly, people returned to themselves, salvaging life. Hajje Nazmiyeh collected some of her pots, random papers flying about that could be used for schoolwork, broken pencils that might still be of use. Perhaps a shoe that could be coupled with another, even if it didn't match. For some children – because, Allah be praised, children are resilient – the rummaging was turned into games and contests. But for most, the landscape of destruction hid the broken parts of them – memories of bombs, fear, and the recently dead – and no one wanted to find those…. Someone threw a plank over a large rock to make a seesaw and children played, their laughter small suns. The harsh winter spent outdoors in tents amid the rubble gave way to springtime pushing up from the scorched ground, absorbing the pollution of bombs and grief. Insects reappeared, then birds, then butterflies." (152-3)

The delicate poise between trauma and recovery, death and life, and decay and rejuvenation can be seen to be present throughout the novel. Love is presented as an adhesive force that glues individuals together above space and time. Hajje Nazmiyeh invokes Palestinian solidarity in the face of the ongoing conflict they are engulfed in, "We find our own ways to freedom. Zionist sons of Satan cannot imprison our joy, can they?" (233). Group sentiments of refugee subculture are thus shown to dilute the trauma of personal tragedies in conflict zones as Palestine.

The older generation of women in the camp including Nazmiyeh go down the lanes of nostalgic memories with the words "[t]hose were the days" and lament their fate saying "[w]ho knew we'd die refugees?" (226). The collective gatherings of the elder matriarchs of the camp that Hajje Nazmiyeh presides over points to her spirit and potential to recover from each of the past tragedies. Her ability to arrange *ghadas* and *joma* meals is a way of fostering their cultural identity and solidarity. The feeling of sisterhood developed between Alwan and Nur, and between Nazmiyeh, the beekeeper's widow and other older women is indeed a step towards the healing of trauma. This is why women characters are able to overcome the trauma in their lives in some way, while men including Khaled are not. Nazmiyeh's words of resilience and the beekeeper's widow's maintainence of her garden of medicinal herbs located near Israeli posts that show average Palestinian women's defiance also testifies to their strength to carry on with life.

Khaled's assumption of the role of narrator also has to do with traumatic healing. He is the one in whom the women confide in their fears, dreads, opinions, worries, dilemmas etc. As Khaled explains, "*I was the unintended repository of secrets and quiet fear. A living, breathing depot of understanding that didn't judge or talk back… They could lay bare their hearts at the same time they changed bags and cleaned tubes and wiped drool and shit and tended to bedsores*" (221-2) (italics in original). Khaled's narration of their stories, in turn, dissipates his trauma.

Realignment of Palestinian History Using Time and Space

While giving expression to individual and collective trauma of Palestinians related to events at the historical junctures of the Israel-Palestine conflict, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* also subverts the often misconstrued and underrepresented

Palestinian historical reality. Linda Hutcheon, in her work *Historiographic Metafiction: Parody and the Intertextuality of History*, says that, "The postmodern relationship between fiction and history is an even more complex one of interaction and mutual implication" (4). The interplay of history and fiction serves a mutual purpose in the context of the novel: the fictional story of the Baraka family with its nuanced subjectivity brings credibility to the history of Palestine that badly needs to be rewritten while the historical background in turn strengthens the fictional narrative. The thread of historical revisionism is inlaid in the fabric of the novel through a range of methods.

The use of magical realism to reaffix the time-space co-ordinates in the complex canvas of the story itself is a deconstructive strategy to present Palestinian history anew. The very outward notion induced by Khaled's coma-like state that he does not possess a clear sense of time and place anymore is juxtaposed with the 'real' condition of his inner self traversing hitherto unknown history beyond the perceived ways of knowing time and space. This journey to an unrecorded ancestral past dismantles the pre-fixed cornerstones of history: he meets his forefathers on the soil they lived, even as the rallying cries of Zionists proclaim their absence and invisibility. Their village of Beit Daras – presented as a cross section of the whole of Palestine – is anthropomorphized in the depiction of its fall from past glory and a splendid history. The *nakba* is portrayed as the pivotal historical event that becomes the source of the time-space repercussions of Palestinian life in the novel.

The space of the blue is not just the place where Khaled's past, present and future meet in its temporal fluidity, but it is the space where he traces his real identity, discovers his roots and reclaims the faded pages of his land's history. At a symbolic level, the realm of the blue also stands for the collective consciousness of Palestinian

history of exile and displacement embedded into Khaled's psyche through memories, stories and protests that he shares with his parents and grandparents. In this way, an alternative historical space is carved out from the central theme of the Gazan child's frequent forays into the past.

In the poetic description that sets off the first section of this novel, history is personified as someone who leisurely enjoyed the comforts of occupying enough space and time: "When our history lounged on the hills, lolling in sylvan days, the River Suqreir flowed through Beit Daras" (5). This poetic assertion is also a reclaiming of the lost authenticity of his ancestors' as well as his own identity. The relaxed composure of this thousand years of history that Beit Daras can boast of as the crossroads of several ancient civilizations quickly changes to one of alarm and inevitable doom in the chapters of the first section. Regarding the utter suddenness of the *nakba*, it is said that "the future of the people of Beit Daras was so far from their destiny that even if a clairvoyant had announced their fate, no one would have believed it" (13). History is again personified when Khaled says that "history arrived and Beit Daras was carried off the wind" (22). He directly hints at the obscurity into which the Palestinian village Beit Daras fell, along with hundreds of other villages. The history of the victorious came to be recorded in all pomp and glory while those of the vanquished and the wounded Palestinians were made to fade away slowly with time. The *nakba* is also defined as "the catastrophe that inaugurated the erasure of Palestine" which sounds like an oxymoron, as it is the inauguration of the erasure of a country and a culture. The phrase is filled with biting sarcasm in that the war at the time of *nakba,* hailed by Israel as the War of Independence, intentionally saw to it that Palestine and its history got erased beyond recovery.

There are instances when history is given not as incidents that happened in the past, but are rather foretold in the form of futuristic prophecies, by virtue of the magical realist framework of the novel. Khaled's great-teta Um Mamdouh, possessed by the djinni called Sulayman, prophesies to the religious leaders of Beit Daras about the events that are to unfold as the inevitable *nakba*. Short and quick utterances in the future tense marks the pace of the coming history of Zionist invasion:

> …. Our neighbors will come joined by others, and they will spill the blood of the Bedrawasis of Beit Daras … Beit Daras will be victorious. You will all fight and you will live, but some of your brothers and sons will fall; yet, that will not be the end. More Jews will return and the skies will rain death upon Beit Daras.… the enemy's fury is great. Native blood will pour from these hills into the river, and the war will be lost. (24)

Read in the light of what actually happened, this rendition of the past given in futuristic terms only adds to its gravity and significance. Similarly, the apparition that arose from Mariam's dead body assures her sister Nazmiyeh, who stands numbed with pain and fright, that their love shall remain constant and that it matters beyond all time and space which are subject to all forms of change.

Israel's invasion of Gaza on December 27, 2008 called the Operation Cast Lead is the second major incident featured in detail in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, after the events of the *nakba*. The attack shatters Gaza so much so that its space-time configurations change and come to a standstill: "Israel's bombing of Gaza altered the clock. As if time had been wounded, it now moved in a crawl, its daily passage impeded by the rubble that carpeted the terrain, its presence so thick that Hajje Nazmiyeh felt the sun dragging along the heavy weight of each hour (152). The

space where they inhabited became “the landscape of destruction” and they waited “for time to limp along” (153). Time is also perceived of as something that carries life forward, after a period of death and decay, “… time thinned out to a liquid that rushed over Gaza like a stream over rocks, smoothing the jagged corners and coating them with a new moss of life” (155). The simultaneity of time makes every event happen at the present moment that Khaled, and only Khaled, realizes that “there is another ‘now’ when Beit Daras is restored to her children” (193). His unique experience of the otherwise irretrievable ancestral past in the form of a perpetual presence enables him to restore the lost pieces in the jigsaw puzzle of his land’s unacknowledged history. His pastime game of tracing the wrinkles of his grandmother Nazmiyeh’s face becomes, on a different level, the act of retracing steps back to a lost homeland.

In framing a Gazan narrative from the inside, Khaled shows the tunnels dug under the border between Gaza and Egypt as a symbol of Palestinian resistance and resilience. He describes them as “*living vasculature*,” being “*a network of underground arteries and veins with systems of ropes, levers, and pulleys that pumped food, diapers, fuel, medicine, batteries, music tapes, Mama’s menstrual napkins, Rhet Shel’s crayons, and anything else you can think of that we managed to buy from the Egyptians twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week*” (1-2) (italics in original). Finding their way deep to the earth like the roots of a tree, the tunnels are made deeper and longer each time Israel bombs them. Thus, tunnels are made to represent the innate potential of Palestinians to regenerate in the aftermath of trauma.

The process of digging deeper tunnels also function as a metaphor for delving into the forgotten historical past. Khaled tunnels into the pre-*nakba* days where “time meandered to the rhythms of crawling, hopping, buzzing, and flying lives” by the River Suqreir in Beit Daras, the village where his ancestors lived before their forced

displacement in 1948 (7). Having already compared the tunnels to "*story lines that history wrote, erased, and rewrote*," Khaled's act of diving into the blue in the company of the djinni Sulayman becomes synonymous with rewriting the history of his people (141) (italics in original).

The novel pays attention to historical inaccuracies in the elucidation of the Palestinian past on a global level. It attempts to expose how the image of Gaza that gets to the outer world has carefully been contrived on the part of Israel. Hints of the policies and politics of the Jewish state regarding Palestine, especially Gaza, are interspersed in the main narrative of the novel: "Declassified documents, obtained years later, revealed the chilling precision with which Israel calculated the calorie intake of 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza to make them go hungry, but not starve" (ix). This is an example of 'biopolitical governmentality,' an idea originally from Foucault which denotes how the condition of stateless citizenship gives rise to inadequate biomedical care and evidently results in the dearth of proper medical treatment for refugees (Muller). Khaled's case bears testimony to such a condition. The novel records the words of an unnamed Israeli soldier who attacked Gaza: "You feel like a child playing around with a magnifying glass, burning up ants" (149). This is a reference to the cruelty behind international political games that involves two parties with a considerable power imbalance between them.

Israeli appropriation of Palestinian geopolitical spaces that leads to further diminished claims of the land of historic Palestine has also been aptly brought in. An old hangout spot called 'paradise lookout' where Khaled as an invalid is taken to by his friends, Tawfiq and Wasim, points to such an encroachment into Palestinian land. The place is called so because the wall that separated the outskirts of the refugee camp from the area beyond marked as the Buffer Zone by the Israeli Army contains

several small holes carved out by many bullets. For boys who peek in through those numerous peepholes, what lay out there seem to be heaven-like, with plenty of scrap metal that can be sold to those who make a living out of recycling such things and rebuilding Palestine as best as they can. But in reality, the buffer zone extends far and wide as dunes forbidden to Palestininans, formed by bulldozing a once well-populated Palestinian neighbourhood, and set under the constant watch of hidden soldiers. Referring to the vast silence that littered the expanse of the buffer zone, Khaled says that "Death lived in the dunes, and we had woken it up" (211). When time flows freely for him, the spatial dimensions of his journeys flow into one another, taking him from his present to known pasts and then to unknown pasts. Khaled feels the creep of fear inside him seeing the bullets fired by soldiers and when he finds his way at last through the waves of sand in that desert, he recognizes the familiarity of the place as being the numerous wrinkles on his grandmother's face that in turn take him once again to the river in Beit Daras. At the riverside, Khaled is greeted by his friend Tawfiq who comes along riding horses with his ancestors, indicating that Tawfiq has been shot by Isareli soldiers and that his soul has departed from his body to occupy the space of the unseen. This sudden shifting of landscapes that contribute to what can be called the fluidity of space in the novel, testifies to Edward Said's definition of Palestine from his work *After the Last Sky* that, "Palestine is exile, dispossession, the inaccurate memories of one place slipping into vague memories of another…" (30). It also sheds light on the intrusive misappropriation of Palestinian spaces.

Palestine as a Nation

In their article "Introduction: Outlines of a New Politics in the Middle East," Sune Haugbolle and Anders Hastrup present the emerging nationalist conceptualizations in the Arab countries. One of their chief arguments is that Arab

forms of nationalism are created through "constructs of continuity with the pre-colonial past" and, more importantly, through the recent memorialization of the various wars and institutionalized violence that define the postcolonial period till the present. They observe that, "[N]ational memory, as it is adapted, produced and reproduced in society, is often informed by the catastrophes and traumas that cannot be captured by the triumphant tropes of official, state-sponsored historical imagination and must therefore be disseminated through other channels" (135-6). Memories of violence and their narrativization thus become part of a highly political endeavour that constantly re-negotiates the nationalism of a stateless country as Palestine.

The Blue Between Sky and Water adds forgotten wars and assaults to the national memory archive of Palestine. The portrayal of trauma inflicted on individuals and groups by each and every historical wound is given due acknowledgement. Israel's military occupation is described as the "ongoing repression of the native people's aspirations for autonomy" (ix). Recalling the failure of the Peace Process, the novel sheds light on Gaza, "the tiny Mediterranean strip of land," came to be sealed off as "the largest open-air prison in the world" (ix). Nazmiyeh's realization that "Palestine was scattering farther away at the same time that Israel was moving closer" (59) can be read along with the "great expansion of exclusively Jewish colonies on confiscated Palestinian land" (ix). The many hurdles along the way to the national self-determination of Palestinian people are thus driven home. The physical changes wrought in characters' bodies such as Nazmiyeh's rape, Mamdouh's wounded leg and Khaled's locked-in syndrome are made to reflect the maimed situation of the land of Palestine, akin to the idea of 'national allegory' propounded by Fredric Jameson in his essay, "Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism." As a nation,

Israel too is picturized as a living body. Referring to Israel's perfunctory withdrawal from Gaza, the nation is described from the perspective of the outer world as having "cut off one of its limbs for the sake of peace" (128). The idea of Khaled, the narrator of this magical realist novel, telling a family tale spanning three generations of his forefathers which is also largely connected with the wounds of partition and trauma of Palestine, brings out a comparison to Saleem Sinai, the narrator of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*. While Saleem is born in the threshold of independence and partition in Indian history, Khaled's tenth birthday coincides with a new page in the history of Gaza. As a boy whose growth is affected by national history, Khaled also follows in the footsteps of Oskar, the protagonist of Gunter Grass's *Tin Drum*.

Narrative Techniques

As mentioned in the beginning of this chapter, Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water* also tells the multigenerational saga of a Palestinian family in the context of the still ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict. However, this novel, coming under the genre of magical realism, makes use of the stream-of-consciousness technique in the form of interior monologues of the ten-year old Khaled.

The Blue Between Sky and Water is divided into seven parts all of which consist of several small chapters, each of those parts ending in a significant turn of events. The seven main parts, though untitled, are introduced with brief poetical lines that capture the essence of the ensuing chapters. These poetical sketches are uttered by a plural consciousness 'we,' symbolizing not just the characters but Palestinian people as a whole. For instance, this is how the sixth part that includes Nur's relationship with Dr. Jamal, Alwan's disease and Khaled's death, is introduced, "Words and stories washed ashore on that ancient way of the sea, and we made of

them new songs. The sun came again, casting shadows that we peeled off the street to make of them new clothes" (201). In the beginning of other main parts too, these sort of lines that function as a key to the unfolding story features celestial objects like the sun, sky, stars and moon, the interplay of light and darkness giving the texture of human sorrow and trauma in the novel.

Interlaced with the main narrative of the novel, there are the interior monologues of Khaled given in italics. The novel begins with a single page introduction like a prologue which situates the novel's context in Gaza and explains the rise of the political movement called Hamas which was initially assisted by Israel though the latter turned against it later. Next, there is a chapter titled 'Khaled' which contains a quote by Dov Weisglass that "The idea is to put the Palestinians on a diet" (1). Except for the title and the quote, the chapter is given in italics, signifying Khaled's words from the blue between sky and water. He touches upon the themes of Palestinian trauma, resistance, resilience and fortitude in this opening chapter. He mentions his grandmother Nazmiyeh, mother Alwan, sister Rhet Shel and his cousin Nur as "the women of my life, the songs of my soul" (3). His last sentence in this initial chapter that, "I stayed as long as I could" also becomes the last sentence of this novel when he reiterates in the end that, "And I stayed as long as I could" (3, 287).

Apart from the chapters titled "Khaled" which are totally dedicated to his stream-of-consciousness ramblings, every chapter begins with Khaled's insight or commentary upon the events that unfold in the chapter. These words of Khaled, as they come from his condition in the blue, are italicized. The initial episodes of his strange disease to which he slipped in and out quickly are shown by italicizing the words he utters then, the word style reverting back to regular soon after. The first part of the novel commences immediately after the above mentioned chapter titled

'Khaled,' and the next chapter 'Khaled' appears only in the middle of the fourth part, in between the fortieth and forty-first chapters. All the chapters named 'Khaled' are unnumbered, and the ordinary chapter follows soon after, continuing with the numbering in the penultimate chapter. This sets off Khaled's voice in the realm of the blue as something outside the perceived limits of time and space, and beyond the perception of the other characters. It also means that his words recount his experiences of an alternative world, thereby, breaking the linearity of the story narrated in the rest of the chapters. All the chapters titled 'Khaled' begin with a quote, taken either from writers such as T. S. Eliot, Wordsworth, Aeschylus and Mahmoud Darwish or from newspaper reports on Gaza, from doctors' accounts of their experiences with Gazan refugees/victims of missile attacks or from Israeli soldiers' testimonies. After the final seventy-first chapter, the novel ends with a small chapter 'Khaled' which in turn is followed by an epilogue by the author. It is a salute given to the fortitude of Palestinian people during Israel's attack of Gaza in July 2014, shortly after the novel was, the author says, submitted for publication.

In addition to this, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* is replete with other narrative strategies. The song that Mariam and Khaled sing together, which is also sung at times by Nazmiyeh and dreamt by Nur, works as a connecting link between the characters even they are separated from one another in reality. Letters, emails and other text messages sent between characters are given in their respective formats. There is ample number of Arabic words in the novel, set off in italics. Some of these appear as apostrophes used in the characters' speech which are not translated due to the cultural significance they carry, the examples of which include '*habibti*,' '*yumma*' etc. Other words showing Palestinian Arab culture and ways of living are also transliterated. The words such as "Keeper of Seekrets" in little Nur's handbook are

deliberately misspelt to show how she had written them down as a child (86). The words shouted by Mazen at the Israeli soldiers during his arrest and those spoken angrily by Nur's mother are given entirely in capitals.

The novel is written mostly as a third person narrative. Khaled's words from the blue, however, are given in the first person. His travails in the blue make him see the past of his elders, thereby, enabling him to function partly as the omniscient narrator of their story. This shift between voices remains constant throughout the narrative. Although the novel follows a near linear order in the narration of events starting from mid 1940s to late 2000s, Khaled's voice often causes its interruption. Moreover, some of the events such as Mamdouh's inability to return home from exile are shown from multiple perspectives as the context appears in different main sections. In a nutshell, the various narrative techniques aid in the subtlety of this novel.

Conclusion

The very cyclic nature of this multigenerational story breaks the linearity of recorded versions of the history of Israel-Palestine conflict. Contrary to the assumption that history is a straightforward record of events, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* reallocates history by projecting memory in such a way that it gives a deeper picture of events which are really inter-linked and superimposing rather than standalone. Khaled's condition of being in locked-in syndrome is presented in the novel as a state of being where the radical deconstruction of the linearity of time and space has taken place. His subjective and irrational vision of an alternative past conceptualized under entirely different temporal and spatial co-ordinates, unhinges the already assumed one-to-one correspondence of time and space that have been

instrumental in bringing up a linear, one-sided picture of Israel-Palestine history. The nexus of trauma, magical realism and the subjective form of historical revisionism define the thread of this chapter.

Transgenerational trauma is communicated well by employing magical realism in the form of Khaled, a second generation descendent of the *nakba* survivors, reaching out in his travails to the blue to Mariam, a victim in the events of the *nakba*. That Khaled meets Mariam *after* he goes through the traumatic experiences of the Operation Cast Lead in 2008 and *before* the onslaught of the terrible event of the *nakba* marks a crucial moment in the rewriting of the Israel-Palestine conflict in the novel (italics given for stress). In connecting the historical events that are separated by an interval of decades, the novel proclaims the continuity of trauma faced by Palestinians generation after generation. Repetitiveness of trauma across generations is shown through a vague pairing that surfaces in the layers of the novel, between the characters of different generations such as Mamdouh-Khaled, Mariam-Nur and Mariam-Rhet Shel. Along with the theme of the recurring nature of political tragedy, the novel follows the technique of fragmentation, an essential feature of trauma narratives.

Though the past always haunts the present of the characters, there are instances where the bitter, traumatic past is boldly overlooked by the women in the novel. While male characters such as Mamdouh, Atiyeh, Abdel Qader and Khaled die due to immediate or sustained effects of trauma, women characters ranging from Nazmiyeh to Rhet Shel survive in the canvas of the story, hopefully waiting for new horizons of peace and happiness. Using subjective and intense versions of history as a legitimizing instrument of Palestinian identity, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* moves towards the aspirations for a sovereign nationhood for Palestine.

Chapter 4

Scriptotherapy: Suad Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*

> "When I began hill walking in Palestine a quarter of a century ago, I was not aware that I was travelling through a vanishing landscape."
>
> -Raja Shehadeh, *Palestinian Walks*

Sharon and My Mother-in-Law: Ramallah Diaries (2005), the first work by the Palestinian architect-cum-writer, Suad Amiry, can be classified as belonging to the genre of creative nonfiction. This chapter intends to show that the author "works-through" her traumatic experiences by means of writing out the various strategies of resistance adopted by herself and those around her against the oppressive rule of the Israeli military force, in the form of her book (LaCapra 144). The author as well as her niece Diala belong to the postgenerations of those who had to flee Palestine in 1948, whose ways of responding to their postmemory also come under the purview of this chapter. In addition to these two explicit aims, the Israeli appropriation of various Palestinian spaces as depicted in Amiry's work has also been studied.

Theory

The author's responses to her traumatized life as a Palestinian individual are mainly positive, consisting of passive resistance and fortitude rather than the reinforcement of trauma through repetition and reenactment. As a piece of life-writing involving trauma, the work is chiefly analyzed as belonging to the genre of what Suzette A. Henke termed 'scriptotherapy.' The concept of 'working-through' trauma which the American historian Dominick LaCapra puts forth in his *Writing History,*

Writing Trauma has been helpful in analyzing Amiry's methods of reacting to trauma as shown in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*. The concept of "everyday resistance" as elucidated by the American political scientist James C. Scott in his work has been used as an aid that complements the author's ways of showing protest to the injustice and subjugation of the Israeli security system (34). The analysis of the characters' postmemory has been carried out on the basis of the theories of Marianne Hirsch. The renowned Palestinian theorist Edward Said's ideas have also been used in the chapter while dealing with the contemporary methods of Israeli occupation.

Introduction to Trauma in the Work

One of the most prominent characteristic features of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* is its use of humour, wit and sarcasm, which makes the work barely pass for a book of trauma in a quick first reading. However, it can be seen that the book's tone of a light comedy emerges from a deep exhaustion on the part of the author whose pain and anger gets re-routed as laughter, irony and wit. As Amiry has written at the close of the third chapter, "Return to Jaffa," laughter often ends most of the sad, tragic and traumatic anecdotes in the book. As a trauma narrative, this work bears testimony to "the possibility of verbalizing the unspeakable, narrating the unnarratable, and making sense of the incomprehensible" (Schönfelder 4). In this way, what have hitherto been unrepresentable in trauma accounts are given the strength of eloquence and the wealth of details. The light, sarcastic tone of the book rallying against the traumatizing and, often absurd, rule of the Israel's occupying forces is seen to shape the text into an entirely new representation of personal and collective trauma. The retrieval of the e-mails the author had originally sent her friends and their compilation into *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, enlarged by even more autobiographical

anecdotes, become a conscious attempt at what Suzette Henke has termed 'scriptotherapy.'

Scriptotherapy

Suzette A. Henke used the term 'scriptotherapy' in her 1998 book *Shattered Subjects: Trauma and Testimony in Women's Life-Writing* to mean "the relationship between autobiographical writing and the psychoanalytic process of 'working through' traumatic experience" (141). Scriptotherapy entails the modification of the basic premise of Freud's 'talking cure,' which in turn denotes "the psychoanalytic working-through of repressed memories through the use of language and free association" (Henke xi). Referring to James Pennebaker's book *Opening Up,* Henke says that, "the very process of articulating painful experiences, especially in written form, can itself prove therapeutic" (xi). This kind of a public inscription of personal trauma has been employed by many women authors as a way of bringing "therapeutic catharsis," a release from mental torment and a reassembling of the self (Henke 142). "[T]he formulation of narrative cohesion can reconfigure the individual's obsessive mental processing of embedded traumatic scripts" (xviii). The conversion of life into story itself transforms the unpresentable elusiveness of traumatic experiences.

Conversion of Trauma into Resistance

The author's 'working through' trauma gets manifested as various acts of resistance against the oppressive and powerful Israeli military rule imposed heavily on the Palestinians. Hence the chapter focuses on the patterns of resistance, real and imagined, or, active and passive, carried out by Amiry individually or collectively as part of some local group. The focus on resistance is owing in part to the way the trauma of Palestinian lives has been moulded and reassembled into steadfast

tolerance, waiting, protests and their determination and perseverance. As Foucault says in his second lecture on "Power/Knowledge", resistance of individuals is also a point of exertion of power which might be in a direction opposite to the main source of power (98). In a number of ways, Amiry's work rages against the military incursion of Israel into the daily lives of Palestinians in the occupied territories.

The Return Motif

Though arranged in the form of fragmented anecdotes, the crux of the book revolves around the author's arrival in her homeland Palestine from Amman, Jordan where she was born and brought up. This return to Palestine becomes central because it followed right from her firm decision and conviction to live out her life on Palestinian soil and thus carve the contours of her Palestinian identity afresh. Though it is a return only to a place in the Palestinian territory of West Bank and not her father's native place, Jaffa, which had become a part of Israel since 1948, it nevertheless is a return to Palestine. It has reversed the linearity of the postcolonial experience that begins from national expatriation in the first place. However, this return triggers a plethora of experiences consisting of daily encounters with the fettering force of the Israeli army which in turn whet the fire of resistance in the author.

Spatial and Temporal Aspects

Sharon and My Mother-in-Law tells tales of dispossession and occupation from the geographic locale and cultural space of Ramallah in Palestine with the precision of chronicled time frames. While most of the diary entries or chapters are titled or subtitled with the time frame of occurrence, there is also an attempt at showing how Palestinian spaces have been invaded, occupied and altered over the

decades with a systematic planning on the part of Israel to populate more foreign settlers and strengthen their demographics. Voicing out Palestinians' daily issues of travel restrictions and land appropriation inevitably brings in the theme of 'spatial justice.' Spatial justice, a term formed by combining space with social justice, seems to be relevant while looking into several Palestinian issues in the occupied territories including human rights violations that Amiry's work projects.

Trauma

Amiry's very act of writing a book as *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* has had the aim of tackling her intense trauma of carrying a heavy past and living in the extremely agonizing present in Palestine. In the 'Preface' to this book, Amiry speaks of how the acquired ability "to step out of the frame and observe the senselessness of the moment" became, over the course of years, "a valuable self-defence mechanism against the Israeli occupation of [their] lives and souls" (xi). The conscious development of such an outsider or observant perspective to check her further traumatization ultimately leads the author to the writing of the book where the role of being the narrator reduces the unpalatability of one's own story. The last line of the 'Preface' effectively encapsulates what the unfolding pages hold in store: "Only through taking 'one step to the side of life' could I observe and recount the absurdity of my life and the lives of others" (Amiry xi). This mode of assuming a critical distance from one's own traumatic experiences in order to tolerate them better has been stated by Dominick LaCapra as a significant step in an individual's 'working-through' process. In an interview with Amos Goldberg, LaCapra mentioned that, "In the working through, the person tries to gain critical distance on a problem, to be able to distinguish between past, present and future" (Goldberg 2). This obviously points to the author's transition from an active participant to a somewhat detached observer,

thereby translating her lived experiences into the narrative canvas of a story. The narrativization of lived experiences and the critical distance afforded by such an act makes the work a clear example of scriptotherapy.

Different Modes of Resistance

The choice of relating individual anecdotes from her life has enabled Amiry to bring little acts of her resistance to the forefront. These tales of reaction and resistance against the oppressive Israeli regime are, interestingly, an amalgam of both fact and fiction. In other words, there are accounts of real encounters with several Israeli soldiers as well as purely imagined confrontations that have taken place only in the author's mind. Differing from any organized modes of resistance, these constitute what the American political sociologist James C. Scott has termed "every day forms of resistance," referring to forms of cultural resistance and non-cooperation (34). Unlike observable acts of rebellion, these are often subtle forms of contesting the otherwise immutable enemy/ unchallengeable oppressive regime. Requiring little coordination or planning, resistance strategies such as these are used by both individuals and groups to resist without directly confronting or challenging dominant norms. Amiry deftly employs several such ingenious confrontational strategies in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* which mark the book as a remarkable specimen of contemporary protest against military occupation. Such tools of resistance showcased in the book are found to be in the form of: 1) silence, 2) imagination, 3) inaction or non-compliance, 4) forgetting or denial, 5) escape mechanism (illegal driving either by playing tricks on soldiers and taking advantage of their confusion or escaping their notice altogether), 6) speech, 7) peaceful demonstrations and other group protests of therapeutic effect and, last but not the least, 8) the act of writing/ recording/ narrating (Amiry's way of writing mimics the act of storytelling). Substantiating the features of

life-writing that comes under scriptotherapy, Henke links the autonomy of the marginalized subject to write one's own life narrative to the potential to resist:

> Because the author can instantiate the alienated or marginal self into the pliable body of a protean text, the newly revised subject, emerging as the semifictive protagonist of an enabling counternarrative, is free to rebel against the values and practices of a dominant culture and to assume an empowered position of political agency in the world. (xv-xvi)

In *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, language and communication are shown to play an integral role in setting up the author's several acts of small scale resistance.

Silence as a Tool of Resistance

Out of the different modes of resistance, silence is explored as an effective tool of individual resistance in Amiry's diaries. Such a silence commanded against the misappropriating, powerful other, speaks volumes about the individual wielder. In *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, one such instance is the double-layer of conversation taking place simultaneously in the first chapter titled "I Was Not in the Mood" where the actual curt or contained, often contradictory responses of Amiry given to the annoying questions raised by Israeli security officers at Tel Aviv Airport are interlaced with an imaginary torrent of words overflowing from the past memories of Amiry and her parents. The setting of this scene is the airport and as the historian Rashid Khalidi observes, "The quintessential Palestinian experience, which illustrates some of the most basic issues raised by Palestinian identity, takes place at a border, an airport, a checkpoint" (1). Amiry's parallel dialogue that begins each time with the words, "I was not in the mood to tell the Israeli officer…" offers a stark contrast to the replies actually given to the series of questions asked by the officers (7). The short,

occasional answers that reveal sparse information about her personal identity are given an easy outlet in the wealth and profusion of the intended answers uttered silently, in her mind. Continuing with her mentally assumed narration, Amiry states that, “It would have been difficult for me to explain to him that I have always envied my parents, and even my grandparents, for living at a time when residing in, or travelling between, the beautiful cities of [Palestine] was not such a big deal and did not call for security checks” (7). These mutually opposing layers, one of reality and the other of imagination – of restraint and outflow, also offer a deep insight to the pent-up postmemory of Amiry as a Palestinian. “The dread with which Palestinians regard such boundaries, and the potent – albeit negative – reinforcement of their identity this fear engenders, can be understood only in light of the many anecdotal examples of incidents at crossing points” (Khalidi 2). The above anecdote narrated by Amiry testifies to this.

Another interesting tale of using silence as a resistance tool is narrated in the chapter “A Shopping Spree in Anticipation of Saddam’s Scud Missiles.” In the form of a steady stare, Amiry unnerves a young Israeli soldier to make him know at least for a few minutes what it means to be under constant surveillance. The short summing-up of the climactic event given in the opening of this anecdote builds up an illusory tale of romantic love until it is flung headway down with a crashing remark:

> I stared deep into his eyes.
>
> I had always wanted to do this, but had been too scared.
>
> I could not take my eyes off him.
>
> At first he did not notice me, or perhaps he had decided to ignore me.
>
> Every time he stole a quick glance in my direction, my eyes were on him.
>
> I was trembling inside, in spite of my calm appearance.

I could hear my heart beating.

The more nervous he became, the more satisfied I was.

It was a long overdue revenge. (58)

When the tale of this "long overdue revenge" unfolds, the stare which Amiry fires at the soldier who called her "*Hajjeh*" or old woman "in the condescending tone often used by Israeli soldiers when addressing Palestinians, especially women" can be understood as the normal, or the only possible, outcome of the string of events that led up to it (67). The burden of having to make adjustments in the allotted, precious time of the curfew respite for various activities and prioritize among the basic necessities of shopping, visiting friends and consulting doctors already weighed heavily upon the author. The hurried visit to their friends' homes together with Salim's cousin had followed after the tired waiting at home for her husband Salim and his mother from a shopping spree during the valuable moments of the lifting of the curfew. Amiry was vexed at how encroachments into civilian freedom as frequent curfews destroyed a relaxing visit to friends' home such as theirs. The sheer luck of avoided collisions between frantically speeding cars, the burning tongues from hastily gulped hot tea and full mouths half munching and half swallowing the specially baked carrot cake, the quickly muttered bye-byes – the frustration behind all these explain the intense concentration of the minutes-long stare at the soldier when Amiry and her husband are stopped by an army vehicle for exceeding the curfew limit by a ten minutes. As Amiry herself explains:

> I don't know what happened to me at that moment. The word *hajjeh*, the immaturity in the shrieking voice of the boyish soldier, the haziness and darkness, all stirred in me the frustrations of weeks of curfews, the aggression of months of preparation for the Gulf War, the anger and

> resentment caused by the 24-year-long Occupation, the decades of unfulfilled aspirations, the eternal yearning for normality. (67)

Amiry's entranced stare at the soldier "with owl-like eyes" is a strong resistance strategy with the full force of communication, or more clearly, a confrontation strategy (68). Though it might seem to be an act of no consequence, the sharpness of her prolonged, almost mesmerized look speaks to the contrary. The soldier comes to notice it and eventually, gets unnerved by it. The duration of the stare is interjected with the repeated commands of the irritated soldier to stop staring, but his orders are met with utter silence poured as a fuel on the burning fire of her stare. An important way of communication arises here – the complete silence accompanying the stare marks a way of speaking back; a strong undercurrent of retorting remarks and comments runs barely beneath the layer of outer silence. The string of thoughts that constitute Amiry's monologue begins with this:

> Fucker, I thought to myself. So irritated by a stare!
>
> I wonder what your reaction would have been if you had lived under occupation for as many years as I had, or if your shopping rights, like all your other rights, were violated day and night, or if the olive trees in your grandfather's orchards had been uprooted, or if your village had been bulldozed, or if your house had been demolished, or if your sister could not reach her school, or if your brother had been given three life sentences, or if your mother had given birth at a checkpoint, or if you had stood in line for days in the hot August summers waiting for your work permit, or if you could not reach your beloved ones in Arab East Jerusalem?
>
> A stare, and you lose your mind! (68)

To the soldier's annoyed remark whether she was deaf, the author's entranced eyes were recounting to him the tale of Palestinian tolerance and fortitude:

> I am neither deaf nor blind nor mute, young man. Like the rest of us, I have learnt how to act deaf, behave blind, pretend to be mute every time I encounter one of you in our towns, our streets, our houses, our living rooms, or even our bedrooms.
>
> Do you want to know how I felt when I acted deaf, the day your fellow soldiers insulted the old man at the checkpoint?
>
> Do you want to know how I felt when I behaved blind as your colleagues were beating up my students, when I was on my way to teach at Birzeit University?
>
> Or would you rather know what was going on in my mind as one of your beloved soldiers screamed in distorted Arabic at the women standing next to me in the pouring rain, while we begged for our residency permits so that we could live with our husbands and families?
>
> Do you NOW understand why we act deaf, blind and mute for the most of our lives?
>
> Do you realize what it would be like if we started acting like normal human beings every day, every hour, every minute or second in which you have violated our rights?
>
> Do you realize what kind of will (and humiliation) it takes to teach ourselves not to hear, not to see, and not to speak up?
>
> That is exactly why the whole world is taken by surprise whenever we decide to see, hear and speak up, every one or two decades. (69)

In this juxtaposition of external silence and deafness with an inner, exploding voice can be seen the epitome of her passive resistance against the oppressive regime. Most important is the attention drawn to their condition of being silenced. The statement that they are forcibly made to act blind, deaf and dumb takes on an accusatory tone towards the oppressors. She gives expression to the will-power of Palestinians when they are humiliated so; her words of resistance succeed in channelizing the blame of such thoughtless acts of humiliation to the perpetrators themselves. It belittles and shames them while endowing power upon the oppressed Palestinians on account of their fortitude. Moreover, the declaration that they are indeed capable of seeing, hearing and speaking up of their own accord attests to the immense strength welling up in large and small acts of resistance. The fact that the soldier will not be able to report her crime to his higher authorities (Amiry laughs and laughs imagining the boyish soldier taking Salim to the authorities and complaining that the man's wife could not take her eyes off him) is the real success of her resistance strategy. It is her stare that finally helps the three of them – Amiry, Salim and Salim's cousin Vera – escape detention and punishment by the army officials whose attention got distracted from their violation of curfew principles (their failure to get to home before the re-imposition of curfew). Thus Amiry weaves out through her silent stare, a new and potent way of communicating, with the otherwise impenetrable enemy. The narrativization of the stare can also be seen as the spontaneous creation of "an episodic interpretation and integration of previously disjointed sensory and affective memories" (Henke xii). Amiry's work becomes scriptotherapy by virtue of this episode-like arrangement of her experiences, which enables her to grasp such memories better.

The intricate fusion of two parallel narratives make up this chapter: one, of the outer narrative which is an account of the events that happened during the time of curfew-lifting and the other, the author's thoughts and feelings that flow as her intense reaction against the prolonged oppression and, more importantly, that which comes in the form of the above quoted monologue directed against the oppressors, right in front of her amidst the scene. Amiry expresses her anger in words that gush out and flood her mind, the full force of which gets crystallized in the fire of her stare at the boyish soldier before her. Her anger, though aroused by and directed at the soldier in front of her, is against the oppressive regime of the Israeli army that seriously jeopardizes and damages Palestinians' freedom and basic rights of living.

Imagination as a Tool of Resistance

Imaginative encounters and dialogue between the author and the stronger side of the other follow as yet another countering technique against the overpowering dominance of the Israeli army. One such encounter takes place in the chapter "Mr. President" in the imagined conversation between Amiry and the then American President George W. Bush. This is primarily intended to bring to light the discrepancies of the first world and third world nations. The comic dialogues involving mispronunciation of the name 'Bush' as 'Push' and the President's inability to comprehend Amiry's talk such as taking 'house arrest' for 'rest' points to the irremediable misconception of Palestinian identity on an international level. Her attempt to inform him of the prolonged curfew imposed upon the Palestinian territories by Israel falls on the President's deaf ears as he simply hears the word 'curfew' as 'carefree' and cheerfully agrees to having heard Israel to be the only carefree and democratic country in the world. However, the whole of the imaginary telephonic conversation also demonstrates the author's attempt to bring to light the

plight of millions of Palestinians before the world. To imagine the bold act of putting across the Palestinian issues of military occupation, poverty and unemployment to the American president is in itself a resistance move as well as an act of upholding one's identity.

Striking just as the above daydream is the muted dialogue that Amiry has with the lioness at the zoo in Qalqiliah, the only one in the whole of Palestinian territories. After meeting the baby giraffe which seemed to be politically ambivalent perhaps due to its ability to see behind the Separation Wall that Israel had purposely built amidst Palestinian land, Amiry who was accompanying the official visit of Leila Shahid, the Palestinian ambassador in Paris, moves towards "the proud, elderly lioness" (193). The very comparison of herself forced to live in the militarily occupied Palestinian territory to the caged lioness speaks about the keen sense of freedom as well as oppression in the author. The mutual exchange that occurred between them is rendered in a quite clear language typical of Amiry's writing:

> The minute I got to the lioness …, she looked me straight in the eyes and said, 'Now you know what it means to be living in a cage, isolated and cut off from your natural habitat.'
>
> 'I know, I am really sorry, we owe you an apology.'
>
> 'It's OK, it is the Israelis that owe us both many apologies,' added the lioness. We hugged one another and cried. (193)

The symbolic relevance of this imagined piece of communication shows Amiry's resistance against being forced to live in the shadow of the Separation Wall constructed by Israel.

Inaction or Non-Compliance

Sharon and My Mother-in-Law voices the little deeds of protest put across by the author against the ongoing occupation of the Palestinian territories. One among them is the deliberate inaction on her part where she refuses willfully to comply with the seemingly absurd orders of the Israeli army. This strategy of non-compliance imparts the real defiant aura to Amiry's way of resisting their whimsy commands. For instance, in the chapter "Ramallah Under Curfew," Amiry elaborates on the frequent imposition of curfews and the extremely hectic hours of curfew lifting:

> Every few days they would lift the curfew for 'humane reasons', so that civilians could go out to buy food and medicine. Ramallah would become an absolutely frantic town, with everyone running like crazy to do their shopping before the three-hour respite was over. Every now and then, I used to refuse to leave the house in defiance of Israel's decision: 'Now you can come out of your houses and run like crazy as we watch you, while pointing our guns at you just in case.' (130)

The voice of the powerful side that Amiry mimics in the last line quoted above reveals their attitude towards the millions of Palestinians brought under their control and surveillance. The author's resistance strategy lies exactly in not complying with the curfew lifting orders of the Israeli army when the majority of the Palestinian population is running hither and thither to accomplish necessary tasks during the short curfew respite. Her decision to not go out of home is, though rather unknown to and unacknowledged by others, her way of protesting the inconsiderate and deliberate imposition of such curfews in the first place. Amiry's way of mimicking the soldiers' speech can be found in other instances of the book as well, such as her imitation of

Captain Yossi in the fourth chapter, “The Seven-Year Epic of My Identity” and in the parroting of the soldiers’ absurd commands in the seventh chapter, “The Promised Gas Masks.”

Such a resistance strategy involving the author’s self-made decision not to comply with what she considers absurd and whimsical orders of the Israeli military rule that is meant to agonize Palestinians shows her capacity of resilience. The book *Resilience* by the renowned French ethologist and psychiatrist, Boris Cyrulnik, talks of how individuals have the strength to recover from personal and historical trauma by means of self-adopted measures (Marquis 124). Here, Amiry’s choice of not going out to the traumatizing frenzy of the curfew respite shows her faith and resilience; she does not want to obey the oppressive rules of occupation that stringently curtails the Palestinians’ freedom of movement while lifting the curfew for a previous few hours.

The funny answers and retorts with which Amiry reacts against the intolerable scrutiny and questioning pattern of the Israeli security officers at the Tel Aviv Airport during her return trip from London is yet another way of refusing to comply with oppression. Instead of revealing the truth that the purpose of her visit to London was just a vacation trip to Scotland with her old friends, Amiry simply answers that she went dancing in London. This choice of withholding true information results not only from Amiry’s wish not to complicate matters and make the interrogation unbearably long but also from her ardent need to resist the very process of unnecessary interrogation and prejudiced scepticism of Israeli officers. Again, when Amiry’s non-cooperation with the security officers seems to result in her detainment and arrest in the airport, she responds to the ridiculous verdict by stating her demand to, “go out and inform poor Ibrahim, who has been waiting outside the airport for hours” to pick her up (9). The mention of yet another person Ibrahim only triggers a volley of further

questions to which Amiry bothers not to explain. Ibrahim is one of the few taxi drivers in Ramallah who has a yellow licence plate for his car and could pick up passengers from the airport. It is just because neither Amiry's husband Salim nor any of her friends possess the travel permits to pick her up from Tel Aviv that Amiry had had to rely on drivers like Ibrahim and she refrains from proclaiming out loud her simple dream of being welcomed at the airport by her husband in any of her return trips. Refusal to elaborate on these sentimental aspects of her loss in living under occupation is then redoubled as the non-compliance at the officers' order to stay detained at the airport. Amiry openly states that the security officers can arrest her but not before she has informed the taxi driver of this and thus save the man endless hours of futile waiting outside the airport. To the short-tempered scream of one of the officers that she cannot leave the airport even to inform the taxi driver outside, Amiry's reaction is quite firm and fearless:

> 'Watch me do it', I said, as I turned around and started walking out of the interrogation room into an arrivals hall filled with passengers, many of them coming to enjoy the sun and beautiful, relaxing shores of Israel. My heart was pumping as I walked towards the exit; by then, two security men were walking very close to me, one on each side. One of them kept repeating, 'Don't make us do things we don't like doing.'
>
> 'Yes, arresting me in front of these tourists will create a scene which is not favourable for tourism in Israel,' I screamed back. 'Why can't I be treated just like any of these tourists?' (10)

Outside the airport, Amiry tersely offers her account of being detained to a bewildered Ibrahim, right in the presence of the two officers who had remained on her chase,

"Ibrahim, these are security officers. It is a long story. In short, I am under arrest and I just came out to let you know that you should not wait for me any longer – please call Salim and tell him that I have been arrested at the airport" (11). Though she is released by the officers on Ibrahim's diplomatic handling of the situation, Amiry stands firm that she is right in not complying with the security officers and thereby confusing them with her round-about way of answering their silly questions.

Thus non-compliance becomes an effective resistance strategy in two different ways: either by choosing to do what has not been allowed or by choosing not to do what has been ordered. This is also evident in Amiry's own mother's stand that she would not cross the River Jordan into Palestine, not even to visit her daughter in Ramallah, as long as there was an Israeli occupation. Her policy was "NO to normalization with Israel" (110). Such personal decisions as these on the part of Palestinian individuals are counter measures, carried out in idiosyncratic ways.

Forgetting or Denial

Similar to the resistance strategy of non-compliant inaction on Amiry's part - as in refusing to come out of the imposed house arrest during the hours of curfew respite, there is another way of protest in seeming to forget the fact of military occupation or denying it altogether, at least to oneself. There is a rerouting of the trauma and pain of having to live under the shackles of Israeli occupation in the use of many humourous understatements, casual irony and carefree dialogue. The severity of the occupation is also better revealed by shifting the focus of attention to inanimate objects of daily use thereby carefully avoiding the sentimental presentation of the scene which would naturally border on self-pity. There are several small chapters on the second part of the book whose titles such as, "Capuccino in Ramallah," "The

Balcony," "The Purple Dress," "The Marmalade" and "The Doors" serve to attach a different level of significance to the existence under military occupation. The strategy of deliberate forgetting adopted by the author in these parts of her narrative evidently points to her choice of seeing the oppression in a defiant way.

The news of yet another military encroachment into Ramallah and Al-Bireh which included the siege of Arafat's headquarters in Ramallah next to which Amiry's mother-in-law resides and the reoccupation of the neighbouring Palestinian areas including their own Al Irsal neighbourhood, is received with alarm by Amiry and her husband Salim. Yet, her diary accounts capture the events in quite a different way, whereby, the main event of more stringent military reoccupation is eclipsed behind the focus on how the events had had their effects upon the author and her neighbours.

The expression of fear and terror on being reoccupied is conveyed mostly through telephone conversation. Having witnessed the arrival of heavy tanks and other military vehicles in the middle of the night, Amiry has fallen into a prolonged and, often disturbed, sleep from which she is woken up repeatedly by a series of phone calls in the morning. Reporting the telephone conversations from just one side or in the form of her own monologue is an effective way of narrating the traumatizing incident of being conquered by an oppressive authority at such close quarters. Her apologetic reply to her friend Vanouch's first call in a husky, sleepy voice that she is fully awake, tries to cover up her shame about sleeping peacefully when the army has freshly invaded their neighbourhood at night. Even her act of sleeping through the incident though conveyed in an apologetic tone is one bold way of reacting to the traumatic situation.

The communication of the events given as Amiry's monologue when she answers one phone call after another imparts the seriousness of the situation in an understated way. More than the arrival of military tanks at 2.30 in the night, her description of the event focuses more on the cappuccino Salim risks his life to make for her at 4.30 only to find her asleep without waiting for the coffee. This gives a humourous tone to an otherwise grave story of military incursion. The monologue also finds appropriate changes according to the person who calls at the other side. Though she consoles each of her anxious friends and acquaintances that she and Salim are perfectly fine at their home despite being surrounded by the military vehicles, she takes peculiar care to deny that it is their Al-Irsal Street that had been invaded as per the news reports to both her enquiring mother and mother-in-law. She also drops the lighter side of the story which includes the life-risking cappuccino when these older women are at the other end of the line. To soothe her terrified mother-in-law who is trapped at her home directly opposite the besieged headquarters of Arafat, she even lies that it was not tanks, but the sounds of thunder that disturbed their sleep the previous night. The deliverance of the monologue poignantly reveals the underlying pattern of Amiry's narrative with its significant points, turns and changes that proclaim aloud her way of fighting against the absurdity and injustice of occupation.

Denial of the unpalatable facts of the Israeli military occupation is, for the author, a resistance strategy like the willful forgetting of undesired events. In the last chapter of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, Amiry speaks about the huge Separation Wall built by Israel that cuts its way through the Palestinian territories. Amiry conveys through her narrative that while Israel claims the issue of 'security' as the justifiable reason behind the construction of such a wall, the reality is that it is

intended to separate “Palestinians from Palestine” (188). Showing that the Wall separates Palestinians not only from their dear ones but also from their agricultural fields and water resources that have fallen on the other side of the said wall, she declares it as “the biggest land and water *grab* in the history of Israel” (188). Edward Soja, in his 2010 book titled *Seeking Spatial Justice*, explains spatial justice on the basis of viewing human life as a social, temporal and spatial experience (2). Amiry’s account of the Israeli appropriation of Palestinian farmlands points evidently to the lack of the so-called spatial justice in the context of her story. Her strategy of denial is elucidated in the chapter in the following manner:

> I was trying hard to hide my anxiety and fear from Leila Shahid, the Palestinian ambassador in Paris, whom I was accompanying on her trip to the town of Qalqiliah, some fifty kilometres north of Ramallah. She wanted to see the worst of the ‘Separation Wall’.
>
> The problem was not the three types of permits I needed to ‘legally’ accompany Leila on her trip, or the impossibility of getting such permits from the Israeli army at such short notice, but rather the mental and psychological barriers, checkpoints and separation walls I had personally built in and around myself and my life, in besieged Ramallah. I must admit I was in a state of complete denial about the harsh realities of the Qalqiliah eight-metre-high concrete wall. Denial seemed to me an effective way of dealing with the unbearable encounters of life under occupation.
>
> To drive ‘illegally’ through Israel seemed to be the only way to make it Qalqiliah. It was also the only way to challenge Sharon’s ‘Security wall’! (188-9)

As Amiry admits, the psychological walls she builds within her correspond to the reality of the concrete wall where the former chooses to negate the existence of the latter altogether.

Escape Mechanism

Confronting soldiers at innumerable posts and checkpoints on a daily basis has taught the author to escape or evade them cleverly at times. Such escape mechanisms, at times humourous and at other times defiant, present themselves as a compelling resistance strategy against the quotidian reality of the absurd military rule. Such an evasion of the security officials is related in the ninth chapter titled “A Dog’s Life” where Amiry’s pet dog, Nura, quite easily acquires a Jerusalem passport on receiving an anti-rabies vaccine from a veterinary doctor in Jerusalem. Making it clear that there were many of her friends and acquaintances who had not yet been able to acquire a Jerusalem ID, let alone a Jerusalem passport, Amiry states that her dog’s possession of such a passport is no trivial matter, given the strictest ways of Israeli bureaucracy that ensure that Palestinians do not come to possess permits and identity cards that allow them to reside in or travel to the holy city of Jerusalem.

Nura’s newly acquired Jerusalem passport is conveniently put to use by Amiry to get through the checkpoint into Jerusalem in place of the two separate travel permits she and her car actually needed for making such an entry. To the soldier’s question at the checkpoint regarding her own travel permit which she had not yet come to possess, the author is ready with her reply, “I am the dog’s driver. As you can see, she is from Jerusalem, and she cannot possibly drive the car or go to Jerusalem all by herself” (108). As a further convincing strategy, Amiry politely laughs and tells the inspecting soldier that “somebody has got to be her driver” (108). With the soldier

satisfied with the details entered in Nura's passport and his affectionate pat on her pet dog's head, she presses her foot on the accelerator, thereby, enjoying a new kind of freedom cleverly won amidst stringent travel restrictions. In *Palestinian Identity*, Rashid Khalidi talks of Israel's practice of apartheid in travel freedom and pass system that hinders Palestinian movement using checkpoints, barriers and walls while allowing Israelis to speed on settler-only roads as "child's play" (xxv). Amiry's funny account ending with the following words reaffirm the whole affair as indeed a child's play: "All it takes is a bit of humour, I thought to myself, as Nura and I passed the same soldier as we drove back to Ramallah that same afternoon" (108). In this manner, the author retorts with a funny logic to the absurd illogic of the humiliating occupation.

Amiry also says how she had to evade the soldiers whenever they happened to appear before her during the three years from 1984 to 1987 when she had to live as an illegal resident of Ramallah before acquiring her ID card by force, "Every time I spotted an Israeli soldier from a distance, I would risk jumping out of the car – if he had caught me with no papers I would be automatically deported – turn my back and hide" (33). Even this tale of escape mechanism ends with her humorous comment that she is not sure whether her poor Birzeit students learnt much from a teacher on the run. Likewise, Amiry recounts her journey to the Palestinian town of Qalqiliah which had been accomplished by 'illegal' driving through Israel. Since Israel has chosen to partake much of the land in the Palestinian territories by building a long Separation Wall, the only way that Palestinians could travel from parts of their territories to another is by journeying through the intervening land of Israel. This journey forbidden to Palestinians by Israeli law is, according to Amiry, the only way of protesting against the blockage of their straight passages between places belonging to

Palestine by the construction of the Separation Wall. About her journey through Israel in order to reach the Palestinian town of Qalqiliah, she writes that "It was my *age* that got us through the Qalandia checkpoint, Leila's *elegance* through the second checkpoint into Israel and the soldiers' total *confusion* over Leila's passport and my Jordanian passport that got us through the only entry and exit point for the 45,000 residents of Qalqiliah" (189) (italics in original). The escape mechanism of tricking the Israeli soldiers manning the many checkpoints is therefore presented as an effective way to challenge the very system of oppression that takes away even the basic right of travel.

Speech

Speech also becomes a decisive tool for the author to protest against the many injustices she feels in her own life as well as those of her fellow Palestinians. In *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, speech becomes the verbal expression of resistance. It is through the power of communication that Amiry acquires her *hawiyyeh* or ID card, the most important aspect of her identity in Ramallah. When communication hitherto had been like a one-way traffic, she could not obtain her residency card for a long period of seven years. In the farce that occurs in the name of a celebration for those residents who newly acquire their cards, Amiry and others are fooled by the Israeli military governor and the Israeli-appointed mayor of Ramallah. It is noteworthy that none of the Palestinians gathered over there get an opportunity to speak up, except for the old man in a black Bedouin '*abaieh.* The formality that accompanies his speech containing headlong praises of the Israeli officers are defined by a sense of artificiality; Amiry suspects that it must have been written by the authorities themselves. Such a carefully prepared speech – spoken by a Palestinian lauding Israel – is part of the one-way communication that establishes the Israeli

superiority over the Palestinians through an outer cloak of pretentious benevolence. Here the black '*abaieh* or traditional cloak of the old man becomes a symbol of his concealed allegiance to Israel. Diametrically opposite to this false clothing is the bare truth of one's real identity in the kind of clothes packed by Amiry – a towel, a nightgown and some underwear – when she goes to meet Captain Yossi to demand her ID card and offers herself to be put in prison after disclosing the contents of her bag and metaphorically, those of her straightforward life. Amiry reverts the channel of communication from the powerful to the powerless in order to obtain possession of her rightful identity – her long overdue residency card.

Amiry relates the interesting tale of how she put an end to the 'seven-year epic' of her identity which is brimming with the fire of resistance. By way of beginning the tale, Amiry says that, "The seven years of hiding away from the Israelis turned into a strong urge to face them, to look them in the eye and make them realize how criminal their behaviour had been towards me and all other Palestinians. The images of young Palestinian boys and girls facing the strongest military with a stone and a sling made me feel ashamed of my patience" (39). This time when Amiry desperately sought and fought for acquiring her residency card coincided with the storm of the first *intifada* brewing all over Palestine in late 1987 (italics in original). Edward Said, in his 1995 book, *Peace and Its Discontents*, has said that, "Our two assets are the capacity to speak out, and to organize courageously in resistance: these served us well in the *intifada*" (123). Starting from her arrival at the Civil Administration compound till her violent encounter and outburst with Captain Yossi, Amiry gains an upper hand in speech which enables her to obtain what otherwise she would have not. She lies to the two soldiers guarding the huge iron gate of the military compound that she has an appointment with the officer. Her response to their

lack of information regarding such an appointment is a dramatic insistence that he probably had forgotten to inform all of his present day appointments, uttered "with all the pretend confidence [she] could muster" (39). Ignoring completely the instructions of the soldier as to wait for Captain Yossi to finish his current appointment, Amiry pushes the door of his office wide open and strides forcefully towards his desk. To the surprised captain's request to wait outside till he gets done with the present visitor, Amiry has an apt reply – "No more waiting. I have waited for seven years" (41).

There is a sudden reversal of subject positions in the encounter with the captain; the woman gains her voice while the oppressive male falls silent. Sitting cross-legged next to his desk, Amiry orders the stunned captain for a cup of coffee and a cigarette. When he asks with a perplexed expression on his face as to what he should do for her, her answer is simple and straight forward, "[g]ive me my *hawiyyeh* (ID)" (41). His confused enquiry about the ID launches Amiry into a lengthy speech, as if to checkmate the alarmed captain:

> Listen, Captain Yossi, I have been dealing with your nonsense for too long now. Do you have any clue what I have been through in the last seven years, waiting for my stupid *hawiyyeh*? Do you have any idea why every single Palestinian man, woman and child is participating in this uprising? It is because we can no longer take your baloney [a polite word for shit]. Do you know what it means for a wife to live away from her family, her husband and children? Do you want to know why Palestinian men have been freaking out and running around stabbing Israelis in the back on Jaffa Road? [At that time there were no suicide bombers.] Ask me. I know. I know exactly how it feels to be driven to the edge of doing mad things. Look at me, Captain Yossi. Do I look like a criminal to you? Tell me." (42)

Amiry's level of resisting against the intolerable domination of the Israeli army here reaches its crescendo when she claims her willingness to be arrested and put to trial. Her anticipation of the possible outcome of her actions penetrates through the usual defensive positions assumed by the ruling Israeli military whenever they seem to be challenged. Handing over all her belongings, Amiry's words force the captain into utter silence, "You claim to be the only democracy in the Middle East. You claim to have courts. Here I am. Put me on trial, charge me for the crimes I have committed (so far). Here is my bag" (42). Making it clear that she has no intention of leaving till she gets her identity card, Amiry's breathless words gushes out – "Put me on trial if you think I am a terrorist. Why not imprison me? You treat us all like terrorists so we might as well behave like them. Give me my *hawiyyeh*, do you hear me, Captain Yossi?" (43). When her angry words finally break into tears, she realizes that the captain was "capable of handling Palestinian demonstrators, rebels, stabbers, terrorists" and that he had even been trained to handle "bombs, dynamite, tanks, fighter planes and submarines" (43). The strength of an ordinary Palestinian woman thus fails the captain's power and the few words he scribbles on a piece of paper within minutes gets Amiry her long awaited residency card permitting her to legally reside in Ramallah. The Captain Yossi episode does not end at this point; five years later during the Israeli-Palestinian negotiations going on in Washington in 1993, the journalist-turned-Captain Yossi requests an appointment with Amiry who is also participating in the peace negotiations. Amiry recounts that it was her turn to say 'no' this time.

The chapter on the futile attempt to obtain protective gas masks is also characterized by verbal jibes and remarks that show Palestinians' ability to resist while holding dear the sense of their nationality. Almost surrealistic and Kafkaesque

in its overall atmosphere, the actual events described in the chapter effectively translate the utter absurdity of everyday reality of Palestinians under occupation. The narrative directly plunges into the midst of the paradoxical situation that Amiry, her husband Salim and their neighbours find themselves in. The Israeli army has announced one morning that they were giving gas masks to Palestinian people to protect themselves from the chemical warfare supposed to be involved in the ongoing Gulf War. The irony of getting shot for going out during curfew to collect life-saving gas masks is subtly revealed through Amiry's thought process, "wouldn't it be tragic to be shot while trying to save ourselves by getting gas masks?" (78). Thoughts give way to confused bits of conversation between Amiry and her neighbour Gabi. When Amiry shrugs saying that she does not quite get why they don't lift the curfew for distributing the masks, Gabi replies with a rhetorical question as to what after all makes sense in the chaos of Occupation. The narration of the absurd and whimsical orders imposed upon the bewildered group of Palestinians of Al Irsal neighbourhood reaches its crescendo in the actions and gestures of the deaf and mute Abu Maher. His desperate translation of the Israeli soldier's orders to his acquaintances who have arrived late upon the scene in the form of wild and frantic wave of the hand only aggravate the enormity of absurdity of the Israeli rules and regulations on the occupied Palestinians.

The account of resistance and resilience shown by the summoned Palestinian people finds a steady pace in the above mentioned anecdote. The accumulation of several small incidents that contribute to the gas mask tale is dotted by curt remarks and observations by Amiry and her Palestinian neighbours gathered at the Army compound. In addition to the angry interjections made by Amiry to the soldier's shouting through the loudspeaker to the assembled group at such close quarters, other

hushed retorts and curses muttered beneath breaths like “No coffee for you, bastard” also escape Amiry’s lips (83). This act of mumbling curses under her breadth can be interpreted on the light of what James C. Scott has stated in his “Everyday Resistance” as, “Open declarations of defiance are replaced by euphemisms, metaphors; clear speech by muttering and grumbling; open confrontation by concealed non-compliance or defiance” (55). Such words of dauntless courage uttered by the author form the core of her passive mode of resistance towards occupation like her previous stare at the soldier in the sixth chapter, “A Shopping Spree in Anticipation of Saddam’s Scud Missiles.”

The account of Amiry’s marriage with Salim again proves Palestinians’ inescapable brush with the occupying army. After having the wedding in Amman, the newlywed couple were crossing the Allanby bridge to Palestine with the hard won one-month visitor’s permit in hand when an Israeli woman soldier approached and tore the permit in front of Amiry’s eyes. This time too Amiry has raised her voice against the cold-blooded order to go back to Amman without her husband, “I am his *wife* now, you can’t turn me back. As a wife I have the right to live with my husband” (32) (italics in original). After desperate cries and pledges, Amiry finally realizes the bitter fact that “There is nothing more frustrating and humiliating than arguing with an Israeli soldier. Why argue when their minds were made up long ago?” (32). Yet Amiry’s power of speech has hardly been blunted by the cold impassive nature of the occupying army: “If the bastards don’t give me a residency so I can live with my husband, I will stay ‘illegally’ for the rest of my life,” so Amiry tells the lawyer friend who had managed after a few weeks to get her another one-month visitor’s permit to be with Salim in Ramallah (32). Where speech proves ineffective, the anecdote titled “The Seven-Year Epic of My Identity” shows, action becomes effective as Amiry

lives in Ramallah with her husband for three years as an illegal resident, always on the run whenever an Israeli soldier was spotted at a distance.

Local Resistance

Progressing from the most passive forms of individual resistance as silence and memory, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* makes a movement towards demonstrating the collective strength and resilience of Palestinians as a people. Such a form of resistance embedded deep in the Palestinian psyche is proof of their aspirations towards national self-determination and a proper sense of identity. Edward Said, in his work *Peace and Its Discontents*, says that, "Our two assets are the capacity to speak out, and to organize courageously in resistance: these served us well in the *intifada*" (123). The many civil disobedience movements that make up such collective protestations against the prevailing occupation serve more as therapy sessions for the oppressed themselves, while seeking to communicate to the oppressor, of their resistance and retaliation.

The chapter entitled "Sharon and My Teflon Pan" demonstrates the most local of small-scale resistances which mainly add to the many civil disobedience movements springing throughout Palestine at all times. The act of banging loudly at pots and pans is presented both as a stern way of voicing protest and as a source of new energy and enthusiasm for Palestinians utterly bored and traumatized as Amiry herself. At the same time, it also strengthens the solidarity of the local Palestinians as a group confronting a collective trauma and boosts their integrity within the group. In her essay, "Trauma and Power in Postcolonial Literary Studies" published in the book *Contemporary Approaches in Literary Trauma Theory*, Irene Visser shows that collective trauma can contribute to a sense of identity and solidarity within a cultural

group (Balaev 9). Relying on Mary Douglas' grid-group theory of cultural thought styles, Visser points out that when traumatic wounding is situated in relation to mechanisms of power, trauma may not lead to the inherent fracture of the individual self, instead fosters a sort of community strength and bonding (9-10). This seems to be true in the context of the anecdote that Amiry narrates in the above mentioned chapter.

Late at night, in September 2002, during yet another difficult time of a prolonged curfew, Amiry narrates the highly exciting experience of local resistance that pierced the calm of midnight in her Al-Irsal neighbourhood. This lively anecdote is given after outlining the author's own "curfew routine" which was repeatedly interspersed with making tea and coffee, watching news, checking mails, walking around her house and garden and mainly, sleeping. If Amiry was angry at being disturbed by a three-year-old's persistent drum beating in the midst of her troubled siesta in the boredom of a curfew afternoon, she was more than exhilarated at the prospect of joining her protesting neighbours late at night with her own banging. When a sleepy Amiry is not at first able to understand the ongoings out in the street, her neighbours tease her out of her sleep asking whether her pots and pans are full of cooked food during the current curfew days that she cannot come up with a single empty utensil to bang her protest upon, out loud. Here Amiry's words are reproduced for the better translation of her experience of collective local resistance:

'OK…OK… I got it,' I said as I realized it was really happening and not a dream.

With great excitement I went into the house, ran to the kitchen, opened the kitchen cupboard, took out my biggest Teflon pan and came running back to

> the street. As I passed the living room, I glanced at the clock – it was past midnight.
>
> Oh God! Why do Palestinians start their civil disobedience late at night? It must be the long siestas they have been having for the last thirteen days. I went out to join the neighbourhood banging crowd, only to realize I had forgotten my banging spoon. I was not suited for this kind of peaceful resistance to the Occupation, I thought to myself.
>
> But it did not take long before I really got into it. I banged and screamed and laughed, as I watched one neighbour climb on top of a roof and start banging at the metal water tank; another was banging on the electricity pole, a third on the garbage bin. It looked like a scene from a mental hospital. Never mind, I thought to myself, even if it did not send a message to Sharon and his occupying army, it was great group therapy. (181-2)

Thus local gatherings for showing protest also have a cathartic effect by their token of evoking group sentiments and cementing their solidarity as a people. Not only men and women but children also actively take part in such struggles. At the centre of this local protest narrated by Amiry is a little boy of three years called Omar whose loud banging marks both the beginning and end of the street protest. If Amiry scolded the child for making noise during her afternoon siesta, she apologizes and eagerly welcomes him to join the elders with his Nido tin at the midnight gathering. Her anecdote ends with her statement of wonder whether “little Omar was one of the young and creative new clandestine leadership of the growing Palestinian Civil Disobedience Movement!” (182). The screaming and laughing of the local

Palestinians was an effective way of showing public disregard of the stringent curfew imposed on them.

The dramatization of the gas mask tale in “The Promised Gas Masks” brings out the collective nature of Palestinian trauma on a daily basis. The repeated attempts of people trying to get on and off the bus in the futile wish to acquire the ‘promised’ gas masks and the pointless orders that blare from the loudspeaker paint almost a Kafkaesque scene. The endless waiting and the distant prospect of a vague promise echo a Godot-like absurd drama where nothing is likely to happen. Amiry’s friend Emile’s remark that he is participating in the ‘tragicomedy’ enacted in the frontyard of his house and this further adds to the dramatic quality of the events. Moreover, Emile’s resemblance to the Israeli officer Mitzna is another dramatic element. These kinds of dramatization occurring in the narration of actual events takes off with a rare, sparkling sincerity of translating the lived experiences of the author and her fellow Palestinians into a collective saga of traumatic confrontation and survival.

Stor(i)ed Memories: The Act of Writing

There is an overarching resistance strategy embedded in the very act of gathering or recording the above-mentioned events in Amiry’s life pertaining to the sensitive issue of Palestine into the form of a book. The second part of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* consists of the author’s diary-like accounts sent to her friends as email correspondences. Following the *hakawati* tradition of Arab storytelling, she narrates her tales with appropriate comments and sarcastic remarks but, as is often the case with oral storytelling, with little or no editing. This resonates with free association, the act of talking freely in order to put across what had not been, or could not have been, said earlier. Amiry’s attempt to “reenact traumatic experience in the masterful mode

of ironic comedy" is proof of her writing visibly turning to scriptotherapy (Henke 141). The events are sad, depressing and traumatic, yet, the narration is light, comic and engaging.

The very act of writing such a book as the one dealt with in this chapter springs up inevitably from acute observation. The very position of the author as understood from her narratorial voice makes it clear that she has observed and analyzed both as an insider and outsider. The reason why this kind of an outsider perspective is adopted in a book containing mostly the author's own experiences is also made clear: in the traumatizing life of a Palestinian residing in the occupied territories with an unhappy past of dispossession and exile, and a present of identity crisis and lack of freedom, there is only one way of alleviating the trauma if at all such a thing is possible. Amiry prefers to make herself a detached observer of the daily ongoings of occupied Palestine in order to curtail the mounting pain and trauma of life. Remarking that a friend of hers named Bilal Hammad had once taught her to, "step out of the frame and observe the senselessness of the moment," the author further explains that this acquired capacity for detached observation has, over the years, become, "a self-defence mechanism against the Israeli occupation of [their] lives and souls" ("Preface" xi). In the "Preface" itself, Amiry pens down how the writing of the second part of what eventually became this text as emails to her friends "started as a form of therapy" during the early years (2001 to 2002) of the second *intifada* (ix). This makes Amiry's text align itself with the body of writing that has been identified as scriptotherapy, the process of scripting traumatic experiences itself imparting a sort of therapeutic effect.

The complexity of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* as an autobiographical text emerges from its narrative tropes, sociocultural contexts and rhetorical aims. The

ethnic, cultural and political dimensions of the text are well balanced by its rhetorical and literary aspects. The narrative canvas in which the real life events of the author and others have been placed has afforded the enrichment of the overall story in the book. For example, Amiry's listing of her curfew routine in the final chapter "A Lioness's Perspective" brings out the sheer boredom of repetition and little activity during the long hours and days of sitting at home. It is in the act of narration that such a listing occurs and thus brings to light the life of an individual forced to undergo house arrest. Similarly, Amiry's way of commenting on the events or situations that she explains, is also part of the book's narrative strategy that lends insight into viewing the events narrated. In the chapter titled "A Dog's Life," the author takes her pet dog to an Israeli veterinary doctor in Jerusalem where she happens to see a board that reads, "Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals" (104). On seeing this, she is quick to remark sarcastically that Arabs are not luckily considered animals. In the same way, there are other instances that reveal how the act of narration has imbued the original story with a deeper meaning. The silence she maintained at the airport and towards the soldier boy whom she fixed in her stare erupt in words only through the narrative canvas afforded by writing. In the due course of writing, Amiry's work also comes forth with the mechanization of the Israeli army and the gender neutralization of soldiers which become possible only in the act of narration. Moreover, the author's own confessions emerge solely in the act of writing like her true feelings about visiting her family house without her father, or her innermost reluctance to face the destruction at Nablus's historic quarter despite her overt enthusiasm shown during the visit undertaken by her Riwaq colleagues to the site of destruction to gauge the damage, make repair and conserve it as much as possible.

As a trauma narrative, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* lays bare many ways in which Palestinians' lives are traumatized. The historic loss of land and the resultant exile in 1948 that became the first of catastrophic experiences have further led to the recurrent trauma and pain of occupation, frequent wars and attacks, further eviction from homes and farmlands, limited freedom of movement, accumulation of permits, IDs and passports, the separation from family and relatives and yet more. To what extent does Amiry's book succeed in working through and smiling off at these encroachments into the Palestinians' very sense of self and identity remains unresolved at the end. Dominick LaCapra explains in the "Preface" to the 2014 edition of his work *Writing History, Writing Trauma* that, "Working-through itself should be understood as an open, self-questioning process that never attains closure and counteracts acting-out (or the repetition compulsion) without entirely transcending it, especially with respect to trauma and its aftermath. Working-through can be related to the ethical turn and conceived as a desirable process that does not replace but complements and supplements political concerns" (xxiii). He also warns that, "it is deceptive to see it in terms of a notion of cure, consolation, uplift, or closure and normalization" (xxiii). In this way, it can be understood that a complete and thorough 'working-through' is not possible in confronting and overcoming traumatic experiences.

Postmemory: Ways of Negotiation

Amiry's book deals with the various nuances of experiencing postmemory both by Amiry and her niece, Diala, who is her eldest sister Arwa's only daughter. Even though *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* tends to describe the author's experiences in the recent past (1981-2003), it is built on the thematic framework of "familial postmemory" (Hirsch 22). The author's journey to Palestine with which

commences the chain of events narrated in the book follows as a consequence of the workings of none other than postmemory. The first sentence of the "Preface" begins with these words, "I don't think I ever understood or, for that matter, forgave my parents, or the hundreds of thousands of Palestinians who fled their homes in 1948, until my husband and I had to flee our home in Ramallah on 18 November 2001" (ix). Years of living in Amman, Beirut and Damascus had hammered the basic fact of their lives away from home to an adult Amiry that she opts for a teaching job in the Birzeit University and comes to Palestine. The stories of Palestine which had shaped her sense of self and identity had, at that point in her life, urged her to pursue her future in the very soil which her parents and several others had had to flee.

Postmemory also offers itself as a powerful tool of resistance against the risks of erasure of one's self and identity. The way Amiry answers the question she herself asked her mother about finding a way to their house in Jaffa lost in the *nakba* of 1948 again sheds light on the 'history of exile' piled up on the younger generations' minds. Coming to a self-made decision to move to Palestine from the exile in Amman, Jordan, Amiry is on the verge of happiness like an eager, innocent child. When she asks her mother to describe the exact way to their pre-*nakba* home in Jaffa where Amiry thinks she would be able to go sometime during her stay in Ramallah, her mother's reply is a sigh and a remark that it would be extremely difficult to reach there as Amiry, born three years after the *nakba* and the consequent exile, had never been to the house before. This casual observation spoken in an almost resigned tone – one that seems irritating and even insulting to Amiry – is what triggers her to an incessant talkative session that mixes memory, nostalgia, a longing to belong and imagination. In this pretty long evocation of her postmemory, Amiry demonstrates her

acquaintance with her parents' past as well as the usurped co-ordinates of her rightful identity:

> It is true I have never *physically* been to our house in Jaffa but I feel I know it so well. Isn't it just next to the train station in al-Manshiyyeh, not very far from Hasan Beik Mosque, and also not far from Suq Iskandar 'Awad? It is just a two-minute walk from the sea; Dad used to walk across the rod wearing his swimsuit, his towel hanging over his shoulder. He swam every morning, rain or shine, right? It is the two-storey house with a staircase on one side. There are three shops downstairs, one of which is a barber shop. I will definitely recognize it once I see the big lemon tree right at the entrance of the house. Isn't the house upstairs ours, and the one downstairs my Aunt Na'imeh and Uncle Omar's? Right? Was my grandmother living with us or with Uncle Omar then? When did Grandma die exactly? Of course she died long before 1948. My sisters Arwa and Anan were still tiny then, right? Or was Anan not even born yet? Anyway, it must be very close to the clock tower – I remember Dad telling us how he took the carriage from there when he first went to study at the American University of Beirut in the autumn of 1921. It was his grandfather who accompanied him, as his father had died in an accident when he was very young; Mama remember… (13-4)

The words trail off into the imaginative realms of stories heard about the lived experiences of her parents. Here, her postmemory is significant, for, its flow is quite in an inverted direction; in other words, it is like a talking back to her parent from whom she acquired her postmemory in the first place. She assists her mother in remembering many a repressed memory of the past by the sheer force of her imaginative undercurrent. The short questions and enquiries, often furnished with the

inquisitive word ‘right,’ depict an interesting way of defining oneself through internalized memories. That the words resembling a pictorial description are spoken to her mother belonging to a generation earlier accentuates its contextual relevance.

During her journey from Amman to Ramallah, Amiry explains that, “As the car drove down the Jordan valley towards the Allenby Bridge, images of 1948 Palestine, which I had collected from my parents’ stories over the last thirty years, started flashing through my head” (15). This is clearly an instance of recall by virtue of postmemory. Amiry’s life on Palestinian soil begins on account of her decision to redraw the contours of her sense of identity:

> I was trying hard to familiarize myself with something unknown and yet also familiar. I felt extremely apprehensive. It was difficult for me to admit that I hardly knew Palestine.
>
> I was sixteen when the 1967 War took place… I was born in Damascus, grew up in Amman and studied in Beirut. All of a sudden it hit me that my familiarity with Palestine came only through my parents’ recollections and my scattered childhood memories…
>
> I was trying hard to fight my growing fear of becoming a stranger in Palestine. (17)

The extreme difficulty of carrying infinite documents, IDs and travel permits is expressed clearly as well, “I felt extremely uncomfortable carrying a document in Hebrew that allowed me into Palestine. I wondered what it said about me. I wondered if it said that my father was from Jaffa. I hoped it did” (16). With the enthusiasm of having arrived in Palestine, Amiry sets out to find her father’s lost house in the port city of Jaffa in Israel along with her future husband Salim Tamari. However, to her

great disappointment, she is met with a few unpleasant and agonizing experiences and fails to locate the house. Amiry realizes that the search to one's roots triggered by postmemory can turn to be a traumatic experience on its own account.

Sharon and My Mother-in-Law is also sensitive to the issues of memory and imagination when it comes to forming one's own identity from one's acquired sense of postmemory. Amiry's niece Diala's visit to Ramallah, Palestine from Amman, Jordan is marked by her own eager enthusiasm of the maiden trip to her original homeland as well as by Amiry's anxiety about keeping up the cherished favourable image of Palestine with which Diala lands on ancestral soil. There are two kinds of hurdles to cross before getting a relative to come to Palestine: one, obtaining the visitor's permit from the Israeli Civil Administration and two, helping relatives overcome their fears in order to make the trip. Amiry admits that her own desire to bring relatives who live far away from Palestine to visit her, makes her stand amidst unbearable crowds in front of the military compound of Ramallah's Israeli governor.

Apart from the practical difficulties involved in getting permission for someone outside to visit Palestine, there is the issue of the quintessential image of Palestine that would communicate to every visiting individual in a different way. This is why the term 'encounter' in the chapter's title "Diala's First Encounter" begins to matter. Amiry records her niece's responses on arriving in Palestine as, "She was nervously moving her beautifully shaped head in all directions, trying to absorb decades of her nostalgic mother's descriptions, her deceased grandfather's deprivations, and her unfulfilled grandma's aspirations" (111). Diala's first time visit to Palestine is thus not unaccompanied by tales, memories and endless imagination about the distant homeland from the other side of exile. This pre-dictated colouring is to undergo further readjustment and alignment when Diala really sees the much

foreseen land with her eyes and happens to meet people and places. It is the knowledge of this fact that makes the author steer the course of her niece's journey through Palestinian soil way too cautiously.

Realizing that it would take much longer for the thrilled teenager to grasp the situation in Palestine, Amiry decides to prolong the role of being "the politically correct aunt" (113). She thinks of giving Diala enough time to get over the initial excitement of visiting Jerusalem and to see and gauge the worth of Palestine as her homeland. Driving from Jerusalem to Ramallah in the hot noon, Amiry takes pains to avoid the bitter scene of Palestinian unemployment before Diala grasps the situation. Her narrative does not merely recount the places she drove her niece through, but also reveals those localities, buildings and landmarks she took care not to drive through. Diala is shown the houses where her grandparents lived before the *nakba* and where they had had to live after the momentous 'catastrophe.' Amiry's words testify to the careful maneuvering that she undertook through Jerusalem with Diala under her wing so that the latter would see the city for what the former intends it to be: "I was intentionally avoiding pointing out Jewish landmarks or Israeli settlements. I really wanted her to see how Arab East Jerusalem still existed, in the hope of convincing more of my family members to visit me. But it was not that easy" (113).

The term 'postmemory' does not necessarily denote a balanced equation that is transmitted from one generation to the other. The meaning of a historical trauma is often incompletely deciphered or taken for granted by those of the upcoming generations which results in just a partial identification with their original identities as embraced by the previous generations. These rifts of difference or points of friction between successive generations influence the way of mutual interaction among them. This is why Amiry gets irritated when Diala exclaims that the sight of the Dome of

the Rock from the Mount of Olives was “cool” (113). Similarly, when Diala enjoys the magnificent sight of the Israeli hotel ‘Hyatt Regency’, Amiry cannot help but admonish her naïve niece with these words, “If you knew that the Israelis confiscated Raja Shehadeh’s father’s land to build this bloody hotel, you would not say it was lovely” (113). In her typical sarcastic tone, Amiry adds in her narrative account that “the Israelis are very skilled at not leaving any traces showing that others were living on this land not so long ago” (113).

Diala’s first encounter is in fact her first lesson on how Israeli-Palestinian relationship really ought to be. More than the panoramic view of Jerusalem from the Mount of Olives or the sight of grand Israeli hotels and apartments or even the houses that sheltered her grandparents in Palestine before and after their exile in 1948, it is the suddenly forged bond with a previously unknown Israeli man that teaches Diala the primary lesson of humanitarian compassion between people on her first day in Palestine. The string of conversation between Amiry and Diala about Israeli settlements on Palestinian land was broken by a middle-aged man who, bent over beside the open door of his own car, was waving and screaming for help with one hand clutched on to the unbearable pain in his chest. Sensing the mutual panic in the quickly exchanged words in English between her aunt and the worn out stranger struggling in the back seat of their car, Diala soon becomes engulfed in her own apprehensions about meeting Israelis.

Added to the dramatic emergency warranted by the necessity of taking a sick man to hospital, there were both Diala and the sick Israeli whose fears and prejudices regarding the ethnic other had to be tackled by Amiry before they arrive at the hospital for immediate treatment. The Israeli man at the verge of a cardiac arrest was frightened to know that he is being taken to a Palestinian hospital by two Arab women

whose genuine intentions were eclipsed under the shadow of his doubts and apprehension about the unknown other. Amiry, on her part, was worried that the help she extended would prove fatal to the man who has already had one heart attack. Mindful of the consequences that may soon follow, Amiry's mind races up to a broader, collective result of her individual action – "What would the Israeli Army do once they found his abandoned car? There would definitely be a countrywide alert any minute now. Oh, God, I didn't want to think about how many young Palestinian men would be arrested as suspects due to my irresponsible, thoughtless act" (114). Diala sensed hostility instantly on seeing how difficult was any interaction that occurred between Palestinians and Israelis. Amiry's knowledge of Diala's prejudice against Israelis had made her arrange an amiable meeting for Diala with some of her Israeli friends. Earlier, she had wanted to be attentive to her teenage niece's fears and had wanted to help her slowly overcome them. Now the twin responsibility of easing the tension of both Diala and the sick person came on Amiry's shoulders.

The mode of conversation that goes on between Amiry and the man takes place by means of looking at each other in the mirror. This is a symbolic way of showing two persons who represent two different peoples trying to understand each other's worries. The language of conversation also creates impact in the third person listener; when Amiry talks to the man in English, Diala guesses that he is an Israeli and not an Arab, and when Amiry talks to soothe her newly arrived niece in Arabic, the sick man is further aggrieved to realize that he had been picked up by Arab Palestinians. The actual communication between Amiry in the driving seat and the sick Israeli man in the back seat occurring through the medium of rear view mirror symbolically also mirrors Susanna Egan's concept of 'mirror talk' in life narrative which captures the refractive interplay of dialogic exchange between life narrator and

reader (or viewer) (Smith and Watson 16). Considering that Amiry's text often calls the reader to negotiate and interpret actively and the fact that the author and the sick man represent two mutually apprehending groups, Diala's forced position to make meaning out of the ongoing mirror talk in the car reflects metaphorically the subject position of a reader of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, especially an outsider.

Even after realizing that the women were Palestinians, the sick man wanted to assure himself that they were from the Israeli city of Bethlehem. But Amiry answers truthfully that they are from the occupied town of Ramallah despite wanting to help the man cling on to the last bit of "the Israelis' comforting myths" (115). She further replies to his anxious enquiry that she was Muslim and not Christian to his horrified and "deadly silence" in the back seat which she can only hope is merely a figure of speech. After the sick man was taken inside the hospital, Amiry and Diala do not see him and they can only wish for the man's recovery. The words he mumbled while he was being carried to the hospital on a stretcher were, "There are good Palestinians after all" (116). Thus, whatever Diala had formerly envisioned of the land of Palestine as part of postmemory undergoes a complete change in that she learns the need of maintaining cordial relations among the Israeli Jews and the Palestinian Arabs as human beings basically. She realizes that the bond between these peoples was far more crucial than entertaining Eden-like images of the land.

"The Travails of Palestinians in Crossing Boundaries, Borders, and Barriers Within and Without their Homeland"

Taken from Rashid Khalidi's "Introduction to the 2010 Reissue" of his work *Palestinian Identity*, the words point to the spatial significance of *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* (xxiv). There is an evident interest in the work to trace the topology of Palestine as it appears to be misappropriated by Israel in a number of ways. First of

all, the author mourns the loss of environmental equilibrium and beauty in Palestine, "Dusty grey had become the national colour, while green was a rarity, fresh air was an impossibility" (125). The ever-present pain of the loss of houses and land in the 1948 *nakba* is doubled by the pollution and damage caused to air, water and other resources in what remained of Palestine in the territories of West Bank and Gaza.

While looking at Amiry's text as featuring the (im)possibility of movement in many of the chapters ("I Was Not in the Mood," "A Dog's Life," "Ramallah Under Curfew," "Nablus – The Unbearable Encounter," "A Lioness's Perspective" and a few others as well), the idea of places as sites of socio-political differences and ethnic hostilities clearly comes to the fore. In addition to the portrayal of Ramallah as the microcosm of altered and appropriated Palestine adorned with dirt and rubble in its pathways, the text focuses on specific spaces like airports and checkpoints that function as Michel Foucault's 'heterotopias,' or the seeming nonplaces. In his essay, "Of Other Spaces," Foucault explains about 'heterotopias' as, "Places of this kind are outside of all places, even though it may be possible to indicate their location in reality" (3-4). Dotting Palestinian territories in every direction, the checkpoints further take away the remaining land of Palestine while acting as nonplaces (not belonging to Palestinian territory where they are built) where Palestinians are checked, detained and arrested. As the security check-up in the Tel Aviv Airport in the first chapter, "I Was Not in the Mood" and the checkpoint security featuring in the chapters, "Goodbye, Mother," "A Dog's Life," "A Ten-Day Relaxation Trip to Egypt" and "A Lioness's Perspective" require Palestinians to carry innumerable permits and identity cards and thereby prove their different categorizations of identity, these places also function as the "borderlands" which Gloria Anzaldua speaks of in her *Borderlands* (4). Checkpoints act as border zones with highly uneven power relations between the

Palestinian travellers and Israeli soldiers/security officers. They are gendered spaces of oppression too, where women are body-searched, humiliated and marginalized. Rashid Khalidi sheds light on how these oppressive spaces link the identities of Palestinians as a people: "The fact that all Palestinians are […] subject to an almost unique postmodern condition of shared anxiety at the frontier, the checkpoint and the crossing point proves that they are a people, if nothing else does" (5). However, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* portrays the Palestinian attitude that protests every such spatial disfiguration in ways possible.

Nation in the Work

As a life narrative that touches upon the individual and collective nature of Palestinian identity, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* inevitably intersects with the history of the conflict-torn Palestine and its contested identity of nationhood. Edward Said in his essay "Arabic Prose and Prose Fiction After 1948" identifies the role of any writer seriously engaged in the actuality of his time as "to guarantee survival" to what is in "imminent danger of extinction" (48). He characterizes writing as having become "a historical act" and since the Israeli occupation of Palestine in 1967, as "an act of resistance" (48). In its portrayal of the vicissitudes of Palestinian identity, Amiry's book progresses with a sense of imbibed insight about the Palestinian history of disinheritance, loss and exile that began in the *nakba* of 1948. The Palestinian right to national self-determination is proclaimed aloud in the book by means of the different resistance strategies against the overpowering military rule, thereby, making a clarion call for freedom and other essential human rights of Palestinians as a people.

In walking forward to a life on Palestinian soil from her parents' past, that included the bitter acceptance of the Palestinian exile and a life away from homeland,

Amiry's life as shown in the book becomes an attempt to redefine her own Palestinian identity. It is a movement away from the historical ties that demand exile and separation from homeland. The mode of life-writing adopted by Amiry in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* that involves the stringing up of nuggets of tales or anecdotes, in a way, helps her to disengage with the moments of shared historical experiences like the *nakba* and *naksa* as significant in the collective time of Palestinian nation or culture and instead, divert attention to the many local incidents of Palestinian towns and neighbourhoods in the recent times that hitherto go unnoticed. The highly subjective style of Amiry's narration recreates the historicity of her stories as opposed to the set margins of totalizing narratives.

Frantz Fanon in his essay "On National Culture" from his 1961 book *The Wretched of the Earth* identifies national struggle as the very site of national culture (209). To struggle for national liberation is to struggle for the terrain whereby a culture can grow. The act of living and engaging with the present reality that gives birth to a range of cultural productions constitutes the struggle for nation itself as well as encapsulates the national culture. According to Fanon, a national consciousness is born of this struggle undertaken by the people which, in turn, represents the highest form of national culture. *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* thus records faithfully the daily trials and tribulations of Palestinians within a localized framework, and therefore, radiates the national consciousness of the people.

The larger collective issue of Palestinian self-determination is intricately connected with Amiry's little acts of resistance. According to Kwame Anthony Appiah, the right of self-determination is a group right or collective right which also ascribes to 'substantive individualism' or the rights of persons within a group (72). He goes on to say that "categories designed for subordination can also be used to

mobilize and empower people as members of a self-affirmative identity" (112). When applied to the context in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, the individuals whose tragicomic stories animate the canvas of the work can be seen as forming a part, though unorganized, of the larger ethnic group of Palestinians. Their subjugation under the military occupation also strengthens them as members of a self-affirmative identity that Appiah speaks of.

Narrative Techniques

Though the significance of the act of writing *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* has already been detailed elsewhere in this chapter, it seems worthwhile to ponder over the writing techniques adopted by the author. The book is written in the first person, the narrator's voice 'I' taking readers throughout the entire canvas of the anecdotes. Even as the frank writing mode is made to feel more like talking, the construction of sentences is precise and brief. While the chapters in the second part are written as real diary accounts with exact dates noted in the beginning, those in the first part that include the experiences of a much earlier time, feature the corresponding month and year or the seasonal time of the year like summer, spring or autumn, as pertains to the author's memory.

As far as the language is concerned, the work is a mixture of English with occasional Arabic and Hebrew words and phrases, often reproduced in the sarcastic way that the author wishes to say it aloud. Italicization and capitalization have been used for emphasis. Paragraphs are short and terse, sometimes a single line serving as a whole paragraph. The flexibility of her unique style has bestowed upon the author ample freedom to change the rhetoric of writing to cryptic expressions, lengthy and exclusive conversations, statements of anaphora and the like.

Featuring many real-life persons as characters, Amiry's debut book makes fun of both Palestinians and Israelis, without disrespecting both. However, her defiant stance as a Palestinian individual against the unjust policies of Israel is all too evident. The work also defends the women's cause, reacting vehemently to gender biases seen in society. In a nutshell, what gushes out in the narrative layout of the work promises newer ways of engaging with the traumatic past as well as the troublesome present of Palestinians.

Conclusion

Sharon and My Mother-in-Law is a brilliant re-channelization of a Palestinian woman's trauma under the pressing historic weight of the collective past as well as the brutal and unjust forces of military occupation in the present. That she could effectively give expression to the otherwise untranslatable grief points to the victory she had gained over the overwhelming traumatic undercurrents of her life. The work demonstrates several ways in which the author and others around her resist the ongoing military occupation by Israel.

The means of Palestinian everyday resistance showcased in the work are non-violent and passive. Not only are the author's methods of tricking Israeli soldiers and not complying with their orders harmless, they are also mainly self-satisfying to the point of achieving temporary relief from their day to day oppression. Even group activities as part of local resistance are intended to the effect of consolidating their identities as strong-willed Palestinians, rather than toppling down the power (in)equations of the oppressors. The majority of counter strategies adopted by the author happen in the terrain of mind, and thus carry the potential to heal or soothe her

trauma, at least to an extent. However, the act of writing down those events becomes akin to that of writing back.

The everyday concerns of life sagging under occupation has its roots in the deep pain of having lost the original homeland in historic Palestine. The uprooting of such a stable, grounded identity now precariously hanging to various identity cards they are obliged to possess, embodies the real mental conflict in Amiry's work. Her working-through trauma is done at the two levels of everyday resistance to oppression and the scriptotherapic way of recording the confrontation strategies.

The chief path cut for the channelization of the author's trauma is, quite different as it is from many other traumatic utterances, subtle humour as well as cheerful laughter. The satiric vein that characterizes the work from its beginning to end marks an audacious way to tackle the intense traumatic crisis in which Amiry's life as a Palestinian revolves. The work not only tries to 'work through' trauma, but also sheds light on the dynamic alterations that one's postmemory can be subjected to. Rather than showing postmemory as a fixed, unchanging sense and knowledge of one's forefathers' traumatic past, Amiry's and Diala's pre-conceived notions of Palestine are seen to undergo change in accordance with the experiences they encounter, traumatic and otherwise. Protesting against the invasion of various Palestinian spaces and using writing as a means for therapeutic healing, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* becomes a work of scriptotherapy.

Chapter 5

Houses as Memory Sites: Suad Amiry's *Golda Slept Here*

Whose house is this?

…..

Say, who owns this house?

…..

This house is strange

Its shadows lie

Say, tell me, why does its lock fit my key?

-- Toni Morrison, *Home*

Suad Amiry's *Golda Slept Here* (2014) deals with how Palestinians view and respond to the loss of their houses in the catastrophic *nakba* of 1948. The aim of this chapter primarily is to find out how the concept of memory is shown to work in two different generations of Palestinians: one, in the form of trauma of Palestinian individuals such as Andoni Baramki, Gabi, Nahil, Elie and Umm Salim who lived during the *nakba* years and two, in the form of postmemory of those Palestinians such as the author and Huda al-Imam who belong to the successive generations. The chapter also argues that there is a special focus on active commemoration of the lost lived space of Palestinian houses in the present.

Theory

This chapter makes a study of the various implications of the house visits conducted by the Palestinian characters as shown by Amiry in *Golda Slept Here*. The

focus of the book on the physical loss of Palestinian houses and other buildings addressed both in the past and present points to the embedded spatial-temporal framework. In the light of this, the chapter analyses the relationships of Palestinians to their lost houses and the various objects in them based on the concept of "memory sites" or "memory spaces" that Pierre Nora propounds in his influential essay "Between Memory and History" (7). The chapter "Objects of Return" from Marianne Hirsch's book *The Generation of Postmemory* has also been relied on for explicating the intricate bond of Palestinian individuals with their erstwhile houses and other material objects in it. A detailed analysis of the different characters' trauma and postmemory is conducted on the basis of Hirsch's texts and the pluralistic trauma theories of Caruth, Luckhurst and others.

The Dichotomy of Home/House

Dealing chiefly with the visits of Palestinians deemed 'absentees' or 'present absentees' by Israeli law to their long-lost houses in the predominantly Jewish West Jerusalem, the book explores the dichotomies of home/house, remembering/forgetting and personal story/collective national history. The emotional bond that characterizes a lived space as home is balanced with the consideration of every house as a unique architectural construction reflecting the tastes and aesthetic considerations of people who built and lived in it. This architectural eye intertwined with the narrative arises from the basic fact that the author who accompanies her protagonists and records their experiences of encountering lost homes is a renowned architect too. There are detailed descriptions of former Palestinian houses situated in West Jerusalem in *Golda Slept Here*. Andoni Baramki, an eminent architect and one of the protagonists, commiserates not only the separation from home but also laments the loss of such a

remarkable piece of his own construction. This home-house dichotomy is poignantly evident when reading between the lines in *Golda Slept Here.*

Purposely bringing out the tales of a handful of flesh-and-blood Palestinian men and women who were suddenly, violently and permanently exiled from their homes, the work turns its primary focus on the inseparable relation of people from the lived spaces of their homes, thereby, trying to rewrite a history of usurped houses and ousted families. The search motif or the quest motif lies embedded in this book that seeks to define the nuances of Palestinian identity in perpetual flux and fluidity. Capturing the Palestinian reality pulsating between official histories and private memories, the book wades through the anecdotes of personal experiences to connect them to wider social, cultural and political implications and understandings. The individual episodes of fixation with the traumatic Palestinian past are well merged with the larger issue of the still unresolved Israel-Palestine conflict, the negotiations with which reverberates the fine contours of this politically charged nostalgic memoir.

Having evicted the Palestinians from their houses in West Jerusalem, the Israeli government has, from time to time, entrusted the absentee property to *amidars* (the Israeli government agency that deals with Arab absentee properties) who, in turn, have lately been selling the land and villas either to Israeli real estate agencies or directly to Jewish settlers. The Arab inhabitants of the houses before the *nakba* have been termed absentees and present absentees whose absence, something taken for granted by the Israelis, is considered as freely allowing Jewish settlers flocking in Israel from time to time to occupy and settle down in those vacant houses. The displaced Arab Jerusalemites, on their part, have taken refuge in East Jerusalem with an Arab majority or have travelled to other Palestinian territories such as the West Bank or else have gone to other Middle East nations like Jordan or Lebanon. This is

the background upon which the picture of Palestinian exiles seeking out their former houses in West Jerusalem like long lost siblings or relatives resonates with meaning in *Golda Slept Here*. The theme of remembering is brought in many ways in order to emphasize the actual meanings of Palestinians' visits to their erstwhile homes. In a two-line dictum, the author expresses the politics of remembering, "While the Palestinians try hard to forget when they should remember. / The Israelis try hard to remember when they should forget" (7). The exposure of the covert transformation of the forcibly evacuated Arab houses in Jerusalem and other parts of former Palestine into Israeli settlements and innovative architectural masterpieces is meant to authenticate the Palestinian search for their ancestral houses. This mnemohistorical thread that studies the past as it is remembered by the different protagonists is ever present in the collective cultural framework of *Golda Slept Here*.

Memory and Trauma

The exploration of such familiar spaces as one's former home is conducted through a combination of memory and practice. Memory becomes the pivotal point upon which this whole book on remembering/ forgetting one's own Palestinian past and history revolves. In his essay "Between Memory and History," Pierre Nora says that "Memory is a perpetually actual phenomenon, a bond tying us to the eternal present" (8). There is an attempt by the Palestinian individuals in the book to reestablish one's lost lived spaces by their reinforcement and, sometimes, reenactment through memories. Memory, comprising the acts of remembering and forgetting, becomes the chief path through which the trauma as well as postmemory of Palestinian individuals in the book are enacted out. While providing a vent to confront his/her personal trauma, memory becomes the seat of past trauma which some other characters would rather like to keep repressed within themselves. Memory also acts as

the main supportive framework upon which the postmemory of the individuals of successive generations are built up. The author's purposeful (and illegal) entry into Jerusalem with which commences the search for raw materials required for the book shows the willful journey to dig up past memories. Gradually, there is a transition to other personal traumatic memories of lost homes whereby the collective picture of mass displacement and dispossession is built up.

The trauma of the above-mentioned characters or individuals are depicted in *Golda Slept Here* through their ways of responding to their own memories. When Amiry thinks aloud to herself on the sleepless night of her 'illegal' entry to the much loved city of Jerusalem that, "Perhaps the wound was still open," there is a direct reference to trauma as a wound in the psyche (7). This 'wound' of trauma opened in the first introductory chapter is reiterated by the author in the final section, "I guess the wound remains open" (152). In her work *Unclaimed Experience*, Cathy Caruth speaks about, "the wound of the mind" as, "the breach in the mind's experience of time, self, and the world" and that, "it imposes itself again" as repetitions (4). Amiry's text thus remains attentive to this yet unhealed traumatic wound right from the beginning.

Differing conceptually from the classic notion that tends to read trauma as a universal experience, the anecdotes narrated in the book uphold the newer pluralistic model of the theory, wherein, trauma is representable variably, specific and locatable unlike the previous idea of being permanently lost. The multitude of traumatic responses in the book, the specificity of experiences related to different individuals or protagonists and the socio-geographic focus on Jerusalem as the location that come under the purview of this study attest to the above-mentioned claim.

The Space-Time Graph

The starting point from which emanates the share of trauma and postmemory in *Golda Slept Here*, as in the case of other works studied in the previous chapters, can be traced down to the contested physical or territorial space and the existing emotional space of Palestine. “Erasing Palestine and appropriating its material and cultural heritage has been fundamental to Zionist colonial practices” (Masalha 6). The city of Jerusalem is described by Rashid Khalidi as “the geographical, spiritual, political, and administrative center of Palestine” (14). The coordinates of the trauma of exile and loss as well as the postmemory of younger generations that make-up the emotional landscape are marked well in the actual physical space comprising mostly of houses and other buildings. Since one of the underlying aims of the book is to expose social injustice, the interactions between space and individuals is essential to the understanding of the uneven functioning of justice. In the framework of Palestine as a geographically contested and unconsolidated place as well as a socially and politically produced space, the thrust area becomes the architecture of Jerusalem, following a geocritical approach. Even the title that forms the highly sarcastic words uttered by the author’s friend Huda (after pressing the brakes of her car quite suddenly in front of an ancient Arab villa), by virtue of the position pronoun ‘here,’ points to the spatial framework upon which this Palestinian ‘return narrative’ is built. Having called home as a “profound foundation” in life and “the pillars for a sane life” in the “Preface,” *Golda Slept Here* takes off with an acute sense of the loss of one’s home as well as an insatiable longing to reach out to it (xi). The main focus of the text on pre-*nakba* Arab houses lost to Israeli settlers effectively succeeds in highlighting the complex emotional responses accompanying such commemoration and mourning of dispossessed lived spaces.

The focus on how individuals relate to places underlines the topophilic angle of the work. The relation or dialectic between a selected cross-section of the Palestinian society and its history has been explored on the basis of an intertwined spatio-temporal approach. Amiry's reflection that the Israeli takeover of Palestinian land and property would be easier with the passage of the Palestinian *nakba* generation is given with an aphoristic couplet, "Time makes Palestinians forget. / Time makes Jews remember" (145). This is an example of taking memory along spatio-temporal lines. Moreover, chapter sub-headings like "Inside the new museum," "At the ticket counter," "Asmahan dined here," "On the Jerusalem-Jaffa railroad tracks" etc. point to the recurring spatial consciousness prevalent in the work. Similarly, a few other chapter titles and sub-titles such as "That Very Moment" and "June 10, 1967" suggest the temporal awareness involved.

Traumatic Response of Andoni

The act of remembering one's home is given from the perspective of the architect himself in the second section of *Golda Slept Here*. Combining the passions of architectural vocation and the dear sense of home, the two chapters of this part titled "Andoni: A Master Builder's Passion" portray a father and his son reminiscing their lost house in interesting ways. Their lost house becomes the central memory space that they continue to seek out as best as they can.

The anecdote revolves primarily around Andoni Baramki, a master architect who designed and built several landmark buildings in Jerusalem in the late 1920s and throughout the 1930s. During the tension in the spring of 1948 at the time of the *nakba*, Andoni and his family had to leave their house which ended up just beyond the border of what became West Jerusalem. Being Arabs, the Baramkis had to seek

refuge in the Arab quarter of Jerusalem called East Jerusalem. Andoni had no choice but to break the promise that he had made to himself – "*never* to leave his home," a construction masterpiece that he always referred to as "nour hayati" meaning "the light of my life" (27) (italics in original).

The curious tale of Andoni's obsession with his beloved house started and went on from 1948 to the Six Day War of 1967. Every Saturday, the day of *Shabat* for Israeli soldiers manning the outposts in the border of divided Jerusalem, he managed to get a look at his *nour hayati* in the West Jerusalem area from the terraced roof of the adjacent YMCA building which happened to be on the side of East Jerusalem. Andoni's obsessive gaze at his former house also constitutes an artist's way of enjoying his own masterpiece of a creation. The narrative of *Golda Slept Here* yet again reverted to that of poetry, Andoni's "weekly encounter" with 'the light of his life' is recounted as something of a clandestine rendezvous between a passionate lover and his beloved. His cautious movements up the four-storey stairway of the YMCA building to hide his weekly obsession from the YMCA staff, his crouching steps at the roof till he got right behind the white stone parapet with his head resting against its stony surface and his long legs taking a stretched position behind him, his slow breathing exercises in full view of his architectural masterpiece and his checking of the desire to sing for 'the beloved' all point to the physicality of the obsessive meeting with his lost house.

The weekly encounter that went on for nineteen long years came to a halt with the Six Day War when East Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories came under the military occupation of Israel following its victory in the war. During the war, Andoni was hopeful that he would soon be allowed to regain his lost house. So he takes the bold move of venturing into his house beyond the West Jerusalem border and gazes

ardently at his creativity, without the dividing frontier of the Jerusalem wall between them for the first time in nineteen years. Continuing with the metaphor of a lovers' reunion, Amiry narrates how the master architect was about to re-enter his beloved house when he was stopped by an Israeli soldier with a rifle – "Everything froze once he was face to face with the beloved. / He smiled, she smiled back at him. / He stretched out his hands and touched her soft texture and her undulating curves" (36). The physical sensations accompanying Andoni's visits including the reciprocation of love on the part of the house or the building show how home has become a memory space or memory site in his case.

Gabi: Loss of material objects

Similar to his father Andoni's obsession, Gabi Baramki too nurtured a nostalgic passion for their lost house in the Jewish West Jerusalem. Gabi's personal loss of home consisted of not just the loss of his house in West Jerusalem but also the bereavement of personal belongings including photo albums. While Gabi was away studying in Beirut at the time of the *nakba*, his parents could not take away the albums with them under the extreme pressure of the circumstances that forced them out of their house. The physical loss of a house, coupled with that of the family albums, made the young Gabi realize upon his reunion with his displaced family back in the summer of 1949, a year after the catastrophic exile, that, "he had lost his past, his childhood and teenage memories" (47). For him, "A photo album meant existence" and he mourned the lack of any proof that "he had ever had a life in Jerusalem" (47). Thirty-five years later, when he finally gets a chance to re-enter his home in the painful guise of a museum visit, Gabi seizes upon it so that he comes the closest to the physicality of his own cherished memories of the house he once lived in.

Resistance

In the case of Andoni and his son Gabi, the negotiation with the varied impressions of their traumatic memories also takes on the colour of individual resistance. Andoni Baramki's weekly encounter of his 'beloved' or 'nour hayati' from afar is not just a way of remembering his masterpiece work. His consistent practice or habit of viewing the building in the Jewish West Jerusalem as his own, constituted the way he chose to resist the forced dispossession of his house in the *nakba*. The most visible expression of his resistance came out in the courtroom when he questioned the Israeli judge about the category of Palestinian people called 'present absentees' to which he, like many others, was forcibly added.

After the 1967 war, Andoni had appealed to the Israeli court in West Jerusalem in order to question the occupation of his house since 1948. At the court's issuance of an eviction order against the Jewish squatter, he had been extremely hopeful that the court would thereafter allow his family back into their house in the Musrara neighbourhood, just as the Palestinian Tazzeez family was recently allowed back to live in their house on the Eastern side of the 1947 Armistice Line. Patient and smiling by nature, Andoni had felt thrilled to hear the renowned lawyer he hired ask of the court to allow "Mr. Baramki and his family to go back and live in their home" and he also relished the lawyer's use of the word "occupier" with reference to the Israeli squatter (38). To him, the eviction of the occupier of his house represented the larger picture of Palestinian freedom from the clutches of military occupation. When the honourable judge casually approved of the photo albums he produced, of the many villas he had built, Andoni with mounting anger spurned the taken-for-grantedness of Israeli authorities regarding the design, construction and maintenance of the innumerable houses they had come to capture. He broke into a heated soliloquy that

took place within his mind while he stood still in the courtroom awaiting a favourable ruling.

The land deed, the house tax, his drawings of the house and the bunch of keys he had always carried in his pocket for the twenty-year period of separation from his beloved house –these form the material objects that confirm Andoni's ownership. The judge's declaration that Andoni is an absentee and that his house comes under absentee property is proof for him of the erasure of his identity which he neither does understand nor does passively accept. What the judge ordered, based on the Israeli laws of the time, becomes an abstract absurdity for Palestinians like Andoni who continue to reject such a disappearance of their very identity. Fiercely opposing the identity allotted to him of an absentee landlord, Andoni bursts out in the front of the whole court, "An absentee, how can I be an absentee when I am standing right in front of Your Honour?" (42). When the judge informs a disbelieving Andoni that all Palestinian refugees, whether present or absent, are considered absentees, his polite answer goes, "Sir, the Palestinians are 'absentees' only because you do not allow them to be present. And those of us who are present are considered absent" (42). To this, the judge tries to identify him in another category called the 'present absentees.' Enraged at the absurdity underlying such a categorization, Andoni asks the judge whether he sees a human being in front of him or whether he hears just the voice of a ghost. With his case dismissed without any room for further consideration and escorted out of the courtroom as a miserable absentee, the meaningful smile of wisdom he always wore on his face turned into intermittent sneers and loud chuckles. He then rolls on the floor laughing while kicking the air with his legs until finally his panic subsides down to a dead silence. Andoni's case is an apt reflection of the "gradual but so far inexorable century-old process" to which the individual

Palestinian predicament is subjected, that Rashid Khalidi's states in "Introduction to the 2010 Reissue" of *Palestinian Identity*: "[T]he Palestinians have been removed from more and more of their ancestral homeland, their property and their patrimony seized, and their very identity and existence as a people placed into question. Most Palestinians are convinced of the basic validity of this narrative, and in consequence experience deep traumatic anxieties" (xxvi).

The Binary of Presence/Absence

Andoni's courtroom scene illustrates the Palestinian predicament constructed by Israeli law through the dichotomy of presence and absence. While Israeli demographics is strengthened by means of stressing their presence, there simultaneously occurs a careful marking of the Palestinian population as a sustained absence. In the list of dedicatees of her work, Amiry challenges this presence/absence dichotomy by mentioning the category of Palestinian citizens considered absentees "who constituted ninety per cent of 1948 Palestine, and who have so far not been allowed to be present" and another group termed present absentees under Israeli law "who are considered absent" (xi). There is a direct reference to the pain of every such Palestinian present absentee "who lives steps away from a home that has become someone else's" (xi). The house visits and similar acts on the part of Palestinian individuals shown in the book are, therefore, protests voicing out loud their very presence against their desired absence.

Gabi's Traumatic Response

The love of home and the longing for rootedness passed down from one generation to another instills passions similar to those of his father Andoni in Gabi Baramki too. Gabi's visit of his lost home when it got converted into an Israeli

museum of historical significance becomes an act of resistance in his final "joyless laughter" that seems to continue to reverberate in the building from the day of opening till date. Gabi's laughter in the midst of Israeli visitors to the museum parallels his own father's penetrating laugh given to the Israeli crowd before him, unwilling to acknowledge his right of belonging to the house he built. Just as Andoni's thwarted ambition of re-acquiring his house made him break into loud laughter in an Israeli court in the late 1960s, Gabi is overcome with painful, exasperating laughter when he is asked to buy a ticket to see around the newly opened Tourjeman Museum which was actually his own home once upon a time. Even as the lady at the ticket counter and others try to dismiss him as a fussy old man fond of making trouble, there are some among the young Israeli visitors who make out the words uttered by Gabi in the midst of his loud chuckle and laughter that it had indeed been his home. In this way, Gabi's visit to the museum/house writes itself as an act of resistance against the injustice of a traumatic past. His inquisitive ponderings during the slow-moving queue of visitors lead him to understand the Israeli appropriation of Palestinian land, property and even names and meanings.

Nahil: Occupation of the Mind

Another important protagonist is Nahil, an old woman in her eighties who returns to West Jerusalem to visit her lost home in the Aweidah compound after sixty-three long years. Like Gabi's visit to his former house now turned into an important museum by Israel, Nahil too is able to reenter her family house in West Jerusalem after decades of longing and waiting. Though Gabi and Nahil are two individuals who have come together only in the pages of *Golda Slept Here*, their life stories share the similarity that both of them had been away studying at universities at the time of the *nakba* and the resultant Palestinian exile. They were among the Palestinian youth who

had left home a year or two ago for studies abroad with little knowledge that they would not be able to return home after the completion of studies.

Nahil's family house was turned into a Jewish school for decades after their eviction in 1948 and at the present in 2011, it ceased to function as a school and lay abandoned for the time being before its intended sale to Israeli settlers by real estate agencies. Hearing about this from her brother, Nahil who lives in Damascus seizes the chance to visit her old house before it comes to be occupied by a settler family and seeks the help of her cousin Huda whose obsessional practice of visiting occupied Palestinian houses was, however, unknown to this old woman.

Nahil's house was one of the two identical houses in the liwan-house layout where one was the mirror image of the other. The second house attached to that of Nahil's had belonged to Huda's grandmother Aysheh before her marriage. Typical of the constructions of the British Mandate period (1918-1948), there were five huge arches in the front where the bright white stones contrasted beautifully with the pink, expensive *slayyeb* stone. Just like the presentation of Andoni's house in the previous section, there is a detailed description of the model of Nahil's house, thereby stressing its physical dimensions that reflect Arab architecture in vogue before the *nakba*.

Seeing the deserted and desolate state of her former house, old Nahil felt herself as an intruder, her "overly cautious and apprehensive" look seeming as if, "she were trespassing on someone else's property" (70). At this point, Amiry who has also accompanied her protagonists in the trip cannot help but comment, "It is the occupation of the mind and the emotions that scares me most" (70). Nahil is simultaneously traumatized and comforted on setting eye upon her old house.

Seeing the familiar rooms, spots, and nooks and corners of her house, though altered in the present, the old woman Nahil reminisces her childhood and adolescence, and relives slices from her past that occurred in those very spaces. Even a rusted cast-iron stopper in the shape of a woman's bust fixed into a stone windowsill catches old Nahil's eye and she realizes with the sting of nostalgia that the room they had been standing in is none other than her bedroom of a lifetime ago. The very fact that the familiar stopper did not come away when both Nahil and Huda separately tried pulling it seemed to indicate its refusal "to leave home," thereby reinforcing the permanence of the objects of daily use in their houses while Palestinian people were torn away forcibly (77). In the chapter titled "Objects of Return" in her work *The Generation of Postmemory*, Marianne Hirsch talks about "the role that objects (photographs, domestic interiors, household objects, items of clothing) play in return stories, marking their sites of implausibility and incommensurablility. Such testimonial objects, lost and again found, structure plots of return: they can embody memory and thus trigger affect shared across generations" (206). Hirsch adds that "Ordinary objects mediate the memory of returnees through the particular embodied practices that they elicit. And these embodied practices can also revive the affect of the past, overlaid with the shadows of loss and dispossession" (207). These familiar spaces and objects once owned and used by Nahil and her family thus work as the memory spaces or memory sites for her at the time of her return visit.

Other than their houses and the surrounding gardens, the group led by Huda also identifies other memory spaces in the nearby locality where they once lived. Seeing the railway line that ran close by, Nahil recollects that she and her friends had spent the best days of their childhood on those tracks. "The power of the passing train, as well as its whistle and steam, constituted one vivid image that they carried with

them into Diaspora," writes Amiry (78). In this manner, places and various objects occupying the lost space that remain the same or change over time hold significance for different Palestinian individuals traumatized by the collective yet highly personal experience of exile.

Elie's Sketch: The Visual Representation of Loss

Elie Sanbar, another protagonist in this work, is a Palestinian expatriate writer living in Paris since 1982. Originally from Haifa, his family had to flee during the *nakba* when Elie was a toddler aged just two and a half years. Amiry recounts how she met him in Paris with a couple of other friends and attended Elie's presentation on the late Palestinian poet, Mahmoud Darwish. Unlike the rest of the main characters featuring in this work, Elie does not pay a visit to his lost home in Haifa, but the tale he says is worth consideration.

Amiry reproduces the exact conversation which she and her friends had with Elie over the dining table at the hotel. If the other chapters in *Golda Slept Here* give out a brief layout of the architecture and design of the Palestinian houses the characters visited, Elie's story does the same by means of a rough sketch he makes on a piece of paper for the group of his listeners to understand. Since a real visit to Elie's family house is not featured in the narrative, the pictorial depiction of his home in Haifa consisting of quickly drawn lines serve to suggest the spatial inclination of the story he is about to tell. The casually sketched diagram of the house is, therefore, just another way to focus on the physicality of the house.

Elie's family house, situated on a steep slope as indicated by the almost vertical lines in his sketch, has not been bought by Israeli settlers, but has been tenanted by Arabs who happened to remain inside the borders of Israel when the state

was formed in 1948. The stairs from the first to the second storey of this house has collapsed, but the Arab tenants are not able to repair it because of the prohibition order issued by the Israeli Custodian of Palestinian Absentee Property that denies the right to maintain houses to both Arab landlords and tenants alike. Consequently, the Arab tenants residing in the house have built a bridge directly to the second floor from the upper road and thus the number of parallel lines increases in the sketch Elie makes of his house on paper. It is when Amiry ponders over the architectural incongruence of this addition that a major twist appears in the story. One day Elie had a call from his tenant in Haifa wherein the latter said that he received a letter from the Israeli Custodian of Absentee Property informing him that they have sold the air space and air rights above the house to a businessman from Tel Aviv who had plans to build a high-rise on top of Elie's two-storey house. Elie's story ends at this point of climax, with the doubts and questions of his listeners hanging in the air, just like the high-rise building that would have to be suspended from the skies as Elie's house does not have a proper staircase that connects the first floor to the second. When each of them comes up with surmises and conjectures about how air rights might not apply to ordinary buildings, 'the businessman from Tel Aviv' becomes almost as mysterious as 'the person from Porlock' in S.T. Coleridge's tale.

Stopping his tale at the right point and taking a deep breath, Elie vertically extends the dimensions of the cubic structure he has sketched as the model of his house in Haifa. He then flashes a big smile at the bewildered company of his listeners and waits for their feedback. This kind of a calm and cool response to an absurd situation concerning one's family house again makes Amiry wonder about Palestinians' potential for tolerance – "I do not know what it is about Palestinians that makes them smile or even laugh at a time when they should be crying" (146). Like

Andoni and Gabi, Elie too can only respond to the fate of his distant home at the hands of Israeli law with laughter. Elie's story bears testimony to the spatial politics of Israel as well.

Umm Salim: Remembering through Storytelling

Diametrically opposite to the conscious and deliberate way of remembering one's own past as a way of consolidating the challenged coordinates of one's Palestinian identity, *Golda Slept Here* also deals with some others who have rather opted not to confront the unpleasant past in speech or even in memories. This is the case of the author's mother-in-law, Umm Salim, who has been a familiar character right from her first book, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*. Amiry writes that she realized only lately that "*this particular story*" of their exile from Jaffa was never told by her old mother-in-law, well into her nineties in the mid-2000s, who usually loved telling tales over and over again from her past (151) (italics in original).

The focus on storytelling and its role in redrawing the contours of Palestinian identity from erasure is evident in *Golda Slept Here* too, as in other works by Amiry. One of the most casual instances of conversation between a mother-in-law and a daughter-in-law becomes, at Amiry's request that Umm Salim narrate to her their 1948 story in detail, a serious effort at recollecting and reorganizing the personal past that intersects with a major historical crisis. The need for remembering the past is once again underlined in this final section of *Golda Slept Here* when Amiry requests her aged mother-in-law to lay bare the latter's traumatic past before her so that she could remember each of its minute details. The death of Amiry's own mother in February 2005 has made her realize how much the past was worth listening to; with her mother's loss, she came to mourn the loss of "the minute details" of how the

Jewish forces dragged her father's family including her aunt and uncle, out of their home in Jaffa, and how the intense shooting and the occupation of their house forced her parents to leave their home in Jerusalem (152). Demonstrating the necessity to hear, record, write about and share such innumerable personal stories, the author writes:

> What amazes me most is that we, as a people, have shared our collective story of being thrown out of our homeland, Palestine, with each other and with many others – actually we have bored the world with this collective story – but somehow the individual Palestinian shies away, or perhaps is too afraid, to share the very personal story of being thrown out of her or his home, living room, or bedroom. These personal stories are seldom told, not even to one's children, perhaps not even to oneself.
>
> I guess the wound remains open. (152)

In this way, the author stresses the ultimate reason behind penning such a narrative on Palestinians as *Golda Slept Here*.

Umm Salim recalls the day she, along with her husband Edmon and two-and-a-half-year-old son Salim, left their home in the heavily bombarded al-Ajami neighbourhood of Jaffa. Their house, as they came to know later, was taken under siege that very day of their escape and thus became a permanent loss which could not be obtained back. Despite Salim's father's adamant stand not to leave home under any circumstances, they were forced to seek a refuge outside the bombing and shelling of Palestinian towns and villages in the Lebanese city of Beirut, just like millions of other Palestinians who had to leave sooner or later or were evicted forcibly or killed. Even as Umm Salim tries to cut short a long tale with merely the statement that they

left Jaffa, the author keen on her desire not to lose any of the details, urges her to explain the circumstances to which the aged woman succumbs, summoning back the memories of what she had withheld so far even unto herself. When Umm Salim begins again with the words "All I remember about *that* night is that it was long and humid, with a deadly silence broken only by erratic shooting," Amiry explains that "Like many 'historic moments,' that night acquired significance retrospectively, when they realised they would not be allowed to go back home" (159). This is an example of the "belatedness" or "latency" of which Caruth had spoken in her *Trauma: Explorations in Memory*, where the gravity of the traumatic event goes entirely unnoticed at the time of its occurrence while returning to haunt the traumatic survivor through the rest of his/her life (11).

As in other tales dealt with in the book, there is an importance attached to the material objects that had a place in day-to-day life in Umm Salim's life story too. Had she known at the time that they would never be able to set foot in their home again, she would have carried with her the silver make-up set given to her by her woman friends as a wedding present. Fifty-seven years hence, Umm Salim remembers it as truly beautiful. She also missed the brand-new furniture which she and her husband had carefully selected and imported them from countries such as Russia. The memory of the house which the couple had set up for themselves during the few years of their marriage before the *nakba* animates Umm Salim in the midst of her storytelling and she becomes eloquent about the dining table and the low coffee table that had once graciously adorned their home in Jaffa. Her preoccupation with those dear objects was such that she had a replica of the coffee table made by the same carpenter who had also fled Jaffa for Beirut. Likewise, she also shows Amiry a gilded icon of Christ which had the shape of a book hanging on her bedroom wall as "*the one thing*" she

still has from among their many possessions from the house in Jaffa (164) (italics in original). To Amiry's question whether they had managed to carry the icon or *iqouneh* with them amidst their hasty departure from Jaffa early one morning, Umm Salim replies that the gilded icon was brought to her later by a Russian nun who claimed to have bought it in Jaffa and she had spent quite an amount of money for retrieving her beloved icon. Keeping the loss of material items one had used at home before the *nakba* at the centre of their identity crisis, Umm Salim's tale of the exile of her family ends with the worry that they could not buy back the Persian carpets in their Jaffa home that were given to her by her brother Najib, her beloved dining table and other items of furniture, in spite of learning that they had been up for sale. Thus, the persistent attachment to the material objects, one used in one's pre-*nakba* house that had since been lost, prompts the Tamari couple to buy back what was originally theirs and what has, since their departure from Jaffa, become stolen goods and furniture. At the end of her mother-in-law's storytelling, Amiry realizes with an inner pain and sourness in her throat that the tale the Israeli politician and former Mossad agent (the Israeli intelligence agent) Shumuel had once told her in the mid-nineties on their way back from attending a conference in Tel Aviv might have occurred in the very house her in-laws had to leave behind in 1948. The piece of anecdote her Israeli acquaintance related was that he had joined the plundering group of soldiers breaking into Palestinian houses and that upon entering a house in the al-Ajami neighbourhood of Jaffa they had found a still warm pot of coffee left behind by the Palestinian inhabitants of the house who must have been forced to leave everything behind. Just as Shumuel had been touched by the sight of untouched warm coffee left not much earlier in haste by the Palestinian people who lived in the house, Amiry too visualizes the gravity of "*that moment*," the warmth of the coffee seeming to communicate the

hasty departure and seeming to fail to convey the permanence of such a journey away from one's home (167) (italics in original).

Taking along the idea of Palestinian architecture as a parallel to Palestinians' identity, Amiry's work aims to shed light upon how the Israel-Palestine conflict changed the living conditions and circumstances of Palestinians drastically. When the author remarks as an architect that, "Architectural details lose their historic significance once removed from their cultural context," she is also quick to think aloud and add that it is similar to, "the Palestinians who lost their significance once they were removed from their natural habitat, their homeland" (88).

Postmemory: Superimposition of Past and Present

Underlining the pluralistic wave of trauma theory by depicting these varied and often diametrically opposite responses to traumatic experiences by several Palestinian individuals, Amiry's work also tries to address some of the issues pertaining to postmemory which can be defined as an ensuing chain reaction from traumatic memories once the threshold of one generation to the other has been crossed.

Golda Slept Here is a work that touches upon the lives of Palestinian individuals who lived decades and generations apart from each other. It invariably tends to deal with the trauma of the successive generations or the postgenerations which is, simultaneously, influenced by and differing from those of the predecessors who have rather experienced the *nakba* firsthand. Whether or not this is an actual trauma in its own right is subtly shown in the book with the suggestion that postmemory, though indirect compared to the immediacy of actual traumatic confrontation (by parents or grandparents), can be more damaging to the individual

self (of the postgeneration). Huda and the author herself bear testimony to this fact with the inextinguishable pain of their postmemory.

In the light of the still ongoing Israel-Palestine conflict, the legacy of the traumatic experiences faced by the present generation of Palestinian individuals can be traced back to the 1948 *nakba* and several incidents before and after this catastrophe. Added to this, the perpetually delayed right to national self-determination coupled with the fetters of Israeli military occupation continue to inflict trauma on Palestinian selves. Thus, every Palestinian lives on, carrying the burden of postmemory inherited from the preceding generations with trauma experienced by himself or herself. In *Golda Slept Here*, the question of how the past continues to define the present contours of the Palestinian lives has been intricately answered with the inevitable baggage of postmemory carried on by the author and her friend Huda who appears in this book.

Postmemory, as is found in *Golda Slept Here*, is always a return to the unforgettably vivid past mixed with the bittersweet taste of nostalgic loss and traumatic pain. Or, to put it the other way round, it is always the intrusion of the past into the present. As Hirsch says in her *The Generation of Postmemory*, postmemory is "not a movement, method, or idea" (6). Instead, it should be seen as a structure of "inter- and transgenerational return of traumatic knowledge and embodied experience" (6). This superimposition of the past perpetually over the present lives of those belonging to the postgenerations gets reflected in their thought and action of which Amiry's book provides brilliant examples by the depiction of how mind works for those like Huda and herself.

In *Golda Slept Here*, the 'familial postmemory' of the author is evident from her own recollections, longings and hesitations shared many a time in the midst of the chapters (Hirsch 22). Her restless determination to seek out her parents' lost houses, though often vague and unsure, shows in the interactions with her protagonists who mourn as well as confront the loss of their homes. Echoing way before the beginning of numbered chapters and sections, the author's voice states that 'I was told: "Home is where I am."/ I try hard but I do not always succeed" (viii). She is able to sympathize with all of her protagonists while trying to avoid looking into her own traumatized self.

The author was born in Damascus in 1951, three years after her parents' exile, marking her as one of the postgeneration. The first chapter of the book opens by showing the author tossing and turning in bed at night upon arriving at a friend's house in Jerusalem. The reason for sleeplessness is the presence of a house just down the road – her parents' former home, where they had lived from their marriage in 1942 to the *nakba* of 1948, which they had had to flee. Her own utter strangeness of such an endearing lived space as one's parents' own home overwhelmingly troubles the author. Her visualization of the act of her own supposed conception in Jerusalem speaks to the intensity of her familial postmemory; hence her confession that she was happy to know that she still had been conceived in Jerusalem even after her parents' exile from their Jerusalem home in 1948. Her temporary arrival in Jerusalem lets loose her imagination that had been made fertile amply by lots of stories by parents and siblings. That is why the grown up Amiry, in the midst of her thoughts in that sleepless night, utters many an unfulfilled wish, "I wanted to see the terrace on which both my sisters, Arwa and Anan, had spent their Jerusalem childhood" (6). She is able to conjure up the figure of the reddish-brown puppies, Lulu and Murjan, which were

her sisters' pets that went missing following the family's hasty departure from their Jerusalem house during the *nakba* after which Amiry herself was born. Till her willful decision to move to Palestine to work and live there, Amiry who was born in Damascus and brought up in Beirut, had never known Palestine except from countless stories and recollections by her elders. Regarding her feeling towards the loss of her father's home in Jaffa, she says: "My childhood memories oscillated between Mama's omnipresent family mansion in the splendor of the old city of Damascus, and Baba's lost house in the Manshiyeh neighbourhood of the sea town of Jaffa. I had to construct this house from tales and imagine it from far, far away" (8). This last sentence speaks volumes about the workings of familial postmemory; it triggers a 'constructive' process of imagination solely on the basis of heard stories from the past. For Amiry, her parents' home in Jerusalem comes next in importance to her father's home in Jaffa – "Lacking the emotional resilience needed to visit my father's house in his hometown of Jaffa, the very first place I paid homage to when I came to Palestine in 1981 was my parents' house in Jerusalem" (6). Thus, her arrival in Jerusalem with the intention of interviewing a few acquaintances to show how they carry on with the trauma of their lives is already marked with the imprints of familial postmemory of her parents' tragic past.

The trauma experienced by the author can be seen in the paradoxical desire to visit her father's house and an unwillingness to do so without the company of her father, as she had mentioned it in her earlier work, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*. This apparent paradoxical nature of one's inner conflict has been defined by Cathy Caruth as one of the characteristic features of trauma.

The author's sense of postmemory resurfaces time and again throughout the narrative. During her journey undertaken along with Huda to see Arab houses taken

over by Israeli settler families, she confesses that "The one thing that I thought I was sure of was that I did not want this trip to be about me, or about my parents, since they too had lost their livelihood and their home" (68). The parallels drawn between the lives of her protagonist and herself reveal the lump of pain about the past lodged in Amiry's own mind. In the midst of such house visits, the author reveals evocatively:

> The agonies and pain I felt as I accompanied my protagonists made me realise that neither my body nor my soul were prepared to dig up my family's story in Jaffa.
>
> I had buried deep the heavy burden of the past and the unbearable darkness enveloping the tragic events of 1948. Perhaps this explained my admiration for Huda's unwavering persistence.
>
> Huda was actively incensed while I, like many others, plunged into silent gloom. (68)

This ever-present pain of the losses in one's parents' past known through the transmission of their trauma lies behind the working of such a book as *Golda Slept Here*. It seeks to connect the vague sense of postmemory to the material conditions of such losses through the actual visits to houses and other lived spaces estranged through Israeli occupation and settlements. For example, Amiry speaks of how she appeared at the terrace of her parents' house in Jerusalem which she visited upon her arrival to Palestine in 1981 and she 'remembered' the words which Anan, one of her elder sisters, aged three years had spoken at the very spot back during the pre-*nakba* time of their living at the house when Amiry was not even born. In this way, places

seem to trigger ‘memories’ not only for those of the *nakba* generation like Nahil or Gabi, but also for those of the postgeneration such as the author.

Huda al-Imam: Obsession Hammered into the Self

The author’s friend Huda al-Imam is shown as bearing the burden of postmemory. In the dedications given before the chapters, Amiry addresses Huda as “the Joan of Arc of Palestinian memory,” situating that her identity and action are intertwined with memory (x). Amiry presents her friend as an attractive and vivacious person, her light-brown curly hair framing, “an ever-smiling face sitting atop an animated physique that radiated a confident personality and an attitude of entitlement” (65). Her coquettish European look and her French passport acquired through her previous marriage to a man from Martinique make her pass for a Frenchwoman and thus she deceives soldiers manning the three major checkpoints in Jerusalem. From an outer image of Huda to her interesting way of action that includes deceiving Israeli soldiers in order to evade their stringent checking of Palestinians, Huda emerges as one, “haunted by the past and tortured by the unfairness of the present” (66). Apart from her job of being the Director of the Centre for Jerusalem Studies at Al-Quds University, she has made it a point to conduct frequent visits to former Arab houses, “Nothing energises vivacious Huda more than a planned (or even better, a spontaneous) visit to an Arab house in what was a majority Arab neighbourhood in West Jerusalem” (65). Amiry further explains that hardly a week passes without Huda venturing on such a visit, either alone or taking along her family members or sometimes friends, journalists and TV reporters who, in a way, form alternative tourists. This activity that becomes a special kind of tourism runs the risk of provoking the Israeli settler families currently residing in the houses being chosen for such visits who more often than not call the police. Thus, the house visits arranged by

Huda form an alternative form of tourism, most likely met with arrest, threats and warnings.

Huda has become "actively incensed" to take such risky house visits due to the workings of her postmemory (68). Her frequent visits have been instigated by her grandmother's tales about the rich life and splendour they lived in prior to the *nakba*. The pain and emotional drainage that one must be prepared to face while plunging into such dives into the traumatic ancestral past is clearly depicted in the chapters about Huda. That postmemory can also become an obsession is neatly revealed by Amiry while introducing Huda's character, "The obsession had started when she visited the house as a child for the very first time right after the '67 war" (71). Though her energy and excitement can be misunderstood as the enthusiasm of taking a fresh maiden visit to one's lost lived spaces, Amiry carefully notes that "her facial expressions, neurotic energy, and the frequency of her nervous laughter indicate to the keen observer the deep exhaustion resulting from an addiction bordering on *obsession*" (66) (italics in original). Unlike her older cousin Nahil who expresses her pain of having lost family houses with nostalgic sighs and tears, Huda always appears quite unmoved while seeing the remnants of many a Palestinian building in Jerusalem. For instance, she points out to a beautiful three-arch building by the roadside and comments that the house previously owned by Nahil's family is now being turned into a five-star hotel by the Israelis. Though her casual remark uttered in a cool, carefree tone can easily be taken as indifference to the tragedy of the Palestinian past, there is a pain that deeply mourns the more or less permanent loss of one's former lived spaces. Adding to her outer insensitive attitude, she even jokes sarcastically about the impending construction work on a famous Arab cemetery wherein lies the bones of their forefathers. But the ever-present lament of the huge

loss incurred by Palestinians by losing their own spaces is detectable in the shrillness of her radiant voice, one that strongly wants to deplore such unjust takeover of Palestinian property. The invasion of Palestinian land, houses and other property is equated with the damage unto Palestinians' sense of identity itself.

Along with assuming a casual tone of uttering seemingly indifferent remarks about the various losses incurred by Palestinians, Huda also has the habit of showing herself at home in many of such house visits. When she takes along her older cousin Nahil to visit the latter's family house after an interval of several decades (which is also her grandmother's house before marriage), Huda feels very much at home while "everything about Nahil conveyed a strong sense of estrangement" (71). Though Nahil had spent her childhood and adolescence in the house they were visiting currently, the gap of prolonged absence stretching more than half a century has brought in a feeling of alienation and otherness for her. Nahil is not able to ward off the sense of estrangement that simultaneously accompanied the sense of identification she felt while seeing many a landmark in and around her old house. It is here that Huda's feeling of identification and comfort acquires meaning: even though she had never lived in the house, it was the house of which she had heard innumerable tales from her nostalgic father and paternal grandmother. She had also had the opportunity to visit the ancestral house in her childhood itself. She could witness and gauge the depth of inseparable bond cherished by her elders who were emotionally shaken at the house visit taken after the 1967 war. It had triggered in her a need to revisit the house continuously, an activity she had thereafter unfailingly conducted. Thus, Huda's familiarity of the lost family house comes not only from the many visits she had permitted herself to, but also from an inner resolution never to feel or feign estrangement from the house one is rightfully entitled to live in.

The Six Day War in 1967 had been an occasion for Palestinians to rekindle their memories of the *nakba* in 1948 and to hold the flickering ray of hope about returning to the homes they had had to flee. Just like Andoni's adamant journey to his beloved in West Jerusalem which could not be stopped by any of his family members, so Huda's father and grandmother dreamt about the return to their dream house coming true in the context of the war between Israel and Arab countries. Their lovely new villa in the German Colony that they were forced out in 1948 had been Farid and his mother Aysheh's dream house. Providing the context to stoke the embers of their traumatic exile during the *nakba,* the 1967 war had become a strong occasion to remember, recollect and revisit the past. In Huda's story, the intrusion of soldiers into their house in East Jerusalem following Israel's victory in the war had been a bitter reminder of the past for her father Farid, "The images of the 1948 Nakba in which tens of thousands of Palestinians were forced out of their homes were still vivid in his mind. It felt as if it had all happened yesterday" (105). This is an example of the polytemporal 'multidirectional memory' which the theorist Michael Rothberg has put forward in his book of the same name. In the context of war, a particular war can become a reference to any other war that occurred before or after the former. Here the Six Day War, also referred to as the *naksa*, clearly echoes that of the earlier *nakba* to Palestinians.

The ritual of visiting one's own house and watching it from afar like strangers or trespassers has begun for Huda at the tender age of eight. The chapters "The Visit: three weeks after the 1967 War" and "A Dream House" throbs with a voice different from that of the author: it is told by an eight-year-old Huda who saw, for the first time, their family villa in West Jerusalem about which she had always heard from her father and grandmother. As a little child, Huda was not able to understand the

emotional strength needed for undertaking a visit to one's house. When there occasioned the chance to venture into West Jerusalem despite the Arab defeat in the 1967 war, she wondered why her father and his mother despite their immense love for their lost house were reluctant to embark on the forty-minute journey. Seeing places in West Jerusalem for the first time in her life, Huda exclaims silently, "Oh God, Palestine, you are so beautiful!" (115). She witnesses and validates for herself the former accounts she had heard from father and grandmother such as, "Nothing is as beautiful as West Jerusalem," "[n]othing is as splendid as our house in the lush green neighbourhood of the Greek Colony" and "[n]othing is as stunning as 1948 Palestine" (112). Being able to set foot in the "lost paradise" of West Jerusalem reinforced upon her mind through postmemory, transforms the eight-year-old child altogether (112). The act of standing on the sidewalk across the street from the house, staring at it, maintaining a respectful silence and praising the breath-taking beauty of the house became, for Huda, an enchanting experience of remembrance that she vowed to herself to carry on in her life. For little Huda, the group visit conducted to their former house and the mesmerized gaze on its splendour and beauty seemed a visit undertaken to "a holy shrine" (117). The tears she saw on her father's and grandmother's faces upon visiting her deceased grandfather's grave in the rundown Mamilla Cemetery after an interval of almost two decades made her fathom what it felt like to become unable to remember one's own past and dear ones. She wanted the process of remembering to materialize into direct if risky visits warranted by one's physical presence in the place one really belonged to. The hysterical barking of the dog at the settler's house has an enormous effect on Huda as a child. Huda's vow taken unto herself at the time of the first visit, to visit her ancestral house for as long as she lives, is intricately tied with the act of remembering: "A constant reminder of *whose house*

it is./ A vow that has since become an obsession./ An obsession that became as heavy as life itself" (121) (italics in original). This active process of remembrance on her part that has ever since become an obsession thus becomes an inevitable part of reinforcing her Palestinian identity. It definitely involves the invocation of certain memory spaces/sites such as the house one rightfully belonged to, the material objects one personally possessed and the fruit trees and other plants one's grandparents or their parents planted for posterity.

Farid's relation to his former house is also formed not only on the basis of the emotional bond of home, but also as the "dream house" he built for his mother Aysheh (92). Upon her husband's death in 1930, Aysheh had been reluctant to return to "the damp dark and crowded house" of her in-laws in the Old City of Jerusalem (92). Her son Farid who was then a young lad of twenty-one had vowed to build an elegant villa for her, resembling the grand Aweidah house in the German Colony where she grew up. When they finally moved into their dream house in 1942, mother and son "showed off their beautiful house, receiving family members and entertaining friends, inviting all to long and detailed house and garden tours" (92-3). In this manner, they had not only loved their home, but also had cherished the house for its beauty and perfection. The focus on the house as an artistic construction in *Golda Slept Here* is evident in this anecdote as well.

House Visits as Resistance

During the visit to Nahil's house in the present, it is Huda who tries to cheer up old Nahil by breaking the awkwardness of the situation. Having visited the house many times earlier, Huda knew how dilapidated the house looked sans its past splendour. She also knew that this would traumatize Nahil who was eagerly looking

forward to visit her former house lost decades ago. Therefore, she takes care to lighten the situation by cracking up jokes and taking photographs of Nahil in the backdrop of the house. When Huda manages to open the heavy cast-iron door and they finally enter the interior of the house, Nahil's loud sobs are quickly stopped with Huda's diverting remarks about the faded yet gorgeous floor tiles of the house. She even brings Nahil out of her daydream of past memories by splashing water on to the tiles and making them turn fresh and vivid as before to the delight of them all. Huda's act of splashing water onto the faded floor tiles acquires a symbolic significance when read in the light of the real intention behind the house visits she arranges. Triggered on solely by the magnitude of her postmemory, Huda arranges such house visits in order to revive the forgotten past and erased identities. The intended reclamation of houses, however momentary, is one method to assert the ownership rights of the Palestinians who built and lived in the houses before they were dragged into exile.

There is a double side to Huda's postmemory – it is both an obsession and resistance, an obsession that plagues her tortured self and at the same time, an individual form of resistance against the injustice of the Israeli takeover of Palestinian land. The transition from "familial" to "affiliative postmemory" can be seen in Huda's visits that repeatedly include her own family house as well as several other Arab houses that have similarly been usurped (Hirsch 36). Her postmemory is exercised through the house visits she organizes which also reveal her firm resistance strategy. In Huda, words and action couple to form her method of resistance.

Choosing rather to blend the unpleasant present with the past, she always uses the present tense form of 'is' in the place of 'was' when it came to the ownership of Palestinian houses currently resided in by Israeli settlers. She also refuses to refer to the current Israeli settlers as house owners because she considers them the usurpers

and not the rightful owners of the property. That is why she parrots back the warning of the Israeli police officer "I no longer tread on the doorstep nor do I enter the garden," changing the possessive pronoun 'their' in the officer's statement to the article 'the' in her obedient restatement of his admonition (135). To his question as to why she had previously entered the Israeli house and picked pomegranates off their garden, she promptly retorts with a big flashing smile and a question like "[w]ouldn't you pick pomegranates off the tree your father planted?" (135). When the officer teases her as belonging to the collective set of Palestinians who continue to live in the past, she again has a very clever answer, "When it comes to Jews, you have a two-thousand-year memory, but when it comes to us Palestinians, you have a sixty-year amnesia" (136). The officer's direct reference to Palestinian's obsession with the past is embedded with the meaning that their memory throbs with counter-historical potential. Marianne Hirsch, in her work *The Generation of Postmemory*, takes memory as a chief means of counter-history that serves "to account for the power structures animating forgetting, oblivion, and erasure and thus to engage in acts of repair and redress" (16). In addition to her verbal retorts and jibes, Huda is quick in acting whatever way she can to assert her rightful Palestinian identity. For instance, she casually claims to Amiry and Nahil that she had taken unmounted windows, doors and pieces of railing when she visited her ancestral house in the Greek Colony neighbourhood at the time of its renovation by the Israeli real estate developer Udi Kaplan and took it to her Sheikh Jarrah house in East Jerusalem where she resides. She does not consider it as an act of theft, but rather finds it as something close to salvaging what remains of one's rightful property when it is being taken away by invaders. Huda is, unlike the author, "*psychologically ready*" to visit her lost ancestral home (110) (italics in original).

When Huda finally takes Nahil and the author to see her own splendid family villa painstakingly built by her father Farid in the Greek Colony neighbourhood, she points out to it as the house "*we* built" of which Amiry takes notice (87) (italics in original). Huda has internalized the idea of the house in the Greek Colony of West Jerusalem that her father so passionately built for his mother Aysheh as her own, despite having lost the house to Israel in 1948, more than a decade before her birth. Therefore, in addition to making an appearance there frequently, she has been having the satisfaction of telling the Blumberg family who bought the house from the real estate agent that it was her family house. Just like her fellow prisoner in the al-Maskoubiyyeh police station (where she was kept under arrest for one night) said to her, Huda cannot stop herself from visiting her family house in West Jerusalem in spite of knowing that this would only invite bigger trouble in the future. Undertaking such house visits has become the projected result of her familial postmemory so much so that it has come to define the identity flux of her Palestinian self that has yet to attain a sovereign citizenship and win back what was lost in the past.

Standing in contrast to Huda's obsessional practice of her postmemory, Amiry, in spite of being preoccupied with her parents' home in pre-*nakba* Palestine, had not often come out with visible action of digging into ancestral past. On her arrival in Jerusalem, the author had commented that she, on her part, had been too shy to confront her own past by taking a visit to her father's pre-*nakba* house in Jaffa. But she finds the courage to think about her own lost family house, now that she has seen the emotional strength of her companions Nahil and Huda. In her mental canvas, she finds herself on the train running from Jerusalem to Jaffa on the very tracks before her and admits that it is the first time that she has ventured to seek out and set foot in her father's house on the seashores of Jaffa. Her daydream ends with her arrival at al

Manshieh Station and soon after, at her family house nearby where she sets down to lunch on the terrace overlooking the Mediterranean Sea. Amiry's confession that she had never before summoned the courage to take such a visit and the vivid scenic descriptions of the plains and valleys that lie on the way to Jaffa seem to convey a sense of reality to the visit taken merely in daydream. This is an instance in *Golda Slept Here* where there is barely a thin line of distinction between memory and imagination.

House Visits as Therapy

While the incessant house visits she conducts from time to time constitutes Huda's way of responding to her trauma and postmemory, Amiry tries to elicit a therapeutic effect to lessen the burden of carrying a traumatic past and present by taking journeys with her protagonists, conversing with them and recording their pain. However, she realizes the emotional drainage and exhaustion that one must face while going through such therapy sessions before mental pressure can be reduced, "therapy sessions are often more painful than the pain they seek to alleviate" (68). This becomes the author's own way of dealing with her individual and collective trauma. It is the empathetic transformation of her own postmemory that helps in the realization of a book as *Golda Slept Here*.

The house visits that make up the core of action in *Golda Slept Here* can well be viewed in alternate ways. When it is looked at from the perspective of the several Israeli settler families presently inhabiting the houses, the sudden and unexpected, or in some other cases, frequent, visits by stranger Palestinians to their living spaces can seem to be unwelcome, intrusive, offensive and even terrorizing. However, there is another side to this issue which Amiry's book wants to highlight. The Palestinian

individuals who land on the settler colonies do not intend to terrify the current residents or entertain any hope of retrieving their ancestral houses. They just mean to visit their former lived spaces and to mark the memory sites they so cherish at least momentarily in their sight. When they are termed conveniently by the Israeli law as 'absentees,' they rather set in like ghosts, to use Huda's term, to visit their father's gardens and orchards. The visiting Palestinians are not threatening to make a return; they are there only for reinforcing their identities, and for reactivating their sense memories of the objects and places they once enjoyed. Despite the stereotypical image of terrorists and troublemakers that they can be cast into, these individuals flit in and out of the areas now prohibited to them to rescue the remaining shreds of their memory from the pull of all-encompassing, dominant history.

House Visits as Active Remembrance

Why is this process of remembering on the part of Palestinian individuals in *Golda Slept Here* never limited to the act itself? As mentioned earlier, the act of remembering does not remain just a mental vocation, passive and unproductive. But rather, it gets manifested into visible acts of outrageous outcome, like the daring visits the few individuals have managed to undertake to the houses from which they or their precedents were dispossessed. In the case of certain other characters like Elie and Umm Salim, the act of coming out with tales of Israeli takeover and appropriation of their houses is markedly different from the silent recollections of the past. When Amiry's book revolves around the dichotomy of home/house and the Palestinian revisit of their former houses now in the possession of Israelis, either private or public, an important question it raises is the meaning or implication of such visits and their possible consequences. In *Golda Slept Here,* Amiry voices the concern of the Palestinian individuals she has written about, as to how does one ever visit one's

house? The visit to their long-lost houses never becomes a return to home. It is just a visit to the place where being allowed by the current Israeli settlers to gaze at the house from the outside and take a photograph or two should rather be considered extremely fortunate for them and extremely polite on the part of the residents.

The acts of personal remembering in *Golda Slept Here* are fundamentally social and collective. Personal memories are made to intersect with those of the land of Palestine. Right in the first chapter, Amiry's sleep-forbidden mind races back to her father's nationalism, his memories of the Palestine Broadcasting Service (PBS) where he worked and also to her mother's life shuttling between the places of Jerusalem, Ramallah, Salt and Damascus and doing her barter business when times were turning hard with tensions between Arabs and Jews brewing in many parts of Palestine. In depicting her father as one who "shied away from talking about his personal pain and immersed himself in starting a new life, with a new job, with a new house and a new everything in Diaspora," she likens him to those of "his Nakba generation" (7).

Memory vs History

"The disciplines of history and memory should be a site of hope, liberation and decolonization" (Masalha 7). Throughout Amiry's exploration in the narrative, the central role occupied by memory (including the traumatic memories of Palestinian individuals and their intergenerational transaction as postmemory) serves as the radical opposite of dominant history and historiography under the circumstances of Israeli takeover of Palestinian land. This counter historical current imparts memory a role akin to that of history itself; it becomes just another way of collecting, arranging and preserving the past as history does. Moreover, in doing so, memory challenges the

claims and authority of history to form a narrative of the past catering to the Israeli power structures at the cost of evident Palestinian subjugation. According to Nora, "Memory takes root in the concrete, in spaces, gestures, images and objects; history binds itself strictly to temporal continuities, to progressions and relations between things" (9). Therefore, the focus on memory in *Golda Slept Here* inevitably pays attention to the lived spaces and objects of the past while rewriting individual and collective Palestinian histories in a newer light.

A primary example of this counter historical pull is the museum/house of Gabi Baramki shown in the third chapter. Aged fifty-three, Gabi, son of the deceased architect Andoni, stood in the long queue to visit the newly opened museum in Jerusalem on 12th June 1983 which was also his first visit to his own house after the *nakba* that occurred thirty-five years ago. When the youngsters in the queue were just keen on entering the historical building of an Israeli outpost turned into a museum, Gabi, different as is his case, was passionate about entering his home, though much altered in the present, to which he could not return from the American University at Beirut where he was studying in 1948. Thus, what the museum-turned-building conserved historically for the coming generations of Israelis became, for Gabi, what it held in store by way of personal memories. Differing diametrically from its historical significance for Israel, the Tourjeman Museum becomes a strong memory site for the Palestinian individual Gabi Baramki.

Inching forward in the long queue into the inner quarters of the museum, Gabi's rereading of the brochure on the museum becomes an act of alternative reading; reading between the lines enables him to see through the historical contortions that has turned his home into an Israeli museum of historical importance. By means of meandering into his memories of names and places, he finds out how the

names of the museum as well as the 1947 Armistice Line have been appropriated by Israel conveniently and exclusively as Tourjeman Post and Mandelbaum Gate respectively. He reads the description of the museum inside its walls as "A meeting point, a place to clarify and discuss questions concerning war, peace, conflict and reconciliation" which works as the mnemonic trigger of the Palestinian family reunions including his own that took place at the divide between the West and East quarters of the Holy City among the Arabs who were internally displaced in their land that became part of Israel after the *nakba* and those who were exiled into East Jerusalem and other Palestinian territories (53). Thus, Gabi's museum visit, unlike other museum goers' act of validating the historical relevance of the museum, functions against the constructed historical significance using the counter historical nature of his personal memories.

Reconstruction of National Identity

Golda Slept Here responds eloquently to the Palestinian cause of national self-determination. The Palestinian history of exile at the time of the *nakba* in 1948 is recollected vividly in the form of a song in the first chapter. Stringing together plaintively, and yet sarcastically, the heavy losses incurred by the Palestinians who were forced out of their land, the author chooses to remember home in the form of a song. She voices out loud a formulaic principle she has come to realize later in her life, "While the Palestinians try hard to forget when they should remember. / The Israelis try hard to remember when they should forget. / While the Palestinians refuse to be victims, the Israelis make sure they remain the only victims" (7-8). Before citing each of the losses Palestinians had had to endure, the land of Palestine handed over to the Jews by the waning rule of British imperialism with little thought about the Arabs living in it is depicted as a bride married off without seeking her opinion. The song of

lament also contains piercing arrows of sarcastic remarks at the hasty decision of the British:

> The Bride was never consulted
>
> Nor in 1918 when they first landed
>
> Nor in 1924 when Lord Balfour made his declaration
>
> What God did not do for centuries
>
> Lord Balfour delivered in sixty-seven words
>
> When they arrived her name was Palestine
>
> And when they left her name had become Israel (12)

In this way, the personal loss of houses is given its initial impulse in the larger picture of Palestine as home. The elegy-like song in the first chapter ends on a note such as, "As Diaspora ended for one people/ Diaspora started for another/ A new nation remembered, an old one forgotten" (14). The dirge for Palestine that frames the opening and concluding chapters of the book given in a combination of verse and prose, lists the numerous losses suffered by Palestine as a nation and poses many a sarcastic question.

The main focus of the text on individual cases does not, however, shift from the overall national cause of Palestine. During her one-night stay in the prison, Huda as an intellectual, remarks that, "If the security of a country means the annihilation of another nation then there must be something structurally wrong with that country" (125). Samira, Huda's fellow prisoner and no intellectual like her, utters the fact that thousands of Palestinians kept in Israeli jails from time to time with or without any reason are merely a money-making machine for the occupying country, or in other words, "the *baqara* Holandiyeh (Dutch cow) that they continue to milk" (131). While

confronting the Israeli settler family residing in the former family mansion of their friend Mona, Amiry and Huda contemplate on "the enormity of the absentee property and ownership laws whereby a whole country was stolen" (85). Similar to the Israeli takeover of Palestinian land and property, Amiry's protagonists are aware of how names of places and events have been distorted in mainstream history to the detriment of Palestinian realities and predicaments. This is what the Palestinian historian Nur Masalha has termed toponymicide. Gabi's understanding of the name substitutions executed by Israel in the case of historical landmarks like the Tourjeman Post and the Mandelbaum Gate and Amiry's bitter swallowing of the Israeli resident's reference to the 'War of Independence' for the tragic incident of the *nakba* are examples.

Narrative Strategies

Golda Slept Here abounds in a variety of narrative techniques that aid in the realization of its complex set of ideas and meanings in a comprehensive manner. At the outset, the text is a first-person narrative that throbs with the firm voice of the author. The experiences of the protagonists Huda and Nahil are narrated by the author as she had been with them during the house visits. However, when Huda came to be arrested, the author confesses that she had to escape the scene altogether on account of her own safety and that she missed what would be an important event in her upcoming text. The reference to the intended project of her book that would become *Golda Slept Here* and the faithful recording of the meetings and interviews she had with her would-be protagonists account to the self-reflexive nature of the text. In the case of Elie's and Umm Salim's tales, the exact conversation that the author had with them are reproduced without much change, thereby emphasizing the many turns and twists their life stories have taken. Andoni's and his son Gabi's traumatic encounter with their erstwhile home are recounted from an omniscient, third person perspective.

In the midst of delving into Huda's past in the third section of the book, the narrator's voice switches over to that of the character. The two chapters "The Visit: Three Weeks After the 1967 War" and "A Dream House" are narrated by the eight-year-old Huda in the first-person mode. This shifting of perspectives in narration strengthens the emotional fabric of having lost one's home that has been embedded into the framework of the text.

In addition to such conspicuous shifts in the narrative voice, there are the memories or slips into the past as well as imaginative enactments of the past which have been given in italics to set them off from the main narrative. For instance, the long mental soliloquy of Andoni in the courtroom wherein he silently reiterates the injustices meted out to Palestinians serves to communicate the impossibility of speaking it aloud to Israeli law prejudiced against Palestinians. Similarly, Nahil's frequent slips into her childhood memories of living at home during the house visit she undertakes in the present are set off in italics. Amiry's daydream that features an imaginative train journey to her father's lost family house in Jaffa is italicized too.

There is a collage-like look to *Golda Slept Here* with its combination of words and images, and prose and poem. Lines from Toni Morrison's poem, "Home" given in the beginning on the concept of home, the elaborate dedications, a map tracing the Jerusalem suburbs and the photos of Palestinian houses and those of the people (some of the protagonists) who lived in them form the 'peritexts' (material inside the book) in this work (Smith and Watson 248). Inside the chapters, there are several sub-headings that function as pointers to the key issue dealt with in the subsequent portions. The titles of the overall sections, individual chapters and sub-plots are in the form of sarcastic remarks, angry questions, aphoristic sayings etc. Sometimes, the chapters narrating family tales that focus on the relationships between

the characters are titled simply as “Mother and Child” and “Husband and Wife” and the story itself is relayed in an objective tone seeming to feature abstract persons rather than the flesh-and-blood individuals seen in the preceding and succeeding chapters. This is an effective technique to translate the lived experiences of a few individuals into the mould of a story, thereby, heightening the significance of their life stories beyond that of mere personal experiences. There are also long commentaries in verse that list out the innumerable losses suffered by Palestinians over the decades both in the first and last chapters. Most of these lines are given as apostrophes, addressed either to the divided city of Jerusalem or to the land of Palestine. Apart from these short pieces of verse that appear all along, the narrative is sometimes quickly condensed to short cryptic sentences resembling verse. The appearance of such objective, matter-of-fact sentences explicating the mental processes and reactions of characters in the midst of detailed, subjective description of their experiences puts across the unrepresentability of trauma. Hence the incorporation of the languages and methods of other discourses or genres. Sometimes, Amiry uses fairy-tale like sentences only to revert them to the harsh Palestinian reality of exile, dispossession and occupation as in, “Aysheh and Farid lived there happily/ But not for ever after” (93). These innovative strategies employed by Amiry succeeds in maintaining a witty, sarcastic tone throughout *Golda Slept Here* even while giving voice to the intense trauma of the protagonists’ lives.

Conclusion

In trying to rewrite the historical effects of the events of the Israel-Palestine conflict on the lives of a few chosen protagonists, Amiry’s work is found to rely heavily on memories as an alternative to history itself. The attention on memories – such as active remembering involving action like ritualistic house visits, other forms

of commemoration as well as themes of forgetting and erasure – channelized the course of this chapter to analyze the trauma of those of the *nakba* generation and the postmemory of the successive generations.

Tracing the contours of the Palestinian past and present in the rippling lives of a few individuals, *Golda Slept Here* puts forth memory in myriad ways – as a means of resistance, as an alternative to established history, as an unhealthy obsession, as a difficult, yet, effective way of healing the self and so on. So, the explication of trauma in memory – including active remembrance, commemoration, deliberate forgetting and denial – turns out vivid in its pluralistic range and meaning. The reactions of characters to their personal as well as collective trauma that vary according to age, gender, generation etc. speak for the diversity and multitude of responses rather than the single aspect of unspeakability of trauma upheld by the first wave of the burgeoning trauma theory in the last decade of the twentieth century. Andoni Baramki and his son Gabi who lived at the time of the *nakba* and experienced the pain of dispossession and exile firsthand both had an architectural bent of mind and continued to mourn the loss of their home both as a physical and emotional space. Their loud and eccentric laughter in public– Andoni's at the Israeli courtroom in 1967 and Gabi's at the museum inauguration that had been his former house – echo a parallel way of responding to the intense trauma of their forced estrangement from the familiarity of former lived spaces. Elie too had closed the chapter of his family house in Haifa with his characteristic smile. On the other hand, women protagonists have seldom responded to the trauma of loss with laughter. Though courageous enough to take a visit to her erstwhile home in her eighties, Nahil breaks down into sobs many a time during the visit. She cannot bring herself to face the Israeli settlers residing in the Arab houses they visit and confront them with the issue of unjust occupation. Umm

Salim also has yet another way of reacting to her past. She has tucked it away in the recesses of her mind all these years until pressed for it by the author. In this way, Umm Salim had chosen denial and forgetting to shut out the gates of personal trauma. However, she had had her own way of remembering miniatures of this repressed past by relocating and remaking objects she had used in her pre-*nakba* home in Jaffa. The author and her friend Huda belong to the postgeneration and yet differ in the manifest outcome of the intergenerational traumatic transfer. While the author has shut the gates to rediscover her parents' past for fear of the sting of irretrievable loss, Huda has obsessively pursued her ancestral past by paying house visits and actively commemorating the erstwhile traumatic events.

From the retrospective view that the work offers into the protagonists' past, it can be noted that both Andoni and Amiry's father-in-law, Edmon Tamari, had vowed to themselves and their family that they would not leave their house, come what may. Yet the tension surmounting at the time had forced them out of their houses in 1948. The hasty flight from their houses had only been considered temporary at the time. The failure to have taken note of the gravity of the moment returns to haunt them again and again as the truth of their exile gets hammered into their minds.

Not all characters pay a visit to their erstwhile homes. Some of them who undertake such a visit or get a chance to visit, do so at the cost of churning up their trauma anew. There are different expectations on the part of different characters – Andoni wants his house back, but his son Gabi has realized the impossibility of it and just tries to visit his museum-turned-house as inconspicuously as does any normal visitor of the museum. But it is the demand to pay for a ticket to enter the museum that finally unnerves him. In the case of Nahil, it is just a one-time visit and one look at every nook and corner of her house that she wants. Huda wants to reclaim her

house in ways yet possible - through speech (her continued usage of present tense while referring to her lost family house), through enjoying fruits off the plants in the garden planted without doubt by her forefathers, and through taking a window or door off the house while it is renovated for the comfort of newly arriving Israeli settlers. Amiry, on the other hand, wants to visit her parents' house and wants the current occupants of the house to be friendly and cordial and allow them to visit. *Golda Slept Here* strings several anecdotes or case studies together that have in common the deliberate attempt on the part of Palestinians to dust their former houses from estrangement and reclaim them at least through the alternative historical medium of active commemoration.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

"Yesterday I lost a country.
I was in a hurry,
and didn't notice when it fell from me,
like a broken branch from a forgetful tree."

-Dunya Mikhail, "I Was in a Hurry"

This thesis seeks to find out how two contemporary Palestinian women writers who are second generation descendants of the *nakba* survivors/refugees have pinpointed the predicament of exile in their works using the nexus of Palestinian history, trauma and nationhood. The dislocated self and identity of the Palestinian individual is connected to the larger, fragmented national identity of Palestine through the overarching socio-political history of exile. The works showed how characters living in the occupied Palestinian territories continuously negotiated the flux of their identities as exiles and/or refugees from their displaced vantage points. An authentic Palestinian identity for both the land and its people was constructed through two intertwined levels of the individual trauma and postmemory of characters as well as the change in Palestinian spaces with respect to progressing time frames.

Moving forward from the introductory chapter that laid the basic framework of the study, the second chapter focused on the Palestinian identity and predicament in Susan Abulhawa's debut novel *Mornings in Jenin*. The belated realizations of trauma that recurrently followed the individual characters were found to have a parallel in the dialectical engagement with historical amnesia in the novel. Michael Rothberg's concept of multidirectional memory that envisaged a polytemporal interconnection

between different historical instances illumined the often unnoticed resemblance of the Palestinian exile and resultant crisis with the Jewish Holocaust. It also served to connect and balance the traumatic impacts of diverse historical events as the *nakba* of 1948, the *naksa* of 1967, the Sabra and Shatila massacre of 1982 and the almost eclipsed Jenin massacre of 2002. Analysis along the lines of trauma as well as postmemory reinforced the ongoing traumatization of the Palestinian characters which can best be described, in Nancy van Styvendale's terms, as trans/historical trauma. This form of trauma superimposed the past on the present, burdened individual trauma with collective, shared memories and combined the historical conflict of exile with everyday concerns of occupation and military attacks in the Palestinian context. The ending of *Mornings in Jenin* on a positive note of peaceful coexistence between the Israelis and the Palestinians pointed towards a possible resolution of the decades-long conflict.

The third chapter that pertained to Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water* foregrounded the alternative historical significance of the Palestinian territory of Gaza with the help of magical realism. In fact, the combination of the theme of historical trauma with the technique of magical realism worked at two levels: not only did magical realism resolve the crisis of representation involved in the narrativization of trauma, but also its inherent subversive potential shed a new light upon some of the previously sidelined events of Palestinian history covered in the novel. Carried out in three levels as the trauma of experiencing, re-living and witnessing, the study that revolved mainly around Khaled's peculiar condition led to envision trauma and postmemory in an enmeshed form in the text. The Palestinian reality of trans/historical trauma was established in the context of Abulhawa's second novel as well.

The fourth chapter was based on *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, Suad Amiry's first book that enhanced a translation of the author's lived experiences into the narrative integrity of a text. This work wherein Amiry vividly relates the lives of Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation in Palestinian territories such as the West Bank was found to uphold pluralistic approaches to trauma. It was also analyzed mainly as a work of scriptotherapy, a coinage by Suzette A. Henke which clubbed together a predominantly feminine mode of writing that achieved therapeutic catharsis in the process. Three key features that Henke identifies in scriptotherapy as its episodic nature, the reenactment of trauma in the form of ironic comedy and the resistance potential of writing were writ large in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*. The various strategies of resistance employed by the author in keeping up a defiant stance against unjust oppressive forces, such as imagination, speech, non-compliance, and denial to name a few, come under James C. Scott's concept of everyday resistance.

The concurrence of memory, trauma and history was explored in the fifth chapter that dealt with Amiry's *Golda Slept Here*, a collage-like work. The home/house dichotomy blended the emotional trauma of having lost lived spaces with the material terrain of Palestinian architecture. The externalization of memory was made possible through active commemoration, like the repeated house visits undertaken by the characters to their former homes now inhabited by Israeli settlers. The lost houses including the various objects in and around them, being material spaces stuffed with emotional investment, were found to be functioning as memory sites that Pierre Nora introduced in his essay, "Between Memory and History." *Golda Slept Here* subtly addressed the binary of presence/absence in the Palestinian context by pitting Palestinian and Israeli perspectives against each other.

Comparison of Abulhawa's Novels

Both the novels by Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, share many similarities. The two works trace the lives of four generations of Palestinian characters. The characters who are forced into exile bear the same kind of emotional affiliation with the villages of Ein Hod and Beit Daras that serve as the respective original homelands in the novels. The uniformity in conceiving the plot structures can again be found in the loss of parents and the scattering of the three Abulheja/Baraka siblings after the *nakba*. This isolation from the herd takes them to different directions, with Amal and Mamdouh, respectively in the first and second novels, making it to the American diaspora. Just as David in *Mornings in Jenin* fears that he is really an Arab and tries to enforce the Jewishness of his being in all his violent deeds against Yousef, so also Mazen, in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, fears the possibility of him being the bastard son of a Jew and strives to work for the Palestinian national cause in an attempt to reinforce his Palestinian identity. The revelation of Nur's mismatched eyes can be compared with that of David's scar; this is how their true identity as kith and kin to the family are brought out in both the novels. While the warmth of cross-cultural friendships between Arabs and Jews spreads in *Mornings in Jenin*, Abulhawa's second novel does not feature any Jewish characters. The realism of *Mornings in Jenin* underwent transformation into magical realism in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*.

Comparison of Suad Amiry's Works

Suad Amiry's works belong to the category of creative nonfiction. *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* is highly autobiographical, covering almost all the important events of her youth till the contemporary period of writing the work. *Golda Slept*

Here, despite featuring the author as one of the main participants in the events related, is more concerned about recording the lives of others – Palestinians who are the author's friends. Compared to her debut work, *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* (2005), *Golda Slept Here* is more complex in its explication of trauma and the range of personal life stories it tells, and at the same time, more focused in its attention on lost houses as unclaimed lived spaces. *Sharon and Mother-in-Law* deals with the destruction and appropriation of historical sites and quarters in just one chapter titled "Nablus – The Unbearable Encounter," whereas *Golda Slept Here* elaborates on the theme of conservation of landmark buildings in Palestine erected before the formation of Israel. While the first work is evidently a work of scriptotherapy, *Golda Slept Here* also features events that lend a therapeutic effect to the author's mind.

A Comparative Study of the Four Texts

As Palestinian exilic narratives written in English, all four works resonate with a voice intended to reach out to a larger audience, especially those in the West. While Abulhawa's novels portray the highly turbulent peak points of the history of Palestine dotted in between by the lives of suffering and coping Palestinian characters, Amiry's works with their sarcastic undertone depict the monotony, hazards and pain involved in living as exiles under the perpetual shadow of military occupation. There are many recurrent tropes lying parallel in the fabric of the four texts that envisage the varied aspects of Palestinian identity. Though the resultant exile in the *nakba* of 1948 brought a significant change in the places of their residence, Palestinians still cherish a deep longing for their places of origin. Not only do they wish for a return to their homeland, but also feel their identities to be essentially tied up with those places. While both the novels by Abulhawa depict the massive exodus from Palestinian

villages into meagre refugee camps, Amiry's works focus on some sort of a return to Palestine and the tension that follows thereafter.

The analysis of the four works leads to the conclusion that there is no homogeneous Palestinian identity. Based on the type of scattering (internal displacement, eviction, rediasporization) they had had to undergo, there is a plethora of subject positions, which are further shown to be complicated by the rules under Israeli occupation. Abulhawa's works deal with the identity formation in the refugee camps (Jenin, Shatila and Nusseirat) and the diaspora (America). A shift in focus is found in Amiry's works which touch on the identity formation in the Middle East countries of exile and, most importantly, in Occupied Palestine. The identity crisis of Palestinians is portrayed as a cumulative effect of their exile from original homeland in historic Palestine and the instability of identity in occupied Palestine under Israeli dominance. The works present a range of Palestinian identities such as refugees and other residents in the West Bank, Gazan refugees, refugees and residents in various Middle East countries as well as migrants in the Western diaspora. In addition to these geographically constituted identities, there are many subject positions like the Palestinian fighter/terrorist, the Jewish other, victim/perpetrator, the subtle representations of which serve to break the stereotypical demonstrations of such characters.

Regarding the portrayal of the Palestinian wish to return to their places of origin, it can be argued that the books show different ways of aspiring to make such a return. Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* features a return to Ein Hod by Sara, David and his son Jacob while none of the major characters like Hasan, Amal or Yousef who belong to the second and third generations are able to make such a journey. However, the wish to visit their original homeland has always been cherished. Whereas, in the

second novel *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, no attempt is shown to return or revisit the native land of Beit Daras, with their refugee status turning to one almost taken for granted by characters at the end. Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* that begins with the author's very return to Palestine carries forward the theme of return in *Golda Slept Here* in the obsessive return of traumatized Jerusalemite individuals to their lost homes. However, the picture of "the indefinitely postponed drama of return" that Said mentions in his essay, "Reflections on Exile" surfaces in all the four works (179). This concurs well with the still unrealized dream of Palestinians to make a return to the places they ultimately belong.

The cross-cultural bonds between Jews and Arabs represented by the friendships of Hasan-Ari, David-Amal and Jacob-Sara point to new horizons of peaceful co-existence. Similarly, Amiry's works, despite showing the author's confrontation with settler violence and the suffocating laws of Israeli rule, allude to her Israeli friends. The episodes with the Israeli veterinarian and the sick man whom the author takes to hospital point to new horizons of mutual recognition.

Trauma that Links and Lingers

The thesis revolves around the central concept that the burial of both individual and collective Palestinian trauma reflects the partially eclipsed history of the land. The acknowledgement of trauma, therefore, becomes akin to the process of digging up an alternative historical vision where no one side is preferred and prioritized over the other. As Judith Lewis Herman says in her *Trauma and Recovery*, "an understanding of psychological trauma begins with rediscovering history" (2). In the afterword to the same work, titled "The Dialectic of Trauma Continues," she also writes that, "the study of psychological trauma is an inherently political enterprise

because it calls attention to the experience of oppressed people" (237). All four works depict the Palestinian trauma emanating out of their violent history of exile, their precarious sense of self and identity, the constant threat of wars, settler violence and changing geopolitical landscapes. In the first two main chapters dealing with Abulhawa's works, the classic model of trauma is at work but Amiry's works, studied in the fourth and fifth chapters, are found to uphold more diverse, pluralistic models of trauma theory. The trans/historical nature of Palestinian trauma found out along the study lives up to the first part of the title of the thesis, "Living the Exile." This type of trauma also fuses with postmemory, another concept that had been of considerable interest in the purview of this study, in its long-term, intergenerational impact.

The works under study, despite their conspicuous differences in narrativization, can once again be compared to etch out similarities and differences. Khaled in *The Blue Between Sky and Water* who finds solace in the realm of the blue is similar to little Amal in *Mornings in Jenin*, expressing her wish to live under water without the sound of gunfire. There is a curious juxtaposition of violence and calm involved in the 1967 war descriptions of Aisha's calm dead body in Jenin and dead Mariam's serene face after her brutal killing in Beit Daras; the utter incomprehensibility of trauma at the time of occurrence is portrayed well. The image of Huda and Amal curled in a fetal position in terror in *Mornings in Jenin* resemble those of Mariam and Rhet Shel in similar positions in the second novel. Nazmiyeh's nightmares, Dalia's depression, Amal's anger and Khaled's outward vegetation are mental conditions that show definitive symptoms of PTSD.

Dominick LaCapra's formulations of acting-out and working-through as the two possible, although nuanced, responses to trauma has been used to analyze the varying degrees of reaction exhibited by a range of characters. A cross study of the

four select works revealed two important trajectories resorted to by characters, one from being initially hopeful to being hopeless and the other, from being hopeless to achieving a positive sense of hope. In *Mornings in Jenin*, Yehya and Yousef, who belonged to the first and third generations respectively, progressed from hope to hopelessness in the due course of their lives. Yet, this kind of an inference is too subtle to be generalized. For, Yehya's daring act of venturing into his confiscated land of Ein Hod emerged as much out of his despair and sense of futility as out of the desperate need to bring some sort of a change and instill hope in others. In the same way, Yousef whose final image was fixed to be the revengeful suicide bomber, furious over all that Israel had ever done to his family and fellow beings, gets revoked in the very last page of the novel where his own words reveal that he gave up on such a hopeless attempt and continued with living. In a diametrically opposite picture, the Abulheja siblings David and Amal are shown to be proceeding towards a fresh ray of hope after having gone through a plethora of traumatic experiences. Amal welcomes even death in a peaceful, almost pleasant way. Positioned between these two strategic stances, there is a middle path endorsed by characters as Hasan, Darweesh and Ari who made truce with the reality of their lives and moved on. In the case of Abulhawa's *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, men like Khaled and Abdel Qader can be seen to give up hope in the face of trauma while women such as Um Mamdouh, Nazmiyeh and Nur have imbued the fictional fabric with their ultimate faith in hope. While Um Mamdouh and Nazmiyeh never lose hope all along, Nur gains a balanced state of mind by mustering courage to confront the sum total of her traumatic past as well as present, and working through it with the help of her case worker and companion Nzinga. Alwan, who is Nazmiyeh's daughter as well as Khaled's mother, remains the one who chose the middle path of having come to terms with her reality.

The persons in Amiry's works also exhibit varying degrees of acting out and working through trauma. In *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, the critical distance that the author states she took in viewing the events of her life as a Palestinian inevitably points to having worked through her trauma. Yet, the act of working-through is always a complex process, emerging as it is only after passing the stages of traumatic acting-out. The author's stance of having worked through is also ambiguous, as if it is a mere resignation to trauma after acting out several times in emotional turbulence. Amiry and her father are portrayed as having turned up hopeless regarding the visit to their place of origin, Jaffa. However, she attains relief through the process of writing which can otherwise be termed as scriptotherapy. Amiry's mother-in-law, Umm Salim, embraces the middle path of endurance; having realized her mistake in fleeing home in 1948, she resolves not to leave her current residence, however tough the situation turns out. In *Golda Slept Here,* Andoni progresses from having hope to losing it while his son Gabi wavers between the two extremes. Even this work points to how the outward stand positions adopted by characters are in fact the exact opposite of their real selves. Initially, Amiry's friend Huda seems very firm and controlled about revisiting her ancestral home and yet, shows herself to be hopelessly preoccupied with it. On the contrary, Huda's elderly cousin Nahil who seems timid and diffident later displays a sort of emotional strength and mettle. Elie Sanbar, from the diasporic distance of Paris, is shown as having attained peace with the loss of his family home in Haifa.

The analyses of trauma in all four works also reveal the resistant force acting in an opposite direction; all action becomes something of a reaction. Another inference is that the works portray men as victims like women. From being the centre of patriarchal authority in the household, their subject positions are shifted to being

powerless and prone to violence. The characters of Yehya, Hasan and Yousef in *Mornings in Jenin*, Mamdouh, Abdel Qader and Mazen in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, Amiry's father, husband Salim, professor Heacock in *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* and Andoni and Gabi in *Golda Slept Here* are subtle portraits of the traumatized male.

Postmemory that Binds Past and Present

The ethos of the Palestinian exile is kept alive in all the four works through postmemory. The characters who belong to the postgenerations possess a deep sense of familial postmemory which suffuses with the larger pool of affiliative postmemory. This is because all of them carry the embodied knowledge of a family history marked by exile and dislocation from the *nakba*, and simultaneously owe their individual identities, despite the heterogeneity of personal experiences, to the image of the Palestinian community in general. In *Mornings in Jenin*, postmemory as the embodied traumatic knowledge of the preceding generations is belatedly acquired by Amal and Sara while the painful past of Jewish persecution during the war years in Europe is falsely imbibed by Amal's brother Ismael/David who is raised a Jew. On quite a different plane, Khaled in *The Blue Between Sky and Water* experiences an evacuation of his own memories in order to accommodate and relive the traumatic episodes of his ancestors' lives handed down to him as his share of postmemory. Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* portrays the author's own sense of postmemory and that of her niece Diala undergoing serious transformation in the frictional encounter with the present – they grow disillusioned from the former romantic conceptualization of the lost native place and come to re-negotiate their sense of identity as Palestinians. Coming down to *Golda Slept Here*, postmemory is presented as an unhealthy obsession with the past that Huda can never let go.

The process of transmission of postmemory, though subtle and spanning a considerable amount of time, can be classified according to the means of transmission. The first of these methods is through words, stories or narrativization. The words of Hasan and Haj Salem to the children of the Jenin camp, Mamdouh's narrative transformation of his traumatic legacy, Hajje Nazmiyeh's storytelling to her grandchildren, Amiry's father's explanation of his failed attempt to visit his lost house, her mother's words that gave her a mental picture of Jerusalem – all of these serve as examples. (However, there are curious omissions – intensely personal and extremely traumatic experiences omitted purposefully - to be detected in the storytelling series. Haj Salem who never tells the story of his entire family's death in the 1948 war in Abulhawa's first novel and Hajje Nazmiyeh who never speaks of the incident of her rape and Mariam's death are instances).

The second way of transmission is through solid images and objects like photographs and souvenirs. Mrs. Perlstein's brooch offers a glimpse of her Baba's bygone world of cross-cultural friendship to Amal in *Mornings in Jenin* while the sole family photograph of the Barakas preserved by her grandfather Mamdouh gives Nur a peep into her family roots in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*. In Amiry's *Golda Slept Here* too, there are objects that serve as reminders to a past lost by the previous generation. Umm Salim's gilded icon of Christ, and the exquisite window frames and other portable building materials from Huda's pulled-down ancestral villa are two instances of this. The former is shown to the author in order that her knowledge of her in-laws' past be reinforced and the latter are willfully taken into possession by Huda who wants to conserve them as existing pieces of a lost rightful heritage.

A third means of postmemory transmission occurs through the direct confrontation of successors with what is irretrievably gone from their family history.

Yousef's witnessing of his grandfather Yehya's return to Ein Hod, Sara and Jacob's visit to the present day Ein Hod, Khaled's magical forays into the pre-*nakba* Palestine inhabited by his forefathers, Amiry's journey to Jaffa and her meeting with Signor Allonzo who retained the figure of the old British Mandate official in his demeanour and Huda's visit to her ancestral home in the company of her tearful father and paternal grandmother – these constitute the performative reenactment of postmemory where the past and the present intersect curiously as layers of emulsion.

In the case of the parent generation, it can be said that male characters such as Hasan, and Mamdouh, respectively in *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, are more concerned with imparting their history to children than women like Dalia, Amal, Umm Salim and others who better not want to acquaint the younger generation with the sorrowful chapters of their lives. The hesitation to open up also ensues from the fear of re-living the event in the act of narration. Once they open up, however, it can be seen that not only are they relieved of the traumatic burden at least temporarily, but they also develop a feminine bonding with the listener who is a daughter/daughter-in-law.

The Cornerstones of Palestinian History Reaffixed

The select works portray Palestinian history in its exclusive subjectivity, so that the overall picture changes from the stereotypical Western conceptions to an insider's perspective. As attempts at historical revisionism, the four primary texts followed a combined spatial-temporal approach whereby they concentrated on the land of Palestine and its historical representations over a considerable span of time. Abulhawa's works claimed the land from which Palestinians were expelled in 1948 as inherently Palestinian in the retrospective portrayals of land before the *nakba*.

Mornings in Jenin saw the parallel alignment of the narrativization of the Palestinian *nakba* with that of the Jewish Holocaust and voiced a strong statement about the ongoing Palestinian condition as emanating from no less a historical tragedy. The work also eloquently depicted the often neglected events such as the *nakba*, the *naksa* and other massive incidents while maintaining a strict silence on the Peace Progress that yielded poor outcome in the Israel-Palestine conflict. The reference to various historical documents and articles brought in a factual clarity to the fictitious fabric of the novel, thereby endorsing Dominick LaCapra's concept of middle voice in historiography. In the nexus of trauma, magical realism and subjective historical revisionism in *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, time was so malleably twisted as to present history as clairvoyance which clearly toppled the so-called objectivity and linearity of history that have been brought in to monopolize the same. The uniqueness of Palestinian spaces was explored in the hyperreal space of the blue as well as the subversive spheres of underground tunnels. *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law* also mourned the misappropriation of Palestinian spaces in the disappearance of greenery as well as the appearance of the greyness of the huge Separation Wall in the occupied territories. The work presented security checkpoints and airports as non-places that held immense potential to resist. *Golda Slept Here* sought to weave strong personal episodes of Palestinian history such that they challenged the larger, hegemonic history of the Israel-Palestine conflict. The indigenous architecture constructed prior to the *nakba* was used as a potent symbol of Palestinian cultural identity and existence. Memory, consisting of different forms like multidirectional memory, traumatic memory, postmemory etc., also becomes an important tool in the process of historical revisionism in the chosen texts.

The *nakba* is portrayed as a massive catastrophe, a major seismic wave that sent tremors throughout and tore Palestinian land into pieces. It is also shown as an unexpected catastrophe for most of the characters in all the select works, who took their flight from home for a temporary displacement. On the contrary, the Six-Day War of 1967 is depicted as a hopeful situation initially in works like *Mornings in Jenin*, *The Blue Between Sky and Water* and *Golda Slept Here*. In the first novel by Abulhawa, Amal and friends fantasize of returning to the unseen homeland while adults prepare for a victory in fight. In the second novel too, characters like Nazmiyeh eagerly look forward to a return to Beit Daras. In Amiry's work, the 1967 war instills the passions of winning back their lost home in Huda's father and grandmother. This resonates with what Edward Said, in his *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives*, writes about the 1967 war as, "Never did our future seem more hopeful" (19).

Reference to particular events, documents and famous comments of politicians involved in the Israel-Palestine conflict feature in all four of the select works. In *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, former Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon's words from an interview about the Israeli way of dealing with the Palestinians that Amiry sarcastically reproduces in the context of her work is also made to resonate like a short excerpt from Israel's 'Water and Land Grab Report 2003.' Abulhawa's works too are replete with references to non-fictional texts by Noam Chomsky, Norman G. Finkelstein, Robert Fisk, et al. This intertextuality embedded in the narratives is a counter-historical move indeed.

Womanhood as the Source of Strength

Voicing the feminine predicament and their sense of resilience remains central to the works, in spite of featuring an ample number of male characters. From the

perspective of the female protagonist Amal, *Mornings in Jenin* is a buildungsroman or coming-of-age novel. However, the traditional form of the genre showing the return or assimilation of the foundling back to family gets reversed in the Palestinian refugee context of Abulhawa's novel, where the family gets dispersed and individual members lose their sense of belonging. As a whole, *Mornings in Jenin* revolves around Amal as a Palestinian woman, constantly trying to negotiate her place in the world. Though the author's next novel reflects the consciousness of Khaled who is a boy, the string of women characters from Um Mamdouh to Nazmiyeh and then to Alwan, Nur and Rhet Shel cannot go unnoticed. The novel is an ultimate celebration of women bonding and sisterhood in the wake of historical catastrophe. Amiry's works too are replete with the inner workings and reactions of Palestinian women to the conditions they are forced to live in. Her portraitures of her women friends, colleagues and relatives testify to this.

However, there are certain differences to be discerned in the characterization of women. *Mornings in Jenin* depicts women as shattered after the loss of their husbands or men in wars. Amal and her mother Dalia are the chief examples of this. *The Blue Between Sky and Water*, on the contrary, features women characters who go on with life boldly without men. In Abulhawa's novels, women are shown as mothers and sisters of the men fighters. But they are not to be sidelined to such depictions; each woman is a fighter in her own right. Nazmiyeh's love of her motherland is not to be discerned in her fertile womb that yields many children, but in her resistance that becomes equal to the fight for a free Palestine. Dalia's mind becomes a metaphor for the homeland that is no longer the same while Nazmiyeh's body is kept parallel to the confiscation and pollution of land. In the case of Amiry's works, women are active participants who partake in local protests against the dominant military rule. Thus the

select works project a reworked picture of gender in Palestinian history by placing women at the dynamic centres of indigenous memory and action.

The Surfacing Picture of Palestine as Nation

The works of Amiry and Abulhawa address the larger question of Palestinian national self-determination in many ways. In *Mornings in Jenin*, the scattering of the Abulheja and the Baraka families is projected as being symbolic of the fragmentation at the larger scale, i.e., the disintegration of the nation in terms of its geography, politics, ethnicity and culture. Fear and apprehension regarding the dwindling of Palestine as a nation has been aptly reflected. There is also the desire to reclaim lost land through reinforcing an inherent relationship with it. The villages of Ein Hod and Beit Daras in Abulhawa's works function as the microcosm of historic Palestine that came to be partitioned in 1948. Exile is picturized as the biblical image of the fall of Man. The idea of looking back with nostalgia to a lost land is evident in Amiry's works too. In *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*, Amiry wished to return to her father's hometown of Jaffa, which is part of Israel at present, but with little success. So did the protagonists of her work *Golda Slept Here* like Andoni, Gabi, Nahil and Huda long for their long-lost houses in West Jerusalem. All these are instances "to reclaim, rename, and reinhabit" the confiscated landscape through imagination and to come to terms with the trauma involved (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 273). Amiry's *Golda Slept Here* ends with the line, "Palestine / Will you ever set us free" (171). The notion of being Palestinian, ever-present in all the four works, proclaims aloud a national identity that is not confined to the limits of a particular nation. Yet, the works exuberate a sense of individual and collective Palestinian identity that seems to demand a free nation for their people.

The coverage of Palestinian history in the select works shows how the lack of a proper nationhood continued to define its nationalism. The works taken for study clearly illumine the national status of Palestine under different time periods, with no clear footing of sovereignty at any point.

Significance of the Study

This study contributes to the analysis of contemporary Palestinian women's writing in English. Sorted out in equal halves of fiction and non-fiction, the four primary texts chosen for study have been found to put forth newer ways of engaging with Palestinian history as well as everyday reality. Spelling out Palestinian trauma and its intergenerational transmission, along with ways of indigenous resistance and self-healing, the study becomes relevant in today's world of dislocated peoples for its projection of the Palestinian predicament.

The chronicling of subjective and intense forms of history in the select works is a layered communication occurring at multiple levels; it is an ongoing dialogue with the Palestinian people as well as a diplomatic discourse with the dominant Israeli history and law. The books also put their ideas across to the Western world and the world at large and seem to demand attention towards settlement of the Israel-Palestine conflict. All four works express solidarity with millions of fellow Palestinians, lending a voice to raise their frustrations and pain. The intertwined framework of the study encompassing the analyses of trauma and postmemory along spatial and temporal dynamics highlights the need for historical revisionism in the Palestinian context as well as depicts individual identities building up to the struggling, collective entity of a contested nationhood.

Limitations of the Thesis as well as Scope for Future Study

This thesis, titled "Living the Exile: History, Individual and the Nation in Select Works of Palestinian Women Writers," deals with a total of four literary works, two works of fiction by Susan Abulhawa and two works of life-writing by Suad Amiry. The study brings out various Palestinian subject positions, as penned by Abulhawa, a diasporic Palestinian writer and Amiry, an author cum architect from the Palestinian territory of the West Bank. While various identities such as the refugee, the expatriate, the revolutionary and the Jewish other come under the purview of the study, the important issue of the internally displaced Palestinian living within the 1948 borders of Israel does not figure in any of the works. The thesis also does not focus on any of the other works written by the two select authors. Furthermore, other prominent writers, including the majority who wrote in their mother tongue Arabic, were left out. The study also acknowledges its gap in leaving out the corpus of Israeli literature. The possibilities of comparison with other national forms of literature from the Middle East, such as Syrian and Lebanese literature, have also had to be dropped to limit the thesis to its basic premise. In the same vein, the study leaves out the scope for a detailed analysis of Palestinian nationalism and its various implications, incorporating theoretical terms and terminologies pertaining to the area.

The increasing global attention on the plight of refugees upholds a beacon of hope for millions of dislocated lives. This study closes by stressing the need for raising louder voices towards an inclusive and just world.

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Appendix

List of Published Articles

No.	Authors	Title of Publications	Journal/ Anthology Name, Vol. No. & Year	National/ International	Publisher with ISSN/ISBN	Impact Factor
1.	Shijila K. & Dr. Praseedha G.	Resistance and Defiance: The Reaction Towards Gender Discrimination in the Palestinian Scenario in Suad Amiry's *Sharon and My Mother-in-Law*	Insight Vol. 1, issue 3 May 2021	International	ISSN 2582-8002	-
2.	Shijila K. & Dr. Praseedha G.	Mother-Daughter Relationships in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and *The Blue Between Sky and Water*	Pursuits Oct-Nov 2018 Vol. XVI	National	ISSN 0974-7400	-