SULTAN MOULAY SLIMANE UNIVERSITY
Faculty of Arts and Humanities
Beni Mellal

***DOCTORAL CENTRE:* ARTS AND HUMANITIES**

***DOCTORAL STUDIES PROGRAM:* INTERACTIONS IN LITERATURE, CULTURE AND SOCIETY**

**A DOCTORAL DISSERTATION SUBMITTED IN FULFILMENT OF THE DEGREE OF DOCTOR (PH.D) IN LITERARY AND CULTURAL STUDIES BY**

**Mohamed HANDOUR**

---

# Exile and Home in the Novels of some Contemporary Anglophone Arab Writers: Ibrahim Fawal, Shaw Dallal, Yasmin Zahran and Nada Awar Jarrar.

---

Under the supervision of **Professor Doctor Moulay Lmustapha MAMAOUI**

**Academic Year: 2018-2019**

# Contents

**Dedication** **4**

**Acknowledgements** **5**

**Abstract** **6**

**Arabic Abstract** **7**

**Introduction** **8**

**Chapter 1 Space in Ibrahim Fawal's *On the Hills of God*** **32**
- 1.1 Space before the Exodus . . . 33
  - 1.1.1 The trope of the house . . . 33
  - 1.1.2 The unhomely space . . . 42
  - 1.1.3 The dialectics of power . . . 47
  - 1.1.4 On the eve of exile . . . 56
  - 1.1.5 the catastrophe/ sacrifice dyad . . . 65
  - 1.1.6 The catastrophe underway . . . 72
- 1.2 Space in Exile . . . 79
  - 1.2.1 The exodus . . . 79
  - 1.2.2 The arrival . . . 89

**Chapter 2 The Psychology of Exile in Fawal's *On the Hills of God* and *The Disinherited*** **96**
- 2.1 A quest for selfhood . . . 97
- 2.2 The traumatized exile . . . 108
  - 2.2.1 the individual's psychological dynamics of trauma . . . 108
  - 2.2.2 The Exile's response to trauma . . . 118
    - 2.2.2.1 Breaking the silence . . . 118
    - 2.2.2.2 Moving Forward . . . 122
  - 2.2.3 Towards a politics of resistance . . . 130
    - 2.2.3.1 A consideration of the challenges . . . 130
    - 2.2.3.2 Gathering Information . . . 139

**Chapter 3 Memory and Belonging in Shaw Dallal's *Scattered like Seeds* and Fawal's *The Disinherited*** **145**
- 3.1 A sense of belonging in exile . . . 146
- 3.2 Memory and the reality of occupation . . . 156

**Chapter 4 Encounters in Exile in Yasmin Zahran's *A Beggar at Damascus Gate*** **184**

4.1 Ambivalent bonds . . . . . 185
4.2 Interrogating the Self . . . . . 202
4.3 Towards an anti-colonial trajectory . . . . . 214
4.4 A dialogic interaction between now and then . . . . . 222
4.5 Retrospective encounters . . . . . 233

**Chapter 5 The Meaning of Home in Nada Awar Jarrar's *Somewhere Home*** **248**

5.1 Root-oriented identity . . . . . 249
5.2 Nostalgia for home . . . . . 261
5.3 Travelling across time . . . . . 274

**Chapter 6 Return from Exile and Post Civil-War Lebanon in Nada Awar Jarrar's *A Good Land*** **292**

6.1 A new encounter with Lebanon . . . . . 293
6.2 Indulging in the mundane . . . . . 311
6.3 Interrogating hegemony . . . . . 321
6.4 Identity in a state of flux . . . . . 334
6.5 Place as a repository of ontological signification . . . . . 343

**Conclusion** **355**

**Bibliography** **368**

# Dedication

To the spirit of my father
To my mother, my wife and children
To my brothers and sisters.

# Acknowledgments

I am deeply grateful to my supervisor Professor Dr. **Moulay Lmustapha Mamaoui** for his exemplary guidance, thoughtful comments and numerous suggestions. His continuous support and encouragement every inch of the way have always been a source of intrinsic motivation and inspiration. I also wish to extend my thanks to my mentors who have never ceased to encourage me in the course of doctoral studies. I must acknowledge that their helpful advice nurtured the impetus to go on writing in spite of my workload and family obligations. To these professors, I owe great thanks for their edifying, instructive and erudite lectures. I must admit that I have drawn sheer profit and pleasure from them as an MA student. To professor **Ait Omar Driss**, I owe many thanks for offering to treat the final doctoral product using LATEX Software.

# Abstract

Though the corpus is apparently heterogeneous and variegated, it is unified by the plight of displacement that engenders a coercive break with the *terre natale*. The Palestinian Anglophone authors Ibrahim Fawal, Shaw Dallal and Yasmine Zahrane share their main concerns with their Lebanese counterpart, Nada Awar Jarrar. Obliquely or directly, there is an aura of exilic life resonating in the five novels and the characters' tendency to write themselves as they attempt to vitiate the traumatizing effect of this coercive parting with what can be tendentiously dubbed "the homeland." The home /exile dyad acquires significance within specific historical, political and cultural contexts. That's why the conditions that produce the Palestinian exile are dissimilar to those that drive the Lebanese characters outside their home. After all, the Isreali colonial occupation of the Palestinian land and the catastrophic aftermath of the infamous exodus cannot be compared to the Lebanese Civil War and its resultant border crossings. In spite of this difference, this thesis is built on the common and salient denominator of the intricacies inherent in the dichotomy of home and exile and the mutability of a people's identity in the course of the excessive mobility that marks their lives in exile. This mutability, however, does not deprive the characters from exulting in the myth of an eternal return. To address the intricacies of exile and home, a multi-disciplinary approach is adopted with a special focus on the materiality of the text. That is the narratives under study are not mere works of fiction but also products of given historical, political and cultural circumstances. In this regard the text is laced with living experiences as it is not antiseptically quarantined from external realities.

**Key words**: Exile, home, space, Zionism, return, hegemony, ambivalence, displacement, the catastrophe, identity, the exodus.

# Arabic Abstract


**المنفى و الوطن في روايات بعض الكتاب العرب المعاصرين الناطقين بالإنجليزية : إبراهيم فوال، شاو دلال، ياسمين زهران، و ندى عوار جرار**

إعداد: **الطالب الباحث محمد حنضور** تحت إشراف : **الأستاذ الدكتور مولاي المصطفى مماوي**

على الرغم من أن المتن يبدو غير متجانسا ومتنوعا ، فإن محنة التهجير التي تؤدي إلى فصل قسري عن الوطن الأم تشكل رابطا بين هذه الأعمال الأدبية. يشارك كل من المؤلفين الناطقين بالإنجليزية الفلسطينيين إبراهيم فوال وشاو دلال وياسمين زهران بواعث قلقهم الرئيسية مع نظيرتهم اللبنانية ندى عوار جرار . بشكل مضمر أو مباشر ، هناك هالة من حياة المنفى التي يتردد صداها في الروايات الخمس وميل الشخصيات إلى الكتابة لأنهم يحاولون التغلب على التأثير المأساوي لهذا الفراق القسري مع ما يمكن أن يطلق عليه اسم أرض الوطن. تكتسب ثنائية الوطن - المنفى أهمية بالغة ضمن سياقات تاريخية وسياسية وثقافية محددة. لهذا السبب تختلف الشروط التي تنتج المنفى الفلسطيني عن الظروف التي تدفع الشخصيات اللبنانية خارج ديارهم. رغم كل شيء ، لا يمكن مقارنة الاحتلال الإسرائيلي الاستعماري للأرض الفلسطينية ونتائجه الكارثية للهجرة المشؤومة بالحرب الأهلية اللبنانية والمعابر الحدودية الناتجة عنها. رغم هذا الاختلاف ، فإن هذه الأطروحة مبنية على القاسم المشترك والواضح للتعقيدات الكامنة في ثنائية الوطن والمنفى وتغيير الهوية أثناء التنقل المفرط الذي يميز حياة الشخصيات في المنفى. مع ذلك ، لا يمنع هذا التحول الشخصيات من الإحتفال بأسطورة عودة أبدية. لمعالجة هذه العلاقة المعقدة بين المنفى والوطن ، تم تبني مقاربة متعددة التخصصات مع التركيز بشكل خاص على مادية النص. فهذه الروايات قيد الدراسة ليست مجرد أعمال خيالية فحسب ولكنها أيضًا نتاج لظروف تاريخية وسياسية وثقافية معينة. في هذا الصدد، نجد النص مفعما بتجارب حية لأنه لا يخضع للعزل عن الواقع الخارجي.



**الكلمات المفاتيح:** المنفى، الوطن، الفضاء، الصهيونية، العودة، الهيمنة، الإزدواجية، التهجير، النكبة، الهوية، الرحيل.

# Introduction

> I left this place by running all the way to California. An exile which lasted for years. I came back on a stretcher, and felt here a stranger, exiled from my former exile. I am always away from something and somewhere. My senses left me one by one to have a life of their own. If you meet me in the street, don't be sure it's me. My center is not in the solar system. (Adnane 4)

Ibrahim Fawal, Shaw Dallal, Yasmine Zahrane and Nada Awar Jarrar do not represent a homogenous cohort of Anglophone Arab writers. However, they have a number of points in common. All of them represent a contemporary generation of Arab writers in English and share the experience of exile and the trepidations of mobility away from home. Besides, they write from foreign geographical backgrounds where they are ensconced after being compelled to leave their countries of origin for one reason or another.

These writers are the products of their cultural environment. They carry a cumbersome load of values and codes that serve to define them and contribute to shaping their subjectivity in diaspora. They are cultural constructs who remain tied to the homeland through memories and ruminations inscribed in their tales of frailty and sorrow. Being displaced does not interfere with a fervent desire to display the ordeal of those among their characters who are caught in the vortex of war or lead an exilic way of life elsewhere.

Writing from disparate corners of the globe is no impediment to negotiating common issues whose echoes reverberate across variegated diasporic experiences. The dyad of home

and exile represents a salient theme that recrudesces in the five novels listed above; indeed, it amounts to an umbilical cord that threads the stories together. Be that as it may, the signification accorded to it is in a perennial state of flux and turbulence. As a case in point, the meaning of home in a pre-exilic space is at odds with its meaning in exile.

The fact that the issue of home and exile in contemporary Anglophone Arabic literature is not fully explored is one of the motivating forces behind taking interest in such a topic. While the critical attention devoted to Indian, and African diasporic fiction is copious, the one dedicated to Arabic literature in English is substantially scanty. However, diaspora literature as a whole is still a nascent field of research, if not altogether undertheorized. This will not, nonetheless, keep us from making a cursory review of this literature to see the extent to which it has a bearing on the thematic subject under scrutiny.

In her book, *Between Arab and White Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora,* Sarah M.A. Gualtieri does not so much raise the issue of exile as she dwells on its corollary identity crisis for the early Lebanon migrants in the US. These migrants, who cannot break free from the legacy of the Ottoman colonialism, still define themselves as Syrians reminding us of Syria in its late-Ottoman sense of bilad-al-sham, or "geographical Syria" ( M.A Gultieri 1). It seems that the author is much more concerned with the issue of citizenship referring to the intricacies involved in the administrative procedures taken by the Asians, the Syrians included, to become American citizens as the Naturalization law[1] is biased towards them. They are apparently for the view that home can be a shifting notion as they strive for establishing a fluid residence in their host country.

*Contemporary African American literature*: *The Living Canon* is a laudable attempt on the part of its editors to provide a thorough survey of Afro-American literature and

[1] The Asian immigrant is denied citizenship because he is neither "a free white person, "nor of "African nativity or descent."

the historico-political context in which it has emerged. Even though the issue of home is not directly addressed, there is an oblique allusion to the racial discrimination faced by those African literary figures who find themselves struggling to achieve presence and visibility through the lens of their literature away from some primeval mythical origin. The hardships they encounter in transforming their narratives into visual works are not merely of financial type, but also of their inability to target a wide readership because of their difference from the white 'natives.' The bitter realities of serfdom and bondage go unnoticed by a white audience that aspires to a fiction with much more artistic merits than those "held as a mirror" to white oppression. In contemporary America, the younger generation of writers revels in experiences that are no longer "Jim Crowed"[2] beyond access though the questions of race and human rights are still recurrent themes (Lovalerie King and Shirley Moody-Turner xi).

In the same vein, Yogita Goyal implicitly accounts for the affective significance of the experiences of black diaspora. Their nostalgia for a mythical return to Africa reveals the importance of reunion with the native soil for the dispersed black communities and the existential impact such a reunion would exert on their subjectivity. In August 1920, the Universal Negro Improvement Association held its first convention in New York. Its leader tacitly states that the intricate routes leading to diaspora cannot destabilize the roots. Even if this proclamation will always remain confined in the prison-house of myth, it is critical for imparting ontological meaning to the blacks' existence. Garven, the eminent leader of the back-to-Africa movement at the outset of the twentieth century, declares that "the other races have countries of their own and it is time for 400.000.000 Negroes

[2] It is the former practice in the US of a law enforcement that is unfair to coloured people who are segregated from white people for example in schools. Though this study dwells on displaced black writers in the US, there is a tacit message of suffering because of being members of black diaspora whose forebears were uprooted from some primeval "homeland" that is still immured in a mythical framework.

to claim Africa for themselves, and we mean to retake every square inch of the 12.000.000 square miles of African territory belonging to us by right divine" (Goya 1). If this is how Garven characterizes truth for the blacks, what would be the reaction of people –even those featured within the space of fiction –whose real homes are still occupied to the present day? This question is partly answered through the eyes of the fictional characters of Fawal, Dallal and Zahrane in their portrayal of the dialectics of home and exile.

The subject of diaspora continues to acquire critical significance in recently published literature, which proves the idea that it is still undertheorized. In this regard Delinda Marzette introduces her academic investigation of African women writers outside the native borders by a simplistic definition of diaspora in relation to blacks. She inaugurates the term to make allusion to "the mass dispersal of people from their homelands . . . to other global locations; objects of diasporic dispersal these individuals then become a kind of migrant, physically and psychologically" (Marzette 4). This definition is instrumental in understanding how the majority of characters in the corpus under study cannot, willingly or otherwise, reach the homeland, but they remain stoically attached to it in their mind's eyes, which underscores the import of the psychological journey to those who are displaced and denied any return to the homeland.

The psychological implication of diasporic subjects may also have something to do with the works of memory. This is the topic raised in close association with "dwelling-in-displacement" that profoundly affects a huge number of people world-wide. The term seems to suggest a sort of alienation that impinges on those living outside their natal geography. In fact, for many members of diaspora, it is difficult to find a certain harmony, if not symbiosis, between home and displacement. That is probably why the editors of *Diaspora and Memory* opt for the hyphenated term above. They go so far as to call

into question the enormous interest taken in 'hybrdized' identities at a time when being diasporic is not an option but a must for many of the migrants. Faced with the predicament of dislocation, they feel obliged to take refuge in memory to establish kinship with home and lessen the pangs of being separated from the ancestral land. In this respect, Timothy Brennan is skeptical about some contemporary coinages such as "subject formation" and "cosmopolitanism" as they fail to capture the essence of displacement and cannot therefore shift attention away from citizenship and the nation-state (Marie-Aude Baronian 9).

Other critics, like Kim Butler, are concerned with the diffusion of the term diaspora. Once solely used to define classical diasporas (Jewish, Armenian, Greek), then African and Palestinian communities in exile, diaspora is now increasingly applied to a "majority condition in global capitalism" (Mirzoeff 6). However, no matter how polyvalent the experiences and identities of diasporic communities are worldwide the need for home and the comfort it implies differs in intensity and urgency among the individual subjects of these communities. Those displaced under duress, or at gunpoint, cannot be lumped with those whose displacement is brought about by other determinants. For instance the tragic experiences of the dispersed Palestinians are far worse than those of the blacks who are denied equality and the basic right "of sharing to utmost ability the opportunities and privileges of modern civilization" (Edwards 1) according to W.E.B. Du Bois[3].

In this context, it would be pertinent to contest Robin Cohen's reference to Jewish and Palestinian communities as equal "victim diasporas" (1) because by so doing he appears to connive at and legitimate the Zionist occupation of Palestine. His declaration that both

[3] Du Bois (1868-1963) was an American sociologist, historian, human rights activist and Pan-Africanist. In Westminster Town Hall, Du Bois delivered a speech titled " To the Nations of the World" that introduces a stunning paragraph, part of which runs: "In the metropolis of the modern world, in this closing year of the 19th century there has been assembled a congress of men and women of African blood to deliberate solemnly upon the present situation and outlook of the darker races of mankind. The problem of the twentieth century is the problem of the colour line . . . " (Bois 6).

the victim and victimizer equally bear the brunt of aggression and oppression minimizes the excesses of Zionist brutality and does injustice to the Palestinian cause. Being victim to the ethnic cleansing of Holocaust does not justify in any sense the Zionists' use of force to encroach upon the property of others, dispossess and displace them. How can the West persecutes Jews and subsequently atones for its notorious misdeeds by assisting them to conquer and subjugate the Palestinians? Fawal, Dallal and Zahrane shed light on the scale of the damage done to these people making the West complicit in the catastrophe that has befallen them and conferring sheer historicity on their novels. They are not mere works of fiction, but historical documents par excellence.

Helena Lindholm Schulz manages somehow to set these narratives in their main historical context. Her book *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Homeland* negotiates the issues of home, displacement and alienation that are also intrinsic to this thesis. The difference being that Schulz addresses them within the ambit of pure history while the aforementioned authors see them from the perspective of fiction-cum history, which makes the distinctive lines between these two realms shadowy and vague. The fictional characters' wish to return home finds support in Schulz's contention that the tenacious attachment to Palestine is what informs Palestinian identity in exile. However, her study seems to veer towards "less territorialized identities" when she points out that Palestinian diasporic communities adjust to new modes of living which make the homeland important but not the only source of identity (Schulz 1). That might be the case politically and historically, but in the narratives under scrutiny the rhetoric of deterritorialization probably applies to some Lebanese characters but not to figures like Thafer Allam, whose ultimate reunion with Kuwait is ironic, as he cannot reach his mother in Jaffa, but it is a source of ontological signification. In fact his journey encompasses

episodes of interrogating the self and ends with a resolution to linger among his ethnic fellows.

Schluz sometimes, consciously or not, is implicated in the ideology embedded in the written history when she attributes the exodus to causes other than occupation. Though she seems to uphold the Palestinian cause, the ruses of discourse undermine her support. To attenuate the cruelty involved in the Zionist appropriation of Palestinian land, some of the written documents the researcher draws on ascribe the coercive flight from home to destitution, to impossible life situations and of course to the Israeli occupation (ibid 2). The order in which these factors are listed places the Israeli colonization in the background and socio-economic conditions in the foreground. This evokes the conceptualization of discourse as the deep ideas that lie behind the ideas we take for granted and reminds us of Michel Foucault's idea that each statement or discursive event contains a mark of absence. Referring to discourse in *The Archeology of Knowledge,* he maintains that "below what is manifest" there is "the half silent murmur of another discourse" (Foucault 28).

Another gap that this doctoral thesis attempts to fill is the intensity of trauma the characters undergo on their way to exile. In spite of some of the lacunae involved in her research, Schluz's conceptualization of place bears some resemblance to the way pre-exilic space is accounted for in this research. Her contention that "'place' cannot be understood in isolation from human experiences and their socio-economic conditions (ix) echoes in our critical study of space. She makes clear that being ejected from a place laced with one's familiar modes of being is traumatic, but she does not expound on the downright trauma undergone by the victims of the exodus. She devotes a chapter to right of return, but she does not provide a meticulous portrayal of the al-Nakba and its catastrophic ramifications.

The author also places home in immediate juxtaposition with exile when she reflects, though briefly, upon the psychology of a person suddenly uprooted from their native space. She describes the appalling situation of a people who are deracinated from their homeland alluding to the collective punishment exacted on Palestinians, Kosovars, Afghans, Chechnians, Bosnians, Rwandans, etc. These are the true wretched of the earth who have to flee for their lives bearing the cumbersome load of homelessness and the excruciating agony of being forced out of the *terre natale*. However, Schluz merely exposes and depicts the plight of these sufferers –which may render her tone voyeuristic –without summoning courage to condemn and deplore it unlike the Palestinian novelists who lay bare the atrocities of Zionism and denounce them. Schluz, no doubt, commiserates with the feeling of loss befalling the Palestinian exiles, but she is clamped tight in the grip of the aporia of regarding their diasporic status essential "in any understanding of how to formulate a viable strategy for peace between Israelis and Palestinians" (ibid 1). It seems that the prospect of peace will not go beyond the confines of myth unless 3.9 million Palestinians ( UNRWA 2001) are allowed to return to their land. Our study of the intricacies of exile and the ordeal of dislocation, through the eyes of the fictional characters, makes this return extremely difficult because their exile experiences are unique.

Unlike the writings of Fawal, Dallal and Zahran that bristle with the sufferings of a civilian population grappling with the aftermath of the al-Nakba, some black intellectual exiles are preoccupied with subjects of a different nature. Some of their creative works are retrospective memories of the repercussions of slavery and serfdom, while others are concerned with typically cultural issues and values. This shift away from the atrocities of bondage is informed by the black diaspora's interest in their customs and traditions. In this respect Gizelle Liza Anatol, directs her attention to "the legend and ways contemporary

authors of the circum-Caribbean and other parts of the African diaspora have incorporated the lore into their writing" (1). The black intellectual exile is verily unlike his Palestinian counterpart whose writings are often mirrors held up to the calamity of dispersal following the deplorable appropriation of their homeland.

In the same vein, F.Abiola Irele locates the issue of black diaspora within literary and imaginative works. She betrays her suspicion of colonial education that mainly draws on "texts, images, and other modes of discourse and representation" (vii) that define the black skinned and relegate them to the subordinated margins of otherness. In this respect, Africa is viewed against the backdrop of the Western representational framework as "the place of negation." Yet this litany of stereotypical naming does not interfere with visualizing the experience of establishing contact with some primeval space originally inhabited by their forebears. Irele's study of Edward Kamau Brathwaite's *Masks* is intended to bring to the fore the return of the native through the process of writing back. Though this return acquires significance symbolically, that is within the realm of imaginative discourse, it has an ontological weight as it can link the Afro-Caribbeans to primordial antecedents far beyond the demeaning acts of slavery. However, the feasibility of the blacks' craving for reunion with Africa is not comparable with the exilic wanderings of a people expelled out of their land under the muzzle of a gun.

Robin Cohen, whose biased approach has been referred to earlier, strives to conceptualize the notion of diaspora by listing a wide range of categories excluding the Palestinians. His essentialist study gives priority to Jews over the victims of Israeli colonialism. His bogus[4] objectivity is undermined when he makes allusion to the Palestinians in passing

[4] In the early moments of the introduction Cohen gives the impression that his study is disinterested as when he cogently points out that to the ancient migrants are added "millions of refugees and exiles whose movements are primarily dictated by circumstances in their home countries rather than by a desire to establish a new life" (x). In this generalization the reader is duped into including the Lebanese as they

and devotes the first chapter to the Jews. A contrapuntal reading[5] of his statements and discursive events evinces his partiality when he gears towards identifying with the diasporic wanderings of the Jews while reducing Palestinian diaspora to nothingness: "State formation and displacement", he argues with sheer bigotry, "precipitated the Palestinian Diaspora, ironically this time at the hands of the Jews in their *reconstituted homeland*"[italics mine] (xi). He lists a litany of diasporas, such as "labour diasporas", "imperial diasporas", "trade diasporas", etc. deliberately excluding what would be appropriately dubbed expelled or exiled Palestinian diasporas. This research is partly an attempt to respond to the like of Robin who, consciously or not, eschews elaborating on the shameless exodus of the Palestinian human calamity. Delving into the complexities of the Palestinian novelists' narratives is an academic endeavor meant to disclose the ordeal of dispossession and dislocation. In some ways Fawal, Dallal and Zahran reveal the brutal power of Zionism hoping to bring into abeyance the tautological exclusivist discourse of "a land without a people for a people without a land[6]". Driving the native population out of their land into exile in order to usurp their homes is scarcely, if ever, done by any other colonial power[7]. The Palestinian authors above confer a historical touch on their stories at the cost of artistic merit which is undoubtedly the last thing to consider by

were driven out of their country owing to political instability and also Palestinians who were forced out of their natal geographical territories. But the author subsequently betrays his essentialist intentions when Palestinians are implicitly represented as a people without a country.

[5] Contrapuntal reading means reading a text "with an understanding of what is involved when an author shows, for instance, that a colonial sugar plantation is seen as important to the process of maintaining a particular style of life in England" (McQuillan 286)

[6] Widely quoted phrase connected with the colonial ideology to establish a Jewish homeland in Palestine during the 19th and 20th centuries.

[7] "In many colonized countries, settlers created vast farms and estates by driving off those who had traditionally lived on that land, some of whose descendants continue to this day to live in an impoverished landless limbo. Without land to cultivate, the only alternative is to drift to the slums of the big cities. . . Dispossession from family land and the claim for the right of return represent the central issue in Palestine" (Young 45-49). The repressive Zionist apparatus inaugurates more brutal strategies because it dispossesses the natives, subjects them to traumatizing treatments and ejects them out of their country so that they become scattered in different parts of the world.

these intellectual exiles who were once eyewitnesses to the horror that had befallen their parents. In the parts devoted to the Palestinian narratives, space, in the form of home and exile, is inscribed within the framework of callous Zionist occupation.

In fact an article written on Zahran's novel pays scant attention to a society "held inert by its sense of refugeeism" (Turki 7) and centers upon a passing or teleological romantic relationship in exile. This article is titled «Ordre et Désordre Amoureux dans Deux Romans Arabes d'expression Anglaise: *A Beggar at Damascus Gate* de Yasmin Zahran et *The Map of Love* de Ahdaf Soueif» by Jacqueline Jondot. The author plays on the polar opposites of order as a term synonymous with social conformity and disorder with fragmentation that most appeals to postmodern[8] philosophy. She is much more interested in the chaos generated by the absence of the lover than the overall conundrum caused by exile. While the amorous encounters represent one of the leitmotifs in *A Beggar at Damascus Gate*, they are a mere veneer behind which lies the genuine love of a place, of Palestine, of the homeland. This is made clear in the female protagonist's terse but meaningful quip that everything is fiction and that "only Palestine is real." Jondot is apparently ignorant of the history-cum-politics that produce the wandering exile and focuses on a fleeting love relationship that Rayya regards as a means to an end. Moreover, she minimizes the scope of struggle and confines it in the prisonhouse of gender relations when in reality it is between the west and east. This research does not rule out the potentially human affinity that the protagonists vainly hanker after, but politics and history interfere with this desire. A homeless individual is primarily concerned with establishing communion with her/his homeland in order to settle down.

While history is not the only criterion against which to set the polarity of home and

[8] This brief mention of that school of thought and a complete absence of bibliography indicate Jondot's assertion that theory is anathema to her.

exile in the Anglophone Lebanese narratives, it is substantially interesting in gauging the trauma of deracination in their Palestinian counterparts. Fawal, Dallal and to some extent Zahran do not downplay the encroachment of history and politics upon the story. In fact, they confer authenticity on the fictional narratives that are widely inspired by such incidents as the al-Nakba. While home is a shifting construct in the novels of Jarrar, it is not so for the Palestinian authors whose narratives try to anchor it in a well determined space: "the mute author, whose presence we sense but cannot ever truly see behind the work of art, the printed page…suddenly sheds his or her disguise and steps forth and addresses us directly, without the mediation of the work of art" (Gilman xiv). This is exactly what Fawal and Dallal do through the agency of the fictional characters.

Inscribing personal experiences in other physical, cultural and social spaces is involved in the act of writing the self. Driven away by war, the characters are compelled to leave behind a familiar space laden with intimate cultural mores and take refuge in a new space layered with echoes and traces of unfamiliar modes of thought and patterns of behaving. Interacting with space in exile is, however, at variance with interacting with it when a given character does not necessarily embark upon the journey under duress. The average Palestinian – even if Palestinian characters do not constitute a monolithic entity – finds himself confronted with life outside his home where he has to start everything anew. Due to straitened circumstances, the journey goes on in quest of better and more stable conditions. Thaffer Allam's migration to Kuwait in the first place is not his end goal. Consumed by the trepidations of the Zionist terror, he bids a permanent farewell to his village to relish peaceful moments in the neighbouring country expecting an opportune moment to come –like a bolt from the blue –in order to immigrate elsewhere. The trauma undergone by this individual case exacerbates when the dream of return remains wrapped

in mythical aspirations, but it is less intense than the one featured in Fawal's novels, where the brazen exodus leaves the characters in desperate wretchedness outside the coziness of home. Exile for the Palestinians is marked by a culture of abstemiousness and austerity in order to survive. This is not so for the Lebanese characters who manage to reap substantial benefits from their exilic way of life before they ruminate on the possibility of return.

As to the parts devoted to the Lebanese female author, Nada Awar Jarrar, home and exile are set against the backdrop of ambivalence and shifting identities. The culture of the civil war in Lebanon cannot be compared with the overall atrocities of the Zionist extermination machine. Less wonder then that the meaning ascribed to the dichotomy of "home" and "exile" is different in the Anglophone Lebanese and Palestinian novels. It is this dearth of fixity and stability that defines refugees and exiles in two disparate contexts. The common point is displacement, but the difference is that the Lebanese exiles' prospect of return remains possible to achieve and life in diaspora acquires meaning through transnational contacts with the homeland (these contacts are both physical and psychological, but for Palestinians return is much more of an idea, a feeling, a dream than a reality). Also, some of the characters that Jarrar introduces in her novels look forward to the domestic political situation to get back to normality in order to embark upon a journey back home. Their experience is not comprehended in terms of collective punishment as it happens in the infamous exodus, but in terms of individual border crossings. As a case in point, Dalia Abdelhady the writer of *The Lebanese Diaspora: The Arab Immigrant Experience in Montreal, New York, and Paris*, locates identity somewhere between home and exile. Back 'home', she applies for a visa at the German consulate. Much to her chagrin, it is turned down on the ground that she is not Egyptian "enough", but despite her thirteen-year stay in the USA she is not even a permanent resident: she

still has "to apply for an entry visa, marking [her] as non-American[9] every time [she] enters the country" (Abdelhady 1).

Like Dalia, some characters of Jarrar are revealed to be grappling with the laborious process of trying to occupy a liminal position against all odds. They seem to take pains to be ensconced on the threshold between home and exile, but other forces such as history, politics and socio-economic factors keep interfering. In this respect, I concur that in the Lebanese context, the political and the literary are intertwined (Salem x). In this regard, the impact of the Lebanese civil war on Lebanese women writings is the central preoccupation of Miriam Cook, who stresses the importance of strife in giving a new direction to the Lebanese literature. However, her concern is not how the conflict between home and exile helps shape the identity of certain characters who are at pains to negotiate their subjectivity in an interstitial space because of the protean conditions either at home or abroad.

The war and its corollary somehow trigger off the acts of mobility that take the characters outside their native geographical background and therefore problematize the process of identity formation. Syrine Houte is not necessarily motivated by the criterion of gender, as it is the case with Salem, in her critical study of post-war Anglophone Lebanese literature; conversely, she stresses how the havoc generated by the war is conducive to shaping this literature far beyond the parochial aspect of gender. Houte's book tackles the question of home and exile from different perspectives. The two notions are layered with meanings in such a way that they are recalcitrant to fixity and stability and serve as

[9] This feeling of not fully belonging in her adopted country is reflective of a psychological unrest attributable to the instability that marks her identity. What exacerbates this feeling is the image of Arab Americans in the wake of the terrorist attack on the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center: "For a few years after September 11", she goes on relating her life story, "I developed an anxiety toward international travel. I always fear that I will not be allowed back into the USA and will be deported to Egypt, or even possibly Guantanamo Bay" (1).

a backdrop against which the diasporic identity is pitted. Though the impact of history and politics on the Lebanese contemporary fiction may not be excluded, the different novelists Hout accounts for do not look at home from the same angle. Rabih Alameddine, for instance, points out that departing is not necessarily “an attempt to escape the past, but to escape oneself”, because by moving away one gains “a distance of both space and time, which is essential for writing about family and home[10]”. For him, exile is an essential prerequisite and something desirable for a writer to establish contact with the native background through the lens of fiction. For Patricia Ward, reality and fantasy intermingle to the extent that it is hard “to know where the truth ends and the fiction begins”, yet *The Bullet Collection* “speaks truthfully about growing up in war, suffering from depression and what it is like to leave one’s homeland;” in this regard, it is “as true as non-fiction” (2008: email interview). For Nada Awar Jarrar the excessive movements of female characters between the homeland and the country of destination reveal her gender-oriented tendencies, but above all she is interested in identity as a process of signification.

Jarrar’s tendency to strengthen her bond with the homeland reveals one of the autobiographical facets of the text and discloses the author’s craving for return from exile. Contrary to some of her characters who set identity against the backdrop of transience, fluidity and ambivalence, Nada anchors it in a place: “I have always thought of home as a place. People are extremely important but the place has to be the foundation. And [ Lebanon] is the only place in the world where I’ve ever felt the connection, where I feel home’ (cited in Farah 6). The mention of home paradigmatically presupposes exile and if the former implies intimacy and familiarity, the latter is tantamount to a psychological state of fragmentation and disintegration.

[10] Cited online at http:// www.wwnorton.com/rgguides/ithedivinergg.htm.

While Hout is simply interested in the affective dimension underlining the dichotomous entity of home and exile/diaspora, this research moves beyond this narrow scope as it is an attempt to inscribe it within the framework of ambivalent human identifications. It seems that the complex trajectories of the characters' mobility call for more critical attention than merely dwelling on "how homesickness ranges from critical memory of the immediate past of the civil war to nostalgic memory of a timeless and splendid Lebanon" (Hout 55). This thesis does not overlook the significance of the emotional landscape of those who have to abandon their homes and cherish, or bear the brunt of a new life elsewhere –in fact this point is central to it –but it is not the only point that needs critical appreciation. One is liable to explore the humanistic rather than the provincial side of the novels under study. Through the experience of Lebanese and Palestinian characters, we understand the plight of any exile to varying degrees of intensity. As Milan Kandera asserts, "the novelist is neither historian nor prophet: he is an explorer of existence" (Kumar 5). Jarrar does not parochially delineate the ordeal of the Lebanese diasporic individuals alone, but also some Palestinians and a Jew whose lives are partly shaped by peripatetic exilic wanderings.

In Leila Almaleh's *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*, the main objective is to cast some light on Arabic literature given that its African, Carribbean and Indian counterparts have achieved the status of 'Parallel canon'. She is confident that fiction in Arabic, for instance, has the capacity of offering "plausible interpretation and humanization of Arabs much better than journalism, historical reports or political memoirs." (x) Her relevant claim that apart from Gibran Kahlil Gibran (1883–1931), particularly renowned for his *Prophet*, few contemporary Arab voices are known to the Western readership is worth taking seriously.

Among those voices, we find that of Nada Awar Jarrar, who is devoted a chapter

titled Meditations on Memory and Belonging. She mainly dwells on the reviews produced about the book and which address the dialectics of home and exile, stasis and mobility. Dawn Mirapuri seems to narrow the scope of identity formation and squeeze it into the plight generated by forced immigration failing to notice that “the boundary is Janus-faced and the problem of outside/inside must always itself be a process of hybridity” (Bhabha 4). Inspired by Bhabha’s concept of ambivalence, which is predicated on the dyad of attraction and repulsion, and Jacque Derrida’s undecidability of meaning, the sections devoted to the analytical appreciation of Awar’s narratives strive to address the home/exile dichotomy on the cusp of an in-between reality.

Likewise Jumana Bayeh introduces the concept of home within the field of diaspora scholarship through the prism of Awar’s *Somewhere Ho*me and Alia Yunis’s *The Night Counter.* Her view that home is inherent in feminist constructions of belonging only partly explains Maysa’s relocation to the countryside to celebrate a return to the ancestral abode where everything began. What is seemingly overlooked in this short study is the fact that mobility is embarked upon for the sake of stasis away from the depredations of a war-torn city. This mythical yearning to relive bygone experiences does not occur in a vacuum as it is a means to an end. However, for the other protagonists of the trilogy the essence of possessing a diasporic identity is intimately bound up with “longing for an imaginary and deferred homeland” (Bayeh 100). Eric Hobsbawm’s conceptualization of home in terms of emotional attachments to the dwelling place echoes in the novels of Awar Jarrar. *Heim* [home], not *Heimat* [homeland], Eric Hobsbawm points out, is highly paramount and not inferior to *heimat* (ibid 102). The complexity of home as an indeterminate concept is what the chapters devoted to Jarrar try to bring to the fore lending credence to Agelika Bammer, who pits this concept against the background of semantic undecidability. In

this regard, she avers that home does not merely refer to "the mythic homeland of your parents and ancestors", but also "to the place you grew up in" (ibid).

This multi-faceted signification finds support in Peter Somerville's reference to "home as hearth", "home as heart" and "home as paradise" (ibid 101). The intimacy, which is not seen from a univocal perspective, between a given character and the local geographical background s/he is somehow tied to is one of the aims set for this thesis. The corpus under study places a premium on the significance of home for those, who are, for different reasons, forced to spend part or the rest of their life outside its cozy walls.

Part of this research is a contentious interpretive appraisal of the signification of home. The latter is not anchored in the moorings of the homeland alone following the diaspora theorists who tend to privilege the homeland over "the domestic hearth and the family dwelling" ( Beyah 101). In both the Lebanese and Palestinian Anglophone literary works under study home is a recalcitrant signifier that lends itself to a multiplicity of interpretations. It is both the *heim* and the *heimat* and something more intricate placed in the interstices of the two. In Fawal, Dallal and Zahran's novels the exile establishes a perennial kinship with the homeland and/or the dwelling place while s/he is preoccupied with setting up a transient "abode" in a foreign land that is mostly bereft of ontological signification. Likewise, Awar's characters' migratory processes are triggered by the Civil War. At the age of 17, on vacation with her family in England in 1975, this incident put off their return. According to the writer "We thought the war would last a couple of weeks, a couple of months, but it lasted years" ( Bayeh 109). However, the experiences of each character or group of characters are uniquely portrayed and their identification with the home is variegated and unmonolithic, which problematizes any critical attempt to capture the essence of the intimate space. The domesticity of the house is layered with open-ended

interpretations in Awar's novels in which the meanings attached to it are heterogeneous and extraordinarily differentiated. This instability of signification is informed by the excessive mobility that vainly targets an ultimate stasis. In this regard, Rayan al-Shawaf cogently points that only a Lebanese writer is in a position "to convey the melancholic drama of exile [. . . ] the insistent pang of homelessness [. . . ] [and] the recurring theme of departure" (ibid). The ongoing mobility does not merely explain the physical journey, but it also resides in the inner recesses of the characters' mind.

This succinct review shows that diaspora literature is still undertheorized and Arabic literature in English is still a nascent field of research. The very few articles written on the novels under study and which do not lay stress on the concepts of exile and home do not discourage, but provide us with an incentive to tear the story from the dark realms of oblivion and interact with the characters whose exilic plight will hopefully be immortalized. The echoes of home and exile resonate across the five novels even if the literary and human experiences that underlie them are not necessarily univocal. The war that causes the exodus in Anglophone Palestinian narratives comes from an outside colonial power whose primary goal is to dispossess and displace the natives, whereas the one that erupts in Beirut emanates from within, and the displaced are always expecting the situation to get back on track in order to reestablish kinship with the *terre natale*.

This research is therefore a critical endeavor to shed light on the thematic topic of exile and home and bring to the fore its intricate and ambivalent implications. That's why it addresses the issue of space in its intimate and exilic dimension. Intimately, it is bound up with the domestic life of the individual characters who are forced to break kinship with home either as 'homeland', or the 'dwelling place' that has always remained a repository of ontological meaning. The meeting point, or common denominator, between

the contemporary Anglophone Palestinian and Lebanese novels is displacement which places a premium on the question of exile. The salient difference, however, is the historico-political conditions in which the exilic wanderings of the characters occur. While escape from the depredations of the Lebanese Civil War is a matter of personal choice for some characters who cannot endure the reality of the conflict and its consequent mayhem, exile, or more accurately refugee life, is foisted on the Palestinians who are coerced into bearing the brunt of the "Nakba." The questions that this doctoral project tries to answer are the following: How is the dichotomy of home and exile conceptualized in the narratives? What are the psychological repercussions of displacement? How is deterritorialization perceived in the Palestinian and Lebanese Anglophone narratives? While home can be in a state of flux and turbulence why does return from exile matter?

These questions are critically addressed in six chapters. The first is entitled Space in Ibrahim Fawal's *The Hills of God*. Beginning with Fawal is meant to give precedence to the ordeal of displacement as it is undergone by Palestinian characters over their Lebanese counterparts. The intensity of violence perpetrated on the Palestinian colonized subjects and the colonial desire to efface their history should be granted priority over the Lebanese sectarian conflict and its effects. The first subtitle runs: space prior to the exodus which is an account of the different human interactions that take place in Ardallah prior the Zionist extermination machine. The intersubjectivity that informs these encounters is integral to the relationship between a Muslim, a Jew and a Christian. At this juncture, space abounds with tolerance and coexistence among different religions. The author seems to see the interactions between his characters from a typically humanistic perspective. However, as the Zionist technology of power starts functioning, the tranquility and serenity that have hitherto characterized space begins to desert it as the events steadily veer towards the

catastrophe, or the al-Nakba. The second subtitle is space in exile in which the characters are coerced into breaking ties with home and all that this notion implies.

Chapter two is titled The Psychology of Exile, the aim of which is to address the chaotic psychological state of the characters that are trapped in Amman. The halcyon moments intimately associated with home are gone as they are compelled to grapple with the squalid conditions of refugee camps. A dire cost of the exodus is physical and emotional dispersal. The first subtitle is: A quest for selfhood. It is mainly built around a sense of loss that befalls the characters who bear the psychological scars of violence, dispossession and displacement. Devoting this chapter to the traumatized exile is meant to lay emphasis on the notoriety and uniqueness of the Israeli colonization. The subsequent subtitle is therefore an attempt to look at the characters' reaction to the heinous crime of dislocation; it is titled towards a politics of resistance and addresses the possibility of developing strategies to contest the ideological and repressive colonial apparatuses. Though these strategies are less feasible for a powerless population immured in an unfamiliar exilic space, they are paramount in boosting their morale and lifting up their spirit.

The difficulty involved in establishing physical contacts with the homeland makes the characters fall back on the works of memory. That's why the third chapter is entitled Memory and Belonging in Shaw Dallal's *Scattered like Seeds* and Fawal's *The Disinherited*. Memory entails guarding against amnesia and warding off forgetfulness to remain in close proximity to the homeland through a series of reveries and ruminations. Two subtitles – a sense of belonging in exile and memory and the reality of occupation – introduce characters struggling with the conundrum of establishing kinship with the *terre natale* even when they are down and out in exile.

The Fourth chapter therefore provides insight into how an exile manages to establish

communion with the ancestral land. Encounters away from Home in Yassmine Zahran's *A Beggar at Damascus Gate* is subtitled into ambivalent bonds, interrogating the self, towards an anti-colonial trajectory, a dialogic interaction between now and then, and retrospective encounters. All these sections serve one ultimate goal: they all combine to unravel the enigma involved in writing the self and shaping subjectivity in connection with the native space.

The dyad of exile and home continues to gain critical significance in the two contemporary Anglophone Lebanese novels authored by Nada Awar Jarrar. However, the meaning accorded to it is different. Unlike the Palestinian characters who find it difficult to return to their home due to the Israeli tight control over their land, the Lebanese set exile and home against the backdrop of contingency and impermanence. That's why some characters establish a 'home' in exile while others see fit to anchor it in the native place. For the Palestinians home will always remain a transcendental signified unless the occupation is gone. In this regard, The link between history and story is articulated by Dina Mattar in her influential book, *What it means to be Palestinian*: *Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood*. Central to her argument is the idea that the Palestinians of diaspora (*al-Shatat*) with all their various passports, *laissez passers* and refugee documents are united through the common denominator of being displaced and denied the right to regain the ancestral land (Mattar 7).

In this respect, the penultimate chapter is entitled: The Meaning of Home in Nada Awar Jarrar's *Somewhere Home*. It is subtitled into root-oriented identity, travelling across time and nostalgia for home, all of which set a premium on the ontological significance embedded in space. Jarrar's *A Good Land* is laden with this significance as it revolves around the affective dimension of return. Therefore, the last chapter is entitled: Return

from Exile and the Post War Lebanon in Nada Awar Jarrar's *A Good Land*, and it encompasses a new encounter with Lebanon, indulging the mundane, interrogating hegemony, identity in a state of flux, and place as a repository of ontological signification. These subtitles address identity from at least two antithetical perspectives: the protagonist who is probably the mouthpiece of the author tries to anchor it in a palimpsestuous place ( in this case the mountains of Beirut) while some other characters see it as a process of signification.

Heterogeneous as it is, this corpus deals with the issues of exile and home from different angles which presuppose a multidisciplinary critical approach. To Edward Said this research owes the worldliness of the text in his contention that culture is not "antiseptically quarantined from its worldly affiliations" ( xiii) and to the New Historicist school the idea that power is ubiquitous, omnipresent and ineluctable. After all, it is the Palestinian characters' inability to disrupt the extermination machinery of Zionism that results in the occupation of their land. This oppression manifests in the condescending and reductive ethos of those whose power operates within the dichotomies and antinomies of exclusion and inclusion, those whose grand narrative functions in such a way as to silence the other or sap his/her energy of retaliation as s/he is relegated to the margins of humanity. In response to these absolute systems of power, the novels under study represent a serious attempt to write back transcending the aesthetic and artistic to the political and historical. The mobility of signification directly linked with the poststmodern tradition is mainly helpful in our critical appreciation of space since home is sometimes seen within the framework of contingency and indeterminacy as it is portrayed in the novels of Nada Awar Jarrar. This instability of meaning is however called into question by the Palestinian characters whose nomadic mode of life does not suspend some primordial essence of

the identity that links them to the occupied territories. In brief, parts of the analysis are conducted through the prism of poststmodern condition that underlies the undecidability, fluidity and ambivalence of signification while revealing their limitations for the Palestinian characters whose concept of home is anchored in the moorings of a transcendental signified[11] (a reunion with the homeland).

[11] This concept is placed against the backdrop of Jacques Derrida's claim that the absence of the transcendental signified extends the play of signification infinitely ( see Derrida by Christopher Noris). This does not apply to the Palestinians who –across ethnic, religious and political differences –share the dream of return. No matter how mythical and farfetched this dream sounds to be, it is important in giving some existential weight to the characters experiences in exile.

# Chapter 1

# Space in Ibrahim Fawal's *On the Hills of God*

## 1.1 Space before the Exodus

### 1.1.1 The trope of the house

The portrayal and conceptualization of space in Ibrahim Fawal's *On the Hills of God* is accorded special importance. It is quite evident that the title itself reverberates with echoes of the metaphysical underpinnings of space. Attributing land to God reveals the author's attempt to extend its scope beyond the narrow ideological representations and disciplinary discursive practices that are built around the antinomies[1] of inclusion/exclusion, logos/mythos, origin/supplement, native/non-native, etc. This intellectual endeavor to idealize this notion outside the ambit of fetishized identities can be realized fleetingly at the outset of the novel before the Zionist territorial expansion is set into motion.

The title may be assumed to foreshadow a narrative where space is less defined against the backdrop of asymmetric binary dualities and where discourse is not necessarily polarized into antithetical figures, categories and entities. This promising expectation is met in the early moments of the events when the codes of race, ethnicity and religion are disrupted in such a way as to allow for cultural dialogue, mutual understanding and interpersonal transactions. Up to this early juncture, the story stands out as a history celebrating difference within a type of land analogous to a conglomerate of variegated human experiences.

When Fawal exquisitely creates an environment where a Christian, a Jew and a Muslim

[1] Emanuel Kant characterizes human reason as conflicting with itself. Such a conflict gives rise to a set of antinomies such as the ones referred to above. "The antinomies make it seem possible for reason both to prove and to disprove the existence of an unconditioned condition of appearances. In a 1798 letter to the German philosopher Christian Garve(1742–1798), Kant said that it was his discovery of the antinomies that first set him on the path of critique because he found it distressing to think that human reason might actually be in conflict with itself." (Cutrofello 9) This contradiction manifests in the inclusion of one category and the ostracism of another.

act and interact safely outside the imperious inhibitions of religion and origin, he places a high premium on human aspects beyond the embrace of the incommensurability of cultures. The author deftly provides us with the light side of a story whose actors will soon be steeped in the macabre atmosphere of agony and sorrow. The prospect of translating the other can occur within the framework of what Emmauel Levinas dubs 'sociality[2]'. This concept can be demystified and elucidated utilizing Habermas's perception of communicative rationality which is substantially founded upon a dialogue based on argumentation. The self and the other, in all circumstances, can inhabit the same physical space away from tensions and raised hackles exulting in an 'ideal speech situation' and consequently achieving an ethics of discourse.

The pre-colonial era is depicted to be a period of cultural exchange. The inhabitants of Ardallah, irrespective of race, gender, religion and culture, are featured to relish a series of human encounters in a place layered with echoes and traces of heterogeneity and multiplicity. The party organized by the Safi family palpably honors cultural translation within the vicinity of a palimpsestuous space where homogeneity and essentialism come into abeyance. The celebration tends to bring people across disparate cultural and social formations. This practice calls on hold the reductive ethos of familiar cultural landscapes

[2] The encounter with the face of the other is central to the philosophy of Emmanuel Levinas, which is called ethics. His approach to phenomenology is at variance with that of Edmund Husserl and Martin Heideggar. The encounter he seems to favour is embedded in intersubjectivity that is predicated on language and the affective dimension related to it. "For Levinas, an 'I' lives out its embodied existence according to modalities. It consumes the fruits of the world. It enjoys and suffers from the natural elements. It constructs shelters and dwellings. It carries on the social and economic transactions of its daily life. Yet, no event is as affectively disruptive for a consciousness holding sway in its world than the encounter with another person. In this encounter(even if it later becomes competitive or instrumental), the 'I' first experiences itself as called and liable to account for itself. It responds. The 'I''s response is as if to a nebulous command. Nothing says that the other gave a de facto command. The command or summons is part of the intrinsic relationality. With the response comes the beginning of language as dialogue. The origin of language, for Levinas, is always response—a responding-to-another, that is, to her summons. Dialogue arises ultimately through that response. Herein lie the roots of intersubjectivity as lived immediacy. Levinas has better terms for it: responsibility is the affective, immediate experience of transcendence and fraternity"( see the entry devoted to Emmanuel Levinas in Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy) (Zalta).

and is therefore conducive to the creation of a territorial cusp that occludes adopting a monolithic stand on the intricacies of cultural life in Ardallah. The guests received in Dr.Safi's home show up with bowls of food to pay tribute to the dwellers of a newly-built villa –a life-long dream that has so long haunted the doctor has finally come true(13). It is within this spacious building that Muslim families, Christian families and some Jewish friends indulge in a shared meal leavened with merrymaking.

However, the act of celebrating the completion of the house occurs in tandem with extreme fear of what the future has in store for the Palestinians. Will this bogus harmony withstand the test of time? Are the British officials that can be witnessed among the Arabs in Safi Jamil's home a good omen and that they will no longer represent a thorn in the neck of the ordinary Palestinian now that they are teetering on the verge of departure? Or is the author more preoccupied with displaying the house as a trope that conveys the polarized feeling of attraction and repulsion that appropriately translate human encounters? Fawal cleverly introduces us to the variegated nature of this gathering within the space of this villa to bring to the fore opportunities and possibilities, prospects and misgivings that surround the question of Palestinian people, their cause and their land. These moments of ambivalence pervade his tale of human frailty and sorrow wherein the autochthonous are victimized and vilified in a space they regard as theirs.

The air of doubt and suspicion that mark this ostensibly human encounter where the colonized subjects are placed in immediate juxtaposition with the colonizing subjects, who are represented by the highly-ranked British officials, reflect the indeterminacy characteristic of the relationship between self and other at the micro level. It seems that "the tension between the illusion of difference and the reality of sameness,"(Huddart 4) which leads to anxiety according to Homi K.Bhabha, is negotiated in this social intercourse and

gives support to the multivalent aspect of the previously raised questions. Within this context, Yousif's interrogations further complicate this presumably pacific encounter and he regards his father's courteous act of inviting distinguished members of the colonial regime as a sham which unsuccessfully hides feelings of animosity between the dominating[3] and the dominated:

> Yousif did not care for his father's politeness, even though he knew it was no more than formal good manners. At least his father was not kissing Britain's ring, nor was he fawning around her representative as others were doing. What was wrong with these Arab men? Where was their dignity?(14)

Yousif does not indict his father for being supine or complicit. He simply highlights the intractable difficulty of putting into effect the doctor's lofty project of carving a multicultural environment out of a landscape where there is a serious plot to wipe out a people's history and deny their right of existence. The Safi Jamils, whose home offers enough space for everyone, are seemingly fettered by forces far beyond their control. The protagonist's narrative is occasionally shaped by a host of queries addressing the uncertain future.

The native landscape is in danger of being fragmented and consequently reconstructed and Yousif is obsessed with the impending violence that will play havoc with the land and displace the people. He is seemingly aware of the symbiotic relation between equanimity and an intact space marked by cultural diversity.

The protagonist cannot help expressing his concern for the future and its repercussions for the sense of affability that has hitherto given a strong impetus to human bonds across religion and social class. Yousif's middle class Christian family is not immured within a

[3] It seems that Jean-Francois Lyotard's neologism 'differend' has little chance of praxis in the context of the slave/ master dialectics. Since the language of justice is impossible in these micro-dynamics of power relations, differend, which is tantamount to preserving the extreme difference that defines cultures, will never be realized simply because it does not serve the agendas of the colonial power that is keen on endorsing the grand narrative of the master (Readings xxiii).

private space of individualism and high cultural values; conversely, it reaches out to its poverty-stricken Muslim and Jewish counterpart and establishes a platform ablaze with the light of tolerance and permissiveness. Ardallah, prior to the Zionist colonial settlement, is exalted to the status of a common ground where the players are not clamped tight in the imperious injunctions of some imagined community. Apparently, they 'gesture to the beyond' with the aim of touching the future on 'its hither side':[4]

> Wearing well-pressed pants and short-sleeved sport shirts, Yousif and his friends, Amin and Isaac, were out for their ritual Sunday afternoon stroll. Yousif was Christian, Amin Muslim, Isaac Jewish. They were born within a few blocks of each other. They had gone through elementary and secondary school together. Together they had switched from short to long pants, learned to appreciate girls, enjoyed catching birds, suffered over acne, and, because they were all semites, wondered who among them would have the biggest nose. They were so often together that the whole town began to accept them as inseparable(18).

The three boys epitomize what Palestine is like before the Zionist extermination machine is on. Muslims, Christians and Jews go about their daily life paying scant attention to who they are. They seem to live up, though fleetingly, to Homi Bhabha's expectations in this quote:

> What is theoretically innovative, and politically crucial, is the need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood – singular or communal - that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself(Bhabha 1-2)

[4] The 'beyond' is inherent in the discursive category that Homi Bhabha is affiliated with( the post-colonial itself gestures to the beyond since the prefix 'pre' does not entail 'anti' or sequentiality). Like Michel Foucault he apparently locates freedom in "the space of the outside"(meaning outside the inhibitions of the cultural and traditional system). The beyond also echoes the Deleuzian schizophrenia and line of flight(flying in unknown directions moving towards territories not yet mapped) as it evokes Blancho's perspective on freedom as the neutral in the sphere of indistinction and indifferentiation, but above all there is a big similarity between Bhabha's conception of the future and that of the Martinican psychoanalyst, Frantz Fanon, who argues that "as soon as I desire I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into thingness. I am for somewhere else and for something else. I demand that notice be taken of my negating activity insofar as I pursue something other than life; insofar as I do battle for the creation of a human world - that is a world of reciprocal recognitions"(Zeilig 49).

At least, identity is not a stumbling block against forging ideology-free relationships. Within the precincts of Ardallah, the three characters are still in dearth of the vocabulary, codes and categories which inform the essentialist rendering of reality as they are not yet imprisoned in the existing representational framework. Since the individual is not a pre-given entity, these three children are not yet fully-fledged individuals and are therefore exempt from the discursive formations foisted upon them by normalizing regimes of truth. The onus is on them is to cement the bond that ties their families. What seems trivial or even childish for an adult is what imparts meaning to their life within the precincts of the Hills of God. The spiritual significance of Sunday for the Jew is merely cast into oblivion when the three friends revel in a stroll away from the mundane atmosphere of the house. Draconian political boundaries are not visible enough to eradicate emotional landscapes where different cultural groups are ensconced. The terms utilized to capture the overall situation of the local districts are invested with light and clarity. Ardallah stands high on seven hills with a view of the blue Mediterranean on a sunny day. It is neither big, nor small, which projects an aura of charm and beauty around it. "It was not . . . a playground for the rich, but an oasis for the young and the aged and all those in-between who cared for the cool fresh air and the soft invigorating breeze"( 22).

This spatial segment is romanticized to the core. Its identity is absolved of any parochial definition. It is home to all regardless of age, gender, or any other criterion. This oasis of freedom is reminiscent of Martin Luther's renowned dream that America would turn into an oasis of love where races are treated in accordance to their character and not to their complexion. The difference, however, is that Luther addresses the future as a potentially promising time for the celebration of peace and tolerance, whereas Fawal ascribes the liveliness of Ardallah to the past. Though the present is not altogether devoid

of signs of positive human interactions, even under the yoke of British colonial power, the past is mourned for its irretrievable harmony and co-existence. Fawal seems to argue that space is not as full of human suffering under the British mandate as it is going to be soon under the Zionist power technology. The author relegates the British colonial enterprise to the background to assign Zionism the role of leadership in the occupational process.

Ardallah, up to this stage, is endowed with an unusual capacity to accommodate all its dwellers. Nonetheless, I concur with many a critic who refers to discourse as a recalcitrant play of signs- a product of restless play within language that can neither be pinned down nor fixed for the sake of conceptual clarity. The author is at times incarcerated within the prison house of the conceptual structures and discursive categories he attempts to jettison and subvert. There are moments throughout the narrative when the physical space, which is presented as a site of human interactions, turns out to be an arena of economic struggle between the rich and the poor. When Amine falls and breaks his arm, as a result of chasing a couple they suspect of being spies, his Jewish and Christian friends become anxious about his critical condition. Yousif, whose father is a doctor, is confident that he can offer some assistance:

> Aunt Tamam [ Amin's mother] held a kerosene lamp atop the stairs they were about to climb. Although he had been to Amin's house several times, Yousif still marveled at its simplicity. It was basically a large room that served as a bedroom, living room, and kitchen, plus a low-ceilinged basement used to raise chickens. Amin's father, Abu Amin, was not only the town's best stonecutter, but was also in charge of several men working on the villa Yousif's parents were building. Then he remembered that Abu Amin, a Muslim, at one time had two wives and two sets of nine children. He was lucky, he could feed them, much less build them a house.( 31)

At the outset of this chapter, allusion is made to the doctor's villa with a special focus on its symbolic weight. Its instrumental function as a building spacious enough to accommodate a large population of Ardallah can be interpreted as an indication that

the Palestinians are one. This sense of solidarity is conveyed through a lucid discourse. On the surface the quote above further lends credence to the solid kinship which ties a poverty-stricken Muslim family to its affluent Christian counterpart. Be that as it may, reading it against the grain will certainly underpin the Foucauldian claim that what is palpably stated hides in its interstices 'a half silent murmur' of another discourse: "The manifest discourse is, therefore, no more than the repressive presence of what it does not say; and this unsaid is a hollow that undermines from within all that is said"(Foucault 25). Rather than averring that there is 'nothing outside the text' as Derrida's frequently-quoted axiom suggests, Foucault delves into discourse in order to reveal its ruses and therefore subverts its claim to unity, continuity and originality.

Amin's house is antithetically juxtaposed to the doctor's villa. While the former is not roomy enough for one single family, the latter has sufficient space for a great number of Ardallah dwellers. Though this is not his first visit, Yousif is still taken aback by the incredible simplicity of a house inhabited by a remarkably big family. This kind of life, unlike his sophisticated way of living, is unpalatable to his taste. After all, he pertains to a middle-class intellectual family, unlike his Muslim friend whose father is a famous stonecutter who is hired to contribute to setting up Doctor Safi Jamil's villa. The ironic allusion to polygamy is intimately bound up with Abu Amin's religion. As a Muslim, he can afford two wives and two groups of children that he can barely feed.

The text, Derrida seems to suggest, is replete with aporias, blind spots, conceptual twists and moments of self contradiction that undermine its claim to self-identity. Behind the spurious intersubjective encounters, the powerful normative logic is occasionally articulated to give support to Derrida's attempt to sap the delimitation of ontology and dislodge the authority of 'the third person indicative M is p.'

When the old healer sets about the business of preparing a mixture of ingredients to apply to Amin's broken arm, the narrator minutely describes the process to the extent that the Muslim family's quirks are set apart from the scientifically-oriented tendencies of its Christian counterpart. The author, being himself a Christian, seems to point out that within one country there are incommensurable structures of feelings that lie dormant beneath the surface of the text, which sets up a bulwark against any semantic and conceptual decidability.

When Aunt Tamam turned up with the traditional equipment, the old man faced his medical task with alacrity:

> He rolled up his sleeves and went to work. He cracked a dozen eggs in a large wooden bowl and began to whip them with a large wooden spoon. Then he reached for a dish covered with white hair from a horse's tail, took out a bunch and placed them over the whipped eggs. Over this he sprinkled a cup of pulverized fenugreek they called *hilbeh.* Then he proceeded to move and batter everything with the same spoon.( 34)

The condescending economy of binary logic that Edward Said attributes to the colonial discourse can mark that of two Palestinian families. By examining those tropes and rhetorical figures, we come to realize that there is an air of arrogance around the narrator's voice. The domestic practices that take place within the walls of Amin's home are contrasted with those that occur under the roof of the Safi Jamils' villa. The squalid conditions surrounding the medical treatment of Amin define him and his family to be mired in atavistic beliefs that are simply frivolous in the eye the modernized Yousif, whose father is an expert doctor. The protagonist thinks about the world through the filter of a logical order positioning himself above the squalor of the ordinary existence of the working class. He is enmeshed in the tangle of the agency of rational thought and considers a belief system that falls outside it as a reminder of a backward mode of life. Yousif, who embraces lofty

humanistic ideals, falls in the trap of polar opposition without necessarily being aware of it. Hence this deconstructive reading of a text relates presence to absence; “it does not point out to the flaws or weaknesses or stupidities of an author, but the necessity with which what he does see is systematically related to what he does not see”(Derrida xvi).

The metaphoric implication of the house should be underscored. ‘it is a cardinal precept of modern structural linguistics that signs do not have meanings in and of themselves, but by virtue of their occupying a distinctive place within the systematic network of contrasts and differences’(Derrida 23). This Saussuraean formulation is complicated by Jacques Derrida, who cogently avers that any piece of writing is involuntarily in constant conflict between what it manifestly means and what it is reserved to say[5]. We can therefore conclude, backing up Derrida’s claim, that the narrator’s meanings and intentions are perpetually re-inscribed and re-interpreted in a potentially infinite range of situations. The nebulous conceptualization of the house as a space that consolidates cultural and social interactions amongst Palestinians is accentuated by its polysemous aspect. That’s why this term can be said to be subjected to a dislocating textual play that prevents it from any form of conceptual or semantic stability.

### 1.1.2 The unhomely space

Ardallah occupies a pivotal role in the psychological, social and cultural life of its dwellers. As the incidents unfold, the characters usher us into the inner recesses of this geographical background with the purpose of divulging its secrets and how they impinge on the local population. It is delineated as a space layered with moments of bliss and others of pain. Ardallah is where some dreams are accomplished, some are deferred and others are simply

[5] “In writing post-structuralists find differences and complexities that mean texts do not say what they initially seem to say, what they want to say, or what we think they say.”(Huddart 3)

thwarted by some notorious system of hegemony and coercion.

People have to bear the brunt of the impending bedlam resulting from the imminent colonial invasion. Fawal's focus on the pre-exilic peaceful mode of life is perhaps an attempt to underplay the intensity of havoc wreaked by the British metropole compared to its Zionist surrogate. However, the author's intention is not to acquit the former and convict the latter. He shifts emphasis away from the British colonial enterprise and dwells on the pogroms of Zionism so as to put the blame on Balfour, who is held accountable for the Zionist colonial settlement. In this section, where attention is devoted to Ardallah, space will be examined as a mirror held up to the people's hopes and despondencies.

Ardallah is presented as a place of joy where Yousif, Amin and Isaac often extricate themselves from the impediments of culture-cum-religion and indulge in a spectacle of amiable encounters. Consciously or not the three characters try to sublate[6] into a higher human order. Isaac, who is labeled a Jew, is at a loss for what differentiates one Jewish group from another. All he cares for is the sheer stability he grows accustomed to in the company of his Muslim and Christian peers. The three have something to learn from Basim's knack as they all belong to one district where they long for a steady movement ahead. They have principally a craving for a future full of welfare and prosperity.

"From Basim Yousif had learned about the difference among the Orthodox Jews and Reformed Jews and Ashkenazi Jews and Sephardic Jews"(41). His unquenchable propensity for gathering as much information as possible about the Jew betrays his perturbed state of mind. He is probably moved by his compatriots' skeptical attitudes towards them.

[6] This is a technical word derived from dialectical philosophy, especially German philosophers like G.W.F.Hegel(1770–1831). If we get over our cultural differences and say that what unites us is humanity, then we sublate such disparities into a higher order, a kind of synthesis in Hegelian terms. "One way of thinking about this is through the example of the genre 'World Music', which brings together many very different kinds of music in an apparently higher term that transcends local cultural differences"( Huddart 19). The three characters tend towards this higher category even if they cannot eschew the ruses of discourse as some deeper ideas lie behind what we take for granted.

His determination to look on Ardallah as home to all Palestinians irrespective of identity is partly explained by his tendency to contest the idea that the Jewish community does not constitute a unique cohort or a herd of clones. Isaac, who is marked as a Jew, is revealed to be more of a Palestinian citizen than anything else. His concern for the well being of his native space is not less intense than that of his Muslim and Christian neighbours. That's why he has always been obsessed with the tourists whom they take for spies threatening the stability of their country in general and particularly their local hills. His digression to enquire if Yousif is still upset about the real intentions of the tourists they have been chasing,(41) may be construed as a fit of paranoia aroused by the political situation on the ground. The three characters are commonly enveloped by a feeling of psychological unrest that has just cropped up in a space hitherto awash with peace and cultural permissiveness.

The turning point in the character's unruffled mode of life is concomitant with the tragic news that Amin's arm is to be amputated. The symbolic implication of this incident is at least twofold. It can incarnate the inevitable outcome of a traditional mindset confiding blindly in the expertise of an illiterate healer at the cost of a doctor's modern treatment. It can also portend that the intimate landscape will soon have to face up to the external colonial intrigues the way Amin has to put up with the life-long lot of grappling with social and political ills without his arm. It is exactly at this point where the characters are neither inside nor outside their physical locations. They have to indwell the rim of an in-between reality where the average Palestinian has to sink or swim. S/he is shackled by the dilemma of defending the land against colonial ambitions or leaving it behind for the sake of survival in exile. It is no accident that Fawal uses the term 'arm' as a homonym that refers both to a body organ and a weapon desperately needed to protect the land

against the perils looming on the horizon.

The doctor's villa, the same space that has attracted diverse cultural encounters, has undergone a sudden metamorphosis. An air of gloom and inertia pervades its walls. Cousin Salman, who is known for a good sense of humour is consumed by a morose outlook following the event of tracking down the strangers whom Yousif, Isaac and Amin indict for espionage. Folding his arms - a token of lethargic demeanor and alienation - Salman apparently becomes uneasy about what is taking place on the surface of Ardallah. He is circumspect about the paranoiac demons threatening to impair its harmony and put its overall stability in jeopardy. He appeals to Basim to maintain a hopeful affinity with the landscape and suppress his preposterous fears of the other: "Why do you always see the dark side of things?" he asked. "The story of innocent young boys who are curious about lovers was sweet. Why did you have to ruin it?"(53). Nonetheless, the questions give away feelings of anxiety and suspicion Salman is at pains to express openly. He seems to be immured within the somber space he fears the others would be entangled in. His attempt to allay the tensions aroused by the incident of what has been regarded as espionage is betrayed by calling its actors mere lovers in quest of some adventurous romance. He is somehow susceptible to, but unable to declare, the new reality that begins to surface around him. After all, the boys do not uniquely identify the strangers as lovers, but also as Jewish spies engaged in the business of planning for some future intrusion. Salman's determination to keep easy-going is in fact an unhomely feeling that turns out to be a sham designed to put off, though temporarily, the inevitable truth of the impending invasion.

This contentious debate about the identity of the suspected spies flares up when Basim introduces himself as a knowledgeable authority in the history of Zionism. He is assigned

the role of legitimating and rationalizing the fears of the boys who are undecided about the identity of the intruders. He takes it for granted that the suspects can't be innocent tourists: "The Zionists were doing this sort of thing in 1936, and they are doing it now. . . last month we caught a group near Hebron; a week ago some Zionist map makers were caught in the hills overlooking Nablus"(53).

Basim is presented as a historian equipped with solid arguments against Salman's accusations of mistreating the tourists. He corroborates evidence to dispel any doubt about the intentions of the group who are portrayed to be not love, but map makers engaged in a kind of secret colonial enterprise. He tries to fulfill the mission of an author and write an account of colonial hegemony and its attitudes, references and experiences. In this regard Edward Said asserts that he does not "believe that authors are mechanically determined by ideology, class, or economic history, but authors are also. . . very much in the history of their societies, shaping and shaped by that history and their social experience in different measure"( *Culture and Imperialism* xxii).

Yousif's interest in history begins to arise; he looks on Basim as an experienced teacher capable of furnishing him with invaluable information about his place of birth. The space that has always been accorded a multicultural status by Dr. Safi is now caught in a maze of political intricacies. Only someone of Basim's caliber, according to Yousif, has the capacity to decipher them. Salman's reservations about being too much preoccupied with the strangers' intentions lose all sense of credibility now that the homeland is beginning to fall prey to a new herd of colonizers.

### 1.1.3 The dialectics of power

The slave master dialectics underline power relations. The colonial enterprise is built around the appropriation of a distant land inhabited by a herd of primitive creatures, whose existence is not acknowledged. These people in Hegel's terms strive hard to write a history of recognition implementing the differing means at their disposal. Fear of death, which is ultimately conducive to a status of slavery, hardly applies to Fawal's characters, who dwell in far off territories that are presented to be empty by the imperial 'authorites of delimitation' [7] and 'grids of specification'[8]. These Eurocentric modalities are adopted and surpassed by the power technologies at play in Fawal's novel.

The residents of Ardallah, and by extension those of the entire Palestine, cannot withstand the power exerted first by the British and subsequently by Zionists:

> it irked [ Yousif] not to know what part Churchill had played in the formation of the infamous Balfour Declaration of 1917. In one brief ambiguous paragraph, Britain had ignored the Palestinians and promised the Zionists a national home in Palestine. . . Now, in 1947 what mattered most to him was the fact that a foreigner-be it Balfour or Churchill or anyone else-could sit thousands of miles away from Palestine and dictate to the Palestinians what would or would not happen to them and their country.(59)

This citation abounds in echoes of the reductionist ethos of what has been regarded the stereotypical western episteme or what Raymond Williams dubs structures of feelings. The subservient rank foisted on Palestine is meant to make it Britain's foil: "The outlying regions of the world have no life, history or culture to speak of, no independence or inte-

[7] Those authorities, like medicine in the 19th century, entrusted with the power and legitimacy to delimit, designate, name and establish madness as an object. This concept is expounded in Michel Foucault's Archeology of Knowledge.

[8] These surfaces are conceptualized by Foucault as settings wherein discursive formations are constructed. They are the locations "in which individual differences, according to the degrees of rationalization, conceptual codes, and types of theory, will be accorded the status of disease, alienation, anomaly, dementia, neurosis or psychosis, degeneration, etc,"( 41). These discursive aberrations may emerge in these surfaces, and then be designated and analyzed.

grity worth representing without the West"; Palestinians are defined as inferior creatures without a voice; their history is erased and has to be rewritten by the metropole, the emissary of light and epitome of the *mission civilisatrice*(Said, *Culture and Empire* xi). This hypocritical ascendency is, however, undermined when the civilizing mission turns out to be an apparatus of violence and oppression.

The mechanisms of the colonial power operate within the context of usurping the other's property. The colonizing subject's authority is gauged by the ability to conduct a territorial expansion and subjugate the natives who are coerced into giving up their land. Salwa is one of the characters featured to be steadfastly patient as her Arabic name suggests. She is Yousif's would be wife and a tenacious defender of the land. She articulates the impossibility of being deracinated because she has all the right and proof to remain attached to the land which palpably bears the marks and traces of her identity. She feels herself connected to place by virtue of a strong umbilical cord that cannot be cut off overnight. This remarkable connection, which consolidates the spacio-human symbiosis, is emphasized when Salwa prides herself on her long pedigree. Her roots go deep in the soil her father 'inherited from his father and he from his father'. The gruesome "uprooting of the Palestinians and the dismemberment and deArabisation of historic Palestinians"(N. Masalha, *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory* 1) do not shake her confidence in the legitimacy of her cause. Unlike Salman, who is determined to keep a bulwark of illusions against the pangs of the reality of imminent occupation, Salwa is prepared to fight until glory is accomplished.

The constant oscillation between present and future entrenches the characters' lack of stability. Some of them, like Salwa and Yousif, are almost certain that the current circumstances betoken a future fraught with tensions between the oppressor and oppressed.

Consequently, something must be done to insulate space against any potential offensive. Others, like Salman, are merely taciturn preferring to keep the harsh reality at bay and display ostensible composure. Still others like the doctor maintain that cultural dialogue and peace negotiations would be the only possible alternative to occlude ferocious Zionist onslaughts. Therefore, he deserves to be extolled for pacifism and non-violent response to the atrocities perpetrated by the colonial system and hailed for his endeavor to undermine the theory of clashing civilizations when he hopefully stresses the fact that Jews, Muslims and Christians can co-exist outside the power-struggle paradigm.

To exult in the peaceful moments that may soon die out, Yousif makes a set of trips back and forth all along the hills of God. The land serves to alleviate the premonition of a tumultuous future and confine him to a 'peaceful' present. In this respect, space is implemented in such a way as to decenter, though fleetingly, the infamous dichotomy of power versus weakness inherent in the logic of colonial ideological apparatus:

> Descending the hill had often brought pleasure to Yousif. He tried to time it so they could watch the magnificent blending of colors as the sun set on the far horizon. This view of Ardallah, resting leisurely on the crests and slopes of seven hills, inspired on him a sense of joy. He often paused to offer a silent prayer. Looking at the town, he felt touched by its serenity. Perhaps the trees gave it splendor and warmth. They seemed to sheathe the little houses, hovering over them protectively.( 67)

In this exquisitely woven part of the narrative, Yousif is depicted to stand in full unison with the natal landscape. Ardallah has been endowed with a colorful aspect that leaves him spellbound paying little attention to the hue that will soon encroach upon the paucity of light that still makes the seven hills quite visible. The multiplicity of colors attributed to the land at this juncture can be construed as a pertinent reference to the cultural diversity peculiar to the town. The fetishized, totalizing identities of the colonial rhetoric are simply hard to find there. The setting sun, however, does not augur well for him.

It can be regarded as the harbinger of the bedlam hovering over the serenity that still muffles the local geography in spite of the uncertain future. The elements of nature seem willing to identify with the hills and protect them from any possible act of violence. The narrator's allusion to the houses being sheltered among trees unconsciously portends the inability of the people to stand up to the impending aggression of the Zionist weaponry.

Fawal, in return, depends on the flora of Ardallah to instill a modicum of solace in the hearts of his protagonist, who is repeatedly teetering on the brink of despondency in the face of what awaits his hometown. Like Nur Masalha, Fawal calls into question "colonial approach to Palestine and the pernicious myth of "a land without a people and argues for reading the history of Palestine with the eyes of the indigenous people of Palestine"( Masalha 1). Yousif momentarily suspends the dialectics of power by shifting emphasis away from the inbuilt antinomies of Western ethnocentrism to the heterogeneous aura of Ardallah as a repository of history. However, the author seems to suggest that the physical space will soon be caught in the vortex of colonial disarray. This potential transformation is referred to, besides the setting sun and the corollary twilight, by the protagonist's downhill movement connoting a precipitous decline or descent towards death.

Allowing his character this short-lived glimmer of dim light, the narrator soon brings this peaceful voyage to a close to give a fresh impetus to the dynamics of power. He traces the genesis of current tensions far to the historical era when the British authorities allow 'Jewish immigrants to come in by the shipload"(71). These settlers indulge in the bountiful Palestinian landscape as long as they are not affiliated to the exclusive system of Zionism. Ardallah, a microcosm of the whole territory, is revealed to offer room for these intruders since they are ready to live up to the principles of peace and security to all. This culturally-variegated terrain, wherein difference is accepted and bigotry is in abeyance, is

being exposed to the wind of Zionist atrocities.

Basim, who is overwhelmed by what lies ahead, is very much concerned with the oppressive project that will tighten the grip on land. The reader may initially censure him for being too obsessed with Zionist territorial expansion, but his arguments appear to be so convincing that yousif recurrently leaves aside his father's pacifist approach and sides with Basim, whose committed engagement in armed resistance is intended to sap the colonial machine and deal the enemy a fatal blow before it is too late to fight. The characters are drawn to the edge of the cataclysmic incident that leads to the creation of the State of Isreal, which forces "approximately 90% of the Palestinians" outside their home(Masalha 7). Basim's understanding of the way power works resonates with philosophical overtones which make us concur with Michel Foucault that power is deeply rooted "in the social nexus"(During 14).

Basim's skepticism is confirmed when Yousif is back from his trip all over the hills. What has befallen the villagers arouses his inquisitiveness. Apparently, his fears are not the outcome of a compulsive fit of paranoia. All the evidence suggests that Ardallah is gearing towards havoc. Power, like the roots of bamboo, spreads across the ground targeting the people and their property: "Approaching the hilltop on his way home, Yousif found his neighbourhood in an uproar. Many had poured out of their houses and were standing in the streets despite the drizzle, too shocked to discuss their new dilemma"(75). At this point, the state of composure and equanimity that has hitherto characterized the natal landscape begins to fade away only to be supplanted by mayhem and chaos. The friendly rapport between people and land is disrupted by the current skirmishes. The flicker of light Yousif has just relished is devoured by darkness leaving the dwellers imprisoned in a place that has always bequeathed sheer peace and stability: "Some kitchen windows were

lit, but most of the street was wrapped up in shadow. Those gathered seemed already touched by the memory of a simple good life that was about to be snatched away from them for reasons they could not understand"(ibid).

Fate has ordained that Ardallah, and Palestine as a whole, will not celebrate a post-colonial era of freedom and self-determination. It has been brazenly reduced to an item for sale and sold cheaply to Zionists who set out to implement their colossal colonial project at the cost of the natives'well-being and security. Space that has been a site bearing the imprints of Palestinians will undergo a sudden metamorphosis. The safe haven where a Christian, a Jew and a Muslim grew up side by side, with little regard for cultural affinity, is now under the yoke of early Zionist imperial authority.

The binary logic is anathema to Yousif's father. He favours dialogue as an efficient strategy of resistance over armed conflict. For the outcome of the latter option seems to have been decided in advance. The kind of argumentation and weighing of consequences adopted by the doctor lucidly emanates from a highly-intellectual figure, whose wisdom is employed as the arbiter of any possible confrontation with the invaders. Albeit the difficulty of initiating peace talks with the enemy, he is certain that the Palestinian traditional arms and disorganized military men cannot rival the heavy sophisticated arsenal of the Zionist extermination machine. Fawal's characters are not trapped in the prison house of epistemological univocity; their diverse attitudes towards confronting colonial power cogently reveal their ability to create a political space wherein individual differences consolidate coexistence and serve the cause.

The inhabitants of Ardallah are not split apart by their contentious debates over how to protect their land. Amidst the cacophony of cons and pros of armed resistance and diplomacy, the Palestinians display spectacular signs of intrepidity that may or may not

bear fruit. Even a blind musician named Jamal cannot help identifying with the physical space because it addresses the emotional landscape of longing and belonging. Before his eyesight deserts him, he is seized by a fiery passion to write a symphony of the hills of God. He craves the retrieval of glory that has once shaped the history of Ardallah and placed it at the apogee of power. The musician cannot help lamenting the residual dregs of this glorious past which has gone to rack and ruin. 'If a blind man, Yousif thought, could fall in love with these hills and valleys, what about those who grew up looking at them every day?'(83)

As the events unfold Yousif's affiliation to space grows stronger. He seems to veer towards military action as the only alternative left to handle the colonial power. This conviction, however, does not impact his relationship with his Jewish neighbours. He and Amin pay a visit to Isaac to inquire about his recent absence. This encounter testifies to the harmony that still underlies Ardallah amidst the confusion on the threshold. The Christian, Muslim and Jew, as they are represented by the three schoolboys, try to maintain a close interaction in spite of the rising tensions on the ground. The implication is that Jews and Zionists are not to be lumped together. All the native communities, irrespective of religion, are indiscriminately targeted and will soon be victimized by the evil machine of the imperial technology.

The first oblique act of resistance is carried out in Isaac's home. Here the three characters take a momentary refuge from the chaos outdoors. The encounter, which is sealed by a unique human ambience, is another occasion of unity against a common enemy. Sarah, Isaac's mother, bestows sheer hospitality and love on her visitors. This is tangible proof that the children are inclined towards peace and the elders follow suit. The enclosed space of the house protectively allows for a short-lived socialization away from the ex-

ternal disarray. Expectedly, however, Sarah finds it difficult to keep herself unaffected by the new circumstances: “she hovered around them, breaking more bread, filling their cups with hot tea, and telling them to eat more. In her loving care she looked flustered. They ate and talked, and pretended to enjoy the meal. Yousif felt such a lump in his throat, he could not swallow"(83). Much to their chagrin, these characters meet to allay their suffering but cannot altogether preclude the repercussions of the imminent invasion. The calamity threatening Ardallah interferes with their bogus composure within the walls of The Shalean’s home and triggers the dormant trauma of anxiety-stricken individuals. Still this shared feeling across disparate faiths fortifies the shared fate of powerless objects in danger of being dispossessed and then expelled. There is little room for Samuel Huntington’s idea that cultural values are intimately bound up with ethnic identity in the space Fawal carves for his characters. Huntington’s contention that “faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for”(Huntington 26) does not occupy a central position in the life of a Muslim, a Jew and a Christian. The three are concerned about how to protect their land from the storms of violence that threaten their peaceful existence.

The traumatized Yousif is finally faced with the bitter reality of colonial violence he has repeatedly shunned. His love relationship with Salwa at a time when Palestine is under threat can be construed as an attempt to relish a moment of relief away from the cries of Ardallah. This love, the author shows to be never consummated, is not unlike his affectionate communion with his native geographical background. However, following his encounter with Salwa at the cinema - another claustrophobic space whose soothing function is critical - Yousif shifts away towards politics and how they can impinge on his country. The ecstasy he derives from his transitory appointments or accidental meetings

with his beloved is always aborted by his concern for the impossible safety of Ardallah. The cataclysmic situation seems to suggest that Nathan Weinstock's biased approach in his assertion that Zionism has improved the living conditions of the ordinary Palestinians(Weinstock 50), disregarding the fact that 90% of them are aggressively dispossessed and displaced, is untenable. In fact the many faces of power, besides Zionism, declare themselves upholders of Palestinian cause to serve ideological agendas.

The newspaper is a document Fawal utilizes to impart historical credibility to the narrative. Through the prism of its columns, we are kept briefed on the events of occupation and the consequent reaction of the Arab world. Though Yousif and Amin are still teenage schoolboys, they are fully conscious of the ideology embedded in this media discourse. The cacophony of fervent support voiced in favour of the Palestinian just cause is subjected to a sifting process. Not all that is said should be taken at face value according to the two friends:

> Everything in the papers stirred their blood. The reports of the Jews singing and dancing throughout Palestine the night before infuriated them. Then there was the battle cry. It had been sounded from Yemen to Iraq, from Kuwait to Morocco. Much of it was Arab rhetoric; that Yousif knew. But the neighbouring Arab states did seem eager on their promise to save Palestine from the aggressors who were converging on them like waves of locusts bent on swallowing everything in sight.(89)

A gamut of mixed feelings is unleashed throughout Palestine. The Jews, who are featured to be in high spirits, are ceremoniously celebrating their premature triumph. Yousif and Amin, on the other hand, are depicted to be helpless in a land that is in jeopardy of being confiscated by the colonial machinery. Amidst all this expected confusion, Amin still looks at the war with tremendous confidence putting his trust in Arabs who will mobilize their armed forces in support of their cause. Yousif cannot conceal his downright suspicion of the candour of the newspaper statements, which he presently thrusts into oblivion

to revive his identification with Ardallah. Whenever anxiety tightens its grip on Fawal's characters, solace is to be found within the arms of the native land. At this juncture, it is the sight of a simple shepherd, in all probability oblivious of the complications underway, which provides a therapeutic session.

The flock reminds Yousif of 'the simple life on these hills that Jamal had called the hills of God. But now Yousif was worried about the future. When they reached the wheat Presser, they parted. It was already dusk"(91). How substantially transitory bliss is becoming in the homeland now that the shadow of violence is hovering around it! The land where peace and light have been widespread is in mourning. It is no accident that the two friends take each other's leave by the presser at dusk. These terms are symbolically suggestive of power and darkness. The conquest brings about terror and dispels people's hopes, the mainstay of their existence on the hills.

### 1.1.4 On the eve of exile

The illusory affiliation to the hills of God begins to wane as the events progress towards the climax. The act of romanticizing the homeland is confronted with the ineluctability of a series of aggressions. There is little room for shunning the catastrophe,*the Nakbah*,that will indiscriminately befall the Palestinian population and precipitate their coerced exodus into exile. The elements of landscape that have hitherto offered a flicker of hope to the villagers and townspeople are trapped in the tangle of Zionist-led attacks. The fictional characters are perplexed about how to ensure the safety of the land where they have been ensconced throughout their life. In this respect Nur Masalha,points out that "land and territory have always been at the heartof the struggle between the Zionist settlers and the native Palestinians"(1). The people's history,the time spent in Ardallah and all the

experiences cherished within its alleys are bound to take a new turn.

One of the early costs of colonial expansion is the disintegration of human relationships that have once marked the pre-colonial space. The Christian,Muslim and Jew,who have epitomized cultural and religious difference characteristic of Ardallah,have to pit their friendship against the ideology of colonization. Being separated from their Jewish friend,who finally meets his doom when he is caught red handed carrying a gun amongst a group of armed Zionists,Amin and Yousif are left bereft.

Ustaz Hakim,Yousif and Amin's teacher,updates his students on the recent political developments. Palestine,he reiterates,is on the threshold of war that could have been prevented by the UN(93). The historicity of the text acquires momentum at this point. The reference to the end of the three-year British mandate marks a turning point in the history of Palestine. According to Ustaz Hakim,the Zionist atrocities are likely to exceed those inflicted by any other colonial regime. The pervasive gloom which overshadows the story foreshadows the turmoil lying ahead.

The fog descending the widow caught the teacher's eyes. He stared at it,trying to sort out his thoughts:

> "I presume you all know that at one time the Arabs ruled most of the known world-from Asia in the east to Spain in the west - from the seventh century till the end of the fifteenth. Their empire-building began with the prophet Muhammad,who in the seventh century led his followers and gave spark to the most brilliant series of conquests the world had ever seen"(93).

This journey in retrospect takes us to the glorious past when Arabs were at their apogee. Taking refuge in bygone years serves to alleviate the intensity of loss and despair that begin to creep up on the characters. The author presents us with physical landscape as a repository of warmth in a land at the edge of breaking kinship with its dwellers. This is no

longer the case since Ardallah is compelled to bear the brunt of territorial expansion: “The issue of land is of course a basic one”,Masalha repeats,“we need a place to plant our feet if we are to build an identity and feel safe enough to be open to others”(Isherwood xii). The romantic simplicity that has enthralled Yousif and aroused his in-depth memories is supplanted by the clouds of the callous shelling. The only source of solace left is then a romanticizing of Arabs’ prime at a time when the present is lamentable.

A strategic nationalist sentiment informs this psychological odyssey backward. Yousif attaches more importance to his ethnic provenance than religious identity. Ardallah has so long reveled in difference and tolerance and now needs a united community of Arabs to set up a bulwark against territorial expansion: "like most Christian Arabs,he considered himself Arab first and Christian second. . . sitting in class now he wondered if the spirit of old would return and save the day for his generation"(99). However,it is quite doubtful if the spirit of yore alone can triumph over the sophisticated military technology mobilized to perpetrate unprecedented massacres against the innocent Palestinian population. Dr. Safi fears that his compatriots tend to be idealistic in their approach to the impending catastrophe and appeals to self-restraint and reasoning in dealing with the current situation. He seems to claim that Ustaz Hakim’s dwelling on the Arab historic and victorious past is an irrelevant narrative for the time being.

Unlike Hakim,who is entranced by the Arab achievements,the doctor concentrates all effort on the present and how to find a way out of their plight. In spite of the urgent need for military preparations,he still clings to his dream of building a hospital. His preoccupation with investing in civilly-oriented projects can be regarded as an oblique aversion to bloodshed. His people are in dearth of health centers,clinics and not weapons and ammunitions(141). Dr. Safi’s pacifist tendencies run counter to Basim’s insistence on

a violent retaliation. This instance of contentious debate has never led to a political rift between them. They are conversely shown to be unanimously allied against the Zionist invasion even if they have different priorities. The doctor questions the military efficiency of a country where patients are helplessly untreated,whereas Basim,a specialist in Zionist war strategies,contends that dialogue is doomed with this unique colonial power.

The dilemma facing the Palestinian patriots is the impossibility of starting peace negotiations with the enemy,and the unreliability of their ammunition. Yousif,who has shown allegiance to Basim,deems it necessary to respond to the intruder's attacks with ferocity but he is somehow discouraged by the outcome. These meanderings are in fact inherent in the pre-exilic discourse because the residents of Ardallah know deep inside that the military might of the enemy is simply unshakable. This hesitant stand is lucidly expressed by the narrator in his allusion to Yousif:

> Passing Sarfand,the British military camp,he wondered what the British were going to do with all these arms. Couldn't the Arabs find a way of getting any of them? Couldn't some of the officers be bought? Couldn't they look the other way as the Arabs helped themselves? It would be a shame if all these acres of guns and ammunition were taken out of the country or if they fell in the hands of the Zionists. He should speak to Basim about that.(100)

Now that the invasion is ineluctable,Yousif considers the avenues that could be open to a powerful reaction. Nonetheless,the proposed considerations are not realistic and represent a set of hopes beyond reckoning. Counting on a colonial power to assist with sapping the Zionist offensive is simply a preposterous wish. After all it is the British political system under the leadership of Balfour which promised the Jews a home in Palestine. The probabilities Yousif raises betray his mistrust of self-defense mechanisms. He seems to concur with his father that Palestinians,left to themselves,are liable to suffer enormously at the hands of Zionists. When he aspires to receive military aid from British armed

forces,he indirectly owns up to the challenge with which his compatriots are confronted; how they could be equipped with enough weapons to save their land. This also bespeaks his flustered state of mind because a crashing defeat is around the corner. Yousif's previously interpreted paranoiac quirks are therefore justified.

He is struggling under the weight of a painful psychological journey which embitters him in Ardallah. A schoolboy who could have devoted his mental energy to the pursuit of knowledge to achieve his ambitions is pathetically distracted by what is to become of his hometown. He knows that dispossession and dislocation will turn out to be their lot sooner or later. Embarking on a trip around the hills,he finds himself clamped tight in the intricate labyrinth of inner recesses. Driving his mother to visit their aunt,he is overtaken by ominous silence wondering about what would be the fate of Bab al-wad,'a narrow passageway between high cliffs.' He muses on the future of this spatial spot and its strategic importance. For any control of this point would entail a 'control of the entire highway' and the isolation of Jerusalem from Jaffa and Tel Aviv(101).

The onus is on Yousif to contribute to safeguarding the hills of God even if this would mean dropping out of school and taking part in resistance. The excruciating pain of parting with Jerusalem is merely intolerable to a young Christian who has grown up in a culturally heterogeneous space wherein Muslims,Christians and Jews are in constant dialogic encounters. Peace and stability that have so long been regarded as a distinctive feature of Ardallah are under serious threat. The hills where Yousif,Amin and Isaac have spent their childhood together will be drenched with drops of blood,the outcome of violence that will precipitate the survivors into exile and will accordingly deconstruct the pernicious Zionist myth of "transfer.[9]". What should be done for the sake of a country

[9] Transfer is one of the infamous ideological concepts utilized by Zionism as a euphemism for the unspeakable atrocities against Palestine: "The idea of transfer is as old as the early Zionist colonies

already paralyzed by the British colonial power to keep its space intact? This is probably the question that constitutes an exasperating puzzle for Fawal's characters:

> A sense of foreboding seemed to grip Yousif as they crossed the city [Jerusalem] limits. The atmosphere in this city of churches,mosques,and synagogues seemed funeral. The sights and sounds of bustle were gone. The usually clean roads,were littered with yesterday's debris. Were the sweepers on strike,Yousif wondered,or were they afraid to do their work?(102)

When the sound of bullets resonate through space,people's hopes for peace retreat,their anxiety exacerbates and darkness falls upon Eldorado. Yousif is seized by a premonition of disaster. The religious sites are swathed in gloom and mourning now that the specters of war are taking their toll on the once peaceful Jerusalem. The prevalent silence entrenches feelings of death that can no longer be eschewed because dialogue cannot simply quell the imperial transgressions. The landscape that used to be a balm to Yousif's spirit is revealed to be in a mess and therefore a mirror through which we can take a look into his chaotic psychology. The land that has once been awash with life instilling great expectations in its dwellers is now laden with indices of violence. Its districts have to bid a permanent farewell to neatness and endure appalling atrocities.

Yousif,numb with dismay,finds it extremely difficult to account for the increasing scale of horror which has warped the contents of the local space. Besides the unusual absence of activity incarnated by the sweepers' disappearance,'posters bearing the stars of David were plastered on walls and over movie billboards. The writing on them was in Hebrew.' It is at this point that events take a new dramatic turn. Space that has been familiar throughout begins to be cloaked in an atmosphere of queerness. The iconic signifiers are

---

in Palestine and the rise of Political Zionism." It encapsulates "the establishment of a Jewish state through colonization and land acquisition –in other words,through a radical ethno –religious –demographic transformation of a country,the population of which had been almost entirely Arab at the start of the Zionist settlment "(Masalha 1)

probably intended to impart a new signification to the city. The photo of Prophet David is an attempt to rationalize and legitimate the conquest. This allusion to a sacred religious figure is a deliberate endeavor to show how Zionism utilizes religion as a telos of colonial expansion. The instrumental function of media which takes on the form of billboards should not be underplayed in the context of colonization. The newspaper and radio,the key means of information for Palestinians,will be swamped by the pictures of the Zionist enterprise.

When she sets foot in Jerusalem,Yousif's mother's emotions are aroused. The city rekindles past memories of childhood. She undergoes the perilous journey not only to see her sick sister but also to embrace Jerusalem and inhale the air she may never have the opportunity to breathe again. 'She wanted to light a candle at the *Qiyameh*,Holy Sepulchre. She wanted to see her parents'( 103). Being in a state of communion with space,she is intent on performing her religious rites and by so doing transforms this ordinary visit to a blessed pilgrimage. She also insists that they can't go back unless Yousif drops in on his grandparents. All these incidents have not been preplanned; they suddenly crop up because she knows how complex the situation will get in the near future.

Yousif's reluctance to linger in the city can also be construed against the backdrop of his highly anxious psychological state. Jerusalem that has always inspired him and caters for his childish curiosity can no longer provide that offer. Standing on the brink of devastation,it simply aggravates the protagonist's trauma and triggers the pangs of nostalgia that set him on a coercive return to the past giving a free vent to a host of painful memories. This type of journey simply entails that everything they used to relish in the spiritual city is unjustly reduced to memories that may be consumed by amnesia once contact with it is lost.

When Fawal repeatedly refers to 'the lump' in Yousif's throat,which he once describes to be as big as a nut,he places emphasis on the mental conditions of a Palestinian citizen whose land will be inequitably seized. Suffering from such a lump is symptomatic of his inability to swallow the bitter taste of colonization which is taking place in front of his very eyes:

> Some of his happy recollections resonated around this sacred and blessed city of shrines,temples,belfries,minerals and domes. From childhood,he had loved everything about Jerusalem: the old and the new,the visits with his grandparents in the old district of Musara... He had loved the exotic and the appetizing smells of herbs and foods drifting from restaurant and sidewalk cafés,the sounds of church bells and muezzins... the sight of silks and leather goods hanging in the middle of the streets and touching the pedestrian heads... ( 103).

Within the vast space,there are places he is infatuated with and dares not desert at gunpoint. The ultimate destination of his odyssey is reached through a host of spatial spots serving to delve into childhood reminiscences. If Jerusalem was once adorned with disparate sites of worship,a tangible proof of tolerance and co-existence,it is now writhing in the agony and terror of a uniquely notorious occupation. What has once stirred his olfactory,sight and hearing faculties and lavished sheer pleasure on him is suppressed by the colonial machinery. Jerusalem is devoid of all signs of life and is steadily drawing towards its twilight moments. The plurality of cultures characteristic of this city is undermined by the univocal,exclusivist ethos of Zionism.

Catching sight of an Arab running away from the British officer who brands him as a terrorist,Yousif is confounded by the commotion of his compatriots as they attempt to get hold on him. When the bomb goes off,he cogently fears that suicide bombing - what is dubbed martyrdom - will become a rampant practice in the country and dispossess mothers of their children. It is expected that resistance will take different forms - be they

legitimate or otherwise- to save space from the Zionist-led bloody onslaughts. He seems to declare that this strategy is anathema to him because the life of Palestinians would be wasted,to no avail. The blood of his countrymen is precious and less risky counter-hegemonic retaliation is what they desperately need to shake the barbarous offensive.

Yousif is so affected by the new realities that he takes us back to the earlier times when Jerusalem has witnessed outstanding signs of cultural encounters between Jews,Christians and Muslims. Fawal makes recourse to these flashbacks to counter the gloom of the present to the light of the past when identity and religion have never produced antagonistic chasms in a culturally multivalent space. Yousif sounds less determined to bewail the demise of this historic era when he warns against perpetrating violence against civilians. He cannot extricate himself from the complex web of memories about his relationship with the Jew in Jerusalem: “every time he had come here with his mother to visit his grandparents or his aunt,she would buy him something from the Jewish shops on these streets: the best football he had ever owned came from one of them”( 108)

Space is not accounted for in a vacuum. It has always been represented to acquire significance from people’s experiences and personal engagements. The same location where interpersonal relations used to rise above identification marks for the safety of all is crippled by extreme terror. The Jews,Muslims and Christians set out to withdraw from a landscape that has formerly bestowed sheer hope and stability leaving it at the mercy of the intruder’s raids. What makes matters worse is that the Catastrophe is more of a process than a single isolated event: “the memories . . . of the calamities and horror inflicted on the Palestinians during the months of the establishment of Israel have carved and continue to carve a deep space in the memory of those who lived it and the generation that followed”(N. A. and Masalha 1). Jerusalem,becoming a repulsive site,no longer

sparkles with beams of light simply because it is teetering on the verge of collapse. It is quite clear then that space,like a palimpsest,is identified by the imprints that are inexorably re-inscribed on its surface. The versatility informing Yousif's emotional territory in reaction to Jerusalem may lend credence to this claim.

The situation exacerbates in Ardallah,but Yousif does not give in to despondency. He establishes himself as a cultural mediator stoically defending Palestinian territory and placing the unity of its people at the forefront of his humanistic agenda. The killing of the middle-aged unmarried George Mutran brings Muslims and Christians together and reveals that religion never interferes with lofty ideals: "There were Muslim Shaykhs,even though the victim was Christian. There were altar boys dressed in black even though,he was not a catholic"(116). The third element,the Jewish party,that has hitherto been an integral part of the culturally-variegated triad has aroused suspicion. The people's tight affiliation with space begins to loosen under the duress of violence.

### 1.1.5 the catastrophe/ sacrifice dyad

The indeterminacy of sacrifice as a signifier is validated by the outbreak of bloody conflicts disturbing a stable way of life. The flow of hate generated by the shooting of Mutran seems hard to stem. Taunting a past friend with complicity in the colonial project divests the vocabulary of sacrifice of its semantic clarity; for it is occasionally tantamount to mere violence victimizing ordinary Palestinian citizens who may not be less patriotic than Arabs themselves. The Jews are not necessarily Zionists and denigrating them as enemies to be terrorized further complicates the course of resistance. The Shaalan family, who have so long befriended their Arab neighbors and shared their food within the confines of Ardallah, turn out to be an object of fear and suspicion. This exchange between Moshe and

a relative of the victim elucidates that attitudes towards Palestinian Jews have changed:

> 'Don't tell me you are sorry for the dead.'
>
> ' of course I am.'
>
> The hell you are. Your people killed him, didn't they? And how you come to bury him. You kill a person and then walk in his funeral, is that it?'
>
> The merchant Selim Rihani and Yousif tried to quiet the angry relative. But the more they tried the louder and angrier Shukri became: ' get out of here, Moshe', the relative said. 'Get out and take your dirty son with you'(117).

At this juncture, perception is substantially impaired and insight weakened as a result of these clashes. The protection of the land is worth sacrifice and consequently the Palestinians should make concerted efforts to accomplish this noble aim. However, it sounds that the majority fail to demarcate categories. The dividing line between Jews and Zionists has little significance because they represent a serious threat to the future of the natives. This monolithic perspective impinges on their valor and imparts a sense of ambivalence to the concept of sacrifice. The subsequent shelling of the Sha'alan family, who are themselves defenseless before Zionist offensives, cannot be appropriately located within the context of self-defense. The doctor, who has repeatedly been excoriated for his edifying ideas on the issue of Zionism and the challenges of counter-hegemony, offers shelter to the Sha'alan in the wake of bombardment. His being generous and hospitable to Moshe is concrete evidence that he is averse to associating sacrifice for the land with random unplanned acts of violence.

His house is once again used as a space wherein an informative lesson is to take place. Moshe, who is supposed to be more knowledgeable about the founding assumptions of Zionism, launches a virulent attack against this movement and its ethnocentric ethos. This way he is acquitted of the guilt foisted on him by some residents of Ardallah. His innocence is pronounced and is therefore revealed to be a victim whose ordeal is no less

appalling than that of Yousif himself:

> 'In Jerusalem', the doctor said reaching for a piece of white cheese, 'there used to be a tradition among Jews and Muslims. Children of both faiths who were born on the same day were breastfed by both mothers. And they used to take this relationship very seriously. They exchanged gifts and so on.'(28)

This socially entrenched habit for habit is invested with pathos. The doctor's villa is not merely represented as a safe haven for the Shala'an family; it is also a setting of instructing the reader about certain facts defining the connection between Muslims and Jews. The reader, who might have been suspicious of Moshe after the killing of Mutran, is liable to rethink his/her misgivings and learn to avoid essential categorization; not all Jews turn out to be Zionists. When the author discloses the common practice of Muslim and Jewish mothers breastfeeding each other's babies, he intends to lay emphasis on the bond of brotherhood that may tie a Muslim to a Jew. Attacking a Jewish family falls short of sacrifice and diverts its course towards mere bigotry contributing little to serving the cause. Under the impact of intimidation the Shalaan are coerced into abandoning their home in Ardallah and their only son Isaac is shot dead. In this respect, what is taken for sacrifice can be construed as a paranoiac reaction triggered off by the colonial aggressions.

After the disappearance of the Jewish family from Ardallah, the ordinary villagers have to muster courage to impart a new dimension to their acts of sacrifice. Shedding blood for the sake of their land is not intimidating according to Basim, who considers no other alternative to armed resistance. For him, dialogue is a prospect beyond their reach since the Zionist extermination machine is prone to wreaking enormous havoc on space and its contents. The doctor, on the other hand, adamantly believes in the feasibility of his plan. Sacrifice is intimately bound up with building a hospital in Ardallah. He seems to prioritize life over death though this goal is somehow farfetched in a landscape

where bullets speak louder than the echoes of peace. That's why Basim takes lightly this project deeming the doctor's dream hospital irrelevant within the context of an impending calamity. Amine, who is no less concerned with protecting the land, keeps musing on his father's lifelong sacrifice in relation to the hardships of obtaining a decent livelihood. He commiserates with him for spending forty years chiseling stones for people so that they can have elaborate homes(144). He sounds to have grown up in constant struggle with the squalor of a poverty-stricken background where sacrifice has always meant earning a living. What adds to it now is finding a way to insulate Ardallah against any encroachment. Survival is more than securing income; it is rather ensuring one's safety in a land targeted by the colonial machine.

As the events move forward, the concept of sacrifice is unanimously directed towards defending the hills of God against the Zionist-led attacks. At this stage Fawal confirms his role as a historian embarking upon "a sincere narration of a phase in the history of the Palestinian people and of their response to the challenge of adversity that has confronted them"(Turki 8). Though the authors of resistance are enmeshed in a contentious debate over the efficient strategy to occlude the colonial process, they all dispel some doubts about the danger they are facing. The controversial issue of sacrifice will not bend the will of a people to grapple with the imminent death in attempt to ensure the safety of Ardallah, where they have savored every moment of serenity and welfare. Yousif, who strives to occupy the middle ground between his father and uncle's stand, does not conceal the urgent need of taking a position:

> Yousif himself was not in the best of spirits. The question of the hospital money still gnawed at him. He felt caught between his father and cousin. Each one had a point. But he was uncertain how far he could go in opposing his father. Ardallah needed to be protected, no doubt. If the hospital money could buy arms that could save a family or even one child, it would be worth it. On the other hand, wouldn't

> it be awful to lose the war and the money at the same time, especially if you knew in advance that the money would have absolutely no bearing on the outcome?(150)

Yousif undertakes the task of putting alternatives under scrutiny. Basim associates sacrifice with action and therefore arms are to be secured. Safi Jamil indefatigably persists in clinging to the humanitarian project of establishing a medical centre because the outcome of any confrontation with the Zionist military power is predetermined. In fact, the situation constitutes a conundrum from which Yousif cannot easily disentangle himself. What is the worth of armed struggle if loss is ineluctable? The doctor's proposal might seem then more practical and less precarious than Basim's. But again what would be the significance of a hospital if the entire Ardallah falls under occupation? Amidst all this turmoil, the Palestinians need to pick up the pieces and sacrifice their lives for home since any other option would be interpreted as a supine act of surrender. If the native space is to be occupied, the Zionists have to pay dearly. Taking full control of Ardallah without meeting a bitter counter-attack would make defeat despicably humble on the part of Palestinians.

The fate of Ardallah, the microcosm of the whole country, has been decided now that the colonizer is determined to disrupt the safety central to the local space. Sacrifice is accordingly confirmed becoming less ambiguous and synonymous with death. The doctor who has been unwilling to relinquish the idea of building a hospital is obliged to satisfy the majority's wish to buy a few more guns to defend Ardallah. Basim, the renowned war tactician, has to shoulder the responsibility of protecting the hills against the wind of invasion. Though we are almost certain that the primitive weapons of Palestinian fighters are incommensurate with the sophisticated arsenal of the enemy, we are equally less dubious about the valor of Basim's men on the battlefield: 'Wagons and pick-ups and

trucks and tanks and all the weapons in the Zionists' arsenal were not enough to shake the Arabs' faith in their cause'(219).

Sacrifice brings about unity and consolidates personal relations. Salwa, Yousif's would be wife, is one of the main characters whose role in instilling motivation in Yousif is critical. She does not allow despair any access into her soul. Death is not frightening when dignity is threatened. Despite her deep-felt anxiety about the repercussions of the war and its impact on the future of two burgeoning lovers, she has been endowed with a fearless reaction against any cowardly disposition towards discord at this moment. Solidarity is her guiding principle; it is a sine qua non of victory. However, Yousif cannot altogether dispense with doubt about futurity. Death is not intimidating, but he cannot put up with the mere idea of being separated from Salwa or expelled from Ardallah. He is prepared to sacrifice his life for the sake of his birthplace, but is unable to be deracinated because he cannot put down roots elsewhere. Salwa, the incarnation of patience, is confident that their existence in Ardallah is such an inalienable right that no external force dares shake.

To fortify his bond to Salwa, Yousif makes a marriage proposal. Sacrifice has to start at a micro-level before it grows into a fully-fledged enterprise. This wished-for- matrimony is symbolic of endurance and dedication the Palestinian cause requires. Salwa as the epitome of forbearance is also a character whose language is fervently emotional unlike that of Yousif, who gravitates towards reasoning whenever the future of Ardallah is brought up. Reason needs to be wedded to emotion so as to have a complete balanced personality capable of meeting the challenges ahead. Reason alone is apt to undermine the issue of sacrifice and precipitate a cowardly surrender because any rational consideration of power would privilege the Zionist side. Likewise, any anchorage of the cause in emotional discourse overlooking the hardships on the horizon may culminate in self-deception. The

union is therefore mandatory to ensure the longevity of sacrifice and extend its scope beyond the parochial economy of reason/unreason polarity.

The journey towards a higher level of sacrifice starts through saving Salwa from the clutches of arranged marriage. Yousif introduces himself as a social reformer. He strongly calls into question some institutional forms of knowledge and widely shared beliefs that legitimate commonsense truths. Hegemony is not restricted to the oppressive power of the colonizer, but goes beyond to include those philosophemes[10] that tighten the grip on personal freedom. Salwa is portrayed to be submissive to her parents' will before Yousif intervenes intrepidly to help her gain her emancipation and consequently regain a voice. Yousif seems to argue that resistance is a bottom-up process. It is a prerequisite to set people free from the prison house of tradition before embarking upon the grand project of unsettling the colonial power technologies. That's why Salwa has to be liberated from a relationship which does not appeal to her:

> Walking briskly, Yousif was as purposeful as a crusader on behalf of all the mismatched couples in Ardallah. All the bright, beautiful, young women who had had to marry their cousins - simply because they were cousins. The unhappy girls who had been forced to marry old men - simply because they were rich. The wives who suffered in silence - simply because they were incompatible with their husbands. He could think of Amal Shalhoub who loved to write poetry but was married to a brute - gluttonous, drunken and foul-mouthed. He could think of Ghada Antar forced to marry at the point of a gun someone thirty years her senior and to bear five children before she was twenty-five.(330)

Yousif apparently believes that any act of resistance presupposes a serious treatment of the myriad social ills that are rampant and consequently converted into natural truths. He seems to obliquely raise the issue of ignorance and illiteracy as the main hindrance of progress. He is probably preoccupied with the riddle of establishing a bulwark against the

[10] This term has been coined by Derrida to generally refer to those established normative ways of thinking that are wrongly taken for truth(Norris 7-8-9)

impending conquest when society is crippled by obscurantist and atavistic practices that make the journey towards progress such a tough experience. If the people cannot dispense with the shackles of some customs that are deep-rooted in the social nexus, how can they deal a blow to the Zionist project? Yousif positions himself as a critic of such modes of life and patterns of behavior because they have the potential to weaken anti-colonial struggle and seal the fate of Palestinians as the vanquished. Much to his chagrin, he cannot easily destabilize a whole web of structurally complicated issues integral to the social reality of Ardallah. His fervor can be interpreted as that of a young enthusiast expressing his dissatisfaction with the cultural mores that will simply exacerbate the plight of a people already mired in the murk of backwardness. Palestine, the target of colonial ambitions, is portrayed to be in dearth of enlightened human resources capable of subverting a mighty Zionist enterprise. Apparently, the confidence we have hitherto had in sacrifice as a possible strategy of resistance is undermined by Yousif's sharp critical evaluation of the overall situation within his natal space.

### 1.1.6 The catastrophe underway

Yousif's confidence in the legitimacy of their cause begins to wane now that the Palestinians are let down to face their destiny on their own. The Arab population show strong allegiance to their right of self-autonomy, but the leaders' support is reduced to mere political discourse that can hardly subvert the impending catastrophe:

> The Arab officials are engaged in a dramatic performance rather than in a serious political reaction. 'Egypt's Prime Minister, Mahmoud Nokrashy Pasha, had wanted to stay out of the war altogether. In reality the Arab regimes were rattling sabers to please the masses - but reluctant to fight. A case of a drum without sound. Or a sound without fury.(368)

Yousif, who has been revealed to vacillate between the pacifist and armed strategies against hegemony, acknowledges the inevitability of war. His predicament intensifies now that the Arab regimes sound to have betrayed the cause failing to keep their own pledges to offer strategic assistance. He obliquely brings to the fore the rhetoric of Pan-Arabism, which falls within the remit of Yassmin Zahran's narrative. Fawal's narrator seems to concur with Zahran's that the Palestinian cause is instrumentalized to serve ideological agendas. The main one, according to Yousif, is the leaders' propensity to calm down the infuriated masses who are not immune enough to the ruses of the discursive formations of political powers.

The lure of the radio is irresistible to the helpless masses. They accord discourse a special importance and elevate it to the status of 'truth'. The majority are unlike Yousif, who is liable to dismantle the essence of what his other compatriots take for granted. Throughout the narrative, he occupies different positions, which makes his identity recalcitrant to any sort of semantic or conceptual clarity. At the outset, we are familiarized with him as a staunch advocate of dialogue with the enemy therefore declaring himself an ally to his father; then he is revealed to be inclining towards Basim, who is certain that peace is not a preferable choice to the Zionist system. Now, he has little doubt about the ineluctability of a bloody battle to which the Palestinians are drawn. His thoughtful concern with discourse takes him one step forward towards becoming a political analyst.

His interest in the newspaper is meant to unravel the intricacies of discursive practices underlying print discourse. Being subjected to a passing defeat, the Israelis cannot abstain from applying for a truce, which the columnist construes as a craving for a "breathing spell." Their desire for a respite is deemed as a form of Israeli tactic to pick up the pieces so as to muster strength to score victory over the Palestinians. Seemingly, Yousif

considers these words as a narrative intended to disguise the harsh fact of an imminent appropriation of land. The ambivalence characteristic of his approach to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict acquires ascendency. War cannot be escaped, but its corollary is in favor of a so called Israel. That's why he exhorts the school principal against being misled by the illusion of gaining the upper hand in any military action.

The calamity is just around the corner. It will soon befall Ardallah according to Yousif's well-calculated reckoning. For him, Palestine is not sufficiently powerful to deal with 'the big powers' supporting the Zionist enterprise. They can handle the Jews, but they are helpless against such a tremendously unshakable alliance. He tends to corroborate evidence to back up his political analysis and disrupt people's trust in King Abdullah of Jordan, who cannot be reliable simply because the budget of his government comes from outside:

> The salaries of his soldiers, his post office clerks, his teachers, his cabinet - all these salaries come in a package of twenty-five million pounds a year. And don't forget his army. All his guns and all his ammunition come from Britain. Even the top of his officers and the head of the army himself are British... If England wants him to have a truce- and it does - then he will have a truce. As simple as that(386).

Yousif strives to expose the aporias of those his compatriots have to count on. He cannot understand how a dominated country such as Jordan can offer military support to Palestine. If the Zionist state is the construction of Britain and London puts Jordan under control at various levels, how can the Palestinian masses naively depend on King Abdullah? Yousif seems unwilling to accept this simple-minded analysis and subverts the claim of an exterior Arab support. There is an aura of disenchantment around his discourse analysis which is made a bit nebulous by his ambivalent stand. Following this reasonable political construal, he once again succumbs to the rhetoric of Pan-Arabism.

The specter of defeat is looming on the horizon and the shadows of war are hovering over the local space. Yousif is almost certain that Palestine is doomed but he departs from a rational analysis to get immersed, though fleetingly, in the preposterous ideology of Arab resurrection. Yousif in all probability is aware of the illusive rationale of this myth, but Palestinians occasionally adhere to it in order to ward off the emotional impact of breaking ties with their native background. His confidence in a possible Arab unity in the future(377) reveals that Palestinians, left to themselves, will not be able to overcome the repercussions of the *nakba*(catastrophe). This view appeals to the principal, whom Yousif has just berated for being less realistic. He extols the young schoolboy for concurring that Arabs have the potential to form a union; however, he admits, appropriating Yousif's former position, that they are now 'whistling in the wind'(ibid).

The characters, employing disparate discursive accounts of occupation, unanimously agree that the catastrophe is inevitable. Resistance is compulsory before the ordeal of exile occurs. The fictional figures are gradually coming to realize that the Arab regimes are mere pawns on the chessboard of power structures and the mediated discourse refers to nothing outside itself. Through interpersonal communication, they are becoming conscious of what the future has in store for them. They are aware that glory is not within reach for the time being, but they mustn't lay down their arms. In a less formal exchange between Yousif and Ustaaz Saadeh, the teacher notes that they will embark upon some sort of anti-colonial struggle that may have long term effects. Ustaaz underscores the value of education[11] as a key to a possible victory. Fighting the aggressive colonial power cannot be solely achieved by possessing weapons, but also by having highly-educated individuals.

[11] "Like all dispossessed people, the Palestinians were forced to live by their abilities. They turned themselves into one of the best educated peoples in the Middle East, with the highest literacy rate in the Arab World and more university students than Israel has."(Hourani x-xi)

The teacher is pertinent to note the following:

> Oh I am sure we're going to put up a resistance of some sort. But such things could go for years. You need to get your education first. Then you can come back and fight the Zionists with your brain - not your muscle. Not your gun. That's how they fought us and that's how they're still fighting us. By using their brains.( 315)

Resistance is the only option left to address the colonization. Now that dispossession and the consequent displacement are inescapable, it is incumbent on the population to make future plans to engage in efficient acts of resistance. What has been hitherto ignored by the majority of the characters is gathering significance now that the Palestinians will be expelled out of their lands. The value attached to education by Yousif and his father is underlined by the teacher, who insists that their country is desperately in short of knowledgeable individuals who can pose a threat to the Israeli brains. The teacher's discourse is likely to surprise the ordinary reader who is wont to associating triumph in any military confrontation with how much sophisticated weapons one side owns. He tries to deconstruct this axiomatic formulation by considering an often underplayed means of resistance, which is education. It seems that the experience of exile should be turned into a journey towards empowerment since the present situation of Palestinians cannot set up a bulwark against a humiliating defeat. The social reform Yousif has started will have to be suspended only to be resumed when the Palestinians are mature enough to fulfill the colossal project of emancipation.

The catastrophe has become palpable when sheer blood is shed on the surface of Ardallah: " the number of documented massacres perpetrated by Zionists and Israeli forces against Palestinians during the 1948 War is much larger and more important than previously thought"(Jawad 60). Ironically, the first character to meet his doom is the doctor, who has always been a staunch upholder of peaceful negotiations. The fact that he is hai-

led as the first martyr deconstructs the accusations leveled at him by the masses as well as the possibility of peace talks with the Zionist power. When he rushes to the battleground to dress Bassim's wounds, he discounts any doubt about his patriotic predilections and consolidates Basim's firm conviction that the fate of Palestinians cannot be altered by endorsing anti-war strategies within the contours of Ardallah.

The disastrous shadows of domination impinge on space. The cultural life of Ardallah runs the risk of dislocation. The Zionists set out to put out of joint familiar codes and symbols and impose their own on a landscape that has so long born the marks of Palestinian religious identity: a helpless old fisherman breaks the news of the local space undergoing a strange metamorphosis. He can behold a 'Zionist flag flying 'on top of Hassan Bey Mosque'. 'He lowered his head in shame and clutched it with both hands'(316). At this stage, the humble defeat is unavoidable and the spacious land is becoming substantially claustrophobic:

> Men buzzed like bees in a jar. They caucused here and there and spoke of one thing - Jaffa. They seemed to make a sharp distinction between Jaffa and Haifa. Haifa, they rationalized had had a sizeable Jewish majority; Jaffa on the other hand, was close to one hundred per cent Arab. Even the UN had parceled it to the Arabs. Jaffa's fall to the enemy meant only one thing: the Zionists were grabbing more than they had been allotted. They were seizing all they could before the Arab armies arrived. Yousif could imagine how Salwa would feel if she were to hear all of this.(316)

The excruciating agony that has hitherto remained quiescent in the character's depth begins to find expression making self-deception untenable in a new socio-political environment. The narrator's perception of people's reaction leaves little doubt about how critical the current situation is. The inefficient uprising is underlined when people are likened to 'bees' enclosed in a jar. They seem to lose direction and their dispersal within the local space foretells the impending dispersion(*shatat*) that will subsequently follow.

The Zionist territorial expansion simply reflects that the native populations will have their land expropriated. Becoming aware of the futility of a counterattack, the narrator raises again the issue of Arabism as the only possible redeeming feature of the present humiliation.

Inflicting all sorts of pain on people falls within the province of the colonial economy, which has also a remarkable potential to flatten the social space. This is echoed in Dr. Afifi's vociferous claim: '. . . My God, the rich and the poor are in the same boat nowadays'(ibid 317). For those at the apex of the social hierarchy, like Afifi, the catastrophe is not merely losing their homes, but also their social distinctiveness. This is what makes the invasion more detrimental to their socio-economic identity than that of the wretched poor who have always been dominated by the dictates of a stratified society. After all, a stone cutter and a doctor cannot lead the same life even when Zionists are still away.

The ordeal of having to leave one's land under the muzzle of a gun is a bitter experience of loss and disappointment. The will of a people cannot endure the military might of the colonial machine. The atrocities inflicted on them and their private possessions indicate that this illegitimate enterprise is intent on establishing a fiefdom in a land where the history of the natives has been written and is now undergoing a process of erasure. All sorts of violence are perpetrated upon a frail crippled society. Seizing the land occurs in tandem with violating people's sense of humanity. Home as a space of warmth, affection and love has become a space liable to be violated with extreme crassness and impudence. Hiyam is one of the characters to bear the scars of occupation in her peripatetic displacements:

> In the living room, the hawk-nosed soldier put his helmet on the round table and threw Hiyam on the sofa, pushing her clothes above her waist. Hiyam tried to cover herself and flee, but the Zionist soldiers again empowered her. Yousif heard the metallic tear of a zipper. He saw him force Hiyam's panties off and plunge himself between her naked thighs.(397)

All the ethics of human encounters are simply transgressed in this act of sexual violence. It is not enough for the villain to rape a domestic location; he also sees fit to satisfy his animalistic desires humiliating a wife in front of her husband. The catastrophe tightens its grip on the residents of Ardallah when their homes are susceptible to the injunctions of the colonial institution; when they turn into a place incapable of offering shelter and protection to their dwellers. The house is no longer a space where people can relish personal privacy and secrecy. It is an alien milieu wherein safety retreats and the man's plight is exacerbated. The Zionists have a craving to exercise unprecedented cruelty on the colonized subjects; they have a penchant for surpassing the atrocities of the previous colonial powers. Deprived of their possessions and, still worse, of their dignity and reputation, these wretched people of the earth are coerced to bid a permanent farewell to their land at gunpoint.

## 1.2 Space in Exile

### 1.2.1 The exodus

Vanquished, the Palestinians are confronted with a serious dilemmatic situation. They have to choose survival or death. The former option means the possibility of starting a new life elsewhere and setting up a novel future project and the latter entails being buried alongside the martyrs who have fallen in action. When they are disillusioned by the outcome of armed resistance, they are compelled to succumb to the brutal force of Israeli usurpers, whose indiscriminate attacks lead the population into exile; each carrying painful memories or the residual dregs of a dream that cannot be accomplished in the homeland where Israel gets the upper hand "over more than four-fifths of historic Palestine"(Migdal

xvii):

> Yousif and his wife and mother moved on command. But at the wrought-iron gate Yousif turned and looked back. The house, the little villa, loomed before his eyes. The bacchanal rang in Yousif's ears. The food, the drinks, the chanting . . . Where was Isaac, still alive when the house was being built? Salwa shining like a Golden star in her yellow dress? Amine's father, who supervised the chiseling of every stone? How many cups of coffee had Fatima served the stonecutters who had toiled and sweated in the sun for months on end.(399)

Departure under coercive intimidation has set Yousif on a soothing reverie. He juxtaposes the past, when he was closely tied to Ardallah, to the present when he is forced to break contact with it. The prospect of exulting in a family life under the roof of the newly-built villa is doomed to remain far from being fulfilled. How ironic it is to complete the building in tandem with the death of its proprietor and the exile of his son! Establishing himself on the cusp between two worlds, he can't help relating to the former and shuddering at the mere idea of exile he, his family and his friends are being driven into. The unison that has characterized the days of yore has metamorphosed to a sense of disintegration. The delicacies will no longer be savored under the roof of the Jamils' villa which will soon fall prey to the Israeli incursions. Isaac, the childhood companion, has been shot dead and will never be part of the intimate group. The disarray brought about by the colonial machine entails that Salwa is prone to lose her usual luster and Amine's father, the stonecutter, will miss the sweltering sun of home.

Under the weight of extreme terror, the natives have become strangers within the contours of the ancestral land. The violent machine of occupation unwillingly directs them away from Ardallah towards Abdullah, king of Jordan. The conditions surrounding the journey into exile are divested of the least ethic of responsibility. Family members and relatives are separated; they have to undergo the perilous odyssey in absence of their loved

ones.(407). This is not a pre-planned event where the necessary arrangements are made; this is a cruel mandatory expulsion from home. The potential exile seems to prioritize life over family and private possessions. The commotion created by the Israeli gun gives him/her no time to look for his/her family members. The first palpable allusion to the ordeal of exodus is made by Salwa, who has no doubt that they are being herded out of their land. Yousif confirms her contention about the Israeli intention to empty the country of its indigenous Arab population(408).

The exodus is made such a hellish experience by the excruciating agony the exiles have to go through. The overnight change in their identity- from native inhabitants of Ardallah to homeless exiles - makes their suffering expected, especially because they are evacuated without being allowed to take anything with them. They are dispossessed and displaced. The atrocities inflicted upon the people are such that Israel can be rated among unique colonial authorities. The encounter is not merely confined to the dominator/dominated dyad; it rather goes beyond to physically dislocate the natives to make space blank for occupation: "Ali, the watermelon vendor was carrying his fragile eighty-year old father on his back. Yousif admired the son but wondered how long he could keep it up"(408). Being thrown outside one's home brings about unspeakable horror as it is incarnated in the predicament of the individuals that make up the procession. Once again Fawal's tone is in tune with that of Said, who is keen on locating the text in the world:

> Reading historiographers like Hayden White or the philosopher Richard Rorty, one finds oneself remarking that only minds so untroubled by and free of the immediate experience of the turbulence of war, ethnic cleansing, forced migration, and unhappy dislocation can formulate such theories as theirs(Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* xxi)

The scrupulous depiction of the human catastrophe in Ardallah gives credence to the

power of language to reflect the world[12] that lies outside its confines. In this case it has a spectacular power to represent the old, the women and children indiscriminately fighting for survival under the tyranny of the colonizer.

The rough trajectory of the exodus impinges further on the powerless exile. The multitude of marchers is less concerned about each other; every one's experience is a struggle for survival. The sense of unity that has formerly characterized life in Ardallah is simply made meaningless in this particularly hostile environment. The ragged space the exiles are compelled to tread without provisions has made them, understandably enough, self-centered and egoistic. All the efforts are directed towards how to bring to a close this exodus; no one has the power to mention the idea of resisting occupation; people unanimously concentrate on how to come out of this tragic odyssey alive:

> ... A howl split the air. Yousif and Salwa looked up. A man had fallen. They saw him tumbling in mid-air, his death cry reverberating in silence. . . The march went on. One more casualty, Yousif thought worthy only of a look and, perhaps, a silent prayer. There would be more deaths - many more. He only wished he had a drop of water to wet his tongue. Only a drop. " Drink your urine, " an old rugged farmer told him. "But try not to piss too much. Save it for the road. It's a long stretch'.( 410)

Scattered like seeds, the families are brought apart. Ironically, the wings of unison are clipped within the precincts of the natal background. The would-be exiles are too preoccupied with their life to cater for family members. They are motivated by expectations for reunion once the storm of terror abates.

The specter of death turns out to be a familiar incident depriving the exiles of any sense of pity and fortifying their position against the rough conditions of the coercive

[12] In this regard Merleau Ponty strikes Said as being realistic in « understanding the predicament of a reality without absolutes, of language as a synthesis of constantly experienced moments, and of mind as incarnated irremediably in things, where despite all our efforts, 'we never see our ideas or freedom face to face' »(Said xxi)

evacuation. The inconveniences of the exilic experience interfere with the casualties' posthumous status. No funeral rituals take place and no burial celebrations are alluded to in the narrative of human frailty and sorrow. The Palestinian autochthonous people are banished to a neutral and uniform world of exclusion; they are left for themselves to grapple laboriously with the worst inclemency that could befall a human being. The exilic experience of death is rendered in terms laden with indifference and apathy simply because the landscape is much of an alien to a wretched group who has been wont to copious serenity and warmth issued from a bountiful space of Ardallah. The deadly wail of sorrow does not take long to die out to give way to silence to reign over the whole tragic atmosphere undermining the intensity of bereavement that is far surpassed by the exiles' assiduous hankering for survival.

This no man's land that lies in midway between home and the unknown tightens its grip on the sorrowful evacuees whose will for survival remains somehow unshakable. They seem determined to reach out for a new distant space where they will hopefully settle down only to reflect upon their plight and muse on the dialectics. Resistance has to start here and develop once they are capable of mustering overall strength to rethink the dynamics of power relations. The early stumbling block they have to surmount is the rigidity of the environment and the climate they are fated to deal with. Their attempts to eschew the threatening interference of death can be construed as a token of resistance. One of the ways to cast the terrorizing death into oblivion is through silence.

Time and energy are two valuable assets that need to be saved if death encroachment is to be deferred. That's why the farmer's suggestion that a dehydrated man should loosen his tongue with some of his urine and leave some for the future is not to be understood within the context of humour. This is part of a realistic episode where the exile's fight for

life should be hailed as one of the preliminary chapters of counter-hegemony.

The mysteries enveloping the exodus are subsequently demystified when the number of the imminent exiles is mentioned for the first time and the families are striving hard to reunite in spite of the uneven trajectory of the deplorable march. The thousands of marchers are compelled to trudge along the unfamiliar roads slowly negotiating their way towards a space where the sound of the enemy's bullets is no longer heard. This coercive break with the homeland does not, however, precipitate the surrender of the native Palestinians. Their ordeal can be pertinently set against the backdrop of Ernesto Laclau's remark:

> If a stone is broken when it clashes with another stone, it would be absurd to say that the second stone negates the identity of the first - on the contrary, being broken in certain circumstances expresses the identity of the stone as much as remaining unaltered if the circumstances are different.(203)

These displaced marchers, who are stepped out of place, stoically undergo the ordeal of dislocation to reach their fated destination safe and sound so as to declare their triumph over death and face up to the challenges of futurity.

Deracinated from the native soil, the members of the exodus leave behind the physical aspects of the past preserving the painful memories of invasion so as to impart meaning to their existence away from home. This break with the past is restricted to the calamity of deserting the space of Ardallah, which is nonetheless ever present in every exile's mind's eye. The present of unspeakable horror cannot be tolerated unless the memories of loss legitimate the exodus and set the colonized subject to planning a future life in a remote geographical landscape. To compensate for their humiliating predicament, Salwa and Yousif disclose an air of determination to give their life a fresh impetus against all odds and misfortunes. A newly-wed couple seldom centers their discourse on matters other

than personal projects; this is not the case with Salwa who goes beyond such a parochial transaction and targets a bigger and nobler enterprise. She seems fully committed to her cause and wants her husband to seal her commitment with a promise to fight Zionists until victory is accomplished(419).

This imposed journey should not be construed as a sign of defeat, or thus the marchers seem to believe. Even if death continues to take its toll on the frail and the old who cannot resist the gruesome conditions, there is an overall tendency to carry on the march in quest of some safe haven. Part of the drama of this inexorable wrestle with death is voiced in these terms:

> ...He [Yousif] saw an old man- bearded, shriveled. He tapped his cane, begging his son, the watermelon vendor, not to abandon him. Earlier Yousif had seen the son carrying his fragile eighty-year-old father on his back. But after thirty or forty miles going up and down mountains, even the bag of bones must have felt heavy. Yousif watched in disbelief. He saw the old man's legs fail him. He saw him falter and fall, cutting himself on the forehead.(423)

Minimizing the cost of suffering, bringing death into abeyance seems to be the only goal within reach of the marchers. When the old man succumbs to death and his son owns to his inability to endure carrying him on his back, we come to realize how life still matters for a people afflicted by all sorts of atrocities. The helpless old man has to be let down to die on the desert not because the son is in dearth of that tender affection that ties a child to his father, but because reason dictates that the man, who still clings to survival, is destined to meet his doom in a remote territory. The son laments what has to become of his father and points out that his decision to leave him behind should not be branded as an irresponsible act. Death should not be given the opportunity to seize on both of them. If the father is teetering on the verge of collapse, the son sees fit to pick up the pieces lest he collapse next to his father. These despicable acts of humiliation and denigration

evoke the idea that the imperial epistemic practices of the Western culture are grounded on the brazen dichotomy of worthy( in this caes Jewish) and unworthy[13]( or Palestinian) victims(Chomsky xiii). The young man reasons his act addressing his father:

> “I have young children to take care of”, the son argued, visibly sunken. “You are my responsibility and they are my responsibility. What am I to do? I can’t carry you on my back all the way to Jericho. We’d both die and what will that do to the rest of the family? Who’s going to take care of the little ones? And Allah isamihni. May God forgive me.”(ibid)

Death is not feared, but responsibility is not abnegated. The man could sacrifice his life for that of his father if it were not for his concern for the future of his children. The symbolic implication of this claim is highlighted by the narrator who seems to link the tragedy of the present to the future of Palestinian posterity. The character delineated in this context has to find a way out of this dilemma and let his father down to die in silence not because he can’t stand the pain of death by his side, but because he craves for survival to confront the future requirements. Saving the children means taking into account the future of a crippled country suffering under the yoke of occupation. If it is appropriate to ascribe a sense of victory to the exodus, it would be accounted for within the framework of the marchers’ fervor to remain alive for the coming times. The cost of displacement is dire and the marchers’ efforts to reduce it to a minimum is what still imparts a paucity of meaning to the politics of dislocation.

Yousif, who is not so far to hear this exchange, has a wider and all-embracing approach to the anti-colonial struggle. Solidarity seems to lie in the core of his project. The tragic event of a dying old man is simply unpalatable to a young boy who often sees the strength

[13] The Israeli colonization is typically notorious for its practices of dehumanizing and racializing the Palestinian other : « Ben Dahan, a rabbi and a member of the right-wing Jewish home party, had previously called Palestinians « sub-human, » and said that « even homosexual Jews are superior to non-Jews »(Lentin, *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism* 3)

of his fellow compatriots in their unity. They cannot denounce the cruelty of being dispossessed and displaced while accepting the demise of a helpless old man in the course of a humble odyssey. That's why Yousif does not conceal his antipathy for leaving behind a frail emaciated man to perish in the wilderness. Such tragic events verily "shape and make explicit the unique and continuing character of the catastrophe"(D. Mattar 7). As such, the protagonist conceives of resistance as a practice that must start at grass-roots level. He seems to argue that sapping the Zionist extermination machine is next to impossible if they can't dispense with their egoistic whims and assist each other to erect a bulwark against the intrusion of death.

Yousif's noble ideas, however, find little appeal in the course of this despicable march. Death is simply unavoidable in such cases and the fight for survival has to go on. Not all the marchers have to comply with the cost of the rugged conditions of the road to exile. The only motivating force is seemingly the potential exile's desire to achieve the status of exile. Life is so precious at these moments that it is worth drinking one's urine to ward off death.

Self-restraint has limits in these traumatic experiences; there comes a time when the former resolution to go on in spite of the excessive turmoil of the journey is impaired by the interfering circumstances. Yousif, who has hitherto been resistant to thirst, is compelled to follow in the steps of the marchers and quench its fire with a mouthful of his urine. Being humble is a matter of fact when the callous mountains stand in the way of the dislocated precluding them from the comfort home is capable of offering. Being too frail to initiate a dialogue that expectedly takes place among ordinary wayfarers, Yousif has to respond to the insistent inner call and obey to let us know how undignified he turns out to be: "Yousif was too dehydrated and too foggy to question the inner voice. He veered

off the beaten path, stood behind a pile of stones and forced himself to leak a few drops. He collected them in the palm of his hand as if they were the elixir of life”(425).

This demeaning act of surrender to thirst is intended to defer the inexorable threat of death that repeatedly declares itself triumphant in the open space of the wilderness. The symbolic implication of this repulsive encounter in which many a marcher has lost his life is lent credence in the concluding moments of the narrative. This is because the only chance left for these displaced Palestinians to ponder the possibility of resistance is to remain alive and overcome the colluding force of the alien geographical landscape. Part of human nature, which is concomitantly a token of human frailty, is a return to a greater power in moments when a person is drawn towards the brink of his end. Yousif, who has been depicted outside the confines of religion, strives to account for his plight through the prism of this power. His blasphemous overtones further entrench the weakness of an outspoken teenager fervently defending his country in the acute absence of means of defense.

As he sees it, providence is held accountable for the wrath that has befallen his compatriots. God is held accountable for the protection of space. Free will, as it is conceptualized by Jean Paul Sartre, has deserted the people, who can’t live according to facticity and immersed in bad faith; a power greater than that of ordinary citizens of Ardallah is entrusted with safeguarding the natal background. This contention merely accentuates people’s weakness in front of the Israeli military might. This instance of blasphemous reaction reveals Yousif beyond the contours of a realistic rendering of the repressive situation in which his compatriots are incarcerated. Since humiliation turns out to be their lot, they strive to lessen its psychological impact by blaming their plight on the superior power of God. God, who has saved Jesus and uplifted him, cannot incur his wrath on the cruel

usurpers of the motherland(434).

At this critical moment of the journey when the voyagers reach a point of no return, Yousif's mind is portrayed to be in excessive turmoil reflecting the turbulence of the perilous march. The confusion generated by the humble exodus impairs his faculty of reasoning and precipitates his descent into the dungeon of blaspheme.

### 1.2.2 The arrival

The survivors have covered the rugged mountains on foot; those who can't subsist are abandoned to rotten in the open air away from the home village. Yousif is revealed in the interior of a car; he is no longer preoccupied with the hazardous landscape but rather with the nostalgic pangs of being displaced from home. The car is moving forward and Yousif is obsessed with memories of yore:

> His homeland was receding in the distance. Only a few minutes gone, and he was already feeling nostalgic. Gone was Palestine with its oranges and olives and balmy weather. Gone were the golden summer nights in Ardallah. Gone were the richly green thickets and leafy orchards of Jericho. Gone were the smells of mango and guava and the bitter taste of endive salad. His eyes grew misty. And in his heart he could feel a growing hate.(437)

Now that the body relishes a transitory period of rest in the car, the psyche is loosened to give vent to nostalgic sensations that serve to break Yousif's kinship with the present and ties him to the past. Home is out of reach and all that remains intact is Yousif's private experiences within the native space. Because his encounter with the homeland cannot possibly be achieved physically, he is compelled to fall back on the power of the senses to establish communion with differing elements of space. For Said Palestine means a lot to its citizens: "what we need to inform the world is how it meant certain concrete things to us, things of which we collectively bear the living traces"( Quoted by Lentin

2). Yousif is initially ushered back into the ancestral land by dint of sight. This sense, which is activated by the mind's eye, is meant to introduce us to a space awash with green vegetation – the antithesis of the barren desert wherein he is trapped. Another reminder of home is smell. The olfactory organs that were animated by a gamut of scents exuded by a variety of local plants are seemingly disrupted by the new interfering circumstances.

The intrinsic and extrinsic factors of stimulation gather momentum at this juncture. The protagonist is stimulated by inner thoughts and desires and at the same time by things that constitute the outside world. Both perception as a fleeting experience and memory as long-lasting engraved traces come into play here(Mikics 106). In this regard Sigmund Freud maintains that "internal cases of stimulus depend on memory, whereas external cases depend on perception. By its nature, perception remains ephemeral and ever changing. Memory, by contrast, persists, both troubling and sustaining us"(ibid). The traumatic encounter with the world of exile brings perception to a temporary halt to allow memory to delve into scenarios that lie hidden in the inner recesses of the individuals' minds. The act of displacement-cum-transformation has brought about a dramatic change in Yousif's identity. Yousif, who used to advocate cultural dialogue and peaceful negotiations is steadily gravitating towards resentment.

Feelings of anxiety and unrest that mark any experience of mobility are highlighted by Fawal. The unfamiliar landscape is anathema to Yousif, who is transported into the exotic background that has little bearing on the familiar geography of home. Relocating to a new place is appalling to the characters who are deracinated from the local space:

> Spindly palm trees were scattered in the wide desert, like pillars of a lost civilization. Half an hour later, unfamiliar mountains hugged the road on both sides. Makram pushed on the gas. Yousif felt the heat wave rushing against his face through the open window(436).

The symbolic connotation of the enclosed space wherein Yousif and Makram are revealed is meant to emphasize the traumatic ordeal of becoming an exile. All the traces that constitute space serve to exacerbate the predicament of those dislocated figures. Yousif has previously fetishized the homeland contending that the spatial contours of Ardallah make a difference. In the same vein, the warmth is not actually generated from inside where Makram puts on the gas, but rather from the exterior where the former existence emits a gust of warm air from home. This exquisitely woven passage is intended to juxtapose the repulsive conditions of exilic life with the cozy atmosphere that the characters are coerced into leaving behind: "these reconstructed images provide the group [of exiles] with an account of its origin and development and thus allow it to develop a historical identity"(Litvak 1). To make amends for the loss of being displaced and allay its consequent anxiety, the characters see no other alternative to unleashing a set of memories to survive and ward off any potential bout of amnesia.

We can argue that the exilic space alone is not responsible for the predicament of the arrivals. Other factors, besides the arid landscape, may contribute to shaping the mental life of Yousif and his compatriots: "Yousif was amazed how little he knew about trans-Jordan, and how little contact existed between the people of these two neighboring states. . . "(ibid). The geographical proximity does little to alleviate his plight simply because the Jordanian and Palestinian people are imagined communities that are foreign to each other. The fact that they are defined by the single term 'Arab' does little to fortify the bond of communication among the citizens of both lands. Devoured by the desert where they become anonymous, the Jamil family are no longer distinguished by class, belonging and birth. They are confined within the claustrophobic space of exile wherein they are consumed by bouts of depression depending on memories as the only available

tranquilizer. Collective memories are therefore a prerequisite for unity as “suffering in common unifies more than joy does. Where national memories are concerned, griefs are more of value than triumphs for they impose duties, and require a common effort”(Renan 53).

The traumatized characters find themselves undesirable outcasts in a land that bears no identifying mark of the individual subjectivity. Their agency is jeopardized by dislocation and the myth of return is regarded as a telos to lessen the shock associated with life in exile. Trauma involves the permanent existence of a somber strange presence within the self, putting our understanding of who we are into disarray(Mikics 106). Yasmin breaks down in response to the alien conditions she cannot get rid of. She becomes too homesick to fit in the exilic environment where she is cast into oblivion:

> As soon as Yousif shut the door, Yasmin began to cry. She wailed for the first time since she had left Ardallah. Yousif watched her walk in a daze around the room, touch the white-washed walls with her fingertips, and bang her fist in agony. He heard her pray for the safety of Salwa and her family, her own parents, her sister Widad and her husband and children. He saw her put her forehead against the wall and cry fitfully.(440)

The suffocating room where Yousif’s mother is pictured in this dramatic scene is probably intent on juxtaposing the exilic situation to that of the homeland. Unable to account for what has become of her, Yasmin gives in to tears. Losing herself on the threshold of sleep and wakefulness or by implication occupying the rim between life and death, she makes recourse to touch as a sense whereby she accentuates her feeling of loss and despair. The coarse white wall is unlike the comfort the conquered villa is able to offer. The tranquility and balmy atmosphere peculiar to her former existence in Ardallah have been engulfed by the agony of dispersion. The landscape is made more unfamiliar by the family members that have not turned up yet. Her cries are utilized as a preamble of a series of memories

still to come.

Salwa, the embodiment of Palestine, stands out as the allegory of frustration at times and hope at others. Her disappearance has perturbed and embittered Yousif and set him on action to pay tribute to a land that has once bestowed sheer respect and serenity on him and his compatriots. He takes it upon himself to retrieve the lost family members and relatives. It is incumbent on him to set out on the purposeful journey of recovering Salwa since the project of liberation and emancipation is inextricably bound up with finding her alive.

At this last stage of the narrative, he seriously considers a variety of options which make the quest rather challenging. Initially, he is displayed to be at a loss for what trend to take. The return of Salwa is a matter of life and death, but what measures to adopt remains a riddle that needs to be figured out if the enterprise is not to be a fiasco. It seems Yousif has to embark upon a philosophical enquiry before setting himself to the laborious task of bringing back Salwa to their midst:

> Which course should he follow? Should he become a politician and lobby on behalf of his people around the capitals of the world? Perhaps he could carry the fight all the way to the United Nations. Did the outside world know what had happened to the Palestinians? Or should he become a writer, a filmmaker a Journalist and tell the world how they were uprooted and forced into the wilderness? For Yousif the memory of that journey is indelible. The good people around the globe should know about it. They would sympathize, they would understand.(441)

This passage palpably purports the confusion that has claimed Yousif while musing over the possibility of making his endeavor a successful project. The alternatives under study are in short of consistency and reveal Yousif more of a zealot who needs to negotiate his way towards philosophical and political maturity. Be that as it may, the questions commonly bear signs of extending the Palestinian cause beyond the narrow scope wherein the

struggle between the occupied and the occupier is contained. He considers the possibility of becoming a policy maker so as to make the moans of ordinary Palestinians heard all over the world. However, being represented by Fawal as a dreamer he soon shifts his attention to becoming a writer so as to spread the agony of the displaced Palestinians to distant corners of the globe. These meanderings are finally settled by Yousif's conviction in the legitimacy of his cause and the necessity of attracting the commiserations of the outside world.

These series of questions beget others when Yousif begins to veer towards maturity. He calls into question the signifying elements of the preliminary queries. Making their cause known at the international level is not certainly the work of a simple individual of Yousif's caliber. That's why the previous questions are superseded by more serious reflections:

> But to what end? Would they help him recover Ardallah? Would they send him home again? Not likely. What then must he do? It was a Herculean task that required the task of governments. Would people listen to him? Would his classmates go along with his plans? What plans? Where would the money come from?(442)

This set of queries tend to lay emphasis on critical reasoning trying to subvert the discursive litany which informs the aforementioned questions. Yousif begins to consider the weaknesses of his preliminary enthusiasm and the various hurdles that may come his way. He is fully conscious of the enormity of the task, which requires concerted efforts to embark upon. This is not an individual obligation; it is the work of governments. Hatching up plans is compulsory for the sake of efficient acts of resistance, but he is skeptical about unanimous adherence to such plans and more important about the sources of funding. These obstacles that present themselves in the final moments of Fawal's narrative constitute problematic issues that are sufficiently and artistically addressed in *The Disinherited,* whose plot is organized around a search for those scattered in the world of exile, especially

Salwa. Her return, alongside other family members, is crucial for Yousif to pause for a moment and reflect upon the project of anti-colonial struggle.

# Chapter 2

# The Psychology of Exile in Fawal's *On the Hills of God* and *The Disinherited*

## 2.1 A quest for selfhood

The conditions surrounding the search for Salwa are presented to be lamentable. The substantially claustrophobic space wherein the whole family is crammed in the land of Amman does not appeal to a once middle class Yousif and his mother. The roomy villa of Ardallah is sharply contrasted with a three-room building where crowds of exiles are congested. The narrow streets of Amman are thronged by refugees from disparate cultural backgrounds making movement difficult and undesirable(9). The awe-inspiring exotic geography that usually attracts a tourist has an aura of repulsion around it for those forced into exile.

The agony of being uprooted keeps gnawing at the heart of the displaced. As the Palestinian scholar Edward Said aptly put it in 1988, Yousif is one of the deracinated to bear the brunt of the Isreali colonization, which is legitimized by the Western corrupted phraseology and discursive hegemony. He is confronted with two difficulties at once. He has been ejected from home and lost Salwa, the mainstay of his project and the catalyst that has the potential to propel the wheel of resistance forward. Her disappearance impinges on the prospect of engaging into making future plans and the idea of return cannot be considered in her absence. Salwa is what confers energy on the otherwise inertia and listlessness inherent in the stagnation characteristic of life in exile:

> Salwa was on Yousif's mind the moment he opened his eyes. As if having haunted him in a dream were not painful enough. As if having turned the dream into a recurring nightmare were an ordeal he could tolerate. There she was again slipping in and out and reasserting her presence in his life as if he needed a reminder of the agony of their forced separation. Wasn't life in exile already hell.(9)

Allegorically, Salwa is a flesh and blood character that stands for the lost home of Pale-

stine. When Yousif is wedded to her, he is revealed to be more committed to the cause than ever before. Her presence beside him is essential to give a fresh impetus to the great enterprise of fighting the Zionist aggression and of rethinking the tactics involved in such a fight. It is at this juncture that perception, in Freudian terms, occupies the foreground of his strategies. Memory is soothing and it is accorded the status of elixir of life on many occasions, but for the time being the absence of Salwa is worth putting aside the intruding memories and attending to the preliminary task of bringing her back.

The narrator's allusion to sight in this context is at variance with the way it has been dramatized when Yousif is afflicted by the hazardous journey from Ardallah through the merciless desert leading to exile. The eyes are open but hollow and vacant and they can't see because the mind is occupied by the image of Salwa. The mind is given precedence over the eyes because it is tormented by the dispersion resulting from banishment. The reality of separation is rendered at all times. Salwa is ever present in his waking moments and conveyed through dreams in sleep. This omnipresence overshadows the other inconveniences of the exilic ordeal.

The narrator drifts away, though temporarily, from Yousif's ever-changing perception and takes us through space and time with the intention of highlighting the dreary circumstances weighing upon Fawal's characters. A flight to the past is meant to disengage us from the tragic quest for Salwa and to reminisce us of the sense of unison and togetherness characteristic of life in Ardallah. An account of the relationship that has formerly been forged between a Muslim, a Jew and a Christian is brought up once more to place home in immediate juxtaposition with exile. A reference to politics is significant in this regard. The narrator's mention of the notorious November 29, 1947, 'when the United Nations passed a resolution to partition Palestine' is an attempt to lay the blame of the boys'

destiny on the machinations of politically biased decisions. In this regard, the Palestinian scholar Edward Said aptly puts:

> It is by no means an exaggeration to say that the establishment of Israel as a state in 1948 occurred partly because the Zionists acquired control of most of the territory of Palestine, and partly because they had already won the political battle for Palestine in the international world in which ideas, representations, rhetoric and images were at issue.(Khalidi 9)

The turbulence created by the Zionist-led onslaught has altered people's situation and brought their dreams to an end. Land as a palimpsest laden with marks and codes of cultural identity suffers enormously at the hands of the barbarous colonizers whose primary mission is to send people out and erase their history. Most of the characters are fully aware that they are compelled to face an unbalanced battle whose outcome has been decided in advance. Banished from their land, the wretched Palestinians recognize the requisite task of surviving the lethal march across the arid zone. Once they embark upon the merciless voyage, the question of identity gathers momentum. They know that they can belong nowhere except Ardallah. This unflinching belief in the legitimacy of their cause is what makes them tenaciously cling to life so as not to capitulate to death seizures. Those who are destined to perish in the wilderness are utilized as a concrete witness of the atrocities of the repressive colonial system. The fact that they are not buried does not merely reflect the hostility of the exodus, but also the living brutality of its authors. The character's tendency to guard against death can be construed against the backdrop of a craving to reach the exilic landscape and deal with the issue of the identity crisis. Fawal's approach to death may be said to be quite different from that of Ghassan Kanafani, who deems self-sacrifice as an act of venerating life itself. Anni Kanafani states her husband's reaction when a Western correspondent asked him, on the eve of his death, what death

signifies to him:

> Of course death means a lot. The important thing is to know why. Self-sacrifice, within the context of revolutionary action, is an expression of the very highest understanding of life, and the struggle to make life worthy of a human being. The love of life for a person becomes a love for the life of his people's masses, and his rejection that their life persists in being full of continuous misery, suffering and hardship. Hence, his understanding of life becomes a social virtue, capable of convincing the militant fighter that self-sacrifice is redemption of his people's life. This is a maximum expression of attachment to life.(Kilpatrick 15)

Death for the sake of dignity is celebrated. Being occupied is tantamount to bondage and therefore dying to ensure the well being of another compatriot and deal a blow to the colonial enterprise is an act of valor and intrepidity. Death, as it is conceptualized by Kanafani, is a sine qua non of pride and grandeur. Fawal's characters, on the other hand, gather courage to shun any collapse and deem it necessary to stay together so as to strengthen their position against the enemy. The dialectics of life and death recrudesce in the novel and its sequel with the pendulum swinging towards the former. The experience of exile has already disrupted people's cultural identity, and death is liable to exacerbate the situation.

Selfhood, though it has lost much of its essence due to dislocation, is still regarded as a defining feature for the novice exile. The motif of the radio recurs throughout the narrative and serves to link them to their homeland. Displayed in a lethargic mood, a number of Palestinians are attentively listening to the 9 o'clock news. They are astounded to hear that Ramallah and Jericho have fallen under 'an Israeli air raid'. 'a group of Palestinians still staggering out of their occupied villages' are also targeted(11): "this state of affairs", Esmail Nashif aptly points out, "makes the study of literary production more urgent if we wish to understand fully the intricate workings of the colonial condition in Palestine"(4). Located miles away from their country, these Palestinians are shown

to be strongly affiliated to the land they are forced to leave at gunpoint. Maintaining contact with their homeland by dint of the radio is informed by a feeling of loss that is made worse by the continuous occupation and the indiscriminate shelling of natives on the road to exile. In the wake of these tragic pieces of news, uncle Boulus has confirmed their newly-shaped identity when he contends that all his compatriots, regardless of individual differences, are becoming refugees.

Youssif bewails his fate as a refugee who has lost two big sustaining pillars, which tremendously impinges on his identity. The demise of his father before attaining the age of puberty and the disappearance of Salwa, whose presence serves to lift up his spirits, leave him in a state of confusion. He finds himself confronted with a host of inconsistent caprices, the outcome of a fragmented self. The stability that has formerly marked selfhood within the fold of Ardallah has deserted him leaving a gap that won't be filled unless Salwa makes a comeback. He falls prey to the remorse of dashed hopes and unfulfilled projects: "He wished there were a huge library for him to devour' rejoicing at 'how Salwa were there to alleviate his mental anguish"(14). The pangs of separation are such that Yousif's consistency falls apart as he keeps meandering from one point to another. This psychological state, which prevents him from standing on a firm background, makes the question of identity a deep-felt crisis that cannot be easily addressed.

Likewise, Yasmin has to taste the bitter disappointment of being transplanted in a foreign soil. From the world of exile, where she feels torn asunder, she takes refuge in a bountiful past of Ardallah. She laments her current social status as an ordinary wretched person who is no longer identified as a doctor's wife. She has become a mere homeless widow divested of former identification criteria. She is conscious that she is teetering steadily on the verge of becoming anonymous and worthless because she finds herself

with little or no affinity to the land where she is incarcerated. Nothing is left of the villa where she used to be ensconced except a host of painful and nostalgic memories. The land which has lavished a sense of overall security on her family has been confiscated and she is thrown out into Amman, where she has to grapple with the basic needs of everyday life. Hegemony and homogeny seem to govern the predicament of these helpless refugees, who have become similar across class, education and descent. At least, at these early moments of exile, the Palestinians are homogenized into a pitiful cohort relegated to the subordinated margins of humanity. The space wherein they are confined is defined in almost the same terms, and the conditions of their subsistence are not dissimilar. Obliquely, Yasmin apparently would like to ask: "is there any difference at all between a prominent doctor's wife and a simple ordinary being in the world of exile?"

Yousif broods over the metamorphosis they are coerced into experiencing and the similar circumstances of life in exile. Stripped of human dignity, the refugees are plunged into common misery and deprivation. They are all reduced to prisoners in deplorable cells of mental anguish and grief:

> A prison was a prison no matter how large. . . no matter how clean or large. He and his mother were prisoners - they who had had more than ten thousand pounds in the bank, an expanse of fertile land, a villa that was the envy of anyone who saw it, a car in the gated driveway, and jewels in under the bedroom floor. Should they not be able to pay their share of the rent, or uncle Boulus or Salman not come to their rescue, they would end up in a dismal tent in one of those miserable refugee camps.(21)

This passage narrates part of what it means to live in exile. All the refugees, in spite of minor disparities, share the common destiny of incarceration. Detained in claustrophobic enclosed spaces, they are displayed in acute dearth of property that they used to relish in the near past. The Jamil family are appalled by what has become of them in this alien

environment. Part of what imparts meaning to the self is the social position. Here they are depicted to be dispossessed of all the material objects that go into shaping their former identity. That's why they are often introduced in connection with the past. Like kanafani, Fawal elaborately mingles present and past in 'the consciousness' of his characters(13), thereby allowing the reader a chance to fathom the scale of torture exerted by the Zionist colonization[1].

To mitigate the intensity of alienation, Yousif sees fit to disentangle himself from the prison house of lethargy, and start his assiduous search for the other side of the self. The excruciating agony of embarking upon this journey of discovery contagiously afflicts all the family members who are scattered like the petals of a flower. Yousif will not rest until Salwa comes into sight. She is the one capable of planting seeds of hope in the murky landscape of Jordan: "He moved from street to street, from shop to shop, from coffee house to coffee house'(22). This journey within offers insight into Yousif's innermost psychological recesses and accentuates the trauma of a boy deprived of family and home.

Meanwhile, the events follow another course that may be thought to stand in parallel with the quest. The author turns the reader's attention to one of the early impediments of unity among the displaced. The discord generated by the initial proposal of building a school in exile testifies to the difficulty of establishing a political body. Yousif, Fawal's protagonist who is assigned the role of a spiritual leader, has his suggestion turned down by a mob of protesters. The latter adamantly insist that their only existential project

[1] The study undertaken by Robert C. Rouland and David A.Frank unfortunately fails, deliberately or not, to do justice to the plight of the Palestinian natives. In this statement the victim and the victimizer are treated on equal footings : "we identify three trajectories of Israeli and Palestinian symbol use in relation to the "other":(1) symbolic denial and vilification( which defined the reaction of both Israelis and Palestinians to the "Other" through most of this century);(2) symbolic recognition; and symbolic reconciliation"(4). The corrupted phraseology and discursive hegemony conveyed by this statement are probably meant to underestimate the inexorable conflict between Palestine and Isreal. It is impossible to talk about any advance in the diplomatic relationships when those expelled from their land are still denied the right of return(Frank 4)

is to go back home(24). The opposing party is apparently swept by a paranoiac bout since they purport that setting up an educational institution away from home is a brazen act of treason and betrayal. It is incumbent on Yousif to overcome this upheaval and put things back on track. He strives to deploy every single effort to ensure a few sources of enlightenment that will hopefully dispel the gloomy surroundings wherein they are imprisoned. His search for Salwa needs to be complemented by combating illiteracy, both of which have the power to serve the Palestinian cause.

Stepping his way towards maturity, Yousif begins to back up his plans with convincing arguments. To silence the mob, he questions the link they establish between patriotism and starting a school in exile. In this regard, he entrusts Ustaz Saadeh to edify them about the importance of education, especially for the colonized subjects, to commit himself body and soul to looking for Salwa:

> ‘Education should become our motto. Our battle cry. There is no liberty without education. No liberation without education. No resurrection, no redemption without education. Speak of it in your tents and huts, instill it in your children’s hearts and minds, sing it to your babies as you suckle them or hold them in your arms. It would be sign of folly for our enemy to think that the opening of a modest school is a signal that we have resigned ourselves to living in exile’.(26)

To boost the spirit of anticolonialism, Saadeh places education at the top of his agenda. There seems to be a close connection between emancipation and learning. That’s why the identity of a Palestinian exile will not thrive without access to schooling. Saadeh tries to establish himself as an eloquent speaker to convey a plain message to the addressee and obliterate their false beliefs that building a school beyond the frontiers of Ardallah is an act of complicity with the enemy. He exhorts his compatriots to make of education an integral part of their existence in exile. It should be deemed as a linchpin of resistance in a land permeated by unprecedented abuse of human rights. The average Palestinian

citizen tenaciously defends the legitimacy of his/her cause and vows to resist the invaders with all might; but any act of resistance that downplays education is likely to be doomed.

The author deliberately shapes Yousif's journey of self-discovery around aspects of both hope and misery. The characters are occasionally revealed to cast aside despondency and engage in the long-term project of making up future generations throwing obstacles into oblivion. However, there are moments when the trauma undergone in exile looms on the horizon to remind us of the intolerable loss that the displaced Palestinian can no longer bear. Yousif's search is perturbed, but not ended, by a host of tragic events that indicate that equanimity has already deserted the consciousness of the homeless individual beyond the boundaries of his native land:

> Two days later, the sky cleared, snow began to melt, and Yousif began to slosh his way back to school. There he came upon another tragedy. Several people were gathered under a tree in the school yard. The body of a man from the nearby refugee camp was hanging. . . The wretched scene was as frightening as anything Yousif has seen in the war. It was not a horror film he was watching; he kept reminding himself, not a dream or even a nightmare. A man had actually taken his own life. Yousif could see the rope cutting into the middle-aged man's neck; snow outlined his head and shoulders. Some in the crowd moved close, but not Yousif. He could not stomach a human being's tongue hanging out.(49)

In this sequel of the novel, death takes another form. In the course of the exodus, life is given ascendency and its loss is effected by the harsh conditions the sick and the old cannot bear. As explained before, death is actually a corollary of the desert's collusion with the colonial repressive apparatus. In this extract, a nameless character chooses the path of suicide as a means of escape. The most susceptible commit suicide to bring their suffering to an end. It is this journey whose indefinite destination which they find rather appealing because they are possibly in short of other strategies of making a change and bringing down the Zionist exclusive power. Pain is simply too unspeakable to tolerate

outside the geography of Ardallah.

When Yousif is shown to make his way to school to see if things are making progress, the weather is improving. The clarity of the firmament and the melting of snow is a symbolic allusion to a glimmer of hope surrounding the new opening of a school. Lumping expectation and tragedy can be construed as the author's endeavor to put accent on education as a necessary tool that will surely enable the wretched exiles to find their way out of the maze in which they are clamped. The fact that suicide is adding to their tragedy is a serious matter that can be addressed by the light of education. In this context, Yousif is obliquely introduced as someone who spurns this form of shunning the reality at hand. An educated refugee population is a dream that will expectedly yield fruitful results and alleviate the intense cold threatening continuity outside Ardallah. Yousif's concern for life is fostered by this scene in which he is confronted by the horrible spectacle of a middle-aged Palestinian hanging himself on a foreign tree. Unlike the rest who are gathering around the corpse to satisfy their curiosity, he distances himself from it simply because the abominable sight of a man's 'tongue hanging out' does not chime in with his ideal of celebrating life.

He is appropriately portrayed as "a young man who could not swim across his troubled ocean"(55). The traumatic encounter with exile sets his identity in perpetual motion and his recurring movement within space reflects his antipathy to a sedentary mode of existence which may give rise to bouts of depression and consequently to self-inflicted annihilation: "It was in the process of the individual's transformation from an inert thing to social being that all manner of social forces were felt and registered"(M.Nasser 1). His ability to hold his ideas in check and inquire into the nature of life in exile prevents him from falling in the trap of acute melancholy. Though his "search for Salwa is wrapped in

a shroud of despair"(55), he is not the one to give in easily. Being a living witness to the Zionist atrocities, he is empowered to sharpen his faculty of critical reasoning in a world where darkness still gains the upper hand.

Now that a flicker of light is already on when Ustaz Saad, under the aegis of Yousif, takes charge of a class of little refugees, sheer time and effort goes into finding Salwa. Her husband "has been looking for her. He even left a message for her on the radio. On the program for people trying to reunite. Still [ he] can't find her"(58). Though his other relatives share Salwa's fate, his main commitment consists in retrieving her. Her return is deemed another source of hope capable of attenuating the gloom that pervades the denigrating camps. Yousif finally breathes a heavy sigh of relief when she suddenly surfaces. At this juncture, the narrator makes allusion to the first change her appearance brings about:

> Time now stood still. Then, in perfect harmony they flew into each other's arms. As he held Salwa, Yousif understood that he not fully realized how much he had missed her nor had he really remembered how delicious her embrace was."Oh, habibti" Yousif said, planting small kisses all over her face. "I missed you, darling, " Salwa whispered, reciprocating his endearments.(115)

This encounter has brought time to a standstill because Yousif has realized his preliminary project. The bodily contact is presented to be lacking in the warmth that usually marks the meeting of two lovers after a long period of absence. These afflicted and grief-stricken exiles are made numb by the mental anguish generated by the squalid, overcrowded refugee camps. The words are sincere but in dearth of warmth which is eaten up with the trauma of dislocation.

## 2.2 The traumatized exile

### 2.2.1 the individual's psychological dynamics of trauma

The semantic significance of the past is underscored; it is regarded as a source of solace when a given character is engulfed in the hue of the devastating present of camp life. However, it is also a millstone around the neck of the survivors of the exodus of shame and atrocity. This dynamic movement along the present and past signifies a turbulent state of mind. The specters of having to flee one's native background under the muzzle of the gun continue to impinge upon the individual psychology of the disinherited trauma survivors. These people whose identity is hanging in the balance are portrayed to be at the mercy of anxiety and a deep sense of insecurity. The human psychology is accounted for through the prism of territoriality. In *Trauma, war and Violence* those forced to desert their homeland, since man is a 'territorial animal'(Eisenbruch 219) find themselves wrestling with 'collective trauma or cultural bereavement'(ibid, 229). The disabling effects that psychological traumatization could engender are related through the mouth of Raja Ballout, a journalist tending his sister who is down with gallbladder. The Israeli soldier is so callous that he imperiously orders him to carry her away with the soldier's finger on the trigger.

It is easy to notice that Raja is claimed by downright despair and defenselessness when he persistently implores the terrorizing enemy to rush her to the hospital in one of their jeeps. The gruesome reaction of the soldier is recounted in the following:

> With mystifying nonchalance, the soldier pulled out his bayonet and walked toward the bed. With one master stroke, he slit her throat. It was like a flash, so electrifying and so particularly wild, that the poor woman didn't have a moment to blink her

> eye or make a peep. A blast of horror filled the house. The children howled. Raja froze in place, his eyes glazed.(63)

In front of her children, in excessive cold blood, the Isreali gunman revels in finishing off the sick mother. This act of incredible terror and sadism has left them paralyzed by the consequent trauma that has been ever since etched on their infantile memories. The witnessing of the dreadful killing of their mother while they are too helpless to offer any help will certainly make them susceptible to what has been identified in the realm of psychology as post-traumatic stress disorder. The trauma of being coerced into abandoning their home is compounded by that of having to leave it without their mother. Of course, the long-term psychosocial repercussions of this savagery should not be underestimated. Since the present is abundant with frustration and the past is burdened with memories of bereavement and loss, the characters are overcome by the urge to take refuge in the future. But which future is expected to loom on the horizon? It seems that posterity will grow up crippled by the horror of the present and therefore unable to set themselves free from its shackles. Yousif is probably aware of the challenges that lie ahead when he dedicates concerted efforts to building up a school where children can break 'the conspiracy of silence'(Danieli ix).

Trauma as "a psychologically distressing event that is outside the usual range of human experience. . . may be experienced alone. . . or in the company of groups of people(e.g., military combat)(APA 248). Hiyam, who is raped in front of her husband, is compelled to carry the burden to exile. In the wake of this act, she becomes pregnant and when she gives birth to a baby her plight intensifies giving rise to posttraumatic stress that is prone to remain a chronic suffering. She cannot tell for sure who the father is, the Zionist or her husband(180). The stigma associated with this happening extends to the whole family

and generates collective trauma: “while for many people time heals ills, in traumatized persons time may not heal but rather magnify the response to further trauma.”(Danieli ix). Hiyam is likely to be confronted by the nightmarish experience of rape throughout her life; consequently she will fall short of concentrating on the future because she is in fact without any future in an exilic space where treatment is beyond reckoning.

The narrative addresses the traumatization of individuals and groups and strives to authenticate their predicament. The story is span by Fawal within the sphere of fiction, but there are moments when it amounts to the level of history. Throughout the novel the contextualization of the Nakba and its adverse effects are effected by the author, whose literary approach echoes Said’s reference to the 1980s’ shift “which is sometimes called the ’turn to history’, whereby history, politics, and context were reinstated at the centre of the literary-critical agenda.”( Said, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* 30). The trauma engendered by the Israeli indiscriminate shelling and its corollary occupation develops into posttraumatic stress outside the contours of natal geography. Since “real history is about things that happen to real people in real time”(APA 2), one can infer that the story in hand is in fact a history of dispossession and external displacement where people are cut off from themselves, their behavioral patterns and modes of life.

While a segment of the characters’ past has the potential to provide shelter from the endemic gloom of the present(their former life at home), the time following their displacement is fraught with all sorts of havoc. They are caught in the labyrinth of conflicting emotions that make psychosocial stability a farfetched dream ever since the moment they are forced into exile. All forms of torture inflicted upon them, their relatives and their compatriots have left serious mental injuries that are unlikely to vanish with the passage

of time. The mental anguish has been gnawing at Izzat ever since his wife was exposed to the flagrant spectacle of rape before him. The induced trauma is aggravated by his idleness and lack of power to interfere to save her from the clutches of the immorally lascivious Zionist:

> In the next few minutes, still standing on the sidewalk, the grief-stricken Izzat explained a lot. His eyes moist, he summed up to Yousif what had happened to him and Hiyam whose rape by the Jewish soldier they and Yousif's mother and wife, had been forced to witness. Yousif knew he would never forget that horrific moment. . . Izzat could read in Yousif's eyes his reaction to his appearance. 'If you think I look bad', he said sadly, 'you should see Hiyam. You won't recognize her'(179).

The traumatized Izzat is compelled to exteriorize the internalized shock of his wife being ravished. The fact that he has to talk about this shameful incident after a lapse of time means that the trauma triggers post-traumatic stress disorder which "is a syndrome that occurs following all types of extreme stressors"(Danieli 2). Providing a meticulous account of this appalling act to Yousif, who has witnessed it, is tangible proof of Izzat's failure to put up with the excruciating agony that has been eating into his heart. He is overcome by a strong urge to break the silence in order to mitigate the intensity of humiliation that has befallen him. This traumatic experience works in collusion with the other adverse effects of exilic life to divest the couple of the little equanimity that may still survive in their inner recesses. The shock is such that its aftermath is writ large on their outward complexion.

Yousif's journey back home is planned and subsequently executed within the framework of exile. It has culminated in his triumph over the hurdles of the Zionist machines and machinations. The ease with which he crosses the frontiers has left a positive impression on him and reminds him of the possibility of reunion with the native soil. No sooner have he and his companion, Hikmat, set foot in Ardallah than space turns out to

perform a soothing function: “The carob tree by the pond” is enough to awaken dormant memories of bygone years when he used to enjoy the company of Isaac and Amine(126) and the gentle breeze brings about a sense of transitory calm. The journey also reawakens bouts of attachment to armed resistance. Relief and confusion alternate to reflect the psychological dynamics of both friends: “Under the apple tree in the front yard, Yousif paused to catch his breath. He was panting not from fatigue but from the trauma he was feeling. He leaned against the thin tree trunk, and looked around, quietly describing to Hikmat what glorious times he had been living in that house”(131). Space is dramatized as a fertile breeding ground for painful and pleasant memories. It could be a source of solace but it is no longer theirs. Yousif’s villa has been occupied and offered to an elderly couple from Bulgaria. The unexpected change visited upon space is conducive to a host of memories that can be construed as characteristic symptoms of post-traumatic stress.

Traumatized, Yousif could find his way indoors. His shock simply has no limit when he trespasses on the living room. His eyes rest on the corner where ‘his parents’ wedding photograph’ used to hang. Realizing that it has disappeared from the area where it is meant to remain as a permanent icon, he feels emotionally hurt. The space that has initially alleviated Yousif’s tensions becomes a stressor simply because the metamorphosis it has been subjected to is unpalatable. His traumatic encounter with it sets him on action:

> Full of anger, he returned to the man and with one swift movement pulled the tape off his mouth. Yousif noticed the man wince in pain but he didn’t care. He yanked the gag from the man’s mouth and demanded, “What did you do with my parents photograph?” The man shrugged his shoulders, his eyes bulging. “Where is it? This is my house damn it. My house. What did you do with the photograph?”(134).

This unusual encounter of hate between the colonizing and the colonized subjects testifies to the difficulty Yousif exhibits in dissociating himself from the past perspective. Unlike

one of Ghassan Kanafani's characters whose past is 'a solid wooden box locked with a thousand keys that had been cast into the depths of the ocean'(Kanafani 82), Fawal's protagonist is perennially thrust into the shadows of the native home and territory. His determination and commitment to the cause is incarnated by a serious attempt to avenge the loss of the photograph, the token of love, peace and unity. Seemingly, the successful odyssey of establishing communion with space has filled him with mixed emotions of serenity at times and anxiety at others. Stealing his way home is a sort of dream-come-true achievement, but catching sight of a transformed landscape is an enraging eyesore that whets his appetite for a violent reprisal: "His eyes grew moist upon seeing Gericho itself. That winter resort that used to be called a sleepy town was now dotted with refugee camps and teeming with people sitting along the sidewalks or walking aimlessly'(88). This probably explains his resort to a kind of 'defensive aggression' and ends this face-to face contest triumphant. However, the photograph remains permanently irretrievable. The fate of this iconic signifier symbolically signifies that of the couple who used to celebrate moments of felicity and emotional security under the same roof.

As a rule, the colonized subjects are muted and suppressed into subservient others. This is exactly what has befallen members of the exodus. Izzat is reduced to a eunuch in front of his wife, who is ravished in full view of her compatriots before everybody is discarded into the unknown. The Jamils are coerced into breaking kinship with every single root that ties them to land and class by complying with the injunctions of the Israeli soldiers. These trauma survivors- these wretched who have miraculously deferred the intrusion of death while pressing their way to exile- are confronted by memories of the catastrophe on a daily basis. Now that Yousif is brought in close contact with the Bulgarian intruder, he contests valiantly the dyad of the occupier/occupied relationship and its

condescending reductive ethos. The sheer trauma he has been exposed to supplies him with the vocabulary of counter-hegemony to initiate a reversal of roles even if this occurs only at the level of the micro-dynamics of power structures. Accomplishing dominance over an old Jewish settler is a laudable sign of anti-colonial struggle but it has little to contribute to striking at the core of the colonial apparatus.

Yousif's rage suddenly abates to be supplanted by a modicum of relief when he beholds something that still connects him to the pre-occupational phase that constitutes a hallmark in the life of a highly ambitious boy: "He saw his mother's crocheted tablecloths and framed tapestries on the walls; even his father's curved pipe was still on the rack. He reached for it and caressed it in his hands, wondering if someone had defiled it with his lips"(135). This bric-a-brac acquires special value in the eyes of Yousif as it redeems the loss of the parental photograph and imparts a balm to his low spirits. Moving back to exile with these petty objects – a keepsake that will always remind him of his first pilgrimage to the land of pedigrees – means that part of the mission has been fulfilled. Now that he is relieved of the tormenting trauma of the missed icon, attention is devoted to retrieving his mother's jewelry.

The author does not merely look on the jewelry as precious ornaments badly needed for the family's meager and exhausting budget in exile. It is indeed a motif utilized by Fawal to fortify his character's bond with space. Yousif's familiarity with the spatial contours of the family abode and the intricacies of its geographical map is by implication a reference to his acquaintance with the local history of its dwellers. The occupiers of the house violate not only an alien geography that needs to be tamed and adjusted to their normative rituals and values, but they also encroach upon the private history of the natives destabilizing the traces of their former cultural codes: "the older conceptions of rootedness

an autochthony[2]" that are presumed to be untenable in the contemporary globalizing world are meaningful to the Palestinian exile. The pipe, the crocheted tablecloths and tapestries bespeak little meaning to the intruders, but they amount to a repository of family history for Yousif.

His retrieval of these objects instills enough confidence in him to step to and fro and further inspect the interior of the house. He craves to allay the traumatic tensions and prolong the period of solace he is indulging at the moment. He is certain that this feeling of euphoria is fleeting and that it will soon come to a standstill once he breaks contact with the familiar place. The nostalgically painful interaction with the familiar objects betoken the fleeting encouter with home and the longevity of exile:

> Yousif crossed the room to the large mahogany radio console in one of the corners and turned up the volume. He catalogued in his mind's eye every piece of furniture. This, he said to himself, was his father's favorite chair. That flower vase was always full of his mother's hand-picked flowers. How many happy and sad events had taken place in the middle of that salon. He remembered the body of his father reposing there in his coffin after he was murdered by a sniper's bullet. The sight and sound of his weeping mother and the wailing of relatives and neighbours were echoing in his heart. Then there was the celebration the night before his wedding to Salwa.(135)

It would not be an exaggeration to purport that a less experienced reader lacking the tools of analysis might view this excerpt as a casual description of the interior of a house. Conversely, what can be deemed as trivial objects are assigned the role of transparent things through which the protagonist relives moments of joy and sadness that once took place within the walls of his home. Strangely enough, he seems to revel in even the memory of his father's death because his body was protected in a coffin in their cozy villa[3], which

[2] In his *Cultural mobility: an introduction* Stephen Greenblatt asserts that "while the older conceptions of rootedness an autochthony seem intellectually bankrupt, the heady theories of creative metissage have run aground upon the rocks of contemporary reality."(Greenblatt 1) For a people whose land has been seized rootedness and autochthony will continue to matter as long as occupation takes control of their home.

[3] This short-lived visit to the parental house, which is now occupied by an elderly Jewish couple from

attenuates the effect of the assassination. It is imparted a status superior to the unburied bodies of those who couldn't survive the exodus. The sound of his mother's mournful yells are not distant now that he is enclosed within the house; they are not out of reach and can hear them reverberate in his depths engendering almost similar sensations generated by his subsequent matrimony to Salwa.

The mental anguish that inevitably arouses from this live encounter with the past cannot be put on a par with the suffering experienced in the narrow streets of Amman. Certainly, it is not inhibiting as it is inextricably mixed with the pleasure of distancing the self from the macabre atmosphere of external displacement. That's why the search for more useful objects of identification to carry away – for his stay in his home is ironically very short and hazardous compared with the permanant exile – must go on. His next purpose is to lay his hands on his father's bookcase to establish a warm rapport with the collection of classics(ibid). The more objects he finds, one can appropriately infer, the stronger the affiliation with family and land and the fewer the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder become. This is partly explained by his enthusiasm not to give up this voyage back in time no matter how critical the situation is. He has a propensity to communicate with his father, to keep in touch with him by dint of leafing through some of his books. In short, he is energized by a nebulous spasm of emotions that Hikmat strives to put under control, but to no avail:

> Emotion surged within him. He wanted to run through the house: to the balcony, to the aviary, to the three adjacent bedrooms on the other side of the corridor, and to the bathroom, kitchen and dining room on his right. Drenched with passion, he wanted to howl: this was his house, the house his parents had saved and labored to build. Who were these strangers now living in it?(136)

Bulgaria, provide a suitable context for the following verses :—Don't die completely—I'll try not to.—Don't die at all.—I'll try not to.—Tell me, when did it happen? I mean, when did we meet? When did we part? (Darwish)Apparently, these verses seal the affectionate bond that ties the exile to his beloved motherland.

Yousif is delineated to be teetering on the verge of hysteria. He is overcome by an overflow of spontaneous emotions that occludes the faculty of reasoning. This fervor soon develops into a recalcitrant reaction that calls for interference from his companion. The euphoria of reviving a disintegrating identity through his identification with various places and objects is beyond normality. Paradoxically his descent towards mania poses a serious threat to the centrality of his identity as a Palestinian exile.

The wild outbursts of rage take hold of Yousif, who finds in revenge a kind of antidote to the agonizing trauma. Those intruders are held accountable for the plight of the whole family as far as he can judge. The Jamils are not only displaced; their history is also being effaced and cultural identity eradicated. What is initially taken for Yousif's feelings of bliss due to his pilgrimage to the native land develops into a serious nervous breakdown reminiscent of a hysterical reaction to the unexpected alteration of the native space. His concomitant experience of joy and sadness gives him away as someone in dearth of psychological equilibrium. He is revealed to be confronted by memories of bygone days when peace and security constituted a characteristic feature of life in Ardallah. Much to their chagrin, the colonial invasion plays havoc with the local space and, by extension, with the mental health of the individuals who are dispossessed and displaced. Being traumatized, they are compelled to carry their pains, worries and aspirations to exile where they are claimed by post-traumatic stress and further traumas that will keep the vicious circle turning. In this regard, one One can't help scoffing at the enlightenment project which is oriented towards finding "a universal norm for the realization of human potential"(Gallagher 5) when in reality human relations are governed by power.

### 2.2.2 The Exile's response to trauma

#### 2.2.2.1 Breaking the silence

'Warfare is a fertile breeding ground for post-traumatic stress. Most of those who have experienced the terror of human warfare would agree with General William Sherman's utterance during the American Civil War that "all war is hell"'(APA 5). It would be relevant to open this part with the adverse effects of all armed conflicts on the psychology of the survivors. War tends to take a heavy toll especially on the weak who find it extremely difficult to resist the technology of brutal power. Fawal's characters are not only vanquished but also driven outside their homes leaving behind a territorial vacancy to be filled by the colonizers. Their psychological trauma is unique because a set of factors antecedent to, concomitant with and subsequent to it are rooted in complex ideological and political conditions. Also, treatment is sought within society and since the characters are dispossessed and dislocated, they are without land and therefore without society. Erikson talks of two traumas: "first, the occurrence of the traumatic event itself and, second, the destruction of community life and loss of social contacts"(3). The question that can be raised in this context is: how can helpless wretched characters help themselves cope with the mental anguish they are constantly exposed to?

As explained before, it is under the effect of psychological trauma that Yousif and Hikmat put their lives in jeopardy to enjoy a fleeting moment of rest in their homeland. Once in exile, these characters and others are consumed by the excessive grief – be it manifest or latent– of being banished from their homes at gunpoint. The repulsive incidents of rape and death that follows their flight exacerbate their psychological unrest and make the most vulnerable susceptible to suicide so as to die to rest. The man who is found

hanging himself on a tree has seen fit to respond to trauma this way. Those who choose to survive make their exilic mode of living less tormenting by taking cosmetic measures capable of reducing the pernicious impact of traumatization and post traumatic stress disorder.

Education seems to play a key role in adopting coping mechanisms to minimize the pangs of trauma. Those like Yousif and Hikmat who have been to school are engaged in enlightening projects to alleviate the effect of trauma on the present and future generations of exiles. The challenge of casting a look ahead to the future has to be taken seriously:

> 'Amana Forever is a resistance movement, if you will. On a small scale it aims to confront our tragedy. How do we face the challenge ahead of us? What do we do next? - sit on our butts and wait for our kings and presidents to restore our rights? That's like waiting for the sun and the moon to switch places.'(127)

They have to hold their emotions in check and face up to the events and circumstances around them. The Amana project represents a preliminary act of considering one of the concrete anti-colonial movements. It is the first reaction against the predatory political and ideological attempt to "make Palestinians disappear discursively and physically"(LeBlanc 3). Rather than succumbing to the pangs of post-traumatic stress disorder and its repercussions on their mental health, they find it rewarding to organize themselves within the body of this association that takes it upon itself to address the issue of dislocation and allay the affliction of the displaced brothers. By asking a series of existential questions, they disentangle themselves from the mesh of the present life. They are engaged in breaking the conspiracy of silence that would otherwise plunge them in the fathomless depths of depression and despair. Though the project of shaking the repressive system of colonial power is somehow elusive given the conditions of exile, Amana has the potential to mitigate their suffering and unite them around the common cause.

The pilgrimage back home, though freighted with mixed feelings of anxiety and relief, has sharpened Yousif's critical faculty and made him deal with the collective plight within the ambit of reason. Expectedly, his encounter with the familiar space of home has excited the quiescent mental anguish that has weighed upon him ever since the exodus. When the storm of establishing contact with the occupied space abates, he indulges a period of self-reflection to engage himself with the future and retreat from the embracing specters of melancholy:

> The remorse, shame that had plagued him that night forced him to reflect on his shortcomings as a freedom fighter. That certainly was a pivotal day in his life. Could he continue his active movement with Amana if he was unwilling or incapable of pulling the trigger? Could he in all consciousness expect others to lay their necks on the line while he sat in an office somewhere passing judgment and planning strategy? There was no honor in doing less than one demanded of subordinates.(161)

One of the options left for Yousif, the spiritual leader of the Palestinian exiles, is to consider the possibility of carrying out anti-colonial struggle. The pen-and-the gun approach has been fundamental to his agenda and its echoes still resonate at the core of the Amana. Sheer trauma has generated anxiety and unleashed wild emotional outbursts that must come into abeyance by dint of resorting to reflection. When he publicly displays the flaws that might strike at the heart of the burgeoning enterprise and interrogates the intentions and caprices of the novice leader, he attempts to allow space for self-criticism and therefore dissociate himself from the mainstream Arab leadership. He inclines towards integrating honesty in the body of tenets that form the basis of the movement. The generalized anxiety disorder(GAD) experienced throughout his stay in the agonized world of exile has substantially intensified when the sanctity of his house is shamelessly desecrated by the inequitable intrusion of the elderly Bulgarian couple. However, coming back with a few seeming futile belongings and his mother's jewelry can be seen as one of the redeeming

features of the journey. Its spiritual dimension is equally significant in so far as it is empowering for Yousif, who seems to cast aside despondency and pick up the pieces. After all, the successful voyage back home has equipped him with some hope, if not myth, of return to Ardallah. This might be a facet of this protagonist's dreams, visions and realities. It is true that they may be engulfed in illusion, but they represent part of the coping mechanisms that will hopefully ward off or reduce further exposure to the symptoms of post-traumatic anxiety disorder. And since Fawal's characters do not constitute a monolithic cohort, each tries, in his/her own way, to survive the ordeal of displacement.

The psychology of exile is central to Fawal's text. The characters are plagued by the anguish of being locked in a claustrophobic space where their life is a daily struggle for survival. Most of them, including Yousif, strive to set up a bulwark against the disabling impact of despair in order to go on living. At the outset of the sequel, we are introduced to the phenomenon of people committing suicide because they cannot endure the tormenting cost of being stepped out of a place that still bears the imprints of their cultural and historical identity. Yousif shows his distaste for such a resolution and condemns it as a cowardly act that leads nowhere. And since trauma has become their lot, the exiles desperately need to look for alternatives to deal with its gnawing influence. It would be a fallacy to claim that time can heal the scars of the past, the present and the unknown future, but it would also be a sign of frailty and an act of irresponsibility to make recourse to self-inflicted death as a means of escape. Yousif and those who follow suit have tried different outlets to allay the harrowing experience of external dislocation and face the challenges the future has in store. He is behind the project of building a school where the evolution-cum-revolution objective will be hopefully accomplished and he is one of the

founding members of Amana, a multi-functional movement prioritizing anti-colonialism. It seems that he advocates Gramsci's proclamation that "the starting-point of critical elaboration is the consciousness of what one really is, and is 'knowing thyself' as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory[4]"(Vázquez 20).

#### 2.2.2.2 Moving Forward

Yousif, spurred by deprivation, takes the risk of stealing his way back home encouraged by Hikmat and the hope of retrieving his mother's buried jewelry. No matter how traumatic his encounter with the homeland, he comes back armed with a strong determination to become a new man. He is steadily pressing his way towards an intellectual exile who is commited body and soul to the cause: "out of this acute sense of the intellectual's worldliness and affiliations, there emerged his haunting question: 'When will we resist?"'(Deer, *Edward Said: A Memorial Issue*9).

Once he is back in exile again, he is decidedly engaged in a number of preoccupations with the aim of filling up the psychological gap created by exilic circumstances and inconveniences and get oriented towards the future. Looking inward does not deprive him of casting a look further on the horizon. There are moments, following this spiritual pilgrimage, when the text celebrates the process of self-fashioning, especially when Yousif starts posing serious political questions and disclosing the ideology inherent in policy-making. Inspired by the evolution-revolution dyad and convinced of the necessity of integrating the pen and gun principle in the philosophy of resistance, he finds his niche in a mobility

[4] For Edward Said the only available English translation has inexplicably excised the remainder of Gramsci's Italian text which runs: "therefore it is imperative at the outset to compile such an inventory"( Said, *Orientalism* 16 ).

that will lead to a destination once mapped by Edward Said for the Palestinian political movement: "We were the first Arabs who at the grass-roots level—and not because a colonel or king commanded us— started a movement to repossess a land and a history that had been wrested from us"(Marrouchi, 37)

Othered twice - first by colonial power and then by the Jordinian political system - the Palestinians are branded as pariahs and scapegoats. This extract reveals that they are downgraded to aberrant trouble-makers:

> A young reporter suddenly appeared with some bad news. A Palestinian shop, on the outskirts of downtown, had been set on fire half an hour earlier. First it was drenched with gasoline and then torched by a couple of young men. The firefighters were still trying to stop it from spreading to other stores. The police were dispersing the awe-stricken crowd. So far there were no injuries.(166)

The Palestinian exiles are regarded as a thorn in the government's flesh and they are essentially blamed for the killing of King Abdullah. They have been grappling with the reality of camp life and now they are caught in the vortex of a coup d'état. At this juncture, the text calls into question the view that it is self-contained and self-referential as the story amounts to the level of history. The history of exile is represented as a complex conglomerate made of different facets, all of which contain an episode of external displacement. They escape gunfire in quest of a safe haven only to be exposed to similar treatment in a space wherein the same language is spoken and similar normative rituals are practiced. Amidst these conditions, Yousif and Salwa cherish the idea of further moving onward to alleviate the mental anguish associated with sedentary life.

Permanently affiliated with the national ideals, Yousif moves to Lebanon appointing himself the spokesman of Amana, the mouthpiece of the Palestinian exile: "Two months after the king's assassination, Yousif was in Beirut, holding a bundle of Amana Daily under

his left arm and handing a free copy to anyone willing to take it"(169). He is revealed as a fully-fledged nationalist obsessed with marketing the Palestinian question outside the narrow geography of Amman. The journey empowers him, strengthens his position and drives him towards non-conformism and therefore anti-colonialism. In this regard Said has always equated dispossession and exile with resistance: until the the aftermath of the black September of 1970, "the main aspects of Palestinian life remain dispossession, exile, dispersion, disenfranchisement(under Israeli military occupation), and, by no means least, an extraordinarily widespread and stubborn resistance to these travails"(Said, *The Question of Palestine* 9). Yousif can't help questioning the significance of compromise formations and concessions when one's right of survival is under constant threat. His struggle for selfhood within the social context and maze of the Zionist-defined colonial structures gains ascendency now that he is no more clamped tight in the embrace of static existence. Mobility catapults him to other lands to take an introspective look to examine his innermost thoughts and feelings and try to stand the test of time. He gradually builds up his project without being daunted by the potential stumbles along the way. Exploring his future course of action saps the grasp of the traumatic discovery of new realities and challenges.

He does not look on this nomadic mode of life as a means of escape - as it is the case with some of Nadda Awar Jarrar's characters in *Somewhere Home* - from the harrowing destiny of displacement, but as an occasion of self-reflection and further philosophical enquiry. He is somebody keen on alternatives and mature enough to consider contingencies. His flight to Lebanon is aimed, first and foremost, to extend the scope of the daily paper motivated by the hope of disseminating the cost of dislocation to other geographical corners. It is also in Lebanon where he strives to implement the project of moving beyond

the confines of theory and embark upon performance. He seems determined to respond to a set of queries he has previously raised about the ideologies integral to the political discourse. He has a penchant for breaking ties with the rhetoric that does not inform action and attempt to set a model for a punctilious leader. The restrictive role of Amana is interrogated and contested and the beyond, 'touching the future on its hitherside' according to Bhabha, becomes a requisite for efficiency.

Coupled with his conscious intention of breathing life in *Amana,* the journey forward is edifying in many other respects. Though intermittent fits of traumatic attacks return, they don't really obstruct the will to learn; for a vehement nationalist, who frankly announces his denunciation of exclusionary orthodox nationalism, finds essentialism counterproductive. He echoes Frantz fanon's support of nationalism which is not nationalism. The former type, because it negates difference, is inhibiting and detrimental to the progressive ideals of addressing the future, and the latter which celebrates multiplicity is instructive and rewarding. His conception of the intellectual dismantles Paul Johnson's scurrilous and synical assault on all intellectuals describing them in these words: "a dozen people picked at random on the street are at least as likely to offer sensible views on moral and political matters as a .cross-section of the intelligentsia"(Johnson 342). In Beirut, Yousif represents himself to be preocupied with the task of becoming an intellectual who upholds and propagates his legitimate cause with grit and grace.

He begins this long process by puting forward the approach to identity as a synthesis rather than a unique essence. He is drawn to a comparative study of space somehow oblivious to the tormenting interference of a nut-sized lump in his throat(172). His extensive mobility within Beirut proves to be an eye-opener; each voyage to a new location is informative and convinces him of the multi-faceted aspect of landscape: "The contrast

between this elegant section of town and the one he had just come from never failed to impress him"(173). The diversity peculiar to a place essentially defined as Lebanon is highlighted and its soothing impact on his psychology is noticeable. We are introduced to a new person teetering on the verge of regeneration and preparing himself to cast aside the disabling effects of degeneration. Space is not monolithic and this absence of univocity in a landscape abundant with variegated facets reveals that Yousif is anathema to stagnation and his predilection for movement should not be interpreted as a form of escapism, but as quest for empowerment, an assiduous search for the tools of becoming a new man to efficiently cope with the challenges of futurity.

The moment of euphoria is over when memory interferes with the serenity offered by elements of space. Meanwhile, Yousif sets off for a journey inward; indeed, it can be deemed as a sort of reverie to maintain contact with home through the medium of Salwa. This reverie is translated into a heartbreaking letter which shows that the wounds of dislocation can be allayed but not cured as long as he is identified as a homeless exile. His role as a potential member of the intelligensia falls within the ambit of Said's characterization of the intellectual:

> In underlining the intellectual's role as outsider I have had in mind how powerless one often feels in the face of an overwhelmingly powerful network of social authorities –the media, the government and corporations , etc. –who crowd out the possibilities for achieving any change and, alas, even at times to be relegated to the role of a witness who testifies to a horror otherwise unrecorded( Said, *The Question of Palestine* xvi-xvii )

The fact that he and his family are scattered evidences that his peripatetic voyages are part of a mission that must be fulfilled as the first step towards counter-hegemony though the enormity of this task should not be diluted as the colonial power is all-pervading and Zionism, which enjoys the Western support, employs what Louis Althusser calls ideological

and repressive state apparatuses to tighten its grip on the land wrested from its owners. The existence of Salwa in his life is accorded special importance because she is the source of motivation and encouragement. Their marriage is more figurative than literal. His strong connection with her is allegorically an act of commitment to the Question of Palestine and the ordeal of being coerced to leave outside its geographical territory.

In his letter he accentuates that the role she is assigned is greater than the solace he obtains from his daily preoccupation with the existential project of liberation and his craving for disseminating the agony of the wretched Palestinian. He makes it clear that the burden is too heavy to shoulder without her assistance. In his letter he also mentions Lebanon as a spectacular space visited for the first time as a thirteen-year old child, but it cannot rival the breathtaking beauty of home. A kind of symbiosis exists between Yousif and Salwa, or by extension, between him and his natal land. The captivating landscape of Lebanon alone cannot possibly abate the gnawing tensions of living away from Salwa. The stereotypical representations foisted upon the dispersed Palestinians ignite the traumatized psychology that has been hitherto pacified by the spatial background. His message to his 'Lebanese brethren'(177) that the Palestinians did not choose to become refugees betrays the mental state of a man plucked from his local territorial surroundings.

Propelled forward by his insatiable thirst for knowledge as a basis for resistance, Yousif leaves for Syria to imbibe the rudiments of history. The descriptive account he is allocated suggests that the pen and gun paradigm remains one of his guiding principles. He is fervent about a genealogical study of the colonial history of Syria; then he

> recalled, with deep pleasure, there was the Umayyad Dynasty in the seventh and eighth centuries AD., when Damascus had become the centre of Islamic culture, heralding a period of glory never to be forgotten, and never, perhaps, to be equaled - A period when Arab warriors had literally stormed the known world from the Pyrenees Mountains in France all the way to china.(184)

The glory celebrated is no longer enjoyed in the Arab world. The litany of this glorious past is a necessary refuge wherein Yousif hides, though temporarily, from the tormenting reality of the present. He remembers the times when the Arabs were at the pinnacle of their power. Unconsciously, he laments the overall decay that has befallen them as a result of consecutive colonial invasions. This intricate combination of pleasure and pain mirrors the unbalanced emotional state of a desperate exile in search of a position from which to address the crisis of living without land. His passing infatuation with the past is triggered by the history of Syria, the country that has once included Lebanon. He can't help mourning the disintegration of the Arab world, which has fallen apart and turned into a fragmented space at the mercy of colonial powers. In fact, this imagined homogeneity can be regarded as a notorious blind spot or semantic slippage in the narrative discourse. The myth of a monolithic Arab world falls within the ambit of Benedict Anderson's famous concept of "imagined communities"[5]. We cannot talk about a powerful Arab world without the exclusion of other cultures[6]. For this world has never really been purely Arab as it is home to different belief systems and modes of thought. His claim reveals how power works against the backdrop of exclusion and inclusion. The unity and might Yousif takes prides in didn't occur in a vacuum; it was the outcome of wars and conquests carried out by powerful Arabs of bygone times.

The heterogeneity peculiar to the ostensibly univocal world further manifests in landscape. After his short-lived exultation at the glorious past, Yousif delves into the intricate

[5] Benedict Anderson, following Tom Naim, characterizes the nation as "an imagined political community." He also draws on Nations and States by Seton-Watson, who maintains that: 'All that I can find to say is that a nation exists when a significant number of people in a community consider themselves to form a nation, or behave as if they formed one'( 5). For its flaws and essentialist discourse, nationalism can strategically unite Palestinian exiles in building up a counter-hegemonic project.

[6] This connection with the past is what Nietzsche calls "antiquarian history." (Payne 3) Though this retrospective return gives meaning to the present, it is excoriated by Nietzsche as a myth. However, it is regarded by the protagonist as a source of solace from the cataclysmic cost of forced exile.

historical processes that have produced both Syria and Lebanon, a space disempowered through the hegemonic fragmentation meted out by colonial France. This historical fact soon gives way to a set of interrogations that testify to the protagonist's tendency to forge a new personality through the medium of education. As a would-be intellectual, he has a propensity to "construct a political identity and will of [his] own" and develop "a remarkable resilience and an even more remarkable national resurgence"(Said, *The Question of Palestine* x). He focuses attention on the disparity defining Lebanon and Syria, a geography univocally termed Arab. Syria, which is famous for its archeological sites, is not as modern as Lebanon[7]. However, Yousif is still temporarily obsessed with the unified Arab territory when Arabs were in their heyday and on the brink of conquering France(185). The dialectics of power are central to this historical account.

To further get immersed in historical studies, he sets out on a journey onboard a plane to enrich his itinerant experiences and gauge the efficiency of the imminent act of resistance. Mobility opens novel horizons and enables Yousif to perpetually rethink and revise the strategies to adopt for the implementation of his project. While Lebanon and Syria remind him of the glory of the Arabs and their territorial unity, his flight over Damascus draws him closer to the thorny issue of how to tackle the anti-colonial movement. The shackles of trauma loosen and the new avenues come to the fore. The Iraqi capital is a stronghold of nationalists(188) and parts of its space are closely linked with patriotism. The Martyrs Square, unlike any other location, is remembered as a site wherein scores of ardent nationalists sacrificed their lives for the sake of liberty. He

[7] The heterogeneity of the world view praised by Greenblatt("New historicists are determinedly suspicious of unified, monolithic depictions of cultures or historical periods"(ibid)) applies to the protagonist's stand on history. Though he seems to take a fleeting refuge from the present in the glorious past marked by the power of "Arabs" –in a moment of frailty –he is subsequently resistant to the unified myths of historical knowledge. After all, the story persistently interrogates the fixity of certain ideological facts such as the hocus-pocus of "a land without people for a people without land."

seems to purport that their blood is not wasted since it is shed to defend a cause. He learns that nationalism, as a concept, is not essentially uniform but rather multivalent and polymorphic. His nationalist orientation is not ethnocentric and functions within the framework of the existential enterprise of survival.

### 2.2.3 Towards a politics of resistance

#### 2.2.3.1 A consideration of the challenges

Ever since the moment the dwellers of Ardallah were ejected out of their homes and sent into exile, Yousif has been armed with a strong will to live through the hardship of the exodus. He has always been revealed to oscillate between the present, the past and the inaccessible future. Like the rest of his fellow Palestinians, he is compelled to perpetually wrestle with a kind of generalized anxiety disorder that has almost amounted to the level of mania. The marchers who have survived the blazing sun and the rugged route of the humble odyssey become exiles without home and without national identity[8]. Once they were Palestinian citizens and now aberrant outsiders who could not fit in a land which does not bear the traces of their identity. Seized by trauma and post-truamtic stress disorder, some of them commit suicide as a means of eternal escape from the agony of present life. Yousif, the spoiled Christian boy, who grew up in a middle-class family and spent a period of time in the lap of luxury shows a great interest in survival and considers suicide

[8] In this context, Hannah Arendt, who was best known for *The Origins of Totalitarianism* and The Human Condition, states in a 1949 essay: "…deprive someone of a political community, of his or her 'distinct place in the world, ' and of government protection, and you rob the individual of something fundamental enough to be called accurately a human right: the right to have the right to life, liberty, and so on. It was no coincidence that the expulsion of millions from humanity in the concentration camps had been preceded by a loss of their worldly location"(Baehr xiv). Though the writer is more concerned with the victims of totalitarian regimes than those of Zionism( for it is most unlikely that a fervent supporter of 'Youth Aliyah' – An organization that rescued Jewish children from Natzism and arranged for their settlement and schooling in the Palestinian land – will be interested in the Palestinian refugees whose return would make the Israeli population a minority) this statement underlines the ordeal of the Palestinian exile and reveals Arendt as a paradoxical political and social theorist.

a cowardly act of surrender to the hegemony of the colonial machine. The contentious debate over Yousif's proposal to build up a school in exile proves that the Palestinians are confounded by the unexpected plight of their land being appropriated. The first step forward seems to espouse the gun and pen model to effectively stand up to the challenges ahead.

Leading an itinerant life, Yousif is not merely in quest of a transitory relief from the traumatic experience of dislocation, but also of opportunities to learn more about the future project of resistance and dissent. His escape from Amman, the epicenter of tense encounters between the exile and the native, is dissimilar to the narrator's intention to leave Gaza behind in Ghassan Kanafani's 'Letter from Gaza'. In the wake of the Zionist-led air raids, this character is gripped by a desire to flee to California to start a new life away from the depredations of the war(112). Though he mysteriously remains attached to the native space, the mere idea of abnegating accountability would be anathema to Yousif. The latter's flight to other Arab lands should not be understood within this context. He leaves to allow the buds of his infant project a different environment to open.

To better get to grips with the nature of the challenges standing in the way of resistance, he provides a detailed new historicist account of how power functions in the social nexus. A study of history is in fact an examination of power relations and the role they play in fashioning subjectivity. His reference to power recrudesces in the narrative in which he cogently points out that the Palestinians are victimized because they lack the necessary knowledge to represent their case and therefore defend their cause. He seems to raise the issue of the inextricable connection of knowledge and power:

> Like an aspiring Politician - which he was - he stressed that the Palestinians had lost their country not because they had less rights than their enemy, or that they had less courage on the battle field. No, they lost because the enemy had been more

> educated and better prepared to argue their case in the halls of power and before the courts of public opinion... he repeated that education was the key to the future; a nation that did not master the arts and sciences of the modern world was doomed to stagnate(256).

As a staunch upholder of the pen and gun stratagem, he places a premium on education and regards it fundamental to the anti-colonial reaction. Armed force, divorced from the basics of modernity, will not certainly yield fruitful results. What empowers the enemy is not the will of the people or their valor –these are defining features of the Palestinian character –but its ability to represent itself and defend its agendas in the public sphere. Education injects life in acts of resistance and extends the scope of struggle against hegemony. It equips one with strategies to deconstruct the ethos of the colonial enterprise and deflate its repressive tendencies. Yousif is confident that a successful anti-colonial movement will not possibly come into being unless its agents have the potential to contest the domineering colonial discourse. Confronted with the legacy of dislocation and the trauma of breaking kinship with the native land, a repository of familiar cultural codes and social mores, the Palestinian exile is revealed in a state of loss and disarray. Yousif is convinced that his compatriots need to find their way out of this intricate maze so as to cast a look to the future – to unfix the fixed past of horror and fix the unfixed future of anti-colonial struggle –and deal with the challenges of self-determination.

Being excessively peripatetic, Yousif incarnates the Deleuzian notion of 'lines of flight.' He departs from a well known identifiable space and embarks upon a journey whose final point of arrival is beyond reckoning. The itinerant lifestyle entails that Yousif doesn't accept to be ensconced in a cloistered existence and be subjugated by the impediments of anxiety and repression. His experience is represented as the embodiment of a shifting identity that is neither constant nor perennial but perpetually moving. Since he is conti-

nuously becoming, Yousif is portrayed to be recalcitrant. His identity cannot be pinned down or fixed for the sake of simple definition. He is not a mere exile anchored in the routine of camp life without prospects and dreams; he has rebelled against the dictates and injunctions of bad faith moving from an ordinary citizen, through exile and then negotiating the strictures imposed on selfhood in his constantly progressing nomadic modes of existence.

In Egypt, he has reached a higher position tackling sophisticated issues of his existential project. He is becoming an experienced leader with a voice to carry the woes, aspirations and expectations of his people outside the parochial area of camp life. He is crowned as a spokesman and representative of his classmates: "He felt like someone spearheading a movement that had been thrust upon him, but he was determined to live up to the principles of Amana Forever"(257). While his nomadic way of life cannot be insulated against the contingencies of the colonial exigencies, yousif remains honestly affiliated to Amana, whose tenets and goals represent a milestone in setting the scene for spectacular signs of resistance. Though its ultimate destination is not delimited –at this stage of searching for tools of survival –the journey is not informed by apocalyptic leanings. His flight, though it may be construed against the backdrop of the rhizome[9], is somehow inspired by certain ideals that must be embraced by anyone deracinated from his land. At this stage, one can pertinently confer that Yousif recognizes "the empowering potential of exile"( Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 5) in shaping a new subjectivity.

The first test Yousif has to take in his struggle against hegemony lies in President Nasser's rhetoric of pan Arabism[10]. This can be regarded as one of the contingencies

[9] "A botanical term for a root system that spreads across the ground(as in bamboo) rather than downwards, and grows from several points rather than a single tap root(Ashcroft 190).

[10] Fawal's narrative informs political action making the novel a literary object that reflects the poignancy of displacement and the anticolonial response of the colonized subjects. The story echoes Said's

threatening Yousif's inexorable self-fashioning. Consciously or not, he seems to gravitate towards the national discourse shaped by the mythos of Arab unity across a multi-faceted geographical, historical and cultural background. At this juncture, it is still too early to note that Yousif's lines of flight will be undermined by the ideological underpinnings of Nasser's nationalism. After all, it would be laudable to develop a national consciousness which is not nationalism. It would be evident for an Arab student of history of colonialism to come across Jamal Abdel Nasser, who may set a model for a zealot engaged in the future enterprise of fighting for freedom, for someone whose anger is "borne out of grinding experience, painfully long self analysis, and even longer thought and reflection"(Sardar vii).

As a Palestinian student in Egypt, he has become a political orator making the Palestinian cause a central theme of his anti-colonial opposition. His espousal of Nasser's ideology of Arabism, irrespective of its flaws, is probably a strategic endeavor to appropriate some of its ideals in defending a cause. For a traumatized refugee, the rhetoric of Nasser's political thought is highly seductive. The narrative of identities ascribed to this Arabic president holds Yousif spellbound:

> Whether with students or teachers, most conversations revolved around Nasser. One day he was a Bismarck who would unite the Arab world. Next day, he was a Saladin who would re-liberate Jerusalem. They often strolled up and down the long and straight banks of the river Nile which were lined with palm trees on both sides (**??**).

"The irreducible excess of the syntactic over the semantic"( Gashé 12) marks this legendary account of the person of the president. He is elevated to the status of a national hero, who would bring the Arab world together. Since Palestine is defined as Arab, it would

"view of the need for intellectual work to recover its connections with the political realities of the society in which it occurs. This connection with political realities enables the intellectual to 'speak truth to power'( Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 15).

also fall under this great union and cease to exist as a colonized land under the Israeli occupation. At this stage, we are not certain whether Yousif really adopts the policy of Pan Arabism or intends to expose its shortcomings and illusions. Does he share the public opinion about Nasser or does he mock the idealistic prospects of Arab unity? It is this ambivalent stand which threatens any attempt at a simple univocal interpretation of the narrative and secures the protagonist's orientation towards a rhizomic identity.

The challenge of adjusting the tenets of Arabism to suit his nomadic inclinations is backed up by a sense of pespectivism in matters related to religion. Iterability[11] seems to be central to his philosophy and he is revealed to be skeptical about essentialist dogmas and fixed belief systems. He is apparently averse to the authority of the third person present indicative and feels inclined towards a subjectivity that is positioned in the rim of an in-between reality. His ambivalent religious performances may be seen in this light: “On a couple of Fridays he went to pray with some of his Egyptian friends at AL-Azhar or Ibn Touloun mosques, always wishing for a glimpse of Nasser”(258). A Christian performing his religious rituals amidst Muslims in a Muslim setting is a conspicuous indicator of his malleability and skepticism about orthodoxy. Though he utilizes religion as a telos to advance his political agendas, Yousif is not seemingly clamped tight in the embrace of normative policy-making. He assigns Nasser the title of an Arab idol only to serve the national cause and push forward his ambition of liberating the homeland from the clutches of Israeli occupation.

One of the grinding challenges besides sifting through the tenets of Arabism between

[11] This term has been attributed to Jacques Derrida by which he means the idea of difference in repetition giving the simple example of a cup of coffee which looks exactly like the one he had before but which is different. "For Derrida everything is a sign, which for him means that everything is founded on repetition(on what he calls iterability) and on the false promise of permanence. This promise must fail because death is “inscribed” in the sign itself”(Mikiks 56)

theory and practice is the extent to which Yousif's discursive strategies inform action. On many an occasion, he reduces himself to a vocal phenomenon whose anti-colonial project is in dearth of coherence and feasibility. This is not, however, daunting for a young patriot in quest of a solid ground in the resistance movement. The fact that Palestinians will not allow their tormentors the chance of time to subjugate them is somehow groundless given the tense situation in which the colonized subjects are entangled. In this regard, Yousif's encounter with Loubna is of great importance since she is initially displayed as a critical figure who puts his fiery enthusiasm to the test. She notes that they 'all know that Eretz Israel is etched on the brain of every Zionist leader since Theodore Herzl. They will continue to expand until they reach their goal'(260). Loubna, representing herself as a bogus fellow citizen, questions Yousif's unrealistic optimism and subjects it to critical enquiry.

When loubna's true identity is revealed as a staunch Zionist, Yousif is confident that the trajectory of anti-colonialism is complicated and is accordingly expecting more turbulence to crop up. The Israeli colonial force is not concentrating on a well-defined geographical spot; its roots extend far beyond the occupied territories, which makes the act of resistance such an intractable problem. As a member of "the Sons and Daughters of Zion", who are expectedly proliferating, Loubna backs up the Foucauldian conceptualization of power as vertically ubiquitous and therefore its tap root is unidentifiable. However, this newly-discovered fact does little to shake his determination to proceed with the existential project of self-fashioning as a sine qua non for any anti-colonial struggle.

As expected, he turns to Salwa for assistance. Portrayed by Fawal as the embodiment of Palestine, she is lauded for her unflinching enthusiasm, especially whenever Yousif is confronted with a hurdle. To lift up his spirits, she underestimates Loubna's machinations

and their impact on the course of resistance, but admits her fear of the anonymous secret agents probably under Loubna's aegis. She therefore seals the Foucauldian theorization of power as ubiquitous, omnipresent and ineluctable. Loubna has been defined when many others under her supervision are still at large, which makes the anti-colonial project such a thorny issue.

By corroborating evidence to mythologize Yousif's discourse with a serious intent to relegate it to the margins of rhetoric, Loubna is revealed as an inveterate Zionist working to undermine any imminent act of counter-hegemony. Her innuendo that Egyptians are not Arabs and that they are descendents of the Pharos(266) is meant to sap any nationalist ideals and weaken the enthusiasm surrounding the Palestinian question and the prospect of re-liberation. Her words subvert the orthodox view of identity as a unique essence. Its conceptualization as an entity shaped by discursive formations evokes Althusser's claim that we are born into ideology and that we collude with it in the construction of subjects(Althusser 37). Consciously or not, she destabilizes the fundamental essence of her Zionist enterprise and the univocal overtones of subsuming the Jews, irrespective of individual differences, under a monolithic cohort. The conceptual schemes and discursive categories shaping her narrative lend support to Jacques Derrida's attempt to probematize and complicate the metaphysics of presence central to the logocentric culture. The fact that meaning is nowhere punctually present serves to dismantle Loubna's Zionist ideology that ignores difference in favour of an essentialist rendering of the political struggle between the oppressor and the oppressed. The strategic reversal of this duality(turning the oppressor into the oppressed and the other way round) may be said to constitute one of the theoretical foundations of her Zionist ideology. Part of Yousif's duty is to retain the status of an active agent at least at the micro-level of this power structure and dislodge

Loubna's attempt to rethink the dialectics.

Yousif makes the headlines when the information is disseminated to apprehend Loubna and clamp down on her 'espionage ring'. She 'was arrested at the airport with a fake passport just before boarding. Her real name turned out to be Esther Mizrahi'(272). Since his journey forward, Yousif has not experienced such an auspicious sign of resistance. His ability to detect the true identity lying behind the guise of a factitious proper name is a motivating force to face the challenges ahead with alacrity. This triumphant encounter with the ostensible Loubna occurs in tandem with a letter from home. The morale is consequently boosted to engage with the intricacies of the liberation process. The letter takes Salwa and Yousif backward and briefs them on events taking place in their absence. The obituary attributed to Jihan, a Palestinian exile in Kuwait, underlines the fulfillment of a posthumous wish. It is her burial back home in Palestine. The throat lumps experienced by the couple is symptomatic of traumatized psychology; still Jihan's posthumous encounter with the ancestral land augurs well for Yousif, who is confident that obstacles are likely to be overcome as long as a person resolutely believes in the legitimacy of his/her project. In her life Jihan has lost kinship with the homeland under coercion, but this bond is restored now that the body is to be blessed by the native soil. The transnational contact Jihan couldn't experience in her lifetime due to external displacement is redeemed by eternal reunion with her roots.

Mobility forward does not serve to insulate the protagonists against the encroachment of the specters of their past life. Part of their subjectivity is constructed by the tragic exodus which alienates them from the composure and peace offered by Ardallah. The abominable shadows of death are far from over and their interference with the wretched subjects is highlighted in the letter Yousif has just received from home. His reaction to

its content is tangible proof that his traumatic encounter with the past still increasingly affects the course of events:

> Yousif wished his mother had not alluded to Salwa's father's death in the desert. He squeezed his wife's hand and pulled her down to sit next to him. He could see a painted look on her face, as she must have recalled leaving her father in the wilderness, unburied and prey to wild animals. When her chin began to tremble, he gave her a kiss on the cheek and patted her knee. They huddled closer as he read out loud the rest of the letter. (275)

One calamity triggers off another: "the wounds inflicted touched the very springs of life and have remained unhealed because they are constantly being gashed open again"(Ikiddeh xii). Jihan's death and her body's return from exile to relocate to the motherland awaken the memory of Salwa's father's collapse in the wilderness and the corpse's exposure to wild animals. His hope for survival is dashed while Jihan's last wish to be wrapped up in the warm earth of home has been finally accomplished. The survivors' interactions with the dead is a recurrent image Fawal resorts to in order to display the ambivalent nature of the past as a composite of both peace and agony, warmth and coldness, togetherness and dispersion. The pre-exilic phase is generally characterized by relative stability even under the yoke of British colonialism and the exilic and post-exilic phases coincide with loss and alienation. The two-dimensional aspect of the past as a soothing and agonizing retreat underscores the psychological state of a people grappling with the bruises that may be quiescent but unhealed. This being the case, Yousif keeps moving on with the intention of espousing the culture of the revolution(Sartre 12).

#### 2.2.3.2 Gathering Information

The process of self-fashioning Yousif undergoes could not start without leading a mobile way of life. Being stationed in the vortex of a refugee camp without any intention of making

a change would simply exacerbate his sense of despair and alienation. That's why he sees fit to set out on a voyage elsewhere to explore the outer space and slake his insatiable thirst for knowledge as a means of empowerment. He goes beyond the domestic sphere where he is wont to interact with close and familiar figures and casts himself into the intricate maze of mobility trying to find a way out to appropriately handle the challenging task of self-determination. As the events progress, Yousif's mission is hampered by a host of obstacles. His triumph over them is a palpable token that he is growing into maturity. He is no longer daunted by his traumatic encounter with the tormenting truth of Zionism and its consequent displacement. It is an ineluctable reality that needs to be delimited in order to be dismantled.

His encounter with university professors of Hassan Omari's caliber serves to satisfy his curiosity to learn about the bilateral relations between the Arab world and Israel. The lectures are currently delivered to provide a political account of mounting tensions between Egypt on one side and the imperial Western world on the other side. It seems that the pendulum of power swings towards the West and Egypt is destined either to sink or swim. The professor's analytical approach to the situation does not exclude the likelihood of a military conflict fuelled by the ideological struggle between USA and the Soviet bloc. As a powerless pawn on the chessboard of power structures, Egypt is steadily drawn towards a war it is not prepared for. The metonymical representation of Nasser as the whole Egypt implies that the professor is himself entangled in the grip of power relations. The debate flares up through the students' queries and the teacher asserts his position as an erudite figure whose power consists in filling the pupils' information gaps. The three parties(Nasser, the professor and his students) are represented to draw a microcosmic pyramid of power with the president at the top, the professor at the center

and the students at the bottom. By getting immersed in issues of culture, history and politics, Yousif craves to implicate himself in the structure of power in order to unravel its intricacies and construct a subjectivity of resistance.

Any essentialist tendencies are likely to be contested when Yousif is brought face to face with Dr. Ni'man, a Jewish professor, who is anxious about the upcoming war(277). This encounter is an opportunity for him to gather more information about what it means to be a Jewish academician and what it means to be a Zionist armed with an exclusivist reductionist discourse that feeds on bigotry and land appropriation. Yousif is astounded by the humanist ideals informing the professor's perspectives on the Middle East conflict. The war is anathema to him and peace is a longed for, but difficult-to-achieve dream. His concern for maintaining a stable friendly relationship with Yousif outside the realm of armed strife evinces a pacifist philosophy which venerates humanity beyond the narrow space of ideological labeling. The Palestinian Christian's positive response to the Jew's propensity to befriend him against all odds is another sign of permissiveness and tolerance amidst an air of political turmoil. The allegorical implication of this Jewish character is highlighted when he is referred to as a man of "all ages: Egyptian by birth, Jewish by faith and universal by attitude"(277). The lesson that can be learned from this interpersonal exchange bespeaks the wayward nature of identity and the fallacy of anchoring it in a monolithic parochial framework. Yousif is likely to call into question any essentialist leaning to look at the Jews from a univocal angle now that he initiates a dialogue with the Jewish professor.

Resistance, as Yousif conceptualizes it, is inevitable but it should incorporate tolerance if it is to be effective. The author creates a humanist context for the Jew and Christian to interact so as to provide a milestone for a possible intersubjective bond. The peripatetic

experience has endowed Yousif with a predisposition to avoid value judgments and engage in a dialogue with the imminent other in order to raise issues related to the Palestinian cause. It is wise of him to carry his people's woes and wishes to different exilic spaces and convince people who may be taken for enemies of the atrocities inflicted by the enemy:

> "As you know", the professor began, his head hobbling, "I am apolitical and basically agnostic. I know how you feel about the loss of your homeland to the Israelis. In all honesty, I empathize and sympathize with you and your people. How could my brethren do this to people who never did them any harm is unconscionable to say the least. But please don't let politics and religion stand in the way of true friendship. Politicians come and go. Causes change with the time. But human decency is to be cherished .(277)

This close contact between a Jew and a Christian evinces the possibility of establishing a human ambiance outside the prison house of political prejudices and violation of individual and collective rights. Like two little children who are at a loss for the ideological significance of self and other, Yousif and the professor stand out as the embodiment of Levinas's ethics. It seems that the perspective of holiness associated with the face of the other decimates Martin Heidegger's Mitsein( being with), which does not give sociality its Levinisian due because it is predicated on a superficial and transitory encounter with the other. The arm's length, passing companionship is subverted by Levinisian sense of responsibility for the stranger who is portrayed to be in need of a sympathy derived from such interpersonal encounters.

His face-to-face encounter with the professor consolidates the personal project of becoming a new man with novel tendencies and preoccupations that will set him on the right position to negotiate the inhumane machine of Israeli colonial power. He is inventing himself perpetually as this conviction underlies:

> "By now we should all be tired of all the well-meaning but useless demonstrations", he vehemently railed. "They have never won wars, not even small battles, venting

> anger and boosting morale are never enough. The wolves are once again knocking on our door. The predators are out to prowl. Where is Arab solidarity?"(278)

A few pages back Yousif is portrayed to show allegiance to those tenets of Arabism that address the issues of resistance and anti-colonialism. Though he has doubts about how such discursive formations can possibly inform action, he cannot fully and thoroughly extricate himself from the imperious injunctions embedded in discourse. Now he has reached a progressive stage in which he begins to seriously interrogate discursive unities and the extent to which they can be translated into performance. His itinerant experience is conducive to various encounters in which his perspectives, convictions and outlooks are contested. The last question seals his skepticism about how discourse is nothing more than literal marks which fail to address the current situation of the Arab disintegration. He is confident that the Arab solidarity doesn't exist outside the text in which it is inscribed. Following the intricate course of his journey, one can infer that Yousif has gone through the embryonic subjective[12], to nomadic and then to becoming. His romanticizing of the imminent Arab unity is losing the power it has been previously accorded in shaping the strategy of resistance.

In reconsidering the strategy of resistance, he speaks out against the unspeakable power structures in which the Arabs occupy a debased position. In fact they are confined to the subservient status of eunuchs who dare not stand up to the colonizer. All the non-conformism inherent in the revolutionary slogans as far as he is concerned is a gamut of mere signs imbued with aporetic moments destabilizing the logocentric implications

[12] The conceptualization of "the alternative" subject according to Gilles Deleuze goes through different but interlinked stages: "the embryonic subject(sujet larvaire), then the 'nomadic subject', and finally, ... in A *Thousand Plateaus*, 'becoming' .In Deleuze's thought , the starting point for formulating this alternative concept of the subject is the concept of 'affect' .According to Deleuze, affects are the basic components of mental activity. Now the concept of an affect does not entail the concept of subjective self-awareness .To understand an affect is to see it as a force, a particular type of energy and this energy does not presuppose self-consciousness... In this philosophical perspective the mind is a site of thoughts rather than a centre of consciuousness"(Due, *Deleuze* 10).

of Arabism. Now that he is gathering information about power relations between the colonizer and the colonized, it becomes possible for Yousif to interrogate the basic ideas and beliefs that legitimize current institutional forms of knowledge. The discourse that continues to reverberate with the echoes of striking at the heart of the colonial enterprise can be deemed as meaningless inscriptions which fail to signify the truth on the ground.

# Chapter 3

# Memory and Belonging in Shaw Dallal's *Scattered like Seeds* and Fawal's *The Disinherited*

## 3.1 A sense of belonging in exile

Thafer Allam is portrayed as the main Palestinian character wrestling with at least the effects of two identities, neither of which occupies the background of his epistemological being. His family undergoes the ordeal of the catastrophe and the survivors are scattered in different geographical landscapes. From Kuwait, Thaffer Allam flies to the USA in quest of building up a future where the bullets of aggression will not interfere with his educational prospects. His itinerant movement across space catapults him to the realm of nomadic and travelling sense of self. He is Palestinian by descent and American by virtue of marriage. In fact Fawal and Dallal "are emblematic of a recent trend in Palestinian literature: writing rooted in diasporic countries but focused in theme and content on Palestine" (Salaita, *Scattered like Seeds: Palestinian Prose Goes Global* 46-59). Thafer Allam's American wife, added to his university education in the States, somehow problematizes his conception of identity formation.

Getting immersed in his intellectual pursuit and family obligations makes the exilic space less of an alien background. The pangs of nostalgia for his parental home, though never to be cured, are lessened by starting a family elsewhere. His Yankee children, no doubt, are a balsam to his experience in USA. The emotional and psychological gap created by the oppressive system of power is partially filled with the warmth of family life. Be that as it may, scenes from home occasionally disrupt this equanimity and the echoes of childhood reverberate deep inside. After all, his relatives are dispersed under the coercive authority of the Zionists and his mother is unjustly trapped in a land that is supposed to impart sheer comfort and well-being. When his wife passes away, Thaffer finds it hard to shake off his sense of bereavement. Memory alone is not sufficient to

establish contact with his land of birth.

Travelling across space gives a strong impetus to the existential attachment to land. When Allam is given an opportunity to work in Kuwait, he takes it with alacrity. He is much more interested in a reconciliatory contact with space than anything else. All along the journey, he reflects on any chance that it has to offer. On the plane his encounter with an aged Jewish woman is not devoid of a cultural exchange in which both parties come to commiserate with the plight of each other. He is separated from his loved ones in the same way the Jewish passenger is. Both of them appear to be grappling with a crippling isolation as a result of the Zionist excesses. When he sets foot in Beirut, he experiences an equally informative encounter with a fellow Palestinian.

Adnan Amri epitomizes the dislocation experienced by the average Palestinian in exile. Like the other poverty-stricken compatriots in Lebanon, he sees the lives of Palestinians as reflections of a catastrophe, with Zionism - as Palestinian writer Fawaz Turki has put it -"having its day and the Palestinian [movement] its eclipse." Individual Palestinians end up in "the world of the exile. The world of the occupied. The world of the refugee. The world of the ghetto. The world of the stateless" (S.Migdal xviii). Turki's statement is echoed by Uncle Boulus in *The Disinherited* in which he cogently points out that they have a new name for the Palestinians who are referred to as refugees ( Fawal 11). The weight of this appellation and its ramifications do not mean a lot to Thaffer, who has worked his way through university in the States. The landscape of Lebanon, which is not delineated in a univocal fashion as it comprises rich and poor districts, destabilizes Thafer's perception of the nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Adnan Amri, who is down and out in Lebanon, initiates a dialogue with the protagonist, whose conception of American society is put to the test. Adnan is adept at

dismantling Thafer's claim that discrimination is not an issue in the States by pointing that he does not fall victim to racial prejudice because he happens not to be black (Dallal 55). The conversation goes on to cast light on the contentious issue of the intellectual exile as regards the project of counter-hegemony[1]. Now that Thaffer is aware of the straitened circumstances of his fellow ethnics in the fringed social space of Lebanon, he ruminates on his role as an intellectual abroad especially when he goes speechless at Amri's contention that Palestine is much more in need of its educated people now than ever before. The exchange underlies a kind of identity crisis experienced by a Palestinian exile who is torn apart. Part of him belongs to the USA, where his children were born, and the other part connects him to the occupied territories where his mother's life is still a daily struggle for survival.

The role performed by Ustaz Sa'adeh in the refugee camp in Jordan would appeal to Adnan Amri, who maintains that a Palestinian intellectual should be an agent of change. Unlike Thafer, who pursues his dreams in USA away from the horror of occupation and misery of the congested camps, Sa'adeh appoints himself a voluntary teacher preparing the refugee children to face the future and make their voice heard at a wider scale (Fawal 32). And though Thafer cannot conceal his sense of bewilderment as to the question of belonging, he is determined to actively engage in the act of resistance in his own ways (Dallal 56). The journey goes on in both novels to confer some ontological meaning on survival.

Thafer is revealed in a territory he has been to formerly. He is stunned by the newly-

[1] Eward Said attributes the oppression of his compatriots to powers other than Israel. He argues that "among Palestinians today, an increasingly urgent subject of discussion arises whenever we gather: the way in which we are treated, whether by Arab friends or Israeli enemies. Sometimes it is not easy to say where and by whom the treatment is worse." (Said, *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* 5) The difficulty involved in determining the enemy complicates counter-hegemonic actions.

acquired identity of a landscape that has once lain as a tiny spot in the desert. His sense of belonging acquires significance and further entrenches the question of identity crisis. The American Palestinian, who will soon be nominated as chief legal advisor of OAPEC, betrays a sense of indeterminacy that might be regarded as the outcome of assimilation. Being close to his parental home does not initially awaken relevant reminiscences about his past; conversely the unaccustomed climate and space bring to the forefront the American identification traits, which makes us enquire how much Palestinian is left in him:

> The wind is shrill, and the sea below is turbulent. The air conditioning roars in his room as he turns from side to side desperately trying to sleep this warm April night. The scene at the Osaga airport, where his children bade him farewell, will not let him rest. It doesn't let go. He gets up, turns on the light, and opens the curtain. Glittering lights move slowly in the distance, and the wind continues to whistle. He returns to his bed, once again trying to sleep. (Dallal 60)

The unpalatable climatic conditions mirror a perturbed psychological make-up. Sleeplessness does not emanate from Thafer's euphoria of getting close to Palestine, and by implication, within a stone's throw of his birthplace, but ironically from being away from 'home' in the USA. The undecidability of signification attached to the notion of home enshrouds the concept of identity in ambivalence. This situation compels the question: Does Thafer identify more closely with America, which has adequately nurtured his dreams, or with Palestine where other members of his family, friends and relatives are still trapped? After all, his previous encounter with Adnane Amri has opened his eyes to the misery of Palestinian refugees that are crammed in incredibly narrow spaces and branded as pariahs and trouble makers. Thafer, who decidedly commits himself to defending his compatriots and identifying with their common cause, still gravitates to life in the USA. Understandably enough, he embodies a sort of cultural hybridity which is made more or less demystified in a social gathering with some relatives living in Kuwait as refugees.

This duality in terms of identification finds a balanced expression as the events unfold and as Thafer is getting adapted to the socio-cultural fabric of the Kuwaiti society. In self -satisfactory terms, he comes to indulge a contact that rejuvenates his kinship with fellow Palestinians: “These are his people, who love him- he doesn’t want to make any mistakes or appear as though he has forgotten his heritage and his upbringing” (Dallal 111). He remembers how Professor Salah Makram sees the Palestinian in his countenance and the American in his deportment and behavior (ibid). Up to this juncture, he accounts for his identity within the contours of a third space; though he seems not to be in favour of compartmentalizing it averring that he is a Palestinian American, he looks at belonging from different perspectives.

Prior to his decision to migrate to Kuwait for professional purposes, he makes clear in one of his visits to Palestine that he no longer finds himself attached to the place of his birth. When his dying father insistently entreats him to stay, he just feels that he does not belong anymore and makes a decision to go back to the USA, where he fits. For the time being, however, he is seized by an arcane propensity to make a pilgrimage to his birthplace. Addressing his American wife, Mary Pat, he finds this mysterious craving for return quite inexplicable: “I don’t know what it is, Mary Pat. Maybe it’s the war, maybe it’s some other thing, but I have this strong yearning to return to the land of my birth” (Dallal 12). This ambivalent affiliation to both locations - USA and Palestine - is one of the distinctive features of the narrative wherein Shaw Dallal exquisitely portrays the interstitial position of a Palestinian American exile in quest of selfhood.

Yousif, on the other hand, is solely preoccupied with what has become of his Palestinian home and the prospect of a powerful return. Both he and thafer have carried the scars of occupation to the world of exile (Yousif lost his father and Thafer his brother early in his

life), but Yousif remains faithful to one single objective: how to survive the trauma of loss so as to carry out efficient acts of resistance. His sense of belonging is one dimensional; he belongs nowhere except in the occupied land of Palestine. Memories of the Zionist oppressive occupation do not weaken his resolve to cling to the existential project of self-determination. The onus is on him to become powerful enough to avenge his father's death on the hilltop trying to help the injured Basim, the intrepid combatant against the invaders (Fawal 109).

His experience of mobility acquaints him with the intricacies of life outside the homeland where he takes it upon himself to unravel some of the facets of the Arab history. A voyage to Kuwait occurs in tandem with a voyage inside remembering how he could imbibe the history of Syria in a serious attempt to understand the nature of the Israeli invasion. A focus on the past connects him to the roots and to a sense of self over time. He seems to position himself in the framework set by Edward Said for the intellectual. In a 1995 interview collected in *The Politics of Dispossession*, Said maintains that "the intellectual must maintain a margin of independence and must be an instrument of resurrecting 'lost memory"' (183). It is this lost memory that Yousif attempts to revive: "Of particular interest to him now were the lessons on ancient Syria. He could still see his green notebook and could still smell the ink with which he has written, in his fanciest style, the name of the invaders who had conquered and ruled Syria' (Fawal 185). Being a Christian does not undermine his pride on the glory of the Umayyad Dynasty in the Seventh and eighth centuries AD., when 'Damascus had become the centre of Islamic culture' (ibid).

Yousif's memories serve to put history at the forefront. Thafer's dialogues with the old Jewish woman and Adnan Amri are not devoid of these intimations of history as well,

but Yousif tends to establish himself as a unique historian, especially when he undertakes to go beyond the parochial approach of disclosing only the history of Israeli occupation. In a fashion similar to Shaw Dallal, Ibrahim Fawal uses space as a repository of historical information. When the plane hovers over Damascus, identity gains prominence once again. Yousif's memory is nourished by space as Damascus reminds him of Martyrs Square that witnessed the gruesome executions of a number of patriots by the Ottoman Turks ( Fawal 188). The "disciplinary hegemony," which is anathema to New Historicists as they find in interdisciplinarity a crucial means by which new knowledge is generated does not also appeal to both Fawal and Dallal, whose narratives transcend fiction to history. In this regard Payne argues that "the reexamination of the relationship between literature and history is a high priority for new historicists" ( 3). The dead bodies of the executed, which represent a historical fact, are put on display to intimidate the colonized subjects and keep any potential insurgency at bay. It seems that Yousif draws important lessons from such historical events that tend to energize his resolve to muse on identity and belonging and reflect on Basim's idea that blood spilt for the sake of freedom is not wasted (Fawal 188). His nationalist tendencies are aroused by place and space and function to consolidate his sense of belonging.

Belonging to a place which is no longer within the reach of the Palestinian refugee is not confined to memory outside the ambit of the controversial project of resistance. "Yousif's prospect is seeing Palestine discard the shackles of colonialism and indulge in freedom" (Fawal 226). This sort of conviction equips him and his fellows with a remarkable emotional and psychological support to survive the inconveniences of the present and make the dream of return a possible end goal. The characters of Shaw Dallal are united around this project that apparently breathes life in their sense of belonging. When Hani Amri

recounts a part of Ayoub Allam's history of valor on the battlefield, the son is brought into close contact with the father and his role in the process of anti-colonial struggle. These acts of resistance make Thafer proud of his lineage and feels that the past is still alive within him. This sensation gives a new dimension to his personality.

The dialogue with Hani Amri brings to the fore the question of how scattered Palestinians should conduct the issue of resistance. Thafer Allam asserts the legitimate nature of their cause but recommends a non-violent anti-colonial struggle as an appropriate measure to negotiate counter-hegemony. Unlike Hani Amri, who favours armed resistance in response to the intense violence perpetrated by the Zionist power machine, Dallal's protagonist leans towards pacifism. He seems unwilling to follow in his father's steps though he takes much pride in his duty towards his country: "He controlled the hills. He and his forces hid during the day and drove the British forces out of their minds at night. Father knew every hill, every cave and every inch of the homeland" (Dallal 97). The encounter with Adnan Amri and his brother is therefore a reminder of how a sense of belonging gathers momentum within the context of the contentious subject of resistance.

Many other interpersonal contacts are anchored in the past to feed the present with the force of belonging to a well-defined geographical background. Thafer's meeting with his brother, Kamal, centers upon the prospect of owning a nuclear plant to be able to confront the Israeli power and therefore recover the homeland. To convince him to invest his expertise in the project of owning a nuclear bomb, Kamal turns the clock back to remind him once again of Ayoub Allam, who will be proud of him (Dallal 125). His pacifism, however, acts as a bulwark against violence even if he owns to teetering on the verge of it now that he has been prevented from visiting his mother in the occupied territories. The experience of being precluded from crossing the borders to Palestine has

changed him, but he still believes that violence is not the right answer. His fear of being haunted by the specters of the past is confirmed when the narrator reports his encounter with his father. This scenery further accentuates the likelihood of changing his pacifist perspective, especially because the narrative ends with Thafer's firm decision not to return to the USA:

> Thafer walks to the living room, and there is his father wearing his military uniform and holding a white robe and a white headcloth. Thafer, my son, he says, I'm going to retire and take off this uniform and wear this white robe and headcloth in its place. I am going to give you the uniform to wear. His father takes off his uniform and hands it over to Thafer. Wear it, Thafer, he says, wear it. Do it now! Right now. (Dallal 250)

This exchange can be construed as Thafer's undecided stand on the question of anti-Israeli conflict. It seems that he is continuously interrogating his pacifism, but he is quite doubtful about the trend resistance should take. This dream-like interaction reveals that armed resistance is not altogether excluded from his options. The fact that he neither accepts, nor turns down his father's offer imparts a sense of ambivalence to his final attitudes towards the issue of counter-hegemony. This ambivalence coupled with his determination not to go back to the USA shows that Thafer Allam turns out to be an active character that begins to question his firmly-held convictions.

Though he does not conceal his dissatisfaction with how things go in OAPEC, where he works as an advisor, it is definite that he has decided not to go back to USA. The dual nature of his belonging does not shake his confidence in defending a cause. His encounter with Souhaila, a Palestinian widow in exile, encourages him to stay behind and consider the possibility of matrimony. In fact, like Salwa in *The Disinherited*, she is the embodiment of Palestine. She is employed in such a way as to mitigate the identity crisis that has so long confounded Thafer's trajectory as a Palestinian American. She functions as a kind

of umbilical cord that would fortify his bond with his ancestral land:

> "I'm sorry, my friend, my countryman, my love. I admire your strength so much. I do want to marry you. . . Maybe we are already married. Our marriage is different. It's a marriage that death does not part. Our marriage cannot be broken by separation. And when our homeland is liberated, and our people come home, we will have a wedding, and your mother and mine will yodel, the way your relatives in Hawalli yodeled when you first arrived in Kuwait, the way the old Palestinian woman yodeled for you when you went to visit her. And we don't have to be sad" (Dallal 265).

It is exactly the same relation that ties Yousif to Salwa; it is succinctly a dedicated allegiance to a cause. The reciprocal love between Thafer and Souhaila is by extension the adoption of the Palestinian cause. The way they celebrate the potential union bristles with strong emotions and acts as a reminder of the inevitability of return home. The longed-for longevity of this couple bears witness to their desire to stay alive to attend the festivities of victory over the colonial machine. The bond - in fact a connection that serves to lift their spirits in exile - will turn into a merry wedding when the Palestinian people establish communion with their land.

When Salwa gets lost during the notorious march into exile, Yousif desperately needs her reappearance since her presence is a powerful motivator to grapple with the conditions in which they are incarcerated. Her emergence is a matter of life- and- death as her duty extends beyond that of a wife to that of a partner in the project of freedom fighting. Her absence makes him awkwardly flustered and his reveries envision a reunion that will impart emotional energy to the ontological enterprise of self-determination: "She had told him to join the struggle or forget all about finding her should they get separated. Even after a daunting day, she was still the same spirited Salwa, forever committed to the cause. And he loved her *iltizam* . . . " (Fawal 162). The commitment with which she clings to her cause is not dissimilar to Souhaila's determination to stay where she belongs turning

down Thafer's offer to go with him to USA. More important, she manages, through her unshakable patriotism, to set a good example for Thafer, who is compelled to consider the possibility of not going back to his adopted country of residence.

To slake his thirst for home and develop the burgeoning project of emancipation, Yousif sets forth to Lebanon without Salwa. The author's attempt to introduce him alone is probably meant to credit her with the emotional support she is capable of providing whenever they are presented together. The beautiful landscape of Lebanon is far from redeeming in her absence. Life without her is unendurable and she alone 'can make it bearable' (Fawal 177). In her absence he finds solace in a voyage back to childhood when he first set foot in the Lebanese space. These memories are apparently requisite in moments of adversity and homesickness. Taking refuge in memories serves to dispel despair and give belonging a legitimate status.

## 3.2 Memory and the reality of occupation

Whereas his Yankee children are revealed to revel in their daily existence, Thafer is lost in another painful rumination, which mirrors part of the ordeal he has to wrestle with: "He wonders where his aging mother is. He imagines her walking helplessly between the war-torn native country, thirsty and hungry under the blazing June sun. He imagines her drained and exhausted, clutching a few belongings in a sack or suitcase, trudging aimlessly with nowhere to go" (Dallal 14). How excruciating it is to be imprisoned in your land with nowhere to live! How horrific it is to be confronted with the residual remnants of a space that was once home to a closely knit community! In fact, this memory betrays the mental anguish of Thafer, whose kinship with his country and mother has been broken

by the oppressive system of colonialism. We are transported back in time and space to be informed that the legacy of occupation continues to matter for the protagonist, who lets us know that part of him belongs elsewhere; for though he is tied to America by marriage and education, he is tied to Palestine by descent and territorial belonging. His present and past obligations impinge on him as a nomadic exile concerned with roots along an intricate system of routes.

From his access to the living situation of his mother through the power of his mind's eye, he makes a shift to delineate an early episode of his coercive departure into exile. In words infused with emotions, he describes his spectacular ability to find a way to redress the balance between university studies and a part-time work on the farm. Gripped by a crippling isolation, he expects to derive sheer solace from his parents' letters that were unfortunately "slow in arriving" (Dallal 16). Soon, he delves deeper into bygone times whose long-term repercussions for his psychological well-being further accentuate the unspeakable barbarity of the colonial economy. He recalls how "his mother braved the intensifying violence, taking him and his baby sister to Tulkaram in April 1948 and leaving his father and brother Rassem in Jerusalem..." (ibid). These memories of forlorn childhood exacerbate his sense of solitude and homesickness at Cornell's University, wherein he is still not adapted to his new life situations. What makes his plight almost unbearable is a yearning to pursue his ambitions in the USA amidst the intermittent interference of memories that awaken the dormant horror generated by the machine of terror.

His reminiscences are in fact exasperating. He recalls his predicament as a child without childhood. The Israeli air raids disrupt any sort of peace and equanimity he and his family might have hitherto cherished. The bombs drop on a defenseless people who have no efficient method to retaliate except by emptying their intimate space for the intruders.

Thafer, who is apparently saddled by memories of terror, needs a great deal of intrepidity and courage to survive the consequent psychological trauma and attend to his intellectual pursuit as he strives for a new identity formation. After a considerable lapse of time, he is married with four Yankee children, but he is often seized by a feeling of nostalgia for his parents' home. On-board a jet flying to Lebanon, his memories for the past link him to a former life:

> At about 5 o'clock that evening the jet hovers over Beirut, then lands. The clear sky and the Mediterranean remind him of an earlier time long forgotten. It is an old sensation that sends a chill over his body. Holding a small handbag and not knowing which direction to take, he descends from the plane into the warm and disorderly airport. He follows a few passengers into an untidy building. (ibid 44-45)

Feelings of nostalgia and awe take hold of Thafer. The space of Lebanon kindles memories that are beginning to wane in response to the passing of time. Being confounded by this sensation, he receives some warmth from the airport, ramshackle as it is. His arrival at the point of departure, Kuwait, marks a unique moment in his personal history. Strong emotions exude from his encounter with Mama Adla, who yodels at the sight of the new comer. His meeting with relatives and loved ones gives free rein to other memories:

> There are tears in her eyes as she yodels. Thafer himself struggles to hold back tears. Uncle Muneer and his children, as well as other relatives are waiting for him. Thafer glances at his father's picture hanging on the wall. He can't look at it without his eyes singing. He has never seen it before. It must have been taken when his father was a youth. (Dallal 80)

The presence of Mama Adla imparts substantial significance to the absence which is made retrievable by dint of excavating the past for memories that go into shaping the characters' identity. His interaction with her unleashes an outburst of strong emotions. The conditions defining this encounter enable him to establish a close affinity with moments of yore. The emotional reunion with the fellow Palestinians is simply ineffable and the act of his father

being immortalized by the picture hanging on the wall further strengthens the bond between the valiant warrior and his son, who begins to seriously ponder the possibility of bearing the torch that has been formerly held by Ayoub Allam. In her own idiosyncratic way Mama Adla celebrates Thafer's return, which is fervently blessed as she compares the returnee to a timber (Dallal 80). This analogy is apparently meant to place a premium on identity as a dynamic concept. The physical change - leaving 'small and tender' and coming back 'as solid as timber'- emphasizes an overall growth that makes the protagonist capable of being involved in issues that matter for him as a Palestinian with all maturity and dedication.

Parts of the story are narrated in retrospection to allow the reader access to facets of the history of occupation. Memory serves to unveil the screen of what it means to be enclosed in a space that is no longer as peaceful as it used to be. Thafer uses his memory to relate the enormity of the terror unleashed by the machinery of colonial power; the scars of childhood can never heal and their pain is still eating into his depths. The farm, which is the source of the family's livelihood and the space with which they are familiar, is confiscated from them and the children are enveloped by fear whenever they have a predilection for its access. The agricultural products yielded by the farm fortify the bond between man and landscape, between him and the soil wherein his roots go deep. More than that, it can be represented as a site which bears souvenirs that cannot be effaced overnight. In spite of the extreme danger looming on the horizon, Thafer and his nephew put their lives in jeopardy and reach the farm after a walk of five miles. Darkness, which is usually feared by children, gives them the hope of escaping the glare of the Israeli patrolling forces. They set off for the march at night to reap the local produce and come back with their mule safe and sound:

> The door to the farmhouse was broken. Most of the furniture had been removed and what remained was damaged. The house appeared to have been ransacked. Thafer tied the mule to a tree. Then they each took a jute bag and went into the fields. Thafer gathered cucumbers and onions, while his nephew picked tomatoes and squash. Then both picked oranges, lemons and tangerines. They were about to load up the mule when a powerful beam of light flashed in their direction. It came from an Israeli patrol, either in a jeep or an army tank. The two threw themselves to the ground. Thafer remembers how they were shaking as they hid among the plants. They were petrified. "Don't breathe", he had whispered to his nephew (Dallal 81-82).

This nocturnal trip occurs amidst the perils of being caught and punished by the Israeli forces. It lucidly mirrors the harsh reality of occupation as regards land appropriation and the act of terrorizing the natives whenever they make a strong claim to it. The murky landscape protects the children from the callous stares of the usurpers and offers an invaluable opportunity to identify with the bountiful produce of the native land. The damage done to their property lends credence to the savagery of the colonial arbitrary authority, which can be challenged in the presence of individual free will. The fact that they can return with a good load of fruits and vegetables without the notice of the invaders, indicates that power can be destabilized though it is ubiquitous, omnipresent and ineluctable. There are always strategies to interrogate repressive power structures as long as the dominated maintain a will for self-determination. Thafer and his nephew can challenge the Israeli authority, though fleetingly, and celebrate a passionate reunion with their land.

These childhood memories soon occupy the background so as to foreground the experience of mobility that subsequently acquires significance in Thafer's life. The intricacies that mark his journey from Kuwait to the USA further complicate the relationship between the colonizing and the colonized subjects. The homeland is in dearth of stability at all levels and Thafer looks back on the route to exile that casts more light on the

plight of a Palestinian citizen stepping his way towards a new identity. Through space, he opens the door of the past to report the conditions and circumstances surrounding his first flight from Kuwait to the USA. In his account, it becomes palpable that the identity of space, like that of a people, is polymorphic and can be conceptualized within the ambit of undecidability and indeterminacy. In 1951, the landscape that was dotted with desolate tents is now decorated with sumptuous high buildings. Onboard the first plane, Thafer sets off for Damascus and from there to USA, where he is compelled to experience another level of exilic life. His departure occurs amidst numerous hardships. The sandstorm, which keeps the aircraft from taking off, stands for weak visibility that engulfs Thaffer's vision as he migrates to the north, to the unfamiliar, to the unknown. In Damascus, the flight is delayed by the assassination of King Abdullah of Transjordan: "He remembers how he aimlessly roamed the ancient streets of Damascus as he waited for the borders to reopen" (Dallal 119).

The journey is not smooth for Thafer, who is caught in the interrogation process following the event of King Abullah's shooting. In Amman, he is further interrogated for identification. His name links him with that of his father and Ayoub Allam is mentioned to rekindle his memories of the past. He remembers his conversation with him on the issue of leaving for USA and how he shows objection to his departure; when he attributes his decision to the advice of a priest who informs him that USA is where he can scrape his way through college, his mother expresses dissatisfaction because the distance is too long (Dallal 121).

Today's Amman is different. Thafer's impression about it is positive as he expects it to be more peaceful than ever. His reverie is reassuring and "the contrast between the Amman he saw in 1951, a town of about seventy thousand, and the Amman he will soon see, a

city of about a million, will be striking" (Dallal 123). However, he cannot help expressing dismay at one of the infamous legacies of colonialism. It is the absence of democracy which is incarnated in the person of king Hussein of Jordan. This fact dispels all the self-confidence he has been endowed with and he has to take the necessary precautions when he gets to Amman. A Palestinian who has indulged in ideals of democracy and justice in his adopted country and who has escaped the Israeli persecution for years has become substantially critical of the absolute power of despotic regimes. Colonial and neocolonial excess is anathema to him now that he has developed a new sense of personality; after all he has studied law and nuclear energy in the USA and become a highly intellectual figure with a spectacular propensity to interrogate the status quo. He seems to obliquely refer to the Arab rulers as puppets serving external agendas.

The downright pressure put on him by the colonial apparatus further complicates his pacifism. He has always been skeptical about the use of military force for the sake of self-determination. But being humiliated at the borders when he attempts to cross to Tulkaram to see his aged mother brings back painful memories, a chronic legacy of colonialism:

> He sees his youthful mother wearing a bright red scarf, drawing her dark brown hair into a bun. He sees her raking leaves and picking up dead branches from his family's farm and feeding them to the fire of the old -fashioned oven to bake bread. I hoped to make it, Mother. I did but the cowards wouldn't let me enter... I'm a grown man now, Mother. But the child in me yearns to put his head in your soft lap. I want to listen to your loving voice. I want to feel your soft hand on my brow... But the cowards won't let me come home. (Dallal 135)

His memory of his mother is imbued with an overflow of powerful feelings. Being prohibited entry to his parental land does not occlude visualizing some aspects of former life in her company. The elements of space associated with such reminiscences attribute a

realistic touch to the plight of a people whose dispersion prevents them from a possible reunion. The impending occupation and its corollary psychological unrest do not altogether interfere with the ecstasy and solace derived from the solid rapport that ties Thafer to space. Being unable to trespass the alleged borders, he awakens his dormant emotions delving into childhood moments to bring back to the fore what has once conferred meaning on his life, simple as it is. The mother figure is presented in terms laden with a craving for a face-to face encounter with home.

Likewise, Yousif introduces the disinherited - their wishes and frustrations - through the prism of memory. Space and its components trigger off positive and negative aspects of the past. A simple object in the motherland may have a soothing function in the world of exile. Yousif's mobility is concomitant with a psychological journey that may lessen the tensions of the present or further intensify them. Childhood is a period he cannot easily forget: "When he reached the carob tree by the pond, Yousif was filled with memory. His sigh was loud enough for Hikmat to enquire about it. Yousif related how he and his friends Amin and Isaac spent many hours at the spot, trying to catch live birds for his aviary" (Fawal 127). The same spot that has once marked times of bliss and born the imprints of strong bonds between a Christian, a Muslim and a Jew, will soon become a thing of the past and will acquire another status in the history of dislocation. The carob tree will also be a reminder of the shameless exodus and the ordeal associated with it. The fact that it is evergreen and able to withstand harsh weather conditions makes it an embodiment of the refugees' sense of personality that is characterized by steadfast resoluteness in the face of adversity.

The true meaning of this adversity is experienced by Salwa in her absence. Her disappearance is probably a deliberate attempt on the part of the narrator to place her in front

of the squalor of refugee life. She can hardly endure the pernicious impact of the colonial apparatus on the well-being and stability of Palestinian refugees:

> Everything I saw brought tears to my eyes. Women washing clothes and dumping the dirty water in open sewers. Men and women running to the fields to relieve themselves. Trash everywhere. Sick babies dying from lack of care. Children crying from hunger and thirst. Husbands and wives quarrelling for no reason than frustration. . . . I kept asking myself what they had done to be uprooted and disinherited. They had no harm to anyone, and look at them. They were like sheep ready to be slaughtered. (Fawal 124)

Salwa is given voice to recount the tragic incident of the exiles who are trapped in a situation they cannot escape. The grimy conditions show with clarity the depth of wretchedness that becomes the lot of their everyday existence. They are incessantly grappling with their quandary in a desperate attempt to find a way out of their total misery. What exasperates the narrator is her inability to find a convincing explanation to this experience of unspeakable horror. Her resort to rhetorical questions, the answer of which she knows in advance, is meant to reflect the intensity of her mental anguish and the psychological breakdown of the refugees. The pernicious impact of their repulsive way of life on intimate domestic relations is informed by the absence of stability that has hitherto marked marital life. The repressive structures of colonial power throw their lives into utter confusion. Salwa identifies with their state contending that their dislocation is groundless; it is the outcome of the slave-master dialectics. Their frailty and helplessness, their inertia and listlessness are rendered by being compared to sheep waiting for their final doom. These memories of the near past serve to exacerbate the overall unrest repeatedly engulfing the characters, but there comes a time when space is deemed to have a redeeming feature.

When Yousif ventures on a journey back home, he develops a behavioral intention to suspend the gnawing reminiscences of colonial atrocities and their repercussions and

get a modicum of relief away from the tensions of exile. The gentle breeze of home does not merely mitigate his anxiety; it also stirs up his quiescent memories of the pre-exilic period. The hills are within reach, and their presence gives life to moments that have so long shaped part of the Palestinian history of bondage. Simple incidents that have imparted meaning to his former life are recollected through the powerful mediation of space and its identifying constituents. The breeze, petty as it is, ties him to the past through remembering a song he would like to repeat at full blast if it were not for the extreme fear of attracting the attention of the Israeli forces. He would love to hear its echoes reverberate in the distance; he wants to bestow life on the hills that have endured the shelling of the invaders, but he feels it necessary to curb this desire and relish his reveries in a land that has so long born the brunt of the savage intrusion.

Following his return from Ardallah, Yousif fetches a set of simple objects whose symbolic dimension is more important than their material significance. The retrieved jewelry is much less needed for its monetary value than its role as a repository of the family history. Surprisingly, it is the seemingly trivial key that most appeals to the mother. The joy it gives her is ineffable and its importance in her eye outstrips everything at her disposal:

> He was struck by how much that key meant her. More, perhaps than the jewelry he had brought back. Could objects unlock memories and be just as powerful as valuable objects? They connect hopes and dreams, no doubt. But was his mother seriously entertaining the thought. . . and anticipating the day when she would return home and use that key to open the door of the house she and her husband had built? (Fawal 144)

The symbolic implication of the key is simply underscored and its emotional significance lies in its ability to unlock hidden memories that function to allay the harsh reality of colonial hegemony. This simple object is meant to nourish the family's hopes and the prospect of return to Ardallah to open the door of the house that has been occupied by

the elderly Jewish couple from Bulgaria. Exile does not entail breaking ties with their land and does not preclude musing on the existential project of reunion with the occupied territories. Whether this dream is realistic or farfetched does not underestimate a people's tendency to cling to the right of eradicating the shackles of humiliation and initiating intrepid acts of resistance. It may also be construed as the epitome of motivation that will energize their human resolve, move them from intention to action and enable them to set goals and work for them.

Yousif and Salwa's encounter with Amin in Kuwait does not occur without unleashing memories that link them to Palestine. They revel in his presence and celebrate a union that reminds them of bygone times. Like the key that transports the mother back in time and refreshes her memory of home, the aviary, left behind, consolidates Yousif's affinity with Ardallah, where his birds are still trapped. The fact that it is a current motif in the novel, subverts any claim to its ordinary usage. Whenever Ardallah is mentioned it is with the intention of making recourse to simple objects and events that are laden with sensations. The opportunity is given to the Muslim and Christian to revive their friendship, which compelling circumstances of displacement do not alter, nor weaken. They are brought together to share the experiences of the present and those of the past. The former is characterized by coercive adventure of mobility in quest of better exilic conditions, and the latter is made recourse to through inward journeys whose single destination is the ancestral land, a repository of personal and colonial history. The presence of Amin and Yousif foregrounds the absence of the Jewish Isaac that used to be the third element of the intimate triad before they were parted by bigotry, which is harbored by the Zionist ethos.

Parts of the narrative are built around the characters' tendency to reach out to their

former life in Ardallah. What imparts significance to their homeland is the events, intimate or otherwise, that take place within its contours and how the Israeli encroachment upon the people's peaceful existence plays havoc with their ways of life. When he recalls his father, Yousif associates his name with pacifism: "The doctor was a conscientious and genuine pacifist who opposed all violence –especially upon the heels of harrowing world war... He was a realist. He thought the outcome was predictable" (Fawal 198). He remembers how his stand on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict was conducive to a heated controversial debate over the money his father insisted on spending on the establishment of a hospital for the general benefit of the public, but he was forced to relinquish this plan when he received bitter protests from the masses. Yousif has to abstain from this repellent memory that would take him to the tragic death of his father while dressing Basim's wounds: "He shook off his memories and returned to the present. His chin winkled and his eyes misty, he hugged Jihan again" (ibid). This backward movement is at times relieving and at others painful and the characters alternately travel between the present and the past. This bears testimony to such an unbalanced psychological state now that they are expelled out of their familiar surroundings.

Through memory, therefore, the reader can fathom the intensity of the colonial excess and its inhuman atrocities. The past bristles with the despair and frustration of being expelled from home and the present is fraught with the unbearable depredations of exilic life. The solace that can be traced through visualizing good moments of peaceful family life within Ardallah is short-lived but it is a critical coping mechanism. Appalling episodes interfere with the spurious equanimity family members seem to enjoy. A succinct description of their abode in exile compels Yousif to relate events that further shed light on the legacy of the brutal colonial system. People are forced outside their land without

private belongings that would enable them to turn the clock back: "He [Yousif] did not have a single picture of his late father, as Salwa's mother had not a single picture of her husband. All she had was the memory of him lying dead in the wilderness and the horror of having left him unburied and prey to wild animals" (Fawal 117). This earlier memory partly explains Yousif's voyage back home in a subsequent moment of the plot. The things he retrieves from his visit to Ardallah, simple as they are, serve to establish the family's kinship with the roots.

In the early moments of the narrative images from Ardallah are not hard to construct. A simple song is capable of giving a balm to Yousif's ears or deepening his mental anguish, especially when it is sung by his mother in a duet with Basim. The lyrics are familiar enough to resonate with scenes from home. The effect is one of nostalgia and melancholy. "Bassim's low, hushed voice flowed like balsam, soothing and yet lifting the scabs off old wounds. . . How enchanting and genuinely touching, Yousif felt, tears welling in his eyes" (Fawal 39). The claim that characters exult in memories and express disappointment about them is evidenced by the narrator's allusion to the ability of that piece of music to allay the feeling of depredation associated with dispossession and displacement and at the same time remove the scabs off old scars. The impact of these memories and others is so powerful that the consequent conflicting emotions bring Yousif closer to the vicinity of his appropriated homeland and how to get to it. All these intricate reveries take place in his mind's eye in a sleepless night when a set of memories occupy him in such a way that a visit home is a matter of life and death. It is a kind of pilgrimage intended for purification, blessing and coming back with memory-inducing transparent objects, the like of the key and the doctor's pipe. The ecstasy of setting off for his parental home is mingled with the potential danger of being intercepted by the Israeli military forces or being attacked by

the invaders of the house. These mixed emotions once more underlie the plight of a typical Palestinian refugee, whose allegiance to the cause is entrenched in his consciousness.

We come to know more about the history of colonialism in the occupied territories retrospectively. Memory is not only a subjective mental process that serves to relieve pain at times and exacerbate it at others. It can also be informative as when Yousif introduces the Ottoman Empire as the sick man of Europe:

> . . . the Zionists offered to purchase - yes, purchase - Palestine from Turkey. The price: paying off the debts of the dying Empire. Just imagine their effrontery to think our country was up for sale was no less insufferable - no less shameless - than Britain's promise to establish a national home for the Jews in our midst. On our land - land we were born on, we worked on, and we died on for more than a millennium. All this devilishness was conducted behind our backs. As if Palestine were empty. As if we literally did not exist. (Fawal 97)

The reductive ethos of colonial discourse is emphasized in this extract. The Zionists look on Palestine as a product for sale; it is not an autonomous country with rights of its own. This commodification is further complicated by Britain when it gives Palestine out to the Jews for settlement; the Palestinian land is to be shamelessly appropriated and the people on it are reduced to nothingness. It is regarded as an empty dark space awaiting the light of the civilizing mission. The inhabitants of Palestine are denied their statehood and their history and culture are erased. Edward Said avers that Palestinians have been driven out of their homeland and therefore scattered throughout the world. For him, the Zionist slogan 'a people without land [the Jews] for a land without people [Palestine] saw Palestine, 'as the European imperialist did, as an empty territory paradoxically "filled" with ignoble or perhaps even dispensable natives' ( Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 4). This reductionist view of space and its dwellers as a tabula rasa shows to Said that the British and later Zionist occupation of Palestine represent a further example of the history of European colonialism;

however, this version underscores the Messianic aspect of the 'civilizing mission.'

Memory further functions to unravel the intricacies of the colonial history. When Yousif fails to attend to the content of the newspaper (Fawal 99), we feel that he is transported to the previous historical periods when Palestine began to attract the colonial ambitions as if it has always been destined to the hegemony of the outside powers. The Zionist–promoted occupation makes him susceptible to the porosity and transparency of the native space. The poignancy of displacement sensitizes him to the historicity of the vast acres of the homeland: "He could envision the waves of storming invaders leaving the skulls of their dead and the hooves of their horses on every inch of this sacred land" (ibid). Yousif, who has been formerly concerned with deriving pleasure from simple daily preoccupations –the birds in his aviary and the company of Amin and Isaac –is now assiduously engaged in tracing the genesis of colonial history.

This account is not merely intended to look at space as a palimpsest of information about the reality of occupation, but also to foreground the atrocities of the Israeli power machine. Yousif's assessment of recent past is redolent with the echoes of coercion. The infamous exodus has broken out and people are now compelled to forsake their homes under the muzzle of a gun. These haunting memories reveal the dark side of the Zionist apparatus and its indiscriminate implementation of force to eject people from their land with nothing to fall back on except the memories that still tie them to Ardallah and the tenacious confidence in the legitimacy of their cause. With 1948, in the words of Fawaz Turki, "The nation of Palestine ceased to be. Its original inhabitants, the Palestinian people, were dubbed Arab refugees, sent regular food rations by the UN, and forgotten by the world" (1). The onus is on Yousif, the implied author, to lay bare these human rights abuses by making of the text a site that maintains a web of affiliations with the world.

The story is woven in such a way as to provide a meticulous account of the political, social and historical structures and mechanisms of colonialism.

The inner life of the characters is presented to be so chaotic and their existence is bearable only through harboring retrospective feelings of loss when the overall stability comes to an end. When the characters are given voice, they mostly make recourse to their former life in Ardallah to draw a comparison with their current situation. The change visited upon their identity as they depart from citizens to refugees is palpably depicted by the characters themselves or by the narrator who seems to have a full knowledge of what it means to be expelled from one's homeland. Coercively transported into a hostile environment, the refugees are crippled by isolation in a claustrophobic space that has no bearing on their home. The narrator takes us into the inner recesses of Salwa's family who are compelled to lead a miserable life away from where they used to be ensconced. Silence does not entail a sense of serenity or equanimity or thus the narrator seems to point out when he refers to the repercussions of exile for Salwa and her loved ones: "Her mother slept in one bedroom and her brothers, Zuhair and Akram, slept in another. It was a far cry where they had lived in Ardallah, but there was no sense now comparing standards of living. What standards? What lifestyle? That was then and now was now" (Fawal 117).

What can be related by dint of memory when the characters are made articulate is accounted for by the narrator when they are consumed by a brooding silence and when language deserts them. He exquisitely uses words to paint pictures displaying downright frustration in a setting wherein they are chronically travelling between Ardallah and the exilic destination. Through the narrator's mouth, we come to realize that Salwa finds her retreat from the stark conditions of exile by drawing a comparison between now and then.

Ironically, this retreat catapults her to a space she can no longer access physically as it is under the firm control of the Israeli forces. However, its import lies in its impact on memory which is kept alive through intrinsic backward and forward movements. Though this inner nomadic way of life is not devoid of nostalgia, it is fundamentally necessary for each character to eschew a potential threat of amnesia. Remaining closely tied to Ardallah through memory keeps the reader well-informed about the atrocities of the colonial enterprise and empowers the characters' resolve for return. A perpetual visualization of scenes from home is relaxing when it takes on the form of reveries and painful when it represents the harsh reality of colonization. However, it is a requisite for survival in a godforsaken environment where the individuals are down and out.

While Salwa can see Ardallah in her mind's eye and by so doing gives a fresh impetus to her memory, Yousif is able to physically reach it along with Hikmat. It is the apple tree whose roots go down in the native soil that reminds him of his home and of what life was like prior to the Zionist encroachment on their land. Like the carob tree mentioned before, it induces pre-colonial sensations and a bitter taste of being deracinated: "He could remember his mother fussing at the craftsmen who were building the house, and later on his father in his bathrobe early in the morning bending forward to prune roses, and the maid Fatima entering the side door, by the cistern pump, bearing a basket of groceries on her head" (Fawal 31). This energizing set of recollections is needed to carry on the hazardous journey and cast aside the paralyzing fears that could interfere with the characters' nocturnal march. The dwellers of the house, associated with the past, are portrayed to revel in an air of unity and togetherness that has been unfairly eliminated by the oppressive system of power. The house is set up only to be occupied, the father is shot dead while his spirit remains alive in his son's soul, the sense of unity that has

marked their former life has simply been disintegrated and the local flora and produce are no longer at their disposal. What follows is a painful experience of dislocation that gives rise to a brazen exodus to exile.

Burdened with the pain of nostalgia and the dispersion of the remaining members of his family, Thafer flies to the USA hoping to bury his mental anguish in higher education. His educational prospects have been accomplished, but the emotional gap generated by the effrontery of occupation is only partly filled by his Yankee children. Like the main characters of Fawal, he seeks solace in travelling across space and time. As we have seen before, his arrival in Kuwait paradoxically reveals his attachment to the USA when he can't help staying up awake in that no-longer familiar background, but as time goes by he becomes more acquainted with it through his encounters with compatriots and relatives. His meeting with Souhaila, like Yousif's bond with Salwa, marks a turning point in his identification. His affinity with his adopted country is on the wane inexorably now that Souhaila, the epitome of Palestine, is near. The way she is described in this extract elevates her to the status of the homeland, whose magic effect on Thafer is lucid:

> He can't go to sleep. It is as though he is embracing his homeland. Hearing her breathe, he feels comforted and protected by her presence. Her breasts remind him of the gentle hills of his homeland, her smooth soft skin of its plains, and her long light brown hair of the rays of its sun. He wants to tell her that he loves her eyes and her lips, that he loves to hear her whisper softly in his ear, that he's comforted when she is with him, that he loves every word she says in defense of their heritage... He wants to tell her that he loves her because she understands his emotions and feels his pain. Do I dare tell her, he asks himself, that I want to go back to the United States? That I can't continue working with Idiots like Ziyad and Hamdan? ... That I want her to go with me to the United States? (Dallal 213)

The relationship between Thafer and Souhaila extends beyond carnal love to embrace the realm of spirituality. Her presence is not that of an ordinary woman; she is equated with the inaccessible land of Palestine. She is there to assuage his fiery passion for moving across

the bogus frontiers to the other side where the primordial traces of Palestinian identity lie just below the surface. Her body is not delineated in lewd terms, nor in a lascivious fashion but as the embodiment of confused feelings of hope and despondency. It is implemented by the narrator in such a way as to ignite Thafer's memory of the natal geography that lies just around the corner but seems outside their reach. At this juncture, before the arrival of his children, he is still attracted to the United States because the American traits of his personality make him unable to work with corrupt obtuse colleagues who seem to put their private interests before those of the cause. Subsequent encounters with this woman, who is the personification of Palestine, lessens the intensity of his attachment to USA and fortifies his affinity with his ancestral homeland.

His commitment to the cause is sealed by what happened at the bridge. He is seemingly haunted by the inability to trespass on the borders that are seized by the Israeli power. His memories of that event reveal him to be gearing towards a new personality. His tendencies and penchants are likely to undergo a change, especially when he decides not to return to America and reflects on the diverse options of resistance. Immersed in a monologue, Thafer avows that this compulsive change places him closer to his father obliquely acknowledging a newly-adopted course of counter hegemony. The previously-accounted for dream in which he meets his father bespeaks a desire to alter his strategies of resistance. His former censure of armed conflict needs to be rethought now that he is precluded access to his motherland. The genesis of this compulsive feeling is traced to Beirut, where he has witnessed the unspeakable tribulations of the Palestinian refugees. This first-hand experience of horror coupled with the encounter with his father in the dream affect Thafer in such a way that his convictions and principles are put to the test. The monologue stirs his memory into action and introduces him to be teetering on the brink

of a novel identification. His manufactured beliefs and credos are seriously interrogated. Like Yousif, who has always been a staunch pacifist until his father is martyred, Thafer admits his change to himself and to the reader in these words:

> Yes, you have! [changed] What happened at the bridge changed you, and you know it. You've become like Ayoub Allam, the warrior. It all began in Beirut, at the refugee camp. That impassioned young officer of the PLO, Adnan Amri touched you with his anger. The ghetto in Hawalli tore your heart. Your brother Kamal and what he said about Ayoub Allam fuelled the smoldering fire within you. Then those encounters with Souhaila, your country woman awakened that slumbering passion hidden within you. But it was the humiliation at the bridge, and your inability to see your mother that changed you forever. (Dallal 213)

The change is systematically in progress developing to the extreme point of the son considering the possibility of identifying with the father. Thafer's pacifist ideals are shaken and begin to wane at the sight of the squalor of refugee life. He admits that the dialogic discourse with Adnan Amri is not the last straw, but its effect cannot simply be eschewed. Amri, consciously or not, brings up the issue of the intellectual exile and his role in questioning oppression. His fury is that of a Palestinian outcast grappling with the aftermath of being inequitably denied the stability of living at home. Thafer, in the long run, seems to concur with Said, who envisions the significance of exile in strengthening the intellectual to break kinship with partisan politics, while maintaining connection with political realities, in order to 'speak truth to power'. The Saidian perception of the intellectual evokes Antonio Gramsci's quip that "all men are intellectuals, one could therefore say: but not all men have in society the function of intellectuals" (Gramsci 9). Whereas Adnan is enmeshed in politics negotiating the project of resistance from within the PLO, Thafer is empowered by mobility without being affiliated to any dogmatic political orientation. He sets off with deeply entrenched pacifism, but the various encounters he makes are influential in such a way that he is compelled to give a second thought to how to tackle

counter-hegemony.

In Kuwait, the point of arrival, Thafer is brought into close affinity with the enclave wherein his compatriots are crammed. The decrepit conditions in which they are trapped destabilize the pretentious equanimity associated with his previous experiences in the USA. His fellow nationals in the USA do not undergo the excruciating tribulations of those living in Hawalli, where Thafer takes enough time to reflect on the legacy of the colonial machine. In this respect Leila AL Maleh argues that "the author, like Fawal, experienced the 1948 diaspora as a young man, and feels the urge to recount the Palestinian saga especially to American readers, who are mostly misinformed" (40). It is in Hawalli that Thafer's firmly-held idea of anchoring the issue of resistance in non-violent reactions begins to take a new turn. Though he has always presented himself as the enemy of constructing a nuclear bomb –indeed a next-to impossible prospect - he is almost certain that Israel can tolerate anything but dialogue. The encounter with the Israeli officer at the borders portends that any peaceful negotiations with the colonizer do not extend beyond the constraints of a discursive event. Though he does not openly advocate armed resistance, his interpersonal interactions with Souhaila seem to suggest that he is no longer confident in any other possible alternative.

His unflinching enthusiasm to contribute to the development of the Arab ambitious project of OAPEC (Organization of Arab Petroleum Exporting Countries) is extinguished by the corruption and incompetence of its members. When he makes the acquaintance of Souhaila, he wonders how possible it is to construct the bomb when the Arabs cannot meet the rudiments of mere punctiliousness at work. All they are concerned about is magnifying the contents of their pockets at the cost of the poverty-stricken, the like of Palestinian refugees who are congested in the ghettos of Hawalli. At this juncture, his

memory of former life acquires importance. He takes us back in time to America, where his children are still based and where his wife is buried and soon comes back to the present where he is destined to open his heart to Souhaila and where his allegiance to the cause is much stronger than ever before. His fluctuation between staying where he belongs and going back to the States gathers momentum and reflects the psychology of an exile who is torn apart between two worlds: The native and the adoptive. Locating himself as a person who is dislocated sounds to be an existential project.

A focus on the past is necessary for Thafer to come to grips with the history of his lineage. He seems to rely on Rassem's memory to know more about his father. The initial phase of this intimate history has been provided by Adnan Amri in Lebanon, where Thafer admits to experiencing the early moments of change. Rassem's retrospective narrative serves to legitimate and rationalize the transformation process the protagonist has to undergo. His pacifist leanings can be construed as a political cant that will soon dissipate under the pressure of painful memories of bloody atrocities that have left incurable scars in his inner mind. The heroism and intrepidity of the father concomitantly bespeak the brutality of the colonial oppressive system. The hidden part of Ayoub Allam's patriotism is related by Rassem:

> "He was the brains. You don't remember this because you were too young, but the British put a price on Father's head. They wanted him dead or alive. He had outsmarted and outmaneuvered the Superior British - fewer than five thousand poorly equipped, ill-fed, but dedicated rebels. . . He controlled the hills. He and his forces hid during the day and drove the British forces out of their minds at night. Father knew every hill, every cave and every inch of the homeland." (Dallal 97)

The reference is the father whose spirit stands out as an incentive for a novel identity. Thafer's pacifism seems to be hanging in the balance under the inexorable influence of those around him. The culminating point of the journey, unlike its earlier moments, re-

veals his substantial eagerness to endorse a new approach to resistance. The mnemonic experience that results from the journey gives credence to Paul Ricoeur's idea that "to remember is to have a memory or to set off in search of a memory" (4). The memory of Ayoub Allam is instrumentally used by the other characters, especially the upholders of armed struggle, to shake his confidence in non-violent strategies of counter-hegemony. The popularity the figure of the father has garnered is intimately bound up with his stature as a brave fighter of the British colonial forces. Amidst the turbulence of dispossession and displacement, his memory remains alive among the majority of the exiles who have a propensity to deal the enemy a fatal blow. Thafer's reasonable calculations are prone to weaken at the face of the emotional fervor underlying the relationship between the victim and the victimizer, the innocent and the culprit. Thafer's logic that the words of his compatriots cannot be translated into deeds and that their theoretical considerations cannot be bridged into practice, given the difficulty faced by a powerless people to stand up to a powerful system, begins to lose essence.

The logical underpinning of Thafer's arguments against the efficiency of armed resistance which evidently privileges the colonial apparatus is deflated by the will of a people. The father's name stands the test of time and resonates among the Palestinian posterity thanks to a strong sense of determination against all odds. His intelligence does not deter him from embarking upon action in defense of his land. All the material evidence would suggest to anyone capable of using his mind that the power machinery of the enemy outstrips that of the colonized subjects at all levels and therefore the outcome has been decided in advance. This fatalism does not interfere with Ayoub Allam and his people's will to contest with all the might they could muster the authority of the British colonizing subjects. Rassem, who introduces the father figure in these laudable terms, expects his

account to exert a certain impact on the son who is supposed to follow suit. The indelible imprint such a narrative has left in Thafer's mind manifests itself in the subsequent encounter –in the course of a dream - between father and son and the latter's acceptance of the former's shield. This symbiosis between the dead father and the living son suggests that the earlier rift between a pacifist and a warrior is liable to be interrogated. Reminding Thafer of his father when he was too young to remember him is probably meant to call into question his reason-governed calculations about the anti-colonial project.

Thafer's awareness of the poignancy of displacement is exacerbated by the various encounters in which memories of the past are triggered. Back in USA his conception of identity converges with that of Edward Said, who maintains in his book *After the Last Sky* that "identity—who we are, where we come from, what we are—is difficult to maintain in exile. . . we are the 'other', an opposite, a flaw in the geometry of resettlement, an exodus. Silence and discretion veil the hurt, slow the body searches, soothe the sting of loss" (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 17). This silence that has long defined Thafer's existence as an exile in the USA is broken by turning the clock back. Thafer's forlorn childhood and the dislocation foisted upon his family subside in the States only to get reignited when he is denied access to Ramallah to reunite with his mother and homeland. This event has become another memory of loss and frustration. Being relegated to the subordinated margins of humanity at the bridge has such a strong impact on his political orientations as he is no longer that staunch defender of pacifism. His encounter with his brother, Kamal, brings the controversial issue of resistance to the fore and introduces him to be teetering on the verge of embracing a new identity.

His anti-violence perspective, coupled with being prohibited entry to his land, imparts ambivalence to his attitudes towards anti-colonialism. He is revealed to be wholeheartedly

involved in his people's dreams, visions and realities but he is still undecidedly hesitant as to which path to take to take part in the liberation act. It seems that both the prospect of owning the nuclear bomb and the peaceful resolutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict are exaggerated. The first strategy addresses emotions, while it falls short of rational considerations and the second cannot possibly work with an exclusionary system whose ethos is rooted in acts of violence. Thafer's undecided stand can be located somewhere in the rim of the two extremes, which makes him press his way towards ambivalence. In response to Kamal, he emphasizes his patriotic tendencies, but remains quite indeterminate as to how to implement the political action:

> "I want to give of myself to the homeland, but I don't want to be involved in violence. Yet something happened to me at the bridge. I keep thinking of that. It frightens me when I think about it. It isn't what happened that frightens; it's my thoughts about it –I can't be free of it. Maybe the homeland needs more science than law at this time, I find myself saying now. I never used to say that and it troubles me. It makes me uneasy. I'm also annoyed with myself for the discomfort I'm feeling. (Dallal 176)

Though he is articulate about the discomfort generated by the encounter at the bridge, he dares not inform us about the trend his thoughts and ideas are likely to take. What imparts ambivalence to the potential change he refers to is the fact that it is frightening and seems unpalatable though irresistible and compulsive. His memory of the event is not as important as the thought itself. In oblique terms he seems to suggest that violence that has always been anathema to him begins to matter in the question of resistance strategies. Being both a lawyer and an expert in nuclear energy makes him share the responsibility of how to tackle the plight of his fellow refugees. The rhetoric of pacifism, which is the guiding principle of his agenda, is affected by the mere thought of the inaccessibility of the other side of the borders. He has been formerly reticent about his position as a

knowledgeable figure in nuclear technology, but he is now confident that science is badly needed for a people crippled by colonial hegemony and coercion. This newly-embraced conviction, which is not declared openly, turns out to be a troublesome preoccupation for a pacifist exile who is reluctant to give up his former ideals. In spite of himself, he seems unwilling to carry on his pacifist strategies which are doomed at the bridge. His failed attempt to engage the Israeli officer in a dialogue is a portent for the future of peaceful negotiations. Be that as it might, Thafer does not palpably announce the political course resistance is to take.

Meanwhile Thafer breaks ties with the past, disentangling himself from the clutches of obsessive memories, and casts a look forward to the future. He envisions a world founded upon humanity beyond parochial ideological affiliations and epistemic dualisms. A focus on the future gives him wings to soar to new heights of contemplation. The soothing impact of this inward journey is paramount for the survival of a dislocated exile whose daily life is a perennial struggle for recognition and dignity. Under the cumbersome weight of a past left behind and a present that fails to meet his expectations because of the corruption of those who are supposed to play the role of the intelligentsia, the protagonist seeks a short-lived solace in a utopian future:

> He opens his briefcase, and looks at his voluminous notes. He reads some of them and turns to the words of the Kuwaiti minister. He imagines a world economically and politically united, where all governments cooperate in an unprecedented effort to do away with all of humanities miseries - ignorance, disease, greed, and its crimes against its own kind. He imagines a world with one nationality, the human nationality, and scholars from all over the world then gather to create a new language to be taught to all people. (Dallal 178)

The conditions of work in a space full of high-ranked Arabs no longer appeals to Thafer; his ardour begins to fade away and his professional ties to the present start to loosen. He

has finally realized that the eloquent discourse that marks Ziad and his colleagues' speech is a gamut of signs that fail to signify their conscientiousness. Thafer, who has just been employed as an advisor for OAPEC, wonders what the future has in store for a people whose intelligentsia is clamped tight in the grip of corruption and power abuse. How can a people consider the prospect of rivaling Israel militarily when their egoism prevents setting a bulwark against greed and fraud? How can Arabs dream of reaching the apogee of progress when the OAPEC officials - indeed a microcosm of power relations at a higher level - under the supervision of Ziad fear admitting their mistakes to the public opinion? These questions and similar others compel Thafer to retreat from the present and relocate himself to the past to delve into the horror of colonial dislocation and how to respond to it under numerous inconveniences.

This time, as the above quote indicates, he departs from the present paying scant attention to his notes and attending less to the political discourse, in order to predict a future built around intersubjective human relations. This intersubjectivity would not be possible unless the world bewails disparity and celebrates economic parity and unity beyond the narrow constraints of culture, identity and other defining criteria. This seemingly pipe dream can be construed as an escape from the current situation in which Thafer occupies the cusp between the past - a site of complicated memories - and the future - a destination accessible only through imagination and does not live up to realistic objectives. His farfetched future considerations and contemplations mirror the psychological state of a homeless exile in quest of a transitory moment of relief in a space bristling with the ramifications of the colonial excess. His last wish - that of creating a language similar to Esperanto in a world composed of one nationality - testifies to the difficulty of being realistic when confronted with the challenges of the present and burdened by the

memories of a past written with the tears and blood of innocent Palestinians.

# Chapter 4

# Encounters in Exile in Yasmin Zahran's *A Beggar at Damascus Gate*

## 4.1 Ambivalent bonds

Zahran's novella is a meticulous exposé of the human predicament of Rayya, who is represented as a typical Palestinian voice in exile. The narrator establishes himself as a translator of her dreams, visions and realities. Being driven by his archeological pursuits to Petra does not conceal his dissatisfaction with the landscape where he is destined to spend a few nights in a hostile sordid environment deprived of the warmth of human encounters. The stupefied decrepit cook is so taciturn and reticent that the narrator depicts him as a mere worthless drunkard whose company is quite unappealing and appalling. The intensity of solitude he is plunged into seems to have a redeeming feature when he manages to retrieve some documents hidden under the heap of rubbish inside a closet on the wall. Being endowed with the archeological tendencies, he cannot resist the urge to delve into the recesses of his find:

> I lit the candle to examine the contents, but all I could see in the closet was a small wooden ladder, a broken lantern, copper pots and crumpled Bedouin rugs in the corner. I knocked the heap with my foot, found a pillow yellow with age, and then my foot touched something hard and solid. . . I carried the entire heap over to the bed and spread it out to read under the electric bulb, but a strange feeling of dread overcame me, as if an abyss had opened before me, and I hesitated to plunge. I wondered who had hidden these papers, rotting and yellowing, in the depth of a crumbling cupboard in this sordid room. (7)

This unexpected encounter with the past documents that contain the marks of human experiences is in fact an arcane interaction with otherness. The feeling of fear engendered by these papers is accounted for in terms of the identity of the precedent occupants of the space wherein the narrator is temporarily trapped. For him, these past dwellers are indeed liberators-cum-tormentors since finding who they are is a difficult-to-achieve mission. Unfolding their tale is an attempt to let us have access to the former life of a

Palestinian exile together with Alex, her English lover. Ironically, the narrator whom we come to subsequently know as Mr. Foster is set free from the desolate space of Petra only to be clamped tight in the journey of discovering the enigmatic relationship between the protagonists. Considering the historicity and materiality of the narrative related through the eye of Mr. Foster is indeed a moot point. In other terms, can we say that the text is located in the world outside the parochial underpinning of functionalism which pays too much attention to the formal operations of the narrative with little regard to its worldliness? Shall we concur with Edward Said's claim that we shouldn't confine the text to the book acknowledging the fact that it is a cultural product located in the political reality of the world from which it is woven? (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 18)

The deferral of signification and limitless interpretations advocated by poststructuralist discursive categories, namely deconstruction, can be used as a backdrop against which to conceptualize Rayya and Alex's ambivalent affinity. However, Rayya's contention that the characters are fictional and only Palestine is real does not 'extend the domain and play of signification infinitely' (Derrida 180). At least, the part of her story that touches on the repercussions and painful memories of being forced out of home is not reduced to mere inscriptions or written marks on a page. While her identity remains undecided throughout and her relationship with Alex perpetually vacillates between love and hate, her commitments towards her country of origin take on a variety of shapes but never devoid of signification. If Derrida maintains "the axial proposition that there is no outside the-text" ("il n'ya rien hors du texte," or alternatively "il n'y a pas de hors-texte") (Abrams 80), Rayya may call anything to radical question except the term 'Palestine.' Questioning her role at times and celebrating it at others does not obliterate her confidence in the legitimacy of a cause. The implication of her axiomatic reference to Palestine as something

real is that the other signs that constitute the story such as the epistemological nature of her existence as an exile are open to construal. The Nietzsche's perspectivism[1] may apply to the intricate bond that ties Rayya to Alex but the truth of her native land remains intact and beyond any multiplicity of interpretation. She looks back at her homeland from a univocal perspective; it is a space whose significance is made up by the familiar sounds whose echoes still reverberate in exile. She strives to approximate the status Edward Said has attributed to the intellectual who must be detached from partisan politics and must be a tool of regenerating 'lost memory' (Deer, *Introduction: Edward Said: A Memorial Issue* 1).

Rayya's erratic conduct and her unruly emotions are not merely symptomatic of her exilic experiences but also of the ambivalence characterizing her interactions with Alex. Whether he is a friend or a foe, a subject of attraction or repulsion is a conundrum the narrative fails to sort out. While browsing through the notebooks left behind, Mr. Foster underlies the duality and double standards that mark Rayya's attitudes towards a spurious lover: 'Alex the bad' is confined to the dark landscape of her being where he will be in dearth of peace as he entertains 'his sinister thoughts and heinous deeds' while she declares her commiseration with 'Alex, the Good and his *chagrin d'amour'* (19). At this juncture, the ruses of identity formation begin to gather momentum as we begin to suspect who Rayya is. Is she a mere peripatetic exile immersed in her academic intellectual endeavors as she patiently waits for the opportune moment to find her way home? Or is she a secret agent recruited by the Palestinian intelligence as a way of taking part in the project of decolonization and destroying potential enemies? Or is she a mere itinerant traveler relishing mobility from place to place and from space to space?

[1] Nietzsche puts to radical question the basic concepts of Western philosophy, namely truth, knowledge and identity axiomatically contending that what is taken for truth is mere interpretations.

The kind of identity Rayya proclaims falls short of ontological delimitation and destroys the oppositional difference between love and hate, which exacerbates the fate of an exile and her faith in stable human ties. The fact that Alex is of English origin makes him exposed to Rayya's stereotypical and politically motivated attacks. Likewise, being an Arab Palestinian woman makes Rayya a target of Alex's feelings of attitudes, experiences and references. When Foster is allowed the opportunity to speak on her behalf, we are given the impression that this female voice is excluded, muted and assigned a subservient role in the game of power structures. His depiction of her notebooks, papers and diaries in derogatory terms as disordered and in a state of mess, and his allusion to Alex's "elegantly bound leather journal" (16) entrenches Edward Said's concept of Orientalism as "cultural strength" and evokes the idea of hegemony which maintains that "certain cultural forms predominate over others just as certain ideas are more influential than others" ( Said, *Orientalism*). While the narrator attempts to introduce the outset of the story within the context of conceptual clarity defining the couple against the backdrop of Manichean binary polarities, the fragments he strives to piece together in subsequent episodes call this simplistic univocal naming into question sapping the authority of the third person indicative: Rayya is the antithesis of Alex and the other way round.

Rayya, who is delineated as feline, is positioned on the opposite side of the bird-like Alex, who is in danger of being pounced upon by his mysterious beloved. Fettered by forces greater than herself, she is apparently skeptical of the ability of a structure to arrive at a final meaning, especially when she exhorts Alex not to fall in the trap of conflating fact with fiction. As a cultural construct, which connotes the absence of prediscursive knowledge, she is written as she writes by the agency within her 'which always already keeps watch over perception, be it internal or external' (Norris, *Derrida* 226).

Our failure to construct a crystal clear image of Rayya's connection with Alex is due to her recalcitrance in a world where trusting the other is a potential uncalculated risk to be eschewed. From the very beginning, if we are to take the worldliness of the text at face value, the relationship between the two is engulfed in ambivalence because they are occasionally trapped in the prison house of mutual labeling:

> He was convinced that I would reciprocate his love, but he ascribed the delay to my magical ritual and to my waiting for a propitious night under the right star. He insisted that I was flirting with him outrageously and when I protested, he admitted that I did not subscribe to the usual feminine tricks to attract him, but my methods were far more dangerous as I flirted with my mind. (32)

Rayya is seemingly consumed by fear of alterity just as Alex is thrust into a realm of suspicion of the other which makes the possibility of reciprocal love doubtful to be realized. This ambivalent encounter, in which two lovers are shackled by the power of discourse, subverts the philosophical and ethical notion of the other. Though space intimately ties them together, we feel that they are partitioned and separated by the use and abuse of discourse as a set of statements within which their world comes into being: "The paradoxical dynamic of codependency and mutual identification" ( Said 59) is substantially weakened by the fact that they raise their hackles and withdraw into themselves giving little opportunity for cultural becoming through honest human interactions. Alex, who traces his origins to Britain, finds it difficult to rethink his identity in terms of an encounter with alterity branding Rayya as an intellectual Arab figure who cannot live up to the ideals of scientific reasoning that befits a woman of her stature. He repeatedly expresses his frustration at finding a way to reconcile her charlatanism and atavism with her intellectual abilities. Rayya, however, seems to contrapuntally suggest that reality is not single-faceted. While Alex looks at his relation with her in terms of exoticism, she

takes him in through weaving a counter-narrative whose deep implications he dares not fathom. Apparently, the signifying economy of his masculinist ethos is dismantled not by her feminist but mental tricks.

The rivalry intensifies without excluding the prospect of finding a thread, thin as it is, that can tie Rayya and Alex together. There are moments when they reach out to each other hoping to “go across [borders]” without enforcing “the line of separation” (45). They are certain that they need to invent themselves continuously, but Rayya’s excruciating mental anguish makes her suffer and consequently unequal to embark upon the Nietzschean humanist project of ressentiment which is predicated on forgetting. William Connolly draws on Nietzsche’s critical account of memory to emphasize the “political efficacy of forgetting for opening new social spaces from which new configurations of the future and new social identities may emerge so as to transgress the perpetual attachment to suffering, allow change, and promote the process of social becoming” ( cited in Hochberg 51). In like manner, Alex cannot altogether extricate himself from the embrace of a colonial master narrative in which Rayya is represented as his exact foil.

The story that traces the physical journey of the bogus lovers also contains moments of allusion to a journey inside as they seem to depart from their position as embryonic subjects pressing their way towards the becoming of the self. What casts further ambivalence on their interpersonal encounters is a yearning for a dynamic existence. This being the case, they constantly interrogate the essence of their identity as they strive to co-exist by enhancing a ‘communicative rationality’[2] that will hopefully be conducive to an ‘ideal speech situation’. Rayya, whom Alex often relegates to the subordinated margins of alterity, proves that she is endowed with a spectacular knack to address philosophical issues

[2] The term is attributed to Jurgen Habermas. Through argumentation, Habermas argues, we are likely to engage in a fruitful dialogue that is conducive to an ‘ideal speech situation.’

subverting his stereotypical stipulation that she cannot transcend the world of magic. The English companion, who has indulged in his role as a teacher administering doses of knowledge to Rayya, finds himself learning from her edifying lessons. This act of swapping or reversing roles testifies to an attempt to decenter any organizing principle or center of a narrative that is actually woven from a multiplicity of voices and perspectives. The way she introduces the question of love is indicative of the empowering potential of exile:

> With the pressing of the seasons of our love, she started to dread our parting from the moment we met, and yet it was she who preached that separation is inevitable and that, like the body which is born with an inner computer marking at birth the hour of death, each love is born with parting hanging over the heads of unsuspecting lovers. Her logic is such that separation is an inherent part of our relationship. Her anticipation distressed me at first but exasperated me later, and when I remonstrated about her, she answered me with an Arabic verse from Ibn Zaidun. (59)

As a wayward character, Rayya seems unwilling to be trapped in the injunctions rendered by the authority of 'to be'. She is someone whose identity cannot be accounted for in terms of a single appellation or name. This extract is in fact part of a decolonizing counter-narrative in which the Palestinian protagonist tries to obliquely annihilate the cultural arrogance of Alex by presenting herself outside the ambit of magic and charlatanism with which her name is repeatedly associated. It is an opportunity for the English man to get acquainted with another face of Rayya, who shows that she is not an empty gourd but rather a knowledgeable figure endowed with the ability to escape and react against the violence perpetrated by epistemic labeling. 'The power of the dominant culture to construct the world under the guise of knowing it' (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 9) is seriously interrogated in this context wherein the Arab woman tackles the issue of love from a philosophical perspective allowing Alex a chance to rethink his dialectics which are partly the product of the environment that has shaped him.

Rayya's growth is becoming fully-fledged though not devoid of ambivalence. She is no longer dominated by Alex, who is compelled to reconsider the dialectics of power relations. She is not presented as a passive pawn in the gamut of power structures. Her activism gives impetus to her nomadic aspirations as she tries to soar high far beyond the current existential status. Though "the Palestinians were severed from the old foundations of society and politics, scarred by exile, and still stunned by the fate that had befallen them", ( Kimmerling and Migdal 215), Rayya is determined to examine her relationship with the other and with the self to make her voice audible from different points in exile. The ebb and flow of her conversations with Alex cogently point out that consistency and stability remain a scarcity in such unfamiliar landscapes where one's physical kinship with the motherland is almost broken.

As an exile, we feel that part of her duty is to relate a facet of her experience through her enigmatic cultural exchange. It is through her writings that she desires to further instruct Alex about the intricate nature of the literal marks deployed in her notebooks. His predisposition to see his relationship with her from a univocal standpoint is denounced by a fragmented Palestinian exile whose essence is difficult to capture.

The text bears testimony to the psychology of a Palestinian exile who is becoming adept at unleashing parts of her painful experience and the intricate side of her relationship with the other as the journey proceeds. The intensity of reservation with which she still treats her English 'lover' is such that the unsaid also goes to make up other facets of her identity –the fact that will always lie beyond the Englishman's reach. Again the dyad of exclusion and inclusion has its effect on Rayya's journal and makes us infer that she, as a rule, draws the veil over components of her identity taking the necessary precaution against showing all her cards.

Consciously or not, she embarks upon the process of decolonizing the mind contesting the stereotypical backwardness foisted upon her by Alex, who plays the authority of delimitation par excellence. Rayya, however, does not subscribe to a uniform definition and does not see things from a single perspective making it difficult for Alex to locate, or rather anchor her, in a well-determined space. The man she refers to in the journal is not necessarily Alex; for her the term is so complex that it is a conglomerate of aspects and defining markers garnered from other encounters. This interpretation evokes the idea that "the counterfactual helps us to penetrate the world more deeply by focusing our attention on selected aspects of it; by revealing to us what is hidden in ordinary life; and by enabling us to think about the most difficult things without risk or penalty" (Nussbaum 4). Unless they are crocodile tears, it cannot be presumed that she is crying for Alex. Her tears may be construed as a salient symptom of agony she has to grapple with as she moves forward delving into the dark recesses of her being and inventing herself perennially. Her predicament can be pitted against Said's claim that "there is never a term or time period for suffering. You can't say suffering begins here and ends there. It goes on.... There's no calendar for when it begins and when it ends." (Deer 28). Nonetheless, this suffering does not preclude her from taking a look further inside as she interpolates and digresses from the main course of her narratives.

Once again Rayya, makes a digression to bring up the issue of magic in an oblique attempt to juxtapose it to the scientific and positivist orientations of Alex. Her encounter with a Jewish soothsayer named Jezelle foregrounds her obsessive deep-rooted charlatanism which is at the same time an instrument of her ambivalent counter-discourse. Her interest in this Moroccan Jewish woman is also meant to alleviate the pernicious impact of displacement and entertain a short-lived solace. She avers that Jezelle is much more

equated with therapy than fortunetelling: “Her predictions have always been a comfort, and she has been more of a therapist than a fortune teller, for somehow she manages to soothe by saying what one wants to hear” (42). This encounter can be regarded as a means to an end; it is desperately needed for its calming effects in a sordid background where Rayya is in dearth of support from a friend, a family or a social group. Her enthusiastic reaction to the prophecy of Alex’s imminent death is indicative not only of her arcane stand on love, but also of her undecided attitude towards the signification of magic.

The longed-for death of Alex, problematizes the relationship between love and hate and blurs the conceptual clarity of language. The semantic slippage inherent in the sign is highlighted by Alex, who is steadily growing conscious of the blind spots that may interfere with the worldliness of the text:

> I put the notebook down and an overwhelming compassion for her swept over me. I was amazed at her stark innocence, which did not see how near to hate love is, and yet I tried to obliterate the shadow of foreboding in the back of my mind, for there was more to this wish for my death than met the eye. (65)

The bond that ties the two lovers, enemies, or mere acquaintances – for language fails to capture the essence of their relationship – is drawing towards its end and separation that has always remained beneath the surface is openly articulated making the relationship between love and hate hazy and enigmatic. The ordained death that will soon befall Alex according to Jezelle’s prediction is a desire Rayya wishes to be fulfilled to celebrate the demise of a complex connection language fails to render because of the inbuilt aporias and contradictions that repeatedly shake the seemingly adequate grounds on which it is built. Apart from Palestine which is real, everything else is imbued with contingency and indeterminacy. The encounters Rayya is engaged in cannot simply be accounted for in terms of an a priori; if one meeting is defined by moments of love, the next may resonate

with echoes of hate, and the following can be mysteriously characterized by both attraction and repulsion. These capricious whims betoken the human frailty and sorrow in a world where a person is overcome by the extreme fear of otherness.

The death of Alex, whom Rayya probably suspects of espionage, further complicates our earlier expectations about his identity as a lover. After all, the Palestinian exile is revealed to identify with a number of armed Palestinian nationalists whom she refers to as martyrs. The one pointed to as ‘A’ “is always trying to hide his aristocratic origin and his Oxford accent. But who knows when a silent bullet might go through his body?” Or when a telephone might blow up as he lifts the receiver?” (87). Her concern for the ultimate lot of this *Fida’I*, as she prefers to call him, can be considered as a clue to the secrecy that envelops her connection with the Palestinian cook in Petra whom we have wrongly taken for a simple old drunkard. When the false garb he has been wearing is removed in front of Rayya in the wake of the mysterious death of Alex, the reader begins to question the kind of relation that really exists between the two characters. The ambivalence that underscores their encounters acquires a new significance when the spurious cook “raised his hand in a military salute and said, ‘ Colonel Abu Ayyash, Security, Palestine Liberation Army, at your service”’ (125). The immediate reaction of Rayya arouses the reader’s suspicions about her possible implication in the killing of Alex, whose death may be attributed to some enigmatic intrigue. The fact that she raised her head, recovered her composure, returned his salute and said that he must be the famous Najib of Southern Jordan, leaves the reader at a loss for the definite outcome of the interpersonal encounter.

Now that Alex has been dispensed with, Rayya is left to face her destiny outside his enigmatic gaze and imperious injunctions. A whole chapter of interpersonal contacts has come to a close leaving us quite bewildered as to the nature of the bond that ties

the Palestinian exile with the Englishman. Whether they are friends or enemies remains such an unfathomable riddle since the narrative is infused with a host of lacunae that language fails to fill in. The narrator "came to the conclusion that she was following a definite path, displaying a certain face which allowed her to exist externally, while the reality was inward" (45). In the aftermath of Alex's accidental death, Rayya immediately resumes her voyages targeting Palestine as the ultimate destination hoping to establish communion with the parental land. The narrator takes upon himself to fulfill the mission of coming across Ryya, by a stroke of chance, and handing over her documents that will be hopefully published into a widely accessible narrative. The plight of this mobile exile, her fragmented self, the extreme fear of the other and the erratic behavior are all symptomatic of an acute fit of paranoia that interferes with her social becoming and foregrounds the detrimental effects of dislocation and dispossession.

The narrator, who has sunk in the world where Rayya is herself incarcerated, feels that he is linked to her through the cumbersome load of her notebooks, which represent a repository of interactions with the self, with the other, and above all with a cause. The outset of seeking her out is such a laborious task that the last clue to her whereabouts is hard to find. He finds himself committed to following her track which is somehow challenging because the image he has formed about her subjectivity is obtained by dint of a discursive encounter with the notes she has left behind. The messages conveyed by the literal marks on the pages found in the humid closet are now put to the test. The question he seeks to answer is whether the flesh and blood Rayya is a replica of the one shaped by discourse? Does Rayya transcend the text to locate herself in the world? Or does the text refer to nothing outside itself? The reply to these thorny queries remains somehow ambivalent as it is palpably suggested by the narrator in owning that he might

fall prey to wrong judgment due to a possible failure to say where and when reality is supplanted by fiction (25).

Mr. Foster's endeavor to locate Rayya in a well-defined space is met with enormous intractability. The whole body of knowledge he has formed about her comes from her notebooks. One aspect of her character is her obsession with supernatural beliefs and magic incantations upon which the narrator bases his early investigations. Interacting with a man about her, the narrator seems to draw on her discursive identity as a mainstay of guidance:

> "Did you say she is superstitious?" My informer would laugh loudly. "We can't be talking of the same person, for she is the antithesis of a superstitious person. She is progressive and rational –the last person in the world to cater to such nonsense." I started seriously to doubt her existence for another of her so-called friends replied to a very important question by saying, "Did you say she belongs to the PLO? Absolutely and categorically not! I am in a position to know –she never bound herself to anything and does not belong to any organization. All she cares about are monuments and ancient ruins!" (135)

These testimonies are implemented in such a way as to back up the earlier allusion to Rayya as a recalcitrant character who cannot be anchored in a fixed position. The difficulty involved in naming her or determining her affiliations bespeaks her deterritorialized status as a constantly nomadic exile in quest of some ontological meaning. Her fragmented identity entrenches not only her traumatic disorder and mental anguish as a dislocated Palestinian woman, but it is also an attempt to destabilize any exclusivist discourse in favor of identity as a process; as something in a state of flux and turbulence. These ambivalent encounters and reactions are also instrumental in the survival and becoming not only of Rayya, but also of myriad patriots who have a craving for return but can't because they are alienated from home by exilic wanderings.

The information provided by one of her so called friends turns out to be somehow

unreliable; for how can a person interested only in Archeology reduce herself, or rather works her way, to becoming a beggar at Damascus Gate? The narrator is taken aback to behold her "sitting like the other beggars, cross-legged and leaning at a corner of the gate, crying in a voice [he] would recognize anywhere, 'Alms for the face of Allah,' while some passers-by dropped a coin or two in her outstretched hand"' (143).

All these encounters do little to demystify the intricate nature of her identity. She has been revealed throughout the novella as a capricious sort of character whose essence is difficult to capture. This versatility betrays the situation of an anxiety-stricken exile whose identification with the cause is so complex that she cannot find the propitious ground on which she can firmly stand. She is not portrayed as a mere physically uprooted exile, but also as a mentally unsettled individual who considers diverse anti-hegemonic options. The intimacy she has developed with the militant *Fida'is* makes us suspicious of her possible endorsement of armed struggle as a way of resistance. This suspected affiliation acquires currency in the transitory exchange she has initiated with Colonel Abu Ayyash, who has been disguised as a Palestinian cook in Petra and whom she knows by name. Also introducing herself as a staunch upholder of Arabism reveals her as somehow reductionist according to Alex.

Indeed, her inability to concentrate her mind on a consistent course of action in setting up the anti-colonial project representing herself – at least textually – to be fragmented in a way similar to her notes is anathema to Alex. The Englishman is clever enough to lay bare the notorious aporias of Arab nationalism which feeds on an exclusivist discourse Rayya has to pay attention to. However, her identification with this ideology is instrumentally intended for its soothing effects; for the harsh reality of displacement keeps the exile clinging not only to the prospect of a mobile existence with a potential ultimate arrival

but also to the illusory interaction between the present and the future. Rayya may not lose sight of the defects and shortcomings of Pan-Arabism and may not overlook its essentialist overtones, but if it is to be strategically regarded as the counter-discourse of Zionism and can lift up her spirits as exile, then its tenets should be embraced. In this exchange with Alex, Rayya explains why Arab nationalism is not beyond her reckoning while other options remain on the horizon:

> I told him that if we were the flag-bearers, the missionaries, the zealots for Arab Unity, it was because in the last analysis our survival in Palestine depended upon it. 'We are therefore ever ready to adopt its prophets and to champion any party or movement that raises the Pan-Arab banner.' But what if this mirage of Arab Unity fails you! he retorted. 'It has already failed us and will fail us again and again, but we won't give up', I replied. (38)

This exchange is intent on casting light on the predicament of Rayya, who is revealed to be aware of finding some way to respond to power outside the ambit of discourse. She seems quite undecided about the efficient strategy to address the colonial excess. She merely takes refuge in Arabism, but soon questions its potential to cater for the needs and prospects of the Palestinian exiles who are prevented from returning to their land. The flaws of Pan-Arabism, however, open Rayya's eyes to the significance of considering a wide range of possible options so as to ensure an ongoing anti-colonial struggle. Her ambivalent, if not spurious, allegiance to this ideology only to establish herself as an outspoken critic of its principles under the auspices of Alex, cogently testifies to a sense of nomadism that further introduces Rayya as an intellectual exile dissociating herself from partisan politics in order to speak 'Truth to power.' (Said cited in Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 9)

Her 'professionalism' serves to underscore the worldliness and historicity of the text, especially when she sets out to castigate those who claim to be the leading voice of the Palestinian cause. Her enigmatic stand on the question of Palestinian–Israeli conflict is

voiced through ambivalent reactions to the effects of the struggle. In response to the death of a *Fida'i*, whom she initially seems to revere in the funeral procession, she raises these riddles: "How could I rival the idealistic, shabby youths who were creating a new world? How could I share their dreams and their revulsion for the enemies that had enslaved them?" (85). Her failure to provide answers to these questions imparts a sense of mystery and undecidability to the identity of a forlorn exile laboring under the weight of homelessness and instability. Her exilic way of life has placed her in immediate encounters with others to reflect upon the visions and realities of a whole community whose kinship with the roots has been severed by forced exile. Her intimate relationship with the *Fida'is* is probably meant to present one option of counter-hegemony which she immediately subjects to a series of interrogations simply because it is incommensurate with her discrete convictions and trends.

Of another *Fida'i* who must have been a dear friend, she wrote:

> 'I heard of his assassination on the eight o'clock news. His obituary consisted of one line: "a bomb exploded in the car of Abu Rustum in West Beirut killing him and his bodyguard" –an epitaph that buried a whole world. His mother, doing the washing in houses all over Jerusalem and his father with his little coffee shop at Damascus gate, had saved the dinars that put his son through school, and then Harvard. His younger brother sold newspapers at the corner of the gate to send him some pocket money in the far-away land. (85)

This extract exposes the heinous brutality of the Zionist extermination machine, and the tragic end of the instigators of armed revolution. This part of the story amounts to the level of a historical account of a Palestinian intellectual who has opted for the armed conflict to respond to the power of the colonizer. It seems that Rayya is obliquely averse to this kind of counter-hegemony since its outcome has been decided in advance. All the efforts and time invested in the making up of this Palestinian rebel are doomed when

he is shot dead together with his bodyguard bringing to a close the entire chapter of a man's history of revolution. The act of befriending this martyr is probably meant to disclose and implicitly criticize the act of putting his life in jeopardy by taking part in the anti-colonial movement. This perspective further enshrouds the character of Rayya in ambivalence since she can probably be suspected of plotting against Alex, whom we take for a lover, when she notoriously salutes the fake Palestinian cook, Colonel Abu Ayyash. After all this close reading of the narrative, the conundrum of Rayya's identity gravitates further towards the undecidability of signification leaving blind spots in the interstices of the narrative.

Her identification with and censure of Arabism is manifest in summoning the courage to excoriate the pillars of the PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army). At this stage Rayya is beginning to extricate herself from the traditional inhibitions of her culture and the prescriptive rules laid down by the grand narrative of Alex. Her Pan-Arabist affiliations start to lose ground in favour of introspective reflections that elevate her to a next status in the process of social becoming. Her critical attention is not simply turned to the other, but it is also directed to the self. Be that as it might, the intractable problem of defining Rayya on the basis of her discursive accounts and framings remain somehow unsolved. Her movement to and fro along such an intricate plot makes it difficult to capture her essence and anchor her in a particular position.

In fact, her language can be regarded as mere traces – a wide range of unfinished interpretations – that are conducive to the deferral of signification and catapult her to the realm of indeterminacy. One concept, however, is not lumped with the other signs; it is resistant to dissemination and 'differance[3]' and its signification is not extended infini-

[3] Differance is one of Derrida's coinages; it is a portmanteau term which involves difference and deferral. In a sign system, Saussure argues, "the signifiers (the material elements of a language, whether

tely. This concept is “Palestine”, which has its organizing principle and center. The self is decentred and disintegrated in the long run for the sake of this expropriated land. The ambivalence around which the narrative is built dissipates when Palestine is mentioned. It is a longed for destination and a land of rebirth and regeneration. The fact that Rayya asserts that every component of her story may fall within the ambit of fiction except Palestine evokes Edward Said’s statement that when he “began this effort [defending the occupied territories] just after the June 1967 War even the word “Palestine” was next to impossible to use in public discourse” ( Sacco and Said ii). In reaction to this attempt to erase Palestine from the contours of discourse and in response to Golda Meir’s reductionism that “Palestinians do not exist” ( ibid), Zahran compensates for the ambivalence of her story by according Palestine an exceptional conceptual clarity.

## 4.2 Interrogating the Self

One of the former lovers of Rayya, a dead poet, defines her as ‘an institution’ and an ‘unchanneled rushing river, whose direction could not be known’. She is also alluded to as ‘a phenomenon’ (29). The poet’s depiction of Rayya’s personality testifies to the idea that her identity is multivalent; she is not someone who is cloistered in a well-defined world. Rayya, on the basis of the poet’s testimony, is mercurial as she assumes a different personality each time. Hers is not a static identity that is determined by a certain essence or defined according to a set of clear-cut superimposing parameters and discursive

spoken or written) and the signifieds (their conceptual meanings) owe their seeming identities, not to their own ‘positive’ or inherent features, but to their differences from other speech sounds, written marks or conceptual significations” ( Abrams 78). Derrida problematizes this claim when he postulates that meaning is nowhere to be present as it is disseminated inexorably. This dissemination is conceptualized by other terms such as ‘Pharmakon’, borrowed from Plato, which means both poison and cure, which gives way to undecidability and indeterminacy and ‘supplement’ which views writing as a supplementary adjunct privileging speech instead. It is these reductive polarizations that Derrida is keen on dismantling.

practices. She is a character who has a propensity for a break, rupture, discontinuity and seemingly renounces unity and continuity. She is represented like a chameleon whose color is erratic and unpredictable. Such a description can be better understood within the remit of existentialist philosophy which attaches a tremendous importance to human freedom.

In this regard Scarborough contends that "existentialists view essentialism as stifling and oppressive. The axiom 'existence precedes essence' insists that human beings are free, that they are not stuck at birth with a nature that limits them, constrains them, a nature about which they had no opinion or choice" (Scarborough 57). According to Sartre we are "condemned to be free" but we can, of course, fail to exercise our freedom. We can blindly abide by the rules prescribed by the crowd and thus eradicate our humanity. To succumb to the dictates of the herd or to blame one's genes or the environment is to live inauthentically, to have "bad faith" (ibid 58). Since the outset of the narrative, Rayya has been grappling with bad faith. No more are its symptoms manifest than in her tenacious defense of Pan- Arabism, the goal of which is to unite all Arabs under the banner of the Palestinian cause. What is astonishing, however, is Rayya's constant failure to live up to what she thinks and what the others, like the dead poet, think about her. This extract clearly reveals her inability to put into effect what she says; which makes her a mere vocal phenomenon under the supervision of Alex. 'All my life', she admits, 'I have wanted to meet the just. I was sure that they existed amongst those who were designated the enemies of my people…I was called to a meeting to be addressed by an Israeli lawyer who defends Arab prisoners…' (86).

Rayya's statement is redolent with an anti-essentialist discourse. She gives the impression that she is teetering on the brink of setting herself free from the essentializing orthodoxy of Arab nationalism. More important, at this stage she reaches into the inner

recesses of her mind to reconsider, or rather question, the efficiency of Arabists, herself included. She has the courage to berate the leaders of PLA (Palestinian Liberation Army) and define them as 'corrupt big cats'. She argues that "they put their personal ambitions before the cause, developing circles within circles and establishing little bands whose loyalty is foremost to themselves... But who am I to criticize – I and the others like me who lead sheltered lives" (89).

It is worth noting that Rayya's look inside herself is usually motivated by the various encounters she has initiated. Though she seems not to concur with the ideological underpinnings of the *Fida'is* and their hard-line approach to the question of Palestine, her fear to engage in a free exchange with one of them betrays her dissatisfaction with her role as an intellectual exile. Prior to this self-critical vision, she makes allusion to his central role in shaping her new attitudes to national identity. 'He stammers badly', she maintains, 'but I dare not ask him where he lives because he will tell me you cannot liberate Palestine by eating in chic French restaurants or sleeping at the Ritz' (87).

Though she is critical of the anti-hegemonic style endorsed by those martyrs she refers to as *Fida'is*, she ambiguously introduces herself to be susceptible to the criticism that would issue from one of them. The extreme dread of being castigated means that Rayya is still in dearth of a clear insight as regards the project of resistance, the ultimate goal of which is to put an end to wandering and embrace the warmth and familiarity of home. Her diverse interactions –though couched in ambivalence – are a prerequisite necessity to put to the test different anti-colonial options. She adopts Arabism and then calls into question its salient tenets and 'territorially reductive polarizations' (Said, *Orientalism* xx), especially when she is alerted to its exclusivist discourse in excluding non-Arabs such as the Kurds, the Druz, the Berber... Alex, who may be construed as the voice of

Western ascendency with reservation – plays a pivotal role in disclosing the aporias of such discursive categories. This is one of the reasons that make him an object of attraction and revulsion. His presence alongside Rayya as the other is crucial to delve into the inner recesses of the self and rethink certain primordial convictions and dogmas.

Rayya's encounter with the *Fida'is* allows her to pit her convictions and ideologies against theirs. She seems to identify with them as dislocated compatriots mobilizing their efforts in armed struggle. She may not approve of the way they put their lives in jeopardy sacrificing their precious blood, but she presents herself less efficient because she cannot propose a more propitious alternative to the anti-colonial struggle probably because she has not yet devised one. This partly explains her perpetual mobility which can be construed as Rayya's incessant search for a novel subjectivity and concomitantly an efficient approach to the enterprise of resistance. The different relationships she has established are not without ambivalence, but they are somehow essential to dissect the differing anti-colonial strategies and see if she can synthesize a much more appropriate approach.

Rayya has a propensity to take her actions of resistance beyond the confines of discourse in which she persists to defend herself and foregrounds her selfhood. She has a good understanding of English, but 'she deliberately kept her accent so as to mark her foreignness, her rootlessness and her exile" (30). This spectacular sign of resistance is meant to place a premium on her linguistic identity in the world where she does not fit. The language is used in such a way as to subvert fixity and stability and give rise to open-endedness and contingency, but it does not certainly champion and promote nihilism. Far from being a nihilist, Rayya is depicted to be a fragmented exile whose mental anguish is such that she finds it difficult to lead a serene and stable life. However, the narrative is

imbued with vestiges of a nascent project of decolonization. She strives to set herself free from the parochial embrace of discourse and counter-discourse and give impetus to efficient acts of anti-colonialism. The unuttered statement that she cannot liberate Palestine by relishing delicacies in foreign hotels has had its impact on Rayya.

A critical study aimed at reading the novella against the grain, would probably adopt a contrapuntal reading in search of the colonial discourse embedded in the interstice of the narrative. Such an approach would view Rayya as a helpless Arab character, who is dominated by Alex, a representative of Western culture. But is Alex purely Western? Doesn't he grow up in an Arab environment where he learns to speak and read Arabic? Doesn't he play a basic role in unveiling certain harsh facts about a typical modern Arab woman who embarks upon the project of liberating the expropriated land of Palestine? Isn't Alex to the point when he avers that Rayya's sharp intellect doesn't chime in with her 'magic formulas and incantations?' If the Orientalist discourse essentially brands Arabs as superstitious, isn't this somehow reflective of what happens in Arab societies? After all, Rayya's belief in superstition reminds us of the situation in pre-literate societies as this quote demonstrates:

> Prior to science, totemestic and animistic views of nature dominated preliterate societies, and more sophisticated versions of animism among the advanced civilizations of the ancient world. Animism... held that the rocks, fields, trees, and streams of nature were inhabited by semiautonomous spirits whose actions could affect the well-being of humankind. Totemism adds that human beings are linked by kinship to these spirits; they are our relatives. In that circumstance the most appropriate behavior towards nature is worship or coercion by magic, not detached scientific examination. ( Scarborough 38)

How can Arabs challenge Zionism when superstitious beliefs and practices akin to totemism and animism are still endemic in their societies and shape the reasoning of a sheer part of the population? If Rayya, the poet traveler, believes in sorcery, what can

be said about the average Arab man and woman? Or as previously stated can't we read her atavism as something instrumentally used as an anti-dote to Alex's so called language of logic? Our inability to find a convincing link between Rayya's high intellect and her supernatural leanings imparts more ambivalence to the narrative.

It seems that Rayya's encounter with Alex, though his language is couched in Western ascendency, is more positive as he supplies her with the incentive to look inside and interrogate the self. Unfortunately, she finds it difficult to rid herself of the contradictions that have wholeheartedly enveloped her faculty of reasoning. She is the product of socio-historical and linguistic forces that go into her making in the environment where she acts and reacts. In *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*, Brannigan states that "subjectivity is the experience we have as individuals of believing in our capacity for freedom, independence and innovation, while at the same time we are subject, and subjected, to ideological, political, discursive and socio-historical forces, which shape our senses of 'self' identity" (118).

Rayya's subjectivity can be appropriately accounted for within this context of personal freedom and ideological subjugation. This duality has always characterized her speech in such a way that her identity is steeped in ambivalence. At times she is critical of the self and its essentialist attachment to the illusion of Pan Arabism as when she seriously questions her contributions to the foolhardy ambitions of this organization; at other times she fervently sees the future of Arabs and Palestine in their unity. A few pages before Zahran brings her tale to a close, she reveals Rayya as someone whose nationalism remains intact. She cannot shake off her mythologized great expectation that when India and China grow into powerful nations, they will breathe a new life in Arabs and give a fresh impetus to their union. 'She believed that when China and India, who are the only powers with

no Zionist influence, arrived at a parity with the USA and Europe, they would put their umbrella over the Arab world, and the history of Palestine would change' (139).

This mist that has unreasonably enveloped her vision and the pipe dream of constructing a more promising future by depending on foreign forces to commiserate and side with Arabs to release Palestine from the tight grip of the Zionist apparatus does not undermine her faith in building up a personal anti-colonial project. As a constantly mobile subject, she repeatedly questions the feasibility of her mission and discloses the shortcomings of her character drawing useful and beneficial comparisons between the self and the other. The embryonic form of her anti-colonial project does not exclude the prospect of a nomadic mode of life which leads her to becoming a beggar in the final moments of the story. A careful reading of her utterances – though it is somehow intractable to draw a dividing line between fact and fiction – unveils this character's unruly nature. However, when it comes to her affinities with Palestine, the language regains its referential and material implications. In this context, the text cannot be treated as 'an inert structure' (Ashcroft and Alhawali 18) divorced from the political realities of dispossession and uprootedness.

In fact, the harrowing experience of exile as a result of the Zionist brazen acts of land expropriation and its corollary displacement of the native Palestinians remain a millstone around Rayya's neck. Her suspicions of Alex, whose true identity she cannot decipher, precipitate her into fits of paranoia. This is one of the pernicious costs of exile, where fear of the other can be permissively justified. Highlighting her fears, Alex talks about her in the following terms:

> ...she never showed my willingness to talk about her writing, and whenever I asked her about the notebooks that she always carried with her, she dismissed my question with a shrug and said 'ancient history' or 'lost periods of time' or just 'dreams', and

> when I annoyed her with persistent questions she was very evasive and said 'My writing? It's only an exercise!' with a deadly determination, I tried to read the notebooks in her absence. My task was easy, for they were all over the place, and I was often alone in the flat when I visited her. (44)

Analyzing this passage against the backdrop of discourse as a set of statements that construct the world in which speakers and hearers, writers and readers come to know about themselves and understand each other's relationship, (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 15), we may cogently infer the rationale behind the mystery that has engulfed the relationship between two seeming lovers. After all, a Palestinian exile grappling with the predicament of rootlessness should be apologized, under all circumstances, for her paranoiac attitudes towards a stranger whose intentions are difficult to fathom. Being taciturn and reserved about her notes explains a desire to draw a veil over her identity. She has to be chary of any uncalculated plot in a world where she is trapped in a mesh of bad faith and fettered by forces larger than herself. Banished to an open unfamiliar space, she is brought into contact with different people – the *Fidai's* included – but her connection with Alex is governed by fear that is exaggerated but somehow legitimate for an exile that is not altogether despondency-stricken.

The fact that her notes represent a gamut of polysemic signs – for she cannot settle on one single name in referring to them – can be construed either in terms of semantic slipperiness or deferral of signification or within the remit of the justified fears of an exilic pariah in quest of starting an efficient counter-hegemonic project. As an embryonic subject, she operates under the guiding principle of the author's axiomatic proclamation that 'all characters are fictitious; only Palestine is real' to disclose the contingencies inherent in discourse in attempt to subvert the binary logic which partly defines the discourse of Alex. At the discursive level, the first act of resistance lies in Rayya's ability to withstand

the anchorage potentially imposed by language. We cannot say whether the literal marks constitute history, bygone times or dreams or whether they can be subsumed under the rubric of what she strategically dubs 'personal exercise' or 'my writing'. This recrudescent 'undecidability of meaning' that is anathema to ontological delimitation continues to hover over Rayya's discursive accounts. But since 'Palestine' is exceptionally real, her dreams as an exile acquire their significance from the term that is intimately bound up with the usurped and raped land.

Dreams energize Rayya's resolve as they concretize into action that is veering towards activism sealing her nomadic ventures. In the course of her movements, she has to toil under the cumbersome weight of displacement without breaking kinship with the past and the future. She is not consumed by egoistic motives because she has to share the excruciating agony of compatriots whose fuzzy memories are teetering on the verge of amnesia. She is concerned with the lot of her 'poor comrades who were born in exile and who are without memories, and who everyday die for a Palestine they have never seen." (81) Her interest in this younger generation of captives shows that Rayya – the Arabic for flag – is not a self-centered traveler reveling in her mobility. Her nomadic way of life is an opportunity to ponder and reflect on how to contribute to the anti-colonial project. Her dreams are those of a whole community of exiles and refugees who are collectively unified under the plight of dislocation.

All the encounters she has made, especially those with Alex represent an endeavor at paving the way for inventing the self continuously. The enigma and lack of perception characteristic of discourse due to contradictions and aporias do not preclude Rayya from rethinking her beliefs and ideologies for the sake of rendering a service to Occupied Territories. Her struggle with the supremacy of Alex – whose presence is nevertheless paramount

for her overall development –is the starting point of announcing her discursive presence without being captured by the linguistic signs utilized by the agencies of rational thought. That's why Alex finds it extremely difficult to locate her in a well-defined sphere. The multiplicity of interpretations that her character calls for - whether Rayya is conscious of this or not - introduces her as a restless exile in a meaningless world assiduously looking for ontological meaning through trial and error. She repeatedly falls in the trap of self contradictions – as when she shows intermittent allegiance to Arabism or mixes up magic with intellect – but her stand on Palestine remains somehow unshakable.

All the suspicions and misgivings she harbors about her encounters with Alex and all the ambivalence that interferes with the conceptual clarity of her intimate relationship with the *Fidai'is* are integral to self interrogations in her journey forward. Her failure to accurately define her English 'lover', who in turn remains at a loss to unravel the essence of her identity, partly accounts for the confusion that impacts the vision of a typical Palestinian exile. Rayya is compelled to interrogate the stability of taken-for granted facts and even thrust a supposedly human relationship into oblivion whenever she is seized by paranoiac fits about the fate of beloved Palestine. The extreme caution and precaution with which she treats Alex and the undecided nature of her reactions and responses to the *Fida'is* reckless shedding of blood for the sake of emancipation represent a serious attempt to palliate the obsessive fear of the other, delve into the intricate recesses of the self so as to move a step forward in the process of becoming a more efficient counter-hegemonic voice. More accurately, she has a craving to push forward the nascent project of decolonization moving from mere words to deeds.

Though this process of perpetual mobility – physical as well as psychological –represents Rayya as a torn character moving to and fro, backward and forward, inside and outside,

she finally musters strength to choose a destination where her role goes beyond voice to action. When the written word is no longer able to follow her intricate itinerary – the notes come to a halt – the narrator takes upon himself to find the flesh and blood Rayya. The information embedded in the notes prove to be tricky and slippery bringing to the fore the problematic of whether fact can be rendered by fiction. The echoes of Zahran's preamble that "all characters are fictitious, only Palestine is real" reverberate in the narrator's quest for the enigmatic character of Rayya. He draws on the clue of her irrationalism, based on Alex's judgment, as a main identifying marker. There is no limit to his frustration when the presumed friends of Rayya unanimously debunk the fact that she is superstitious.

Still Mr. Foster, the narrator who is to foster the story of Rayya and unveil her experiences, is now determined to locate her whereabouts to compensate for what he sees as the outrageous act of encroaching upon the private property of others. Spurred by moral ethics to seek Rayya's consent to publish her tale, he embarks upon the physical journey of discovery. The notes, though not altogether reliable, are infused with traces that sufficiently cater for Mr. Foster's needs and slake his inquisitive tendencies. He is preoccupied with a desire to mitigate the enigma surrounding her identity by representing her outside the strictures of the notes found at random in the musty closet of the rest house in Petra. Clamped tight in the grip of the guilty intrusion, he is resolved to attenuate it by making the story of a Palestinian girl widely accessible:

> Had I the right to appropriate papers from a humid closet in a forsaken village on the edge of the Arabian desert? Had I the right to force the lovers on the stage? But in my moments of moral arrogance, I felt all powerful, for I had the means to expose the story of a Palestinian girl to the light, lining up behind her thousands of silent women who lived in the shadows and who, culminating in her, had at last the power to speak. (24)

The narrator exceeds his role of cultural mediator and translator to disclose the exiled and silenced voice of Rayya. His language, unlike the one of the notes, is a "synthesis of constantly experienced moments". He seems to advance Adorno's idea that "homes are always provisional" for the displaced (Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Stories* 185). The text cannot be separated from the lived experience of a deracinated Palestinian woman who is coerced to be other than herself in order to establish a transitory space at home. The turbulence of forced migration does not disrupt a wild desire or bend a human free will to affiliate with the land wherein the anti-colonial project – limited as it is in scope and betraying personal idiosyncrasies and quirks – imparts meaning to the protagonist's existence.

Rayya famously subverts Bernard Lewis's claim that Arabs attachment to their homeland is loose. Edward Said lays bare his racist overtones in this citation:

> Take as a case in point his essay on the word *watan*, which in Arabic means homeland, or nation. Lewis's tendentious account of this word is an attempt to strip it of any real territorial, or affiliative, connotations; he alleges, with no contextual evidence whatever, that the word does not mean *patria*, or *patrie*, or *patris*, and cannot be compared with them since *watan* for Islam is a neutral place of residence. . . Since Arabic for him is only a language of texts, not of spoken or everyday intercourse, he seems totally oblivious to related words like *bilad* and *ard* that connote a strong sense of specific habitation and attachment. ( *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World* 17)

Space, from the standpoint of maverick Lewis, is squeezed empty from history, culture and simple human experiences in his stereotypical reference to Muslims. Said subverts the essence of this colonial discourse in the following:

> What our leaders and their intellectual lackeys seem incapable of understanding is that history cannot be swept clean like a blackboard, clean so that "we" might inscribe our own future there and impose our own forms of life for these lesser people to follow. It is quite common to hear high officials in Washington and elsewhere speak of changing the map of the Middle East, as if ancient societies and myriad peoples can be shaken up like so many peanuts in a jar. ( *Orientalism* xiv)

Rayya, who has been perpetually mobile, is finally portrayed at Damascus Gate in Palestine. The fact that she retreats to a semi-sedentary life, putting an end to her itinerancy, in a space where her roots go deep deconstructs Bernard's racially motivated clichés. It is not until she celebrates her existence in the appropriated land that she becomes slightly intelligible and less ambivalent. At this juncture, we begin to decipher and see the implications of Zahran's reference to Palestine in terms of reality. Rayya's ardent connection to land regardless of imminent acts of belligerence from the occupied power simply dismantles the essentialist reductive arguments of Bernard's diatribe.

Clothed in the robes of a beggar, she strips the notion of identity of any orthodox centrality and its consequent parochialism. From a peripatetic poet, she performs a beggar in order to play havoc with the notion of identity and display its ruses; above all, she takes shelter in the newly-formed identity drawing supporters of her case like a magnet. From her excessive mobile existence she acquires enough strength to engage herself in intelligence acts as a way of taking part in actual acts of resistance. Petty as they might appear, they are the distinctive marks of a burgeoning project.

## 4.3 Towards an anti-colonial trajectory

It would be wrong to assume that Rayya's journey has come to an end at Damascus Gate. It is there where her peripatetic movements have come to a momentary halt in order to take some breath and reflect upon the enormity of what awaits the future of a Palestinian exile. It is noteworthy to underscore the role of the narrator in locating Rayya in a well-determined geographical background in order to unveil part of what really links this outcast to the land and consequently to the roots. She is revealed as somebody

whose subjectivity has gone through a number of stages, all of which problematize the concept of identity for the sake of a future defined less against turmoil and turbulence. Her preliminary encounter with Alex does not absolve her of strategic essentialism defining herself as an ambivalent character moving to and fro within the matrix of Arabism and in and outside the confines of modernity. Though she can be upbraided for her inconsistent demeanor, siding with Alex at times and turning on him at others expressing composure at his mysterious death, she seems to direct all her actions towards a demeaning but meaningful end. The onus is on the narrator to finally catch a glimpse of Rayya:

> I sat down to lunch, but did not touch the food. I was amazed that I had recognized her from Alex's description; she seemed a little heavier, but still beautiful under the beggar's garb. I went up to my room and took three dollar bills from my wallet. I wrote on the first bill in red pencil: "I found your papers in Petra in 1980 still in the closet where you had hidden them." On the second bill, I wrote: "For eight years, I have looked for you to give them back; please contact room 210, Hotel "Al-Hamra." On the third, I wrote: "I have prepared a manuscript for publication, pending your approval." I signed the three bills, "A friend." I then crumbled them into a small ball and put them in my pocket. (145-146)

The secrecy surrounding this potential encounter is tangible proof that Rayya's existence in Palestine is not on a par with her previous exilic wanderings. In exile she is not simply confined to a single spatial spot as she is constantly mobile confessing that her dislocation and uprootedness do not prevent her from reveling in fleeting moments of coziness in ranked hotels. Now that she relocates to her maternal land, she is compelled to be disguised as a beggar simply because her mobility is fettered by the power of the colonial apparatus. Mr. Foster's interaction with her happens within the remit of precaution and caution as the extreme fear engendered by the forces of occupation necessitates limited action. The narrator feels that he has to fulfill a mission he has been obsessed with for years; it is to situate Rayya far beyond the world of fiction in the concrete land of Palestine that has

been defined against the backdrop of reality.

The encounter therefore takes place in a geographical spot that places a premium on identity and belonging. Though she is confined in a narrow space demeaning herself by reducing her social status to a beggar, she seems exalted by serving the land that is most dear to her. It is at this juncture that Rayya experiences a paucity of stability amidst absence of stability and peace due to pressures imposed by the colonial power. Playing the beggar also helps her to come to the fact that Israelis should not be essentially categorized under one unique cohort. Among those who drop coins in her hands are members of Israel who seem to share some kinship with Rayya and identify with her anti-colonial project.

The narrator, who can't help expressing euphoria at reaching Tel-Aviv, accounts for her sudden surfacing in terms laden with ambivalence. The only thing we are certain about is her ultimate existence in Palestine and as for her real subjectivity it remains undecidable:

> Could Rayya have formed a cell from disgruntled soldiers who were sick and repulsed by the brutality and inhumanity of the repression of the Intifada? I had gone back to continue bargaining for the coffee pot when a religious Israeli, with his black clothes, hat and locks dancing on the side of his face, stopped in front of Rayya, dropped his coin and plainly said something to her. (145)

Up to this juncture, Rayya is still clamped tight in the grip of mystery. The narrator fails to draw a transparent image of what she really is. He merely surmises that she is a resistant figure who is fed up with the heavy excesses of the Zionist apparatus. Her existence in Palestine is therefore crucial to rethink her stratagems as regards her involvement in the anti-colonial struggle. She seems to be detached from Partisan politics in order to negotiate the issue of power and hegemony. She brings her itinerant movements to a standstill so as to reflect on her existential project and take part in a sort of activism.

Her newly-established sedentary existence is intended to make friends amidst foes and land usurpers. It is noteworthy that the sympathizers of the Palestinian cause extend beyond the indigenous residents to include some religious Israelis whose identification with Rayya disrupts the epistemic dualities and divisions that tend to dichotomize people into well-defined categories. Her experience of a beggar shows that among the enemies there is a minority of friends that subverts our essential claim of binary logic. In full secrecy the religious Jew adopts Rayya's cause and announces his animosity towards the unfair colonial act of cracking down on the Intifada.

It is within the precincts of the Palestinian land that the notion of identity as a process of questioning gains supremacy. The undecidability of meaning attached to it problematizes any attempt at conceptual clarity we tend to confer on identification. It is also instrumentally exploited in the service of a cause not only on the part of Rayya, but also on the part of other components of a society wherein secrecy is accorded special importance as a way of setting up a bulwark against any possible spread of information in a background where turmoil and upheaval are simply rife. There is a sense of incredibility on the ground as the narrator puts it:

> The whole scene was hallucinating, unreal. Beggars were not beggars; soldiers were not soldiers; waiters were not waiters. I walked quickly running away from the gate and such thoughts until I came to the Dominican Convent, with its famous library, where I had done some research years ago when I had still been living in Beirut. (148)

The contingencies linked to identity formation gather momentum in a space where stability and peace are dominated by the chaos and disarray generated by the occupational process. People are coerced into hiding their real selves in order to survive in a land appropriated by the aggressive usurpers. The hazardous venture of showing one's identity is simply shun

in order to eschew annihilation and engage, though in full secrecy, in counter-hegemonic acts. This is the case of Rayya, who plays the beggar in order not attract the attention of the Israeli snipers who represent a threat to any overt act of resistance. Even the narrator fails to control his emotions and reassure his tensions because of the imminent danger that results from the colonial authority. His movements must be calculated and his safety should not be put in jeopardy; that's why he must seek solace and lift up his spirits in a religious site that links him to a peaceful past when he has to slake his intellectual thirst in Beirut. This juxtaposition of the present to the past is probably meant to juxtapose warfare to welfare and turbulence to serenity.

The flow of thoughts that define the narrator's affinity with the past is ruptured by his committed dedication to the future. Rayya stands for his craving for a movement forward in order to find her whereabouts. A sedentary life in Beirut no longer appeals to Mr. Foster, who feels that he should not abnegate the responsibility of rendering a service to a human fellow and identifying with her plight: He "walked around the garden thinking to [himself], 'I must not leave under a cloud, for I have been a long-time friend of the Palestinian people"' (148-149). This friendship is sealed by Rayya's consent to publish her manuscript in order to immortalize the story of a wretched Palestinian woman who has been cast to the exilic world before she relocates herself to the native space where she becomes a beggar reflecting upon the prospect and challenge of standing up to the colonial hegemony.

A retrospective look at Rayya's life in exile shows that her identification with the cause outplays fleeting cultural encounters in the course of her excessive mobility. The fact that she remains stoic in front of Alex's stereotypical remarks indicates that she is alive for a goal other than that of travelling throughout the world. Contrary to Alex's expectations,

Rayya seems indifferent to his critical voice:

> I was sure she was going to collapse, to have a fit, but it was I who broke down. I ran to the bathroom but she ran after me, and when she saw my state – I must have looked paralyzed or mad – she dragged me from the bathroom and forced me to lie down. She covered me with a blanket to stop my trembling and held my shaking hands. I knew she was frightened and my muttering about cutting my veins turned her normal pallor into a whiteness of death. She was trying to dial for help when I stopped her and begged her just to let me sleep. (67)

In this encounter, Rayya proves her strength-cum-affection. The fact that she does not collapse, contrary to Alex's anticipation, betokens a sense of determination to remain brave enough to serve her long-term project. Her ability to provide assistance in a moment of calamity testifies to a kind of heroism that manifests when there is a need for it. The ambivalence that has so long impinged on her relationship with Alex does not keep her from displaying spectacular signs of intersubjectivity when necessary. Her identification with the plight of Alex – whose identity still remains much of an enigma – is tangible proof that she is not a mere useless peripatetic traveler in quest of bliss. Seeing through her ambivalent behavior, one is likely to discern the positive side of Rayya – a side catering for the other when he is in desperate need of assistance. Though she often suspects him and doubts his real intentions, she still shows allegiance to him as a companion whose presence is paramount to assuage the solitude of exile. At this stage, his death is something she can't bear simply because she is still confounded by the mystery that envelops his character. Whether he is a foe or a friend is still too early to say.

A close reading of facets of her exilic experience, prior to being disguised as a beggar at Damascus gate, reveals the agony of a deracinated woman in quest of selfhood. Her mistrust of Alex's conduct can be construed in terms of vigilance that usually defines a Palestinian pariah who has been expelled out of her land under the muzzle of a gun. Her

treatment of this British acquaintance betrays the psychological confusion of a burgeoning exile preoccupied with the nascent project of anti-colonialism. After all, reticence is regarded as a golden rule for someone toiling under the panoptical gaze of potential enemies, usually those who support or pertain to the colonial force. To ensure a successful and efficient counter-hegemonic reaction, she is displayed to be a bit taciturn in matters relevant to security:

> I was slow to take the impact of his words. I wanted to explain to him that any man mentioned in my notebooks was a composite, a collage of elements from many men, but then I thought that this was a dangerous thing to say. It then struck me that what he had quoted had been written in Arabic and that he wanted deliberately to open a discussion on this question, which I had refused to do. I was so vexed that I started to sob. 'Do not cry', he said, 'I can't bear it and frankly, crying is not relevant between two enemies." (73)

The instability of meaning that has so long defined the interpersonal relationships in the novel continues to inform the intimacy that has developed between Alex and Rayya. The former remains fuzzy and the latter fails to locate him in a well-demarcated space. It is clear that the Palestinian exile has much to say but prefers to stay vigilant and wary against disclosing all the secrets of her predicament. Hers is a world where it is difficult to categorize people into well-defined entities. She seems ready to play her cards next to her chest since she is preparing herself for contesting the Zionist-led hegemonic domination. Though she is depicted to be close to him offering help when needed, she establishes a distance as far as communication is concerned. For an exile maimed by the scars of dislocation caution is a crucial factor that determines interpersonal relationships. That's why Rayya is obliged to keep alert providing minimal information for the sake of survival in a world where trust hangs in the balance. The urge of explaining things to Alex is undermined by the extreme fear that takes hold of a Palestinian dislocated woman

carefully considering a propitious time to react against colonial power within the limits of her strength.

Even before her identity has undergone a metamorphosis becoming a wretched beggar actively involved in matters of self-determination, home occupies a central place in her agenda. Though she owns to indulging in mobility, there are moments when she is seized by lethargic musings on the homeland as when she states:

> Ahead of me was the road that would lead me home, but suddenly I could not move. My feet had become leaden, and I was shaking. I could hear my choking cry when Alex shook me gently. 'Rayya, Rayya, wake up. It is only a nightmare, and I am here with you.' What happiness to find myself safe with him and not alone on a winding deserted road! (99)

Far from being linear and smooth, the trajectory of mobility is interrupted by the act of pondering over the notion of home. Rayya is obsessed with the roots and the possible routes that would take her to Palestine where she belongs. The fact that she is physically paralyzed indicates that she is grappling with a serious psychological unrest due to a feeling of isolation that results from being dislocated. The physical symptoms of her ailment suggest that she is crippled by a sort of inertia even in the presence of the enigmatic figure of Alex. Her inability to sleep peacefully palpably introduces the other face of Rayya – the inner recesses of her mind as she looks ahead to the future hoping to serve the Palestinian cause. The ego, Freud argues, is not a master in its own house. The road that leads to truth, according to him, takes the form of parapraxis such as dreams, jokes, puns and slips of the tongue. It is in her sleep that the psychological make-up of Rayya is revealed. The mental anguish of being deracinated and the propensity of return represent the hidden aspects of a Palestinian exile yearning to establish communion with the homeland. When she regains her consciousness, she sticks to the presence that attaches

her to Alex, the source of attraction and repulsion. But her concern for the future is hidden in the inner recesses of her mind.

## 4.4 A dialogic interaction between now and then

The encounter between past and present seems to underlie the bulk of the narrative in which the progress of the main characters is in a state of flux and turbulence. The symbiosis between now and then can be seen through the mediation of space that functions as a prism through which the history encroaches on the current realities. At the outset of the story, the narrator stresses this symbiosis:

> I knelt down and discovered, wrapped in a rug, an old canvas bag, which I pulled and tried to open, fumbling with the zipper. As the bag opened, a heap of colored school notebooks and bundles of old papers fell out, but there was more at the bottom, and I pulled out a thick leather-bound journal tied to other papers with a string. I carried the entire heap over the bed and spread it out to read under the electric bulb, but a strange feeling of dread overcame me as if an abyss had opened before me, and I hesitated to plunge. I wondered who had hidden these papers rotting and yellowing, in the depth of a crumbling cupboard in this sordid room. (8)

The desolate atmosphere of Petra, where the narrator is destined to lodge as a wandering tourist, is imbued with traces of the past that awaken his curiosity and bring him in close interaction with the domestic history of a Palestinian exile. The papers that he accidently lays his hand on are analogous to a palimpsest layered with echoes and traces of bygone times. He does not conceal the extreme fear of placing himself in immediate juxtaposition with a past he dares not face. The act of hesitating that sweeps over him entails that the hidden events are not always soothing and that their repercussions on Mr. Foster are probably ineluctable. He is about to embark upon a maze whose exit is hard to find. The laborious task of unveiling the intricacies of a personal history and deciphering its

mysterious codes has impinged on the narrator in such a way that he is overcome by a crippling tendency to bring the content of such a past to the fore. Up to this stage, he is confined to the present in which he indulges his private experiences though he is clamped tight in the grip of seclusion owing to the sordid aspects of the space he temporarily inhabits.

The elements of space are presented in such a repulsive way that the journey forward does not augur well for the narrator whose fate has ordained to share the story, or more accurately, the history of a homeless Palestinian woman. What he fears most is the depth of the story that he expects to bring to the light of day. The task of familiarizing us with the content of the papers is demanding and the beginning of the journey that awaits the narrator is inevitable while its trajectory is uneven. After all, a good deal of his time has been spent looking for the owner of the papers accidently found in the humid closet of the rest house in Petra. The mere sight of the tattered documents is accompanied by a certain mysterious awe as he remarks here:

> The words haunted me for they sounded like music. It dawned on me that I was on the urge of receiving a revelation, a glimpse into the holy of holies of a human heart, and I recoiled at the transgression and closed the notebook. But after a few moments curiosity triumphed. I wrapped myself in blankets, wound a towel round my head like a Kaffiyeh to keep out the cold, and being a notorious bibliophile, I opened the book again to find another entry also dated in Petra. (9)

The words, not yet decoded, have such a pernicious impact on Mr. Foster, who still glues to the present unequal to set off for a journey backward. Immersed in his current reveries, he still confronts bygone moments inscribed on the papers with hesitation and dread. The grandeur conveyed by the inscriptions is such that he looks at himself as someone teetering on the verge of a revelation. Though regarded as an object of fear and awe, the past is located in the space of holiness and sanctity. After all, the odyssey he is about to

start cannot fall short of a portrayal of a holy heart - the heart of a woman expelled out of her land only to find herself grappling with the depredations and hardships of exilic life. The burden of disclosing this past and unveiling its screen is so cumbersome that he is tormented by fits of hesitation, for he knows that the beginning of this voyage back in time will open new and intricate avenues towards a target that is not certainly accessible. Be that as it might, humanity entails venturing into the history of a woman who is cut off from home and family to lead the life of a recluse in exile.

Bringing the present and past together is a destiny that he cannot eschew. A gamut of sensations interferes to disrupt his intention to open the door of the past, but destiny ordains that his life and that of Rayya represent coterminous facets on one and the same conglomerate. Being a source of dread does not preclude the past from exuding some warmth that imparts meaning to the sordid atmosphere of the present. These preliminary encounters, added to those made with some indigenous residents of Petra, whet his appetite for setting out on a backward movement to introduce the enigmatic character of Rayya and her mysterious relationship with Alex.

Mr. Foster positions himself as a mediator between the present and past falling back on the text as something laced with experience. The text is feared because it is challenging and does not refer to itself; it rather unveils the lived experience of a displaced Palestinian woman who seeks emancipation from the shackles of exilic life and colonial repressions. Only "minds so untroubled by and free of the immediate experience of the turbulence of war, ethnic cleansing, forced migration and unhappy dislocation" (Said, *Reflections on Exile* xxi) can formulate theories that relate to the Derridean axiomatic proposal that there is no outside the text. The narrator is quite certain that the story of Rayya is a history of human frailty and sorrow; that's why the task of bringing it to the light of day

is demanding and challenging.

His encounter with the Bedouins is regarded as a kind of refuge from this task and a moment of self-reflection. Even if he refers to them in repulsive terms, he seems to cherish their company before taking us on a voyage back in time through the eyes of Rayya and Alex:

> Two impish Bedouins tried, without much enthusiasm, to sell us some coins and invited us to a roaring bush fire in one of the caves. We did not speak; the necropolis weighed on us until we came to the richer, more ornately carved tombs. 'It is all yours,' he gestured, 'which tomb will you choose?' 'That Roman one; it is a little grayer than the Nabatean tombs,' I said falling in with his black humour... The bond between us grew. We were alone, locked in a desolate city of the dead, and the terror in me grew violent. (11)

His interest in anything originating in the past introduces him as an archeologist. The primitive life of the Bedouins seems more palatable than their coins. Silence that ties them together betrays a moment of fear and reflection. The shadows of the dead are present among the living, which affects this encounter and divest it of words. All of a sudden, silence gives way to speech and life is foisted on the tombs that are laden with history. The multiplicity of tombs implies the plurality of interpretations accorded to periods of yore. From these archeological sites, the narrator manages to establish kinship with people that no longer exist. From a simple spot within the necropolis, he seeks to choose the one reminiscent of the Roman age. This openness to the past brings the Bedouin and the narrator closer to one another. The intimacy they tend to share can be appropriately attributed to the bleak atmosphere of the city wherein the dead constitute the overwhelming majority reducing the living to a minority overcome by a feeling of solitude that the narrator seeks to discard.

In fact, the solitude and isolation that impinge on the narrator's life in Petra should

be allayed by a journey backward before embarking upon a forward mobility seeking emancipation from the shackles of the past. However, his paranoiac attitude to the past must be noted as he is still unable to allow us access to the inscriptions left behind in the humid hideout. Rayya's papers are like a treasure possessed by a supernatural power bigger than his idiosyncratic tricks. He therefore continues to defer relating the story of the Palestinian protagonist filling in his psychological gap with other encounters:

> The waiter at the door handed me a cup of tepid coffee and the message that the road to Shobek and Amman was blocked by snow. I pretended to be disappointed as I had hoped to spend part of the day visiting Qalat-Elshobek, the old crumbling ruin of a crusaders' castle, but I was overjoyed. Fate had intervened, for I intended to continue reading the notebooks and to find out about the former occupants of the room. (13)

Struggling under the weight of fear to confront the past, he finally admits to interacting with the unknown and unfamiliar with extraordinary intrepidity. Once transgressing the strictures imposed by dread, he seems to find sheer warmth and solace in reading the notes upon which the novella is built. Through the notes and fragments left behind, the narrator takes us on a voyage back in time unfolding the intimate history of a woman that will not rest unless she sets foot in her ancestral land. Moving a step further from the beginning, which is a tough experience, he relishes the literal marks that are gradually woven into a tale related in retrospect. Though inspired by mobility excavating the hidden remains and residues of the past, he appreciates the awful weather that has unexpectedly paralyzed his movements so as to have some time for acquainting us with the story. His ultimate objective is to move backward, through the textual inscriptions, in order to present the former visitors of the space where he is destined to be incarcerated by unpleasant weather conditions.

The crippling fears of confronting bygone times are supplanted by Mr. Foster's love to

encroach upon Rayya's past, present and future. Part of her history is recounted through her intimate connections with home. He remembered her saying that

> every stone in that city was familiar to her. She was, for me, [the narrator] that city and I wrote to her like a madman: 'if I forget thee Rayya, if I should ever forget thee, my life would be a desert – as white and as lifeless as that dreadful valley of kings – devoid of colour and of light.' (35)

The city she identifies with is Jerusalem. She is so involved in the well-being of that familiar space that her feelings and emotions catapult her to a status where she is at one with it. She reaches a level where she mingles with that city in such a way that they become one homogenous entity. Under the heavy weight of the past, the present acquires meaning as long as her future prospects are carefully considered. The fact that only Palestine is real is revealed in her identification with Jerusalem. Her identity as a displaced forlorn beyond the native geographical borders is understood only in relation to a country she is coerced into leaving behind. The present of excessive mobility acquires signification from her close affiliation with a past marked by the turbulence and upheaval of the Zionist power. We are therefore tempted to interrogate the essence of Rayya's convictions as regards her itinerant mobility. Does she really undertake her constant voyages light? That is, does she revel in her exile tours like any other peripatetic poet, or is her experience as a dislocated Palestinian a special one?

Answers to these questions have been provided throughout this section within the boundaries of ambivalence. At one point, we are introduced to Rayya through her voice as a traveler with little concern for what goes on at home; but the empowering potential of exile has subsequently transformed her into a person who has not broken ties with the realities of colonial expansion. In other words, she is not released from the embrace of a past she has been compelled to leave behind. Her lived experiences turn out to be a sort of

grappling with the past. As a Palestinian woman, she becomes confident that part of her duty is to celebrate a reunion with this past in a future encounter with the native space. This reconciliation can't be achieved unless death is eschewed. So like the Protagonists of Ibrahim Fawal, Rayya knows that this dream necessitates a drastic metamorphosis. Becoming a beggar is one of her ultimate goals to relish a sedentary life in a land she mingles with.

The intricate trajectory – in its temporal dimension – involves a kind of moving back and forth in search of some ontological meaning. This dilemmatic movement is noted by the narrator:

> I wondered whether the former lovers had my dilemma. I was constantly in the process of trying to capture her in her oscillation between the past and the future, and I often told her bitterly, 'it is only the present you miss!" – a reproach to which she was not sensitive and to which she simply replied: "the present is you"! (47)

The dialogic intercourse between Rayya and the narrator is attached paramount importance in this extract. From the very beginning, he is determined to capture her essence, but he can't because of her nomadic way of life. Her mobility is not confined to physical, but also inner journeys. This is informed by her backward and forward travels. This oscillation mirrors the mental anguish of a Palestinian exile who cannot confine herself to the present simply because it is bereft of meaning. The past is tantamount to Palestine, to the warmth of home and to unity under the banner of familial and national affiliations. The present displays the agony of exile and the pangs of nostalgia. Her movements can be construed as signs of restlessness – a flight to the past in order to excavate the residual dregs of bygone times and to prepare herself for a return where she belongs. That's why the present is of little significance to Rayya, who is expelled from her land. It is merely a point from which she looks back to the past and forward to the future. The present will

become valuable only in Jerusalem, where her mobility comes to a temporary halt.

Her relationship with Alex further introduces her as someone whose interest lies in the past and the future. This is one of the reasons why her temperament does not chime in with that of Alex:

> Rayya continued to draw a veil over her knowledge of his treachery and tried to resume her life as before: "I shared with Alex an intense dream life, but whereas my dreams oscillated between the past and the present, his dreams were clairvoyant and, in a sense, prophetic. My dreams revolved around a landscape that I was trying to reach in vain. I often had the same dream in which I found myself amongst a crowd of people in a white domed stone house with pointed arches, typical of the houses of the old city of Jerusalem. (98)

This encounter once again reveals Rayya's dreams, visions and realities. The bond she is destined to share with Alex is flimsy, but it withstands the intervening circumstances of discord. Though differences between them outnumber similarities, Alex's presence remains essential for Rayya to lessen the adverse effect of alienation. That's why she does not pay much attention to his acts of betrayal as long as they are fated to share a dream life outside the boundaries of the homeland. At this juncture – unlike the narrator's previous contention – the protagonist is not detached from the present since it can be construed as a point of departure backward and forward. One cannot talk about the past and future at the exclusion of the present. For the time being, she owns that her dreams are rooted in a landscape she hopes to reach as long as she is alive. On the other hand, those of Alex can be regarded as lacking materiality. Rayya's dreams have a referent; it is a concrete space with a particular design and architecture – a space reminiscent of Jerusalem.

The present of physical and mental wandering is meant to assuage the pangs of exile and consider a possible return. That's why she treats Alex with much reticence to the extent that she is suspicious of his real intentions. He is the embodiment of a present

defined in terms of excessive mobility waiting for the opportune moment to dispense with him and flee to Jerusalem to be ensconced in a familiar space. She is compelled to put the past behind her back looking forward to a promising future that will enable her to resurrect moments of yore. Grappling with the present, she introduces Alex in mysterious terms:

> One day he came upon me crying and sighing loudly, repeating endlessly: "Only the one without a lover is a stranger."" What on earth is the matter? What are you muttering so loudly with sighs and sobs?"'Listen,' I said, clutching his hand, repeating the phrase over and over again. It is by a Sufi of the second century (Hijri) Farquad El Sabkhli, and it is so beautiful that I cry with joy. He looked at me and I continued, 'I found something better still by another Sufi of the same period, Malik Bin Dinar: "if the heart is void of sadness, it falls into ruin, as a house falls into ruin without inhabitants." This same Malek Bin Dinar abstained from marriage, and when he was asked why, his answer was "I would divorce my very self if I could!". (79)

Rayya finds solace in giving lessons to Alex on how to withstand and cope with the hardships of the present. The empowering potential of exile seems to have its effect on Rayya, who is no longer a passive hearer. The way she describes her companion emphasizes his weakness and frailty because he finds it difficult to eradicate the shackles of the present. Like a child, he is reduced to tears because Rayya is mature enough to detect his tricks. She instructs him relying on Sufist injunctions and teachings. To make him bear the agony of the current moments, she depends on renowned Sufist scholars who establish an intimate connection between sadness and bliss. She is in a powerful position to put aside the tormenting encroachment of the present, which is incarnated in exilic displacement, and deal with the ailment of her British 'lover'. She introduces him to a culture which is supposed to define part of her identity as an Arab wanderer. Having diagnosed him with anxiety, she sees fit to administer doses of Sufism-related medicaments.

His only treatment is in her hands. He is in dearth of love which she can give but she

is married to a cause, which makes her relationship with this enigmatic 'lover' without essence. She probably uses him as a mere instrument to divert attention while she is secretly engaged in spawning plans she keeps to herself –plans she dares not share with a 'lover' who may turn out to be a potential enemy. There are moments when manifest discourse fails to categorize identities and interpersonal relationships in such a way that one needs to scan the interstices of the narrative for hidden information. What is obliquely stated in the extract is the fact that she takes refuge in the past so as to deal with the current situation of Alex. Sighs and sobs no longer matter for Rayya, who has adopted the voice of Sufism. She is not paralyzed by the cumbersome load of dislocation since she takes this new religious track that enables her to reflect upon the self and palliate the exilic tensions resulting from solitary life outside native geographical borders. By immersing herself in the spiritual teachings of Sufism as endorsed by the two leading scholars above, she is equipped with enough strength to come to grips with the ills of exile and look forward to a possible life in the homeland. She seems to undergo a kind of purification under the effect of sadness. If Malik Bin Dinar has cleansed his sins by adopting a Sufist way of life to the extent of abstaining from marriage, Rayya follows suit so as to deal with the dislocation of the present and the challenges of the future.

The interaction between disparate times continues to impinge on the narrator, who looks at identity as a process. He wonders whether he is still the same person who has been caught in the world of Rayya and Alex for nine years:

> How time has passed! It is almost nine years since I entered the world of Rayya and Alex in Petra and took possession of their papers. Sometimes I have wondered if I were the same man who in that far winter night succumbed to the seduction of yellowing pages, written by unknown lovers –the same man who wrote their story without an end while the elements of the situation changed and the end became another beginning. (133)

It seems that he steps in the world of Rayya and Alex without finding himself a smooth exit to bid a permanent farewell to the agony and confusion resulting from the antinomies of love and hate, exile and home, mobility and stability, etc. The rhetorical question he poses betrays the idea that identity is a process of interrogation. It is next to impossible that such a long time of intimacy between Rayya and Alex and the space wherein their bond has developed do not have a fundamental impact on Mr. Foster's identity. The story of the Palestinian woman and the British man is so full of contradictions and intricate encounters that the narrator fails to bring it to an end. It takes on a circular form in such a way that the end becomes a new beginning. This manifests in Rayya, who is forced out of Palestine only to go back to it clothed in the robe of a beggar. If her identity should be revealed, she would probably undergo the same experience of displacement she has already experienced. This circular form might suggest that home is provisional for someone whose land is occupied.

The accident of finding the papers that exhibit fragments of Rayya and Alex's tale culminates in a long journey, the aim of which is to go beyond the confines of the manuscript to the concrete world wherein Rayya resides. In other words, the writer/narrator has a craving for establishing a rapport between what we take for fiction and reality. The fact that she has been accounted for in ambivalent terms throughout the narrative does not stand in his way to trespass on the borders of her intimate, though turbulent, space. Actually, the nine-year period is not altogether expended on unveiling the story of the protagonist, but also on locating her whereabouts. The allegorical underpinning of her name, which seems to suggest the flag in Arabic and the short, but telling, remark that 'only Palestine is real' augur that Rayya is more than a fictional character. When it comes to her ordeal, the novella amounts to a slice of life underlying part of the history

of displacement and the consequent depredation of the Zionist extermination machine. When he finally finds her attired in the garments of a beggar, he is reassured that part of his mission has been fulfilled. This dedication has been rewarded by Rayya's approval to have her manuscript published.

## 4.5 Retrospective encounters

Rayya does not weave her tale merely to interrogate and talk about the self in relation to a spurious lover. Through acts of memory she looks back on those she feels related to by counter-hegemonic ethos. Even if she does not champion violence in response to oppression and domination, she can't help taking us back in time to introduce actions and reactions of a Fida'i, who sacrifices his life for the land:

> He had spent his childhood in a refugee camp in Damascus and then had received a scholarship to France, where his mother sent him money earned by doing embroidery work at night and selling it at the gate of the camp. His domain was silence. He never spoke of his academic achievements, and he had had no childhood to speak of, nor love – for he was a lover of a captive land, a beloved of whom he had hazy memories. (81)

She excels at the 'encoding of historical experience by... literary form' (Said, *Reflections on Exile* 13) giving life to the text which amounts to the status of history. In this excerpt, she dwells on the harrowing experience of a Palestinian martyr whose childhood is steeped in the ordeal of displacement as he is trapped in a refugee camp outside the warmth and coziness of the native space. Being confined in the claustrophobic land of the camp does not preclude him from forging strong affiliations with the homeland and pursuing his dreams in exile. Unlike Rayya, who relishes the soothing and healing effects of mobility oscillating between the past, present and future, the Fida'i concentrates on the bitter

present of uprooting and dislocation. His stay in France is meant to give impetus to his identity which has been mostly developed in the refugee camp under the constant surveillance of the colonial power. Since his native land has been appropriated offering no room for self-emancipation, he seeks empowerment in a far off place wherein a voyage back to the past is almost impeded by amnesia:

> When I asked him what he remembered of Palestine, he replied, "I was eight years old when we left in 1948, but I'm lucky, for I still remember. I think of my poor comrades who were born in exile and who are without memories, and who everyday die for a Palestine they have never seen". (81)

This Palestinian figure has contracted partial amnesia which makes his memories hazy and debilitated but not wiped out unlike his contemporaries who were born in exile and grew up with a vehement predilection for fighting for a Palestine they have never known. Though teetering on the verge of forgetting, he is satisfied that he is still tied to the past with some reminiscences that make him defend a real rather than unknown Palestine. He feels privileged that he is in a better position than his comrades who are compelled to die for an imagined community. This can be interpreted as a desire to legitimate his extreme counter-hegemonic acts in reaction against the atrocities of the Zionist-led onslaught. When Rayya brings up this tale of sorrow and grief, she establishes a contact with another version of the anti-colonial response. This response is fueled by the experience of turbulent displacements at gunpoint.

Language does not talk about itself, but it refers to the world wherein the characters grapple with the experience of displacement and homelessness. The Fida'i in question is forced to leave for France to seek intellectual empowerment and contest his position as a Palestinian outsider whose land has been inequitably appropriated. He has been cast to a position to ponder his role as an extreme freedom fighter: "The historical experience of

imperialism for the imperialized entailed subservience and exclusion; therefore, the historical experience of nationalist resistance and decolonization was designed for liberation and inclusion." (Said, *Reflections on Exile and Other Stories* 23) The Fida'i, who seems to lead the life of a recluse as an expatriate in France is not left to stand up to his ordeal alone. His mother is also engaged in acts of resistance in her own way. She owns a living doing embroidery in order to financially support her son.

This encounter between mother and son evokes Rayya's memory of a childhood spent in a family unison in the land of her birth. In 1969 the acclaimed Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish underscores the importance of the Palestinian memory in strengthening the connection between the land and a people who "know the time of the rain from the smell of the stone" (Deer et al, *Edward Said: A Memorial Issue* 3). In a state similar to hypnosis Rayya takes us to a scene enacted in the past in order to underlie the solid connection that ties her to the land:

> In myself-induced hypnosis, I asked for his physical presence, thus reverting to ancestral ways that the land itself had preserved in the cycle of death and resurrection. In my waiting for his sudden emergence, I was delving back into racial memories, awaiting the return of Tammuz, the miracle of resurrection eternally bound up with the land that had given me birth. I lulled myself with images of my mother crying silently while combing her long chestnut hair. (106)

In this vivid memory act – the act of travelling back beyond the strictures of time and space – the protagonist underlies the difficulty inherent in the present situation of exilic life outside the geographical boundaries of home. Since 'exile can produce rancor and regret, as well as sharpened vision' (Said, *Reflections on Exile and other Stories* 29), Rayya embarks upon a voyage to the past to establish contact with her loved ones in such an intimate space. The absence of Alex projects her to a meditative mental state in order to confer life and regeneration on moments she is in dearth of. Though they are often

presented to be on different wavelengths, she desperately needs the physical presence of Alex, who may stand as a bulwark against the intervening past time. Be that as it might, her souvenirs enable us to see what life was like for her when she cherished the warmth and security of home.

Home means a composite of old ways she is lacking in now that she is engaged in peripatetic mobility due to the absence of stability. In a moment of reflective musings she imparts life to death in order to establish access to the land of her childhood. Simple events and occurrences as the ones related in the quote above acquire significance when the mere thought of occupying a stable space at home is next to impossible. Through her mind's eye – now that Alex is away – she relives the bygones moments and celebrates the traditions that make her Palestinian and seal her sense of belonging to a familiar geographical background. The event of her mother combing her hair – simple and mundane as it is – is worth reflection and pensive consideration. Being alone is an opportunity to embark upon a journey to the past hoping to lessen 'the crippling sorrow of estrangement' (ibid 188): "Since almost by definition exile and memory go together, it is what one remembers of the past and how one remembers it that determine how one sees the future" (ibid 30). Rayya goes back to the burgeoning stage of childhood and the circumstances surrounding it so as to prepare herself for moving forward, especially when the present is bereft of Alex.

One of her odysseys is made in the absence of her 'lover', or more pertinently, her arcane companion. The passing of time and its intricacies occupy central stage:

> Long before his disappearance, I was keeping the routine of his presence: waiting for the midnight calls, listening for his footsteps on the stairs. How would the space that spiraled into infinite time be filled. It was a constant fight against walling in those memories, extending over a large part of the globe. What vanity to think I could relegate them to a corner where they would not see the light! The many

> remedies for obliterating them were in vain, and to my horror, I saw that they had a life of their own. How strange that memories engendered such emotions when the love that created them was dead. (75)

The human bond that has developed between Rayya and Alex in spite of all sorts of contradictions and aporias is not obliterated from her memory. His disappearance, fleeting and transitory as it might be, has impinged on the Palestinian woman to the extent that she resorts to the working of memory to retrieve her former relationship with the Englishman. Part of her identity has been formed through interactions with him and the ups and downs of her lived experience with him have left imprints that cannot be effaced overnight. Now that he is away, she finds it difficult to erase his existence from her life. That's why, she is portrayed as though he were not far from her. In fact, she falls back on memory to draw a live image of his and his actions. Absence is supplanted by presence when she stirs her memory into action. She gives way to the power of her senses to establish a close contact with this enigmatic figure.

How ambivalent human relationships really are! All through the narrative, the two raise their hackles and withdraw into themselves turning discourse into debate rather than dialogue. However, when one is absent the other betrays his/her failure to deal with the situation. In this excerpt, the mere absence of Alex has plunged Rayya into a deep meditation hoping to mitigate the intensity of dislocation. Being out of place, she finds solace in flying back in time not only to impart presence to absence but also to fly afloat in a limitless space that metaphorically stands for a sort of hoped for emancipation, or liberation from the constraints of forced exile. Hers is a dream space that cannot be filled because it is too vast to be contained in her world – a world that cannot be physically defined and that has no center or guiding principle. Her last wish to relegate her memories to a dark space of her mind cannot be realized at the moment because the power of love

she has felt now that Alex has vanished is too ineffable to locate within a well-demarcated place. The fact that she is taken aback by the regeneration of intense emotions when love is dead further confirms the ambivalent connection between the two 'lovers'.

It seems that one of Edward Said's definitions of the term exile applies to the context of Rayya, who is incarcerated in the prison house of solitude and reclusion: "Nationalisms, he argues, are about groups, but in a very acute sense exile is solitude experienced outside the group: the deprivations felt at not being with others in the communal habitation" ( *Reflections on Exile and other Stories* 191).The corollary of isolation undergone by the protagonist is her failure to bear a lonesome existence in the absence of a person who is much more feared than loved. As an epitome of otherness, Alex does not often get on well with Rayya, who looks on him as an imminent threat to be feared rather than loved or admired. This feeling is justified by the mysterious death of the Englishman and the immediate return of Rayya to the fold under the guise of a beggar. However, she desperately needs company and the presence of Alex keeps her from letting loose the content of her memories – this content that ambiguously harms though it also heals. As an exile she introduces herself to be cut off from her roots, her land, and her past. A facet of this past is accessible only by dint of memory which further displays Rayya in an ambivalent state of mind that testifies to the agony and instability of a homeless Palestinian woman.

To attenuate this homelessness, she directs her retrospective reveries to part of what defines her as an Arab moving beyond the particularities of a Palestinian identity and nationality. The soothing elements of space that still contains the traces and signs of her pedigree are worth mentioning. Introducing Alex, she appears to look at her companion's taste with derision:

> I was not progressing enough for his taste in bird watching or in identification of plants and butterflies, so he began my instruction on the Southern tip of Sri lanka, on the beach of Bentota. The Indian Ocean stretched straight to the South Pole as we bent to pick little tropical plants whose name I never have remembered. The nights on the enchanted Island recalled the magic tales of the Sindbad of my childhood and his adventures at Serendib. (52)

It is in space that she strives to bury the agony and isolation of exile. She takes refuge in a moment of childhood spent on the Island on which she looks retrospectively on the tales of “Sindibad the Sailor”. This tale appears in the second volume of the book of *One thousand Nights and one Night* and it is probably the stanzas sung by Sindbad, the porter, that most appeals to Rayya though not explicitly mentioned. If he labors under the cumbersome weight of his loads as he moves incessantly, she toils under the heavy weight of her cause as she moves from place to place. The wretched Sindbad cannot help looking at the delicacies and luxuries of a well-to-do person with Jealousy juxtaposing welfare to misery:

> I have heard of poor men waking In the shadow of a palace, But the solace Of such waking Is not for me. I have seen the rich man’s burden, Heavy gold on gold increasing; But the blessing Of that burden Is not for me. Though more heavy than those others Is the load which makes me weary, What I carry Is for others, Is not for me (Mathers 178).

Central to these verses is the idea of wretchedness and isolation brought about by extreme poverty that makes Sindbad the porter work for others. The state of loneliness and despondency is what Rayya seems to share with this forlorn wayfarer. In this backward voyage to the past, she dwells on the tale of Sindbad in order to compare herself to an itinerant wanderer to whom she is tied by the destiny of living outside the warmth and comfort of a stable existence. His fate ordains that he should serve others just as she is destined to tour the world because of forced migration and unhappy dislocation.

Alex's pastime activities are not palatable to Rayya, who has a propensity to instruct him on the intricacies of a space she regards as a repository of intimate historical and nationalist feelings and tendencies. She does not deliberately attend to his passion for bird watching and plant identification as she gears towards such landscapes as Sri Lanka on the beach of Bentota, a coastal town whose name is 'derived from a mythical story which claims that a demon named 'Ben' ruled the tota or river bank" (Wikipedia). The fact that she cannot remember the name of the tropical plants they have collected suggests that for her space and landscape are instrumentally resorted to as a telos to alleviate the anxiety-stricken existence of becoming out of place. In short, such acts of memory enable Rayya to re-experience moments she no longer cherishes under the auspices of Alex and under the compelling circumstances of exilic wanderings. Though the harsh reality of leaving behind everything that makes her Palestinian is indelible – a place, a people, a heritage, etc. – she seems to find a modicum of solace in her retrospective as well as prospective travels.

Her exile wanderings and the plight of failing to establish communion with the native space have probably a redeeming feature; it is to attain a position similar to the one reached by Sindbad the Sailor. The latter succeeds in vanquishing the turmoil and bitterness engendered by poverty and revels in a life of tranquility and luxury. Depicting his well-being, he recounts that "in this new life I forgot the sorrows, hardships and dangers which I had undergone, the sadness of exile and the fatigues of voyaging. I made charming friends and lived a life of calm joy for many months, feasting my mind with pleasure, eating delicately and drinking rare wines" ( ibid 187 ). However, though she savors the taste of homecoming and inhales the fresh air of Jerusalem, she remains – unlike Sindbad – unable to disentangle herself from the mesh of colonialism and eradicate its repercussions

because of her identity. As an Arab Palestinian, she is a pariah, an aberration that is relegated to the subordinated margins of humanity. For Said, "the way Islam, the Arab World and Palestine are represented is deeply indicative of the power of a dominant culture to construct the world in a particular way under the guise of knowing it" ( Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 9). Her existence in the land of her forebears is celebrated in full secrecy and reticence because she cannot discard the garb of a beggar which she is compelled to don in order to eschew the cruel gaze of the Israeli military power. And how long she can go without being noticed remains a conundrum the narrative fails to sort out. Will she spend the rest of her life as a bogus beggar in order to establish contact with friends and recognize foes amidst supporters? Will she be apprehended and banished from Jerusalem, the land that is dear to her heart? That is, will the vicious circle start anew and will Rayya undergo another period of exile?

It is probably these problematic queries that make the presence of Alex essential though not desired. The domestic conflicts between him and Rayya prevent the latter, though temporarily, from digging into the past and brooding over the general purport of the questions above. Very early in the narrative, she reflects on her relationship with Alex in the following terms:

> "I am so frightened of being with him; our being together is so fragile that anything – a sound, a look, a gesture – can shatter it. The air becomes so rarified that I am afraid to breathe. The words we exchange burden the atmosphere with their banality and can so easily break the spell, for when we meet it is on another parallel level, another dimension, where we merge and flow together. Is he a man? A force? What is he? (9-10)"

At the outset of the narrative, Rayya is not mature enough to contest the supremacy of Alex and his condescending masculinist discourse. Though he is feared, he is necessary to engage her attention which might otherwise be consumed by the events and occurrences

she has undergone as an exile. Her words betray a sort anxiety generated by the potential separation because the bond is not solid enough to be unshakable. A close reading of the extract testifies to the idea that what she fears more is not the encounter with him but its possible break as it is not based on adequate grounds. The fact that she is tied to him by a flimsy thread bespeaks a feeling of paranoia that has taken hold of a deracinated Palestinian woman in need of someone to share her predicament. Kept to herself, she can't help visualizing a dizzying series of events that position her outside the contours of home and family. The fact that she cannot even breathe so as not to interfere with her relationship with Alex is tangible proof that she is under constant fear of being let down.

In this retrospective voyage to the past, she fails to reduce the enigmatic Alex to a single clear-cut identity. Though she is fully aware of the thin thread that ties her to him, she is at a loss for his true nature. She is not sure whether to locate him within or outside the realm of humanity. This claim once again is indicative of the fictional nature of the narrative since the character of Alex is decentered. The fact that she cannot foist a label on him problematizes identity and accentuates its ambivalence. The last question dismantles the authority exerted by the third person indicative since the Englishman does not fall within the normative ambit of the verb 'to be'. This interpretive reading lends credibility to Zaharn's contention that everything can be called into question except the idea that 'Palestine is real.' The ontological being of Alex is interrogated since he can be other than a man, which makes us associate the identity of a typical exile with contingency and instability. In his *Reflections on Exile* Said states that "exile is life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentered, contrapuntal, but no sooner does one get accustomed to it than its unsettling force erupts anew" (200). The nomadic way of life implies that identity is in a state of flux and turbulence. In short, this memory introduces Rayya's

companion in terms she cannot herself understand.

What Rayya shies away from expressing directly or by dint of memory is expressed on her behalf by the narrator, who extols her ability to write down traces of a personal history:

> At other times Rayya's sheer intensity carried me away, but perhaps being a writer, she was using her medium more effectively than did the reticent Alex: "so we fell in love, with our lives so separate, so far apart" –'against all the odds' as he would say – and unlike lovers, we did not envisage a future, for in the world we inhabited everything was in flux. He carried me with him to a region from which he managed to escape, before a permit was issued for his release. One is never on solid grounds with him; one is always aware of the shifting sands underneath. His essence I can never capture, for he continuously eludes me. (35)

The narrator emphasizes the fluid nature of identity in exile through the eyes of the two 'lovers'. What makes one skeptical of their love is its lacking future orientations as though theirs were a life destined for a potential chasm, a rift, a break that will bring the two apart putting an end to any encounter in the subsequent times. Their mobile existence prevents them from making future plans since the destination of their journeys is not determined in advance. For the time being, before making her exit to Palestine, Rayya seems to construct her own room in writing facing the challenges of trying to define - though in vain - the intricate identity of Alex, whose essence she cannot unravel. After all, the subversive nature of this enigmatic figure has previously been pointed out when Rayya inquisitively enquires into his essence without being able to provide a satisfactory answer.

The mystery that surrounds the concept of identity is also retrospectively handled in Alex's letters:

> His first letter announcing his return to Paris ended with: 'I shall be afraid of you; there is something of a pagan power about you. Dear Rayya, you disturb me, there is

> too much of the Greek in you, so be warned –I shall come in awe.' This was followed by another, written after his second visit: 'what kind of spells, what enchantment have you woven? We are sitting here, my little green bird and I, motionless, silent, dozing together, listening to Mahler. Your presence filled the house. If I called, you would answer from the next room; if I held up my hand you would be there; if I looked from the window, I would see your face, your dark hair. (36)

Conceptualizing identity as a monolithic entity would be an absurdity. If Rayya fails to foist a pristine univocal label on Alex, she is equally much of an enigma to him. His inability to confine her to a simply-defined category partially explains his paranoiac tendencies towards her. His reductionist attitude soon fails him when other considerations loom on the horizon. At first, he acknowledges that there is an aura of paganism around her, but then shifts to her Greek origins, both of which problematize identity and stress its polyvalent and polymorphous nature. In a fashion similar to Rayya's inability to capture the essence of Alex, the latter is equally eluded by Rayya, who does not subscribe to one single naming. The perturbing and confounding fact that she does not abide by the discursive practices laid down by the Englishman can be construed as a sign of dissent and resistance as she steadfastly grows into a fully-fledged character. At this juncture, she seems to have deserted her gullibility and celebrated a sort of emancipation from the shackles of her relationship with Alex.

The fact that she has become awe-inspiring bespeaks a transformation her identity undegoes. She no longer fears Alex, who is baffled by the pluralism with which her subjectivity is associated. She cannot be pinned down, nor assigned one single appellation. She becomes so arcane a figure whose presence is nevertheless missed in a world characterized by a harrowing solitude even for a man who does not bear the brunt of displacement in a manner similar to Rayya.

The way they exchange insults and taunt each other with ready-made value judgments

is indicative of their fear to step into the world of otherness. Dreaded as it is, the other is paramount in the construction of subjectivity as it is conceived by Laplanche[4] in *Essays on Otherness*:'the constitutive role of the other' (2) is underscored when Rayya recounts the affinity that has developed between her and Alex whenever they find themselves in a face to face encounter. The language which is often laden with ethnocentric ethos is necessary to bring the two together. Alex's disparaging innuendoes do not occlude an ongoing interaction that is broken only by the absence of one party. Each time they go to an Arab country, he would say, he catches sight of Rayya merging into the throngs in the souks as if she were intent on purging herself 'from the dust of the Western world' and yet her mind is 'so western' (42). Though he is steadily moving to a serious downfall, his discourse is shaped by the authority of the third person indicative considering his companion a wayward child to be tamed and therefore establishing himself as a sort of supreme judge or teacher. This typical colonial discourse of trying to define Rayya's mind as lacking in a symmetrical structure occurs early in the novella when she is confined to the background of the narrative by making her taciturn and less articulate. In spite of this structure of references, attitudes and experiences, the spurious lovers cannot stand leading a solitary existence outside the spatial ambit of one another.

The essentialist tendencies that mark their discourse introduce the 'lovers' to be unable to occupy an interstitial human space outside the injunctions of the binary logic. They are repeatedly shown to inhabit a parochial space built around power dialectics that function within the paradigm of exclusion and inclusion. These epistemic dualities and divisions represent a serious hurdle that the characters fail to surmount and yet when one is away,

[4] He is best known in the English language world as the co-author with Jean-Bertrand Pontalis of the great critical and theoretical dictionary *The Language of Psychoanalysis* (1967), and in literary and film studies as the co-author, also with Pontalis, of the classic essay on the primal fantasies translated as 'Fantasy and the Origins of Sexuality' (1964).

he leaves a vacant place that needs to be filled. This is why the bird is not enough to keep Alex company when he is away from Rayya. Moving in and outside this ambivalent space, makes any simplistic construal of the events such an impossible task. It might even be a fallacy to ascribe Rayya's early silence to her occupying a space inferior to that of Alex. She 'usually declined to reply to such naïve statements, but sometimes [she] would ask him cynically' whether it is possible to 'shake off his conditioned outlook on the Arab world' (42). The silence that might be erroneously interpreted as a sign of denigration and frailty is regarded by the Palestinian protagonist as a token of power if not of superiority over the articulate Alex.

She looks on his statements as devoid of reasoning and his arguments as abnormally spurious since he simply echoes the mainstream discourse of Empire; a discourse pregnant with the signifying and discursive statements that tend to dehumanize and marginalize anything Arab. Such a discourse that determines the relationship between speaker and hearer (Ashcroft and Ahlu walia) and their place in the world is actually undermined by Rayya's silence. It is as if she wanted us to be chary of misinterpreting her inarticulate position and attributing it to her inability to live up to the lofty status of Alex. She seems to abstain from overreacting to his stereotypes resorting to intermittent silence. In her eye they are not worth responding to even if the Englishman's discourse sometimes calls for deep critical reflections and musings as when he destabilizes Rayya's fixed conviction about a potential return to the ancestral land. He admits his failure to understand one of her essential projects:

> 'What I do not understand', he would say, leaning on his elbow to light a cigarette at dawn, 'is that you attribute all your ills to the loss of Palestine, but a radical non-conformist like you, a little head of her time, would have been a stranger there anyway. You would not have belonged, even if you were physically in Palestine! (42)

The mystery of this discourse continues to impinge on our tendency to decipher the purport of this claim. Though it is somehow pertinent to excoriate Alex for his stereotypical perceptions of reality, he sometimes presents himself as a sort of informant even if we are not certain whether to take his words for granted. The piece of information he provides here concentrates on Rayya's subjectivity and the question of her allegiance to Palestine. What sounds ambivalent again is whether she was born in Palestine or outside of it and therefore remains attached to the homeland as an imagined community. This undecidability of signification has marked the narrative throughout making our interpretation of the events an open-ended process. For instance, the relationship between Alex and Rayya cannot be simply accounted for because it is predicated on attraction and repulsion. When the two are destined to come together, they find it quite difficult to bear one another and when they are brought apart physical mobility comes to a standstill as they yearn for a subsequent encounter.

# Chapter 5

# The Meaning of Home in Nada Awar Jarrar's *Somewhere Home*

## 5.1 Root-oriented identity

When Maysa is fed up with her existence in Beirut, she sees fit to relocate to the mountainous ancestral home where she is liable to cherish the memories of bygone times. This movement back to the roots is partly explained by the situation in the city that suffers from the turbulence of armed conflicts. Her craving for a past of unity and togetherness is palpable in this quote:

> As Beirut smoulders in a war against itself, I have returned to the mountain to collect memories of the lives that wandered through this house as though my own depended on it. And as my heart turns further inward, I nurture a secret wish that in telling the stories of those who loved me I am creating my own. (4)

Through the mediation of space Maysa revels in weaving her own story by delving into the history of people who have once occupied the landscape she has identified with now. Leaving behind the chaotic and hectic city life, she takes refuge in her parental home as a means of escape from the macabre atmosphere of Beirut. According to Salem, "the multiple militias, shifting alliances, regional proxies, and urban guerrillas all become fixtures of the seemingly dissolving Lebanon" (9). Her return is celebrated through giving free rein to memories that tie her to the native background. It is therefore her presence that imparts significance to an otherwise lifeless and desolate place.

Establishing communion with space wherein the echoes of the past reverberate constantly has equipped Maysa with a desire to breathe a new life in the events that have once occurred within the walls of the ancestral home: "The sights, smells, food, and sounds of the native land are summoned up in a celebratory fashion, awakening body and soul simultaneously" ( AL Maleh 33). Her voyage back in autumn when the weather is freezing cold can be explained in terms of a quest for some warmth she has always been in dearth

of in the city where the sound of the bullets interferes with her equanimity. Establishing a dialogical encounter with her ancestors beyond the strictures of space and time is an attempt to immortalize the dwellers of the house by writing a history that will confer meaning on her retreat.

She exults in her arrival at the mountain where she begins to make necessary arrangements to ward off the potential effect of the intervening cold. Some pieces of the furniture she depends on for this purpose acquire their import from their past identity. The Persian carpet that belongs to her mother is a mnemonic object that bespeaks Maysa's identification with a family member as a repository of memories. She cherishes her lonesome, but comfortable existence away from the noise and havoc of the city. She indulges in the warmth of space when darkness pervades the atmosphere and serenity enhances contemplation.

At night when silence prevails, she is consumed by a fit of reverie in which she retrieves incidents and occurrences that have once coloured facets of her existence. The sights and sounds that emanate from the house make it resonate with echoes of life. She no longer feels the burden of homelessness weighing upon her. This movement from the city to the mountain is spurred by a desire to cast aside a sense of alienation that has marked her existence prior to her retreat. In the city she feels that she does not belong even in the presence of her husband. In this respect, Layla AL Maleh notes that "rootedness and dwelling, uprootedness and homelessness, transrootedness and migration can shape a human being's identity, transforming one into native, foreigner, colonizer, traveler, migrant, nomad, refugee, or exile" (Ibid 19). As a migrant to the city, Maysa is clamped tight in homelessness and seeks solace elsewhere; that's why she experiences a reverse return to establish kinship with the familiar space.

Her four-month pregnancy is symbolically suggestive of a proclivity towards giving birth to her baby not only in a peaceful climate but also in a house 'where everything began' (7). This primordial affiliation with the native background explains Maysa's tendency to stay in close affinity with the space where she relishes the mythical reconstruction of the past. This nostalgia 'for a periodical return to the mythical time of the beginning of things, to the "Great Time"' (Eliade xi) manifests in her intimate relationship with and voyages along the familiar landscape:

> My world feels so small now, the house, the garden and the shadows in between. On the rare occasions when I go down to the village, I encounter no one who can lift my spirits. When she comes to see me, Selma tells me people have begun to talk. Your belly, she says, is going to be difficult to hide soon. (8)

It seems that Maysa has a penchant for simplifying life and reducing the intricacies associated with it in the city. Hers has become a tiny world that is not difficult to contain and focus on. When she needs to make a change, she undertakes a voyage to the nearby village where she cannot eschew the gossip of the local people. However, it is the house and the areas adjacent to it that trigger off the pleasurable pangs of nostalgia for a past that bristles with life: "this house, this old, dilapidated house, was once a castle, alive and spilling over with energy" (9). In her mind's eye she visualizes her grandmother as she sat on 'a wooden-backed chair' and is accordingly seized by fear of the shadows that have dominated a place hitherto awash with liveliness and activity.

Her scrupulous account of the inside and outside of the house is intended to break the hideous silence and indulge in the task of writing the story, or more pertinently the history, of her relatives. She strives to narrate the self hoping to come to grips with the differing realties that have once defined the individual existence of a people. The house and the garden are represented as a palimpsest layered with traces and vestiges that

will help Maysa put pen to paper in order to inform the coming generations about their forefathers and their way of life.

She minutely inspects the interior of the house to relive and re-experience moments that have once occurred there. She seeks to establish a close-knit encounter with the dead through the intermediacy of space:

> Outside, there is unqualified silence. I begin to wonder if I would not manage to rest easier if I moved into another room. I wrap a thick blanket round myself, light a candle and tiptoe to the other side of the house where the four boys, my father and his brothers, once slept. The room is spacious and bitterly cold. I can see them, Salam, Rasheed, Fouad and Adil, lying one against the other for warmth on mattresses placed together to accommodate their growing bodies. I hear their breathing and see the shadowy figure that makes her way into the room, and feel the gentle kisses she gives them on flushed cheeks. (11)

The signifying economy of space is highlighted as Maysa considers how to avoid the impending effect of silence that is rampant outside. To take refuge from it, she looks for a cozy place inside moving from one corner of the house to another in quest of establishing kinship with family members beyond the barriers of time and space. The coldness of the room suggests her search for warmth through a mythical encounter with her father and brothers. Now that she can see them, she can visualize their actions and how they impart life to the otherwise dreary rooms. She is motivated by a desire to keep alive the story of a lost home.

Maysa's obsession with the house thus enables her to musealize the past. The house is endowed with inordinate power as the place where everything began. Here, Pierre Nora's theories on *lieux de mémoire* help explain Maysa's motivations and actions. Nora argues that "*lieux de mémoire* are sites that embody memory and allow a sense of historical continuity to persist" (196). However, it is noteworthy that her historical accounts will remain highly subjective as she has excised sixteen years from the chronicle. This period

is that of the civil war that broke out in Lebanon in 1975. Her record starts a few months before the birth of her child, stops at her birth, then resumes when her daughter is sixteen years old. The very fact of overlooking the sixteen-year interval is an attempt to escape the harsh reality of the war, which Maysa dares not include in her story.

At one moment in the house Maysa has a propensity to decenter the central identity that attaches her to the *terre natale*: The impact of the war is such that she wishes she could become someone other than herself. She "wants to have been a Chinese warrior, a rounded Eskimo, or perhaps a Scottish prince... anything but this weighted, haunted longing for a distant past" (11). This ambivalent attitude reflects the quandary of a Lebanese woman who chooses to escape from the present and take refuge in the past only to find herself enmeshed in its embrace since she shows herself to be in dearth of concrete material to draw on in order to write a record of the local history. Though the house evokes the past by enabling the narrator to give free rein to her imagination, the scarcity of historical documents leaves Maysa baffled as to the enormity of the task awaiting her.

The notebook that she accidently finds is empty and therefore its virgin pages contain no information about the dwellers of the abode. She consequently uses it to inscribe the events that might have taken place within and in the vicinity of the house. As Peter Brooks writes, "We live immersed in narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed" (3). Against the backdrop of these words, we can set Maysa's narrative which draws on the past experiences and encounters that used to occur in the natal home.

Space triggers off past incidents and transports her far back into earlier times breathing life once again in her loved ones. She mainly focuses on the history of the women that have

once imbued the house with liveliness though constantly grappling with the exclusionary discourse of a patriarchal culture that seems to favor men over women. Her grandmother's feelings for her daughter "wavered between love and irritated concern until the day she promised five-year-old Saeda's hand in marriage to a first cousin's son and no longer felt the need to worry about her future" (32). Unlike her brothers, Saeeda has not been granted the prerogative of education as she is the victim of an arranged marriage. Be that as it might, Maysa accords her a privileged status in the novel as a caregiver looking after her parents –in –law when her husband has departed elsewhere. This departure gives Saeeda a special place in the narrative because she is also the one to tend the native soil by keeping the garden green with 'basil and thyme, parsley, mint, rosemary and coriander, everything she loved to touch and smell and taste in her cooking' (37). From this perspective, I don't concur that Maysa's interest in the past at the cost of the present is an act of betrayal of the current times (Mirapuri 473). By unveiling the screen of bygone moments, she enables us to see what life was like on the mountains when Lebanon was peaceful. The repercussions of the civil war –though the narrative is brought to a close soon after the birth of Maysa's child only to be resumed after sixteen years –are not covered so as not to interfere with the narrator's nostalgia for a past that is retrievable only through her mind's eye.

She is revealed to lead the life of a recluse in order to cherish meditations on memory and belonging. Her escape from Beirut at the time of war cannot be construed against the backdrop of irresponsibility given that Wadih, her husband, is left alone to grapple with the upheaval of war. Her return to the home of her forebears is meant to gather information to write a book to read to her own children in the future (44). It is at this juncture again that the dividing line between fact and fiction is shadowy and vague. The

only reference that could be of some use is the empty notebook she is obliged to fill with historical intimations solely drawing on the power of her imagination.

Through a brief encounter with Wadih, Maysa seems willing to draw a comparison between her situation and that of the older women whose history is being recorded for the time being. It is Wadih, rather than Maysa, that has to pay a visit to the mountain to see his wife who has a proclivity to keep him at bay in order to savour the memory of the past. Unlike her predecessors, her retreat is symptomatic of a craving for emancipation and independence. If Saeeda's husband once left her behind to fend for herself, this time it is Maysa who has agency to live independently of the man giving herself the necessary conditions to start writing down a history –fictional and incomplete as it is – for posterity.

The husband's visit brings the flow of the story into a temporary halt. Maysa extricates herself from the injunctions of the past in order to introduce us to the situation of the present. Most of the questions addressed to Wadih center upon the civil war in Beirut. He admits that the fighting flares up and abates while they manage to live during 'the gaps in between' (45). The contention to which Maysa responds with utter apathy stressing that she does not feel lonely as she makes recourse to the past in which she identifies with the house dwellers jotting down their historical narrative. The cold encounter between husband and wife bespeaks Maysa's autonomous way of life away from the city where her husband is trapped. It is important to note that this sporadic interaction is not incorporated into the story which, explains Maysa's desire not to shake the equanimity and pleasure derived from her close contact with her relatives.

She soon leaves aside the fleeting encounter with Wadih, who is obliged to go back to the city, and resumes the act of delving into the past to allay solitude and bring the story forward: "She can almost swear to having heard Adel's and Leila's voices...on lonely

nights in this house" (47). This communication with the past through space continues to matter in the period Maysa has spent on the mountain. For example, she brings up the story of Alia, who is introduced in close contact with her grandchildren, who are back home as they have arrived from America. While the parents speak both Arabic and English situating themselves in an interstitial space between the homeland and the hostland, the children who can speak only English find it hard to adapt in their parents' *terre natale*. "It was not the first time they felt out of place in a country they had referred to since childhood as 'back home"' (49). In fact, in the three parts of the novel, home is a problematic concept that cannot be simply defined. In the case of Lebanon, where the characters lead a mobile life it is not easy to say where one's home is located. The children maintain a closer affinity with America than Lebanon. Adel told Leila how "he had loved America for the huge skies, the prairies and the wheat bending with the wind, and had reveled in the freedom of endless roads leading nowhere. . . and then with equal certainty said there had never been any question of his not returning to Lebanon" (51). Though he shows more allegiance to his adopted country of residence, it has not occurred to him to sever his ties with the parental home. He remains attached to the prospect of return even if he is enthralled by the overall atmosphere of North America.

The enigmatic perception of home is highlighted when Leila is not sure where she belongs. This confusion does not mean a lot to Maysa, whose rapport with her grandmother is consolidated by a mere return to the mountain where she feels free to identify with items that have once pertained to her. She seems to derive sheer inspiration –that a writer desperately needs to stir her imagination into action –from the simple pieces of furniture that have adorned different corners of the house. Maysa knows that having access to the past requires invoking the spirit of the dead by dint of falling back on the traces left

behind. Her body starts to shiver as if haunted by unseen powers and seeks to reassure herself when she lies on her grandmother's bed (58). At this moment she owns that the distant past begins to lose its essence as the present encroaches upon it. She wants to let us know that the past cannot be faithfully retrieved without being modified by the writer who cannot shun the effect of the present. Perception seems to be debilitated by the lapse of time as Maysa points out that the act of seeing does not chime in with that of remembering: "The ceiling seems higher than [she] remembers it and [she] feels as though [she] is sinking into the depths of the mattress" (ibid). This attempt to reconstruct the past as a means of escape from the morbid trepidations of the war can be accounted for in terms of a craving for a peaceful retreat in the village house. She strives to reinstate an idealized version of the past while playing down the intricacies of the current times.

The sixteen-year hiatus in which Maysa has thrust the war into oblivion hoping to set up a bulwark against its psychological repercussions has made her a flawed chronicler. The excision of this interval from her intimate historical records reveals her to be unwilling to face up to the corollary of armed conflicts that have erupted in Beirut, where her husband is based. Though we can't help sympathizing with a novice writer in quest of a safe haven where she can devote all attention to the intimacy of local history away from the depredations of motiveless atrocities, the rupture created in the narrative fails to capture an important component of her identity formation. She seems not ready to include this part of history in the book she wants to read to her children in the future. In other words, she is featured to take refuge in the past expecting a ceasefire in order to carry on the task of writing. From her birth until she is 16 years old, Yasmin is excluded from the narrative. At the age of sixteen, she is introduced to us from the capital. She writes her mother long letters using a language that is a combination of 'simplicity and

arrogance' (59) expressing her satisfaction with the postwar Beirut. This arrogance is academically highlighted by Sune Haugbolle in his book *War and Memory in Lebanon:*

> From the onset in 1990, Lebanese officialdom discouraged critical memorialisation and instead promoted a culture of letting bygones be bygones. In the absence of state-sponsored attempts to establish what happened in the Lebanese Civil War and who was to blame for the human tragedies that accompanied it, the politics of remembering in postwar Lebanon emerged mainly through cultural production, by which various nonstate actors disputed the ethical, political and historical meaning[1] of the civil war. (4)

Maysa 's narrative seems to be in tune with the mainstream political agendas that tend to exclude the war from the Lebanese historical imaginary. She has a propensity to forget it in order to indulge a memory of a distant past when her ancestors led a life of harmony and togetherness in the village house. Through the eyes of Maysa, Jarrar seems to concur with the public opinion that any act of reconciliation cannot be achieved in the absence of the politics of remembering the determinants and effects of the civil strife and also by assuming responsibilities. In his book *Twilight Memories* Andreas Huyssen notes that "there is a deepening sense of crisis often articulated in the reproach that our culture is terminally ill with amnesia" (1). In this regard, Maysa seems to condone this sort of self-inflicted ailment when she remains silent about the atrocities and their cost.

She takes shelter in the house interacting with the spirit of her grandmother paying scant attention to the intense fighting that goes on in Beirut. When her daughter is old enough to travel with her father to the capital, Maysa watches her departure without pain expressing a sort of satisfaction to stay behind ensconced in the intimate space. When the car has gone she turns once again to her house for solace (61). Shutting herself off from

[1] In the absence of pure historical records about the Lebanese Civil War, cultural products – especially the novel –have become historical documents par excellence. In this regard New Historicits are aware that "history is both what happened in the past (a set of events) and an account of those events (a story); historical truth arises from a critical reflection on the adequacy of the story that is told. History is, therefore, initially a kind of discourse, which is not a denial that there are real events" (Payne 3).

the world outside, she is lost in another reverie in which she has formed an extraordinary union with Alia. The body of both women mingles into oneness. This identification with the past –though it has the potential to dissociate Maysa from the reality of the present –has left her somehow baffled by what sort of identity she has. She wonders if she has something in common with Alia, whose soul is present in the house. She seeks a response to the following question: “Did she see herself in the inevitable loneliness of always being half-wife, half-mother and never entirely herself?” (65) This is how Maysa has finally viewed the self. She feels so compartmentalized that her subjectivity lacks in essence. Her relocation to the mountain is an occasion to further escape from the self and the war.

When Maysa insists that Wadih should inform the child, we feel that the couple is reticent about the civil strife. Yasmeena has no idea why the parents are separated and Maysa believes Wadih ought to update her on the conflicts in the city. However, neither father nor mother dare disclose this taboo leaving the child without an important facet of the Lebanese history. The mother who could provide an account of the war in the notebook also prefers to remain silent and relish mythical encounters with the women that used to live in the house. She seems not ready to spoil those peaceful times she experiences away from the relentless bombardments. In his book *The Future of Nostalgia,* Sveltana Boym cogently points out that “nostalgia. . . is a longing for a home that no longer exists or has never existed. Nostalgia is a sentiment of loss and displacement, but it is also a romance with one’s own fantasy” (13). It is the last part of the definition that applies to Maysa in the mountainous village. She is seized by such an irresistible nostalgic fit that allows her to stay in touch with the past creating illusory encounters while she loosens ties with the present which is coterminous with the mayhem of armed conflicts.

Back in the city, Maysa presents us with an image of a postwar Beirut. She leaves

behind the village house and makes her way to Wadih's apartment, but before she gets there she introduces a positive face of Beirut excluding the whole period of war from the narrative. Now that the civil strife is over, she says:

> Beirut is a recurring dream, at once elusive and familiar, a keepsake of a drifting mind. Blue sea, beeping car horns, fishmongers, and vegetable carts, dust, people calling to one another from balconies, sun, noise and an insistent sense of confusion. I arrive early and decide to sit in a café on the beach before making my way to Wadih's apartment (69).

After sixteen years on the mountain, Maysa moves to the city where new memories awaken. The dream of return imparts ambivalence to the notion of home. She seems to have deserted her earlier attachment to the village and come back to Beirut to start a new life now that the war is over. The way she has described the city offers little room for the adverse effects of military conflicts. She is intent on overlooking the heavy cost of the war depicting Beirut as hectic and full of life. People go about their daily activities as if nothing has happened. This tendency to introduce Beirut in positive terms is an indication that Maysa dares not be frank about the atrocities resulting from the sectarian violence. The death toll and the destruction generated by the war are simply cast into oblivion. This deliberate attempt to be inarticulate about them makes us think of Maysa as an unreliable and untrustworthy historian. She is merely concerned with making a shift back to the past to remember her happy childhood away from the depredations of war.

Her encounter with Wadih occurs in his apartment and weakens her identification with the ancestral home. She becomes more interested in the present and her relationship with her husband has dramatically improved. Now that the city is safe, she unties her grip on the past. When she finally returns to Beirut and her family, the pull of the past recedes and she sees an "image" of the house "encircled in shadow" (72). Cultural theorists

have written that people turn to memory to anchor themselves in times of instability and uncertainty (Mirapuri 470). As soon as the war ends, Maysa entertains a novel episode of existence in the city obliterating the war and its effects from her chronicle. This deliberate tendency to skip the whole period of the civil strife can be construed as a form of escape from the bitter reality on the ground. Maysa retreats to the mountain where she gives birth to Yasmeena away from the sound of the bullets. She tarries in the village house waiting for the opportune moment to resume the historical record. However, she can be assigned the status of a flawed chronicler because she has excised the whole period of the war from the narrative, which is mainly the work of imagination. An important facet of her identity has been overlooked which has created a hiatus in her account. Yasmeena is liable to grow up without the memory of the war and therefore contract a sort of amnesia.

## 5.2 Nostalgia for home

In the second story Aida is consumed by a set of reminiscences that take her on a voyage back to the past. This feeling that relates her to childhood moments is cogently described by Sveltana Boym in the following:

> Nostalgia is a longing for a place, but actually it is a yearning for a different time—the time of our childhood, the slower rhythms of our dreams. . . . The nostalgic desires to obliterate history and turn it into private or collective mythology, to revisit time like space, refusing to surrender to the irreversibility of time that plagues the human condition. (16)

Aida, who is in her twilight days, is drawn back earlier in time as she is seized by a fit of nostalgia. Though she is physically located in real time and space, she is emotionally and psychologically transported into an imaginary world to celebrate a reunion with a place and time that have once defined her subjectivity. In her mind's eye, she creates

images and scenes that remind her of home. By so doing, she problematizes this concept as it becomes unclear what she exactly means by it: "sitting in the clipped quietness of her room, she would shift her mind into recollections of home until the images appeared, layers of moments piled on top of each other, searchlights into history" (75). Like Maysa in her solitary retreat, Aida summons courage in her sedentary life to initiate a kind of interaction with the past. The echoes of childhood experiences reverberate in her ears and fill her heart with a sense of nostalgia. Wrestling with displacement as she tours the world, she manages to inhabit the rim of an in-between reality through the act of negotiating different languages and cultures. It is in the works of more pronouncedly Arab writers in Australia that in-betweenness and hybridity are indelible and strongly remarked ( Mirapuri 446). The impact of mobility on Aida is such that essentialized identifications are anathema to her and permissiveness and tolerance constitute the underlying principles of her philosophy in life.

It is important to note that mobility compensates for the loss of her native land and slakes her passion for eternal return. Her peripatetic movements teach her to celebrate difference by adjusting herself to different cultures and speaking a variety of languages. However, "she was faceless one moment and shining the next, and in her manner no secrets were revealed" (77). The reservation of not divulging her secrets implies that she has things she wishes not to share as a foreigner; she has defining criteria and distinctive features that have the potential to link her to a well-determined space when little energy is left for mobility. Being an Arab Lebanese in Australia does not interfere with her acculturation but does not sever her ties with the parental house, either. Now that she grows old, she is compelled to lead a sedentary life. She seeks respite in remembering the family and how the household members are intimately related to a Palestinian refugee

named Ammou Mohamed. Aida still recalls herself as a little child in his company. The simplicity inherent in the past is what imparts solace and comfort to her.

Aida and her sister Sara find in Ammou Mohammed a surrogate father. He is their intimate companion whenever they go on an errand around the house. This relationship between an indigenous Lebanese family and an old Palestinian refugee enables us to witness the excruciating pain of Ammou Mohamed and his compatriots. These subaltern figures are compelled to work for others in order to subsist in exile: “Like many other Palestinian refugees who lived in Beirut, Amou Mohammed had spent most of his time at his place of work, visiting his wife and children at the camp on the other side of town only on the occasional Sunday” (84). The affinity that has developed between Aida and the Palestinian refugee sheds light on the plight of the Palestinian refugees who are crammed in grimy camps without adequate sanitation and appropriate living conditions. A good part of the narrative is devoted to him in order to foreground the predicament of the Palestinian exile who has been forced out of his land. Amou Mohamed has actually been othered twice: once by the Zionist extermination machine and once by the Lebanese state. He is therefore the epitome of dislocation par excellence.

In her last moments Aida recalls, not without nostalgia, how this Palestinian locates himself closer to her and her sister to the extent that they look on him to be more than a mere worker in their house. When he invites them to see his family, he wants to place them in front of the grinding poverty in the camp. Aida seems not ready to face the repulsive conditions in which Palestinians are trapped, but cannot help nodding to him. Though much younger, Aida is depicted to be in a situation similar to that of Maysa, who has a proclivity to escape from the present and take refuge in the past. However, this retreat is not always soothing. For example, Aida’s embarrassment at Amou Mohamed’s invitation

can be accounted for in terms of her inability to witness the ordeal of a family steeped in deprivation and poverty. She visualizes this period with mixed feelings of pleasure and regret. She probably feels sorry not to have visited Amou Mohammed's house because she couldn't stand the sight of such an unfamiliar space:

> She dreaded the thought of entering the unknown world of refugee camps and poverty, and what she imagined would be total squalor. Amou Mohamed had told her many stories about the home that he and his parents had left behind when they were forced out of Palestine many years before, and she did not want to see the same sorrow in a hundred other pairs of eyes. (85)

Like Maysa, Aida betrays her fears of facing the harsh reality of the present. Being accustomed to a life of stability and serenity in her home, she finds it difficult to accept Amou Mohamed's invitation because she can't stand the dreary conditions in which the Palestinian outcasts are trapped. This encounter reveals the plight of the Palestinian exile in Lebanon. He is expelled from his own country only to find himself down and out elsewhere. Aida dreads the world of refugee camps because it is unfamiliar and unknown. In other words, it stands out as the antithesis of the intimate space where she grows up in close connection with Amou Mohamed, whose person she admires and regards to be attractive. However, she dares not trespass on the local space where his family is based as she expects to see the excruciating suffering of a myriad of Palestinian refugees. Her unwillingness to disclose the ordeal of the Palestinian refugees can be construed as an attempt to draw a veil over what goes on in the camps which she considers as a typical eyesore in the capital. While Maysa takes refuge in the past overlooking the civil war and its ramifications, Aida is likewise selective in her accounts concentrating on the positive side of the present while ignoring the tragic face of the refugee camps.

However, under the insistence of Amou Mohamed, the three sisters (Aida, Sara and

Dina) pay a short and reserved visit to the camps. Still the narrative concentrates only on the claustrophobic space wherein the Palestinian family is incarcerated leaving aside the overall predicament of the other refugee campers. The visit represents a typical contact between a Christian and a Muslim family who are united under common interests and shared human ideals: "Um Hicham and her two elder daughters began to place small dishes filled with food in front of [the visitors] while Hicham handed round loaves of flat bread. Aida heard her hosts quietly recall the name of Allah before breaking off large pieces of bread and scooping up the food" (88). This short unplanned visit presents us with only a limited amount of information about life in the camps. Hundreds of other Palestinians who are steeped in misery are simply cast into oblivion. We can even look at Aida's experience at Amou Mohammed's house in terms of her desire to save face because she takes this initiative unwillingly. As a worker in their home and given the close affinity that has grown between this man and Aida, the latter has eventually accepted the invitation which does not appeal to her. Though the simplicity that defines the Palestinian family is recounted with a feeling of nostalgia, Aida looks forward to ending the visit in order to go back to the familiar space where she cherishes a happy childhood in the company of Amou Mohamed. Her first hand experiences in the camp are fleeting and her interest in the suffering of her hosts represents a passing fad. Even if she is still a little child –and therefore cannot be held accountable for her actions –she is represented to view the overall dilapidation that characterizes the camps with a sort of childish apathy. The narrator accounts for such indifference in the following terms:

> They walked between the open gutters that ran alongside the path. Barefoot and disheveled children wandered listlessly up and down the alleyway and tugged at Aida's sleeves for attention. The level of noise was unlike any she had ever heard. Aida moved closer to her sister and looked at Amou Mohammed for help but he was already a few steps ahead of them. (86)

Aida is apparently unaccustomed to the situation in which she is suddenly trapped. The little refugee campers are delineated in a way that calls for repulsion. These Palestinian others are represented as pariahs in their tattered garments and horrible cries. In spite of all this, Aida is not moved by their plight as she is claimed by a mysterious fear that makes her seek Amou Mohamed's attention. These helpless children, who should be the object of pity, are viewed with utter indifference which makes us skeptical of Aida's reluctant acceptance of the invitation in the first place. Aida fails to live up to Richard Rorty's ideal in his *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.* He argues, for example, that the utopia of human solidarity will be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, by "the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers" (XVI). She has reasoned that this visit is unpalatable because she dares not see sorrow writ large in the eyes of scores of Palestinian refugees. Contrary to what has been expected, Aida is untouched by the sight of the kids whose conditions she has reacted to with frightening silence.

She recalls other scenes and spectacles that have marked days of yore. In her mind's eye she travels to Lebanon, where she has spent her childhood. She recalls a few moments she has relished in 'the Horseshoe Café': "She imagined herself boldly going to a table, sitting down and ordering something to drink" (97). Simple as they seem to be, these events and others are summoned in order to alleviate Aida's tensions and mitigate her solitude in her adopted country of residence. Meanwhile she recalls her intimate relation with Amou Mohamed, who has apparently filled the vacancy created by the immigration of her father. She takes interest in every single act that emanates from him. His daily routines are simply palatable to her and the mere process of remembering them are soothing in the host country. Religion does not stand as a barrier for communication and interaction between a Christian family and a Muslim Palestinian. Aida still remembers

how she moved to Amou Mohamed's bedside table and touched the Koran that always lay there wishing that she could read it the way he did (98). All these memories serve to link Aida –now an old woman –to her familial background in Beirut. This voyage across time and space is a balm to her now that she cannot physically reunite with the original home. Though her migration is a voluntary act, she is now caught in a situation similar to that of a refugee who is forced to leave his home. Her lot is like the one described in this quote:

> You are unsettled, uprooted. You have been translated. Who translated you? Who broke your links with the land? You have been forcibly moved off, or you have fled war or famine. You are mobile, mobilized, stumbling along your line of flight. But nothing flows. In moving, your life has come to a halt. Your life has been fractured, your family fragmented. (Young 11)

Aida's lines of flight[2] turn out to be intrinsic taking on the form of a psychological journey to revisit her past. She makes up for her sense of displacement by a recrudescent voyage to her native home. Though her migration in the first place is partly spurred on by the civil war, she still associates Beirut with emotional stability and togetherness. She visualizes herself "on beaches, in water, walking through the shimmering heat, the sky above dusty balconies small but open and her nose sniffing out the oily smells of summer in Beirut" (104). All these meditations occur in a far off land where the umbilical cord that ties her to the homeland is not undermined by the test of time.

All these reminiscences turn out to be a farrago of positive and negative aspects of a past that lies outside Aida's reach. The irksome side of the past manifests in her inability to ward off the demons and specters of a motiveless conflict that makes her country go to rack

[2] This concept is attributed to Gilles Deleuze to point out the nomadic nature of identity. When it comes to nomadism, the point of departure is usually defined and identified but the point of arrival is not. One sets off from a definite point but his lines of flight take him far beyond any destination that can be envisaged.

and ruin. Alongside the moments of bliss she has spent in the company of Amou Mohamed, Aida cannot keep the tragic cost of the war at bay. It actually interferes with and mars the reveries that are directed towards the positive face of her memories. The pleasant atmosphere and climate of Beirut is destabilized by the civil strife: People "heard of anti-craft rockets being fired between neighbourhoods, of people being dragged from their homes and dumped into mass graves half alive, of militias turned into protection mafias and of an absence of mercy in people's hearts" (105). These events and others awaken quiescent memories that alternately intensify and lessen Aida's anxiety in Diaspora.

Ironically Amou Mohamed, who will soon meet his doom at the hand of a militiaman, has sent Aida a letter hoping for a better future. The good news of a potential ceasefire serves to allay her anxiety and open up the prospect of co-existence among different sects. Her imagination still resonates with the echoes of peace that will allow her to consider –as Amou Mohamed hopes –the possibility of return to her only home. The writer of the letter draws on the repercussions of the war expressing his exhilaration over the impending end of the disastrous conflicts. Its corollary is rendered in his tours around the city. The changes caused by the war are mentioned to inform Aida about what has become of Beirut. There is an aura of destruction and melancholy around the areas controlled by militias and invading armies over the last fifteen years (105). In spite of all this, Amou Mohamed is confident that new Lebanon is looming on the horizon.

Leaving Amou Mohamed's dreams and ambitions aside, Aida takes us to a more calming component of her past. The present is simply unbearable and she seeks comfort in invoking episodes that have once made her comfortable. Her close affinity with the Palestinian refugee is recalled once again to impart some meaning to her desolate and solitary existence in exile. She remembers how she once took shelter next to him under his

umbrella when he inquisitively inquired about her arcane silence. This silence she finally attributed to pondering the idea of embarking upon a journey abroad at a time when Beirut was on the threshold of a war. Aida relives this moment with nostalgia recalling how she relished a walk in the park on the eve of her departure. Amou Mohamed, who did not seem to concur with such a trip, reminded her that she would miss the trees (111), the remark Aida agreed with obliquely stating that she would not sever her ties with home.

Through the power of imagination Aida draws a picture of one of the visits she has paid to her local district wishing to establish communion with the native space. She is taken aback by the overall destruction that has reduced the capital to a set of shabby streets and ramshackle buildings. Amidst this confusion, Aida does not fail to recognize vestiges and traces that remind her of the pre-war Beirut. The presence of barricades and soldiers everywhere does not preclude her from seeing the sea and flickering lights that have always defined her city. This encounter with home, after a long period of absence, is freighted with strong emotions especially when Aida drops in on Amou Mohamed's family.

Much to her chagrin, she will not be able to see the Palestinian man this time because he has been shot by a militiaman. The fact that his photo is displayed for any visitor to see is revealing. Showing him at the fervor of his youth with a concentrated look into the distance is indicative of hopes and ambitions that will be dashed by the Zionist power apparatus. Amou Mohamed, who is the victim of the al-Nakba, or the catastrophic shattering of the Palestinian community in the 1948 war with the Jews, is destined to fall victim to the same violence that has expelled him from his native land:

> There was a very large picture of Amou Mohammed hanging high on one wall of the room. It was a retouched photo of an unsmiling young man who was looking away from the photographer and into the distance. Framed passages from the Koran were

> placed on either side of the photograph. The calligraphy was beautifully ornate, the words flowing into one another to create a single image. (114)

Aida has lost her surrogate father and his picture is there to keep his memory alive. Being ejected out of his land does not spare him the bullet of a militiaman. The way the photo is described testifies to the psychological agony that keeps gnawing at his heart. The focus on his eyes suggest a look further into the future in which Amou Mohamed has not fulfilled the dream of return and the consequent establishment of a fixed home in the maternal land.

In Beirut, he has always looked upon his life in the camp as a transitory and contingent experience that will come to a halt sooner or later. However, fate has ordained that he should die outside the boundaries of the natal space. His mobile trajectory between Aida's home and the camp is an attempt to earn a living and fill a psychological gap engendered by forced displacement waiting for the opportune moment to go back where he belongs. His tenacious attachment to land echoes in his insistence that Aida should come back once the war is over. Aida's encounter with Houda, Amou Mohamed's daughter, in the camp bespeaks the solid ties that link these Christian and Muslim families. When Aida refers to Amou Mohammed as a second father, we understand his place in her life and that of her sisters, Sara and Dina. When the two sisters married foreigners, the Palestinian refugee is quite certain that they would never come back home (116). Ironically, this frequent and persistent allusion to the concept of home betrays the hidden desire of a forlorn Palestinian to reunite with his motherland.

Jarrar's female protagonists are depicted to escape from the harsh reality of armed conflicts and pay a visit when the storm of violence subsides. Like Maysa, who has taken refuge on the mountain for sixteen years, Aida has fled to Europe, where she mostly

maintains affiliation with home by dint of memory. In this part of the story where she recalls her return in the wake of the war, a focus is laid on her affinity with Amou Mohammed and his family and also on the depredations of the strife. Those left behind – either because they have no other alternative or they consider escape a cowardly act – establish themselves eyewitnesses to what has befallen them and their property. In her dialogue with Aida, Huda provides a brief but tragic account of the war stating that the basement of their apartment used to serve as a shelter for her family from the heavy bombardment (116).

Aida pays a visit to the empty apartment and is taken over by dismay and surprise at what has become of it. This reunion with space serves to slake her nostalgia for home even though the abode is in a state of dilapidation following the family's departure elsewhere:

> The apartment had grown shabby, its room possessing a deserted air that Aida could not fill. She walked up and down the corridor a hundred times a day, slept in a different bed each night and serenaded the moon from open windows, and still couldn't breathe life into her former home, Aida began to imagine her sisters, young and energetic, calling her downstairs to play, or her mother sitting quietly in the room next door, certain but invisible company. (117)

The symbiotic rapport that has developed between Aida and the parental home is meant to alleviate her homesickness and impart life to a deserted space. Her restless moves inside the apartment can be construed as a desire to reconnect with the past whose effects on her psyche she dares not eschew. It is through the prism of location that she seeks to relive moments of bygone times. She seems to scrupulously search every single part of the house for a hidden secret that will confer meaning on her existence. Though she feels that the vacancy that has occurred as a result of migration is difficult to fill by her small presence, she has increased the frequency of her walks as if she wanted to furnish the abode with a paucity of human warmth it no longer enjoys. Aida seems to derive sheer pleasure from the

romantic attachment to the empty space that has lost significance now that its inhabitants are no longer there. Be that as it might, her walks inside are intended not only to breathe life into the abandoned walls but also to muster strength and regeneration that will serve to lift up her spirits once she has left for her adopted country. The fact that she sleeps in a different bed each night is an attempt to establish contact with her sisters beyond the constraints of time and space. The psychological gap created in Diaspora needs to be filled by this romantic infatuation with the elements of domestic space. Nonetheless, when she is exasperated by the excessive mobility inside the contours of the apartment, she resorts to meditation by stirring her imagination into action. She remembers how she used to play with her sisters savoring the peaceful atmosphere that has once characterized Beirut before it is disrupted by the curse of war.

Aida knows that her visit is short-lived; that's why she seeks to have access to the past by dint of memory. She craves for escaping the demons and specters embodied in the overall destruction brought about by the armed conflict and further get immersed in reveries that will hopefully reduce the pangs of civil strife and the solitude resulting from the departure of loved ones: She was "invited to dinner at the home of old friends of her parents and had gone only to replenish her store of memories of her family's life in Beirut" (118). Like Maysa, she has a desire to reconstruct an image of the past striving to set up a bulwark against the intervention of the macabre side of fire exchange that has so long interfered with peace and security in Beirut. But unlike her, she does not rely on personal idiosyncrasies and quirks alone as she seeks to initiate a dialogue and establish kinship with her parents' acquaintances and fellow townspeople. In this respect, she befriends a general practitioner in order to lessen a feeling of loneliness she has been plunged into since her flight abroad. Consciously or not, the doctor finds the issue of war and its corollary

simply ineluctable bringing Aida into close contact with the subject she dares not face. She apparently revels in her childhood memories when the bullets of antagonism could not be heard. Her encounter with the general practitioner places a premium on the cost of the war and how to address the wounds and scars of its aftermath.

She yearns for escape, for attenuating the adverse impact of the war by taking shelter in the house once again. In the presence of the doctor, the image of the mountainous life experiences keeps intervening to the extent that she thinks of going back home to stay in close contact with the past. Peace is significantly coterminous with the inner part of the house where she comfortably locks in herself indulging in the ubiquitous safety the empty space offers beyond the constraints of time. While the outer landscape is distorted by the outcome of armed conflicts, the interior of the parental home evokes the pre-war Lebanon when Aida was at peace with herself and those around her, including her surrogate father, Amou Mohamed. For the time being, she feels the urgent need to part with Kameel hoping to return to the village once she has recharged her batteries through establishing a nostalgic encounter with the times of yore. In a tone full of passion for a reunion with the domestic space, she shows a determination to see off her companion and pay "a visit to the house again and try to get inside this time" (126-127). The psychological implications of space are underscored, especially when Aida is revealed to be looking at herself in the mirror. This device is implemented by the author to foreground the inner state of a character looking for solace outside the ambit of the present moments.

When Aida is homesick, she seeks respite in weaving a story in retrospection. Through flashbacks, she manages to reach a far off destination where Lebanon is idealized. In her mind's eye, she visualizes her childhood moments and exults in her everyday routines in the company of Amou Mohamed and then with Kameel at a later stage. This is not the

case with Salwa upon whom the third part of the novel hinges. She stands out as the exact antithesis of Aida. While the former suddenly finds herself grappling with mundane experiences in Beirut leaving Australia behind, the latter continues to wrestle with her lonely existence in Europe. Salwa finds it difficult to adapt in Australia when health deserts her and she consequently makes a journey back home.

## 5.3 Travelling across time

Separation between characters and their loved ones constitutes one of the salient features upon which the three stories are built. Maysa is so obsessed with return to her origins that she deserts her husband at a time when the war plays havoc with the life of individuals in Beirut. Her relocation to the land of her forebears can also be understood as a pretext to run away from the atrocities of armed conflict. Establishing herself in the old house of her pedigree, she makes a voyage to the past by invoking childhood memories. In like manner, Aida introduces us to a moment in her previous life when she is able to surmount the barrier of the present to recall her lived experiences in the company of her sisters and Amou Mohamed. What makes Salwa's story different is a desire to reunite with a space that would be simply termed foreign by her parents. She hopes to reunite with her father beyond the boundaries of what can be called the homeland:

> Mathilde and I go to the local school because father insists on our education, but I only pretend at learning. Although everyone tells me that I read and write Arabic very well for a girl, my heart is elsewhere, in the rainforests of South America where my father lives a thousand days away from home. (134)

The uniqueness of Salwa's experience lies in a desire for migration to South America where her father is based. For her, the concept of home remains meaningless outside the familial

context. The absence of the father has divested her of motivation as a little learner.

The way she relates to the past occurs within the framework of her unfortunate arranged marriage. While some culture theorists contend that people make recourse to memory "to anchor themselves in times of instability and uncertainty" ( Al Maleh 19), Salwa's equanimity is seemingly shaken by her return to the past. She looks back on her matrimony with a feeling of chagrin as it has been imposed on her. She seems not to find solace in this backward retreat. Her attempt to turn down the old man chosen for her is doomed when fate in collusion with patriarchal normative authority ordains that she has to be wed to a person she does not love. Running away from the house is a spectacular sign of resisting the cultural codes that denigrate women as minors who are powerless to decide on their own future. This childish escape, however, is ironic since Salwa is fated to marry the same man she strives to avoid. She does her utmost to ward him off but she can't. When she realizes that the dress her mother has brought is a gift from him she takes it off (140).

Though her past contains unfortunate moments such as the reluctant match, she is compelled to take us on a movement back to her infancy when her mother has to fend for her and her sister in place of the father who has set off for South America. Now that she is a sick old woman in Australia, she lets loose the contents of her memory to reduce the pangs of nostalgia and the pain of disease. While her body is too decrepit to enable her to experience a physical journey to Lebanon, her mind is set ablaze with memories and images of the homeland. According to Sveltana Boym these nostalgic reconstructions reinstate the negative and painful aspects of the past not merely an idealized version of it (41). Her intimate bond with the ancient times is accomplished by dint of memory as she lies down in her bed:

> No one knows how improbable my longings are as I lie here waiting for you, Father. I have pictured our home in a thousand and one different ways, with you and without you, in the softness of my mother's embrace and in my sister's laughter. I have closed my eyes and seen the hills and waters of Lebanon, and remembered layers of morning sunlight shadowing me as I played. This is the telling of visions. Listen for them in your sleep, Father, Dream with me. (145)

Though the future has little in store for Salwa who is probably on her twilight days, a return to the past is paramount as a way of historicizing the events that have contributed to the making up of her personality. In this regard, Ngugi wa Thiang'o states that "our vision of the future, of diverse possibilities of life and human potential, has roots in our experience of the past" (39). This voyage back home is intended to reunite not only with place, but also with those that used to furnish it with ontological signification. Her inability to reunite with her father in his lifetime has translated into a wish to embrace his spirit in his death. In this respect, Paul Ricoeur states that "imagination and memory have as a common trait the presence of the absent and as a differential trait, on the one hand, the bracketing of any positing of reality and the vision of something unreal and, on the other, the positing of an earlier reality" (44). The real and the unreal combine to impart significance to Salwa's sedentary mode of life as she grapples with frailty and disease. What seems feasible is the journey whose destination is a concrete physical space located elsewhere and what appears to be imaginary is her invocation for reunion with the father, whose presence she could not cherish while he was still alive. At this juncture, in which Salwa strives to distance herself from the present and reach out to the distant past, she has something in common with the archaic man. She cannot confine herself to her current existence in Australia, where she has never felt at home. Like someone under the effect of delirium, she starts speaking Arabic to her son who is her doctor. "I want to sleep, habibi", she tells Richard, who reacts that she can't speak Arabic in the host

country (143). The echoes of this mythical voyage backward continue to reverberate in Salwa's narrative. All the conditions in the receiving country precipitate her retreat. The effects of solitude –even if she indulges the company of Richard, who has become a doctor –and disease make this inward odyssey almost unavoidable. She gives free vent to her memories in order to relive moments that are no longer within reach. She remembers her encounter with Adnan, who is much older than her, and the consequent unlucky wedlock. This agonizing reminiscence is soon supplanted by recalling the warmth she used to revel in within the four walls of her parental home. Years after her wedding, somewhere in the remote land of Australia, she can hear her "mother's serenade" across the distance: "memories of that day long ago come over me, of mother's voice and the thumping rhythms of my own heart, and for that brief moment a certain joy is restored" (150). It is the act of restoring the absent, of retrieving bygone times that lightens up Salwa and relieves the pain of disease and loneliness.

She narrates the experience of marriage with a sense of nostalgia for a past that has become accessible only though memory. She recalls her marital life on the mountains and how much comfort she used to derive from her mother-in-law, who would spend the whole day talking to her about her sons who were based in far off lands beyond the geographical borders of Lebanon. It is worth noting that the characters resort to the past as a refuge from the demands of the present. In this respect, Salwa's mother-in-law finds her niche in relating to the previous times when she asks her sister-in-law to read the letters she had received from her sons. Salwa could gradually come into terms with her husband, whose age no longer matters for a wife with a child. She dramatizes one of the scenes in a local souk where Adnan asks her to buy whatever appeals to her. She has a penchant for a pair of earrings she enthusiastically tries on taking pride in the new identity she has assumed

now that she has become a married woman.

What follows the pleasurable scene of shopping proves shocking for a denizen who is unexpectedly forced onto the deck of the ship. Though she resolutely resists Adnan's plan to go overseas promising to accept this adventure another day, her plea is simply turned down and the family is bound for life elsewhere. She watches "as the dock moves further and further away until the bright and brilliant beauty of Beirut is only a distant memory" (158). At this point, Salwa embarks upon the experience of mobility moving from place to place until she finds herself anchored in Australia, where she is tended by Richard. Though she is surrounded by her son, she finds it next to impossible to fit in a foreign land where she can no longer hear familiar sounds and see recognizable people. Being located elsewhere does not prevent her from introducing us to the intricacies of the first voyage abroad. Though she has a penchant for staying in Beirut where she belongs, she is in such a powerless position to make a decision that she is forced to follow in the footsteps of her husband.

The distance that separates Salwa from her loved ones grows longer as the ship sails forward, but she is keen on keeping in touch with them across space. With her child in her arms, she shouts out the names of her mother and sister several times so that the passengers onboard the ship are startled and turn to look (158). This time Adnan cannot intervene to keep her from letting out the hysterical screams. All the previously achieved rapture and felicity in the *souk* are supplanted by grief which Salwa endeavors to lessen by writing a letter to her mother once she is in America. She is eager to maintain a link with home depending on every possible means at her disposal. That's why she willingly accepts a bundle of papers from Lebanon from her brother-in-law, Najm.

The point of arrival serves as another point of departure in quest of a place where

new opportunities are likely to open up. At all events, mobility takes Salwa away from home and catapults her to Australia, where she is destined to maintain affiliation with the *terre natale* through memory now that she is too old and infirm to embark upon a physical voyage. She looks back on the second journey with sheer nostalgia for Lebanon as it is manifested in a letter to her mother, whom she reassures that no matter how far she is, she will sooner or later celebrate a reunion with the motherland. When her daughter, May, grows into a fully-fledged woman, she introduces us to the concept of home and how slippery and fluid it is. Home for her is the place where her mother finds it difficult to belong; it is Australia. Her connection with this country is so strong that she reminds Salwa that she will not copy her example; that is, she will not marry and leave home soon (164).

Home as a loose concept is highlighted by Salwa in her first journey back to Beirut after ten years in her adopted country. Through the eyes of May, we come to realize that this notion remains somehow ambivalent and hazy. Fate ordains that May will meet her would-be husband during her first trip to the 'native land.' She has therefore to stay behind in her mother's home as she leaves her own in Australia. Surprisingly enough, Salwa equally refers to Australia as her home (ibid). In the company of her grandson, Nabil, the term is further problematized:

> 'Mum, darling,' my grandson reads. 'How lucky Nabil will be to see you. Since I cannot leave the family and make the long trip home, I thought I'd send you my gorgeous son for his school holidays. He is fifteen years old and during his father's frequent absences from home, he is the man of the house. Isn't he wonderful?' Nabil stops and gives me a sheepish smile. (165)

This extract from May's letter to her mother underscores the concept of home. Though she has lived in Lebanon for more than fifteen years the daughter has gone through the

same experience of her mother in Australia. She finds it difficult to fit in a land that is supposed to link her to the primordial ancestry and connects her to the roots. However, it is not clear where home is located for Salwa. Is it in Australia where she has spent a long period of time or in Lebanon to which she is linked by descent and ancestry? This epistemological undecidability imparts a sort of ambiguity to this concept and makes Salwa torn apart between two disparate geographical locations. As an old woman she is physically trapped in a well-demarcated cultural space but her heart and soul are in the motherland.

Apparently home is not a monolithic and seamless construction. It is rather an elusive term that lacks in conceptual clarity. When Salwa transcends the constraints of time and space to relive moments from her past in Lebanon, she has the intention to palliate the intensity of homesickness that has taken hold of her in the receiving country. Her daughter, on the other hand, finds it difficult to set off for Australia –the land she calls her home –simply because of the incredibly long distance that separates it from Lebanon. These antithetical wishes translate a desire to be ensconced in a familiar space where one feels in unison with her surroundings as far as history and culture are concerned. It seems that both mother and daughter identify with the geographical locations wherein they are reminded of their childhood. Salwa takes us on a journey of self discovery to Lebanon recalling her quotidian life and its intricacies in the parental land. Likewise, May feels that she belongs only in Australia, where she was born and spent the prime of her teenage years.

Salwa is seemingly haunted by the specters of illness and old age, but in the presence of Nabil she suddenly summons courage to shake off the inertia and listlessness of ill health and make a journey of rejuvenation back home. She likes to go beyond visualizing the

homeland in her mind's eye and establish a real contact with it. Through these physical movements, as Akram.F Khater cogently points out, a new web of social encounters is woven around 'multiple axes', the most prominent of which is family (8). In the presence of her grandson, we are once more introduced to the ambivalent nature of home. When Nabil addresses his grandmother noting that Lebanon is her home, but she enjoys going to Australia (179), he further reveals the undecidability of signification associated with this concept. A salient feature of this journey, however, is the familial bonds that acquire momentum in Salwa's return to the fold. Even if the whereabouts of home remain somehow enigmatic, its essence can be set against the backdrop of family. All the members of the same household reunite in this trip to Lebanon, though Salwa is struck by a sense of awe after such a long period of absence:

> We are making our way to Lebanon and my three daughters will not be swayed from their lack of enthusiasm. They are afraid of what will come and I cannot blame them for there is a certain anxiety in my own heart at what I will find back home after twenty-seven years away. May, stay with your sisters [Diana and Lilly] until I get back. I am going to find your father. (179)

The enthusiasm that marks this reverse migration is mixed with the fear of what the characters might find in the sending background. They are not psychologically prepared to face the changes that might have occurred since Salwa's departure to Australia. What further complicates this journey is Salwa's readiness to embark upon a new odyssey –whose outcome we are at a loss for –in search of the father figure. It is as if the celebration of return will remain incomplete unless the father, who has always been absent, is present. This quest, however, is soon thrust into oblivion when Salwa is portrayed to be enthralled by the overall landscape of Beirut.

The intricate lines of the story seem to disrupt linearity in the narration of events.

Prior to this journey back home, we are introduced to May as a married woman who is compelled to settle down in Beirut and now she is presented in the company of her mother in the premarital stage. This failure to observe the chronological order of events as the writer moves back and forth in time suggests the chaotic psychological state of the protagonist who is torn between two differing worlds. Leading a sedentary way of life because of age and disease, she apparently derives a modicum of pleasure from these retrospective meanderings. At this juncture of the story, where she delineates a physical voyage to Beirut, the issue of identity is brought to the fore. In an attempt to connect her daughters to the roots, she introduces them one by one to their aunt, Mathilde. The fact that they don't speak any Arabic does not interfere with the human warmth of the encounter. Addressing Salwa, Mathilde states:

> 'Well, Salwa, now that we've met make sure that you bring them [Salwa's daughters] up to the mountains soon. I have a young man in mind I want them to meet.' She turns to May and gives her a big smile. This one is the most beautiful by far. I am sure Riyad will like her. He is my brother-in-law. Wonderful young man educated in America. (182)

Mathilde insists that the girls should visit her on the mountains where they are likely to feel more at home. This interaction with migrant relatives raised outside the national borders of Lebanon calls into question the nationalist stipulation that unique histories are formed in 'culturally pristine spaces' (Khater 9). Salwa's daughters who can use English productively with only a receptive knowledge of Arabic compel the question of how much Lebanese and Australian they really are. The contingency of cultural identity is emphasized in the encounter that will soon occur between May and Riyad. The resultant matrimony subverts the claim that tends to anchor identity in the monad of a uniform perception. Though May is of Lebanese origins, the fact that she cannot speak Arabic

gives her away as a naturalized Australian. Leaving Lebanon as a little infant in her mother's arms and returning to it as a fully-fledged teenager problematizes her subjectivity and complicates her affiliations and tendencies. On the mountain she will be married to a native Lebanese and start a new life outside the geographical contours of 'home', which will further cast this concept into the realm of indeterminacy.

Mathilde has done her utmost to make the guest relatives go native and relish their stay on the mountain. She takes them to the "best vegetable market in the country" where they are introduced to the local produce such as *mouloukhiyyeh* that they will have for lunch (183): "here, food, as in much ethnic literature of late, becomes an ostensible agent for identity exploration" (AL-Maleh 35). Connecting them to space through local vegetables is probably meant to lessen the intensity of the spatial transformation that Salwa has come to witness. The village is noisier and there is a sense of "constant bustle that permeates the air," (185) the fact which Salwa cannot understand as she asks her sister: "is it me or has the village changed a great deal?" The question to which Mathilde pertinently replies in the following terms: "it's been twenty-seven years, Salwa. What did you expect?" (ibid) In spite of all this, the girls find it difficult to adapt in the ancestral land. Their father wants them to stay behind and marry but they seem not to like it as they persist on going back home. While the mountains prove to be attractive for the mother, it is not so for her daughters who seem to show much more allegiance to Australia where they have spent their childhood than Lebanon, their mother's homeland.

While the girls find it difficult to adapt in a land they are not familiar with, their mother is full of life in her home village. She is so inspired by the intimate natural surroundings that she dares not control her feelings. The reticence with which she relates her lived experiences in Australia dissipates to give way to an enthusiastic outburst in

response to the natural landscape adjacent to the mountainous dwelling where she takes up residence. The way she recounts her affinity with space betrays the sensations of a person whose kinship with home is celebrated after twenty-seven years in Diaspora:

> I stand up and walk to the edge of the courtyard and look at the small field just below us. It is planted with orange trees that are beginning to bloom and the soil is a beautiful dark brown colour. I take a deep breath and find somewhere inside it a hint of the familiar scent of orange blossom. I fight the urge to jump down into the field to be near the trees that stand warm in the sun, and wrap my arms tightly round myself instead. (186)

Unlike her daughters who look at place and landscape with a kind of apathy, Salwa has a predilection for establishing a close-knit rapport with the elements of space. She takes interest in petty little things that might be overlooked by any other uninterested holidaymaker. Familiarity that exudes from the adjacent field cannot simply be cherished in Australia, where the protagonist is portrayed to be overtaken by a lethargy that may be attributable to something other than poor health and old age. It is partly the outcome of being displaced from the familiar background of the *terre natale.* She is so enthralled by the magic of the trees that she has almost lost her self-control. This uniquely established union with the native space is indicative of Salwa's homesickness in the foreign territory. In spite of her long stay in Australia to which she accidently refers to as home, she feels that she belongs more in the Lebanese mountains.

This journey back to the mountains is an attempt to consolidate ties with the native land and embark upon the process of invoking the absent father to remind us of the gap engendered by growing up without him. The serenity offered by the night is an appropriate incentive for Salwa to undergo a reverie in quest of a destination for the father beyond the framework of the concrete world around her. She seems to revel in this visit, but she is so obsessed with his whereabouts that she cannot go to sleep. The euphoria of return to

the mountain soon fades away and is replaced by the fear that accompanies this intrinsic search. She vainly tries to find a satisfactory reason why he has forsaken them and never returned:

> As soon as darkness falls my mind wakes up to thoughts of you Father. I am alone and afraid, and have no claim on the night but this hard, insistent desire to understand what it was that compelled you to leave us. Did you search your memory for tenderness and then wipe it away or was it a sense of adventure that drove you to forgetfulness? Did thoughts of the family you once cherished leave you unhurriedly or was it an instant realization that overtook you? (168)

Salwa is assiduously motivated by a strange desire to get to an explanation that will slake her perpetual search for the absent father. This quest of discovery is so critical that she introduces the word with the capital "f". The magnitude of this endeavor is underlined by the questions she raises waiting for an adequate response that is probably out of her reach for the time being. She wants to know the exact determinant that has precipitated his disappearance and placed him beyond the sphere of responsibility. She enquires into the nature of this cause that takes him away from the household and makes him forget his family. But it seems that all these questions will remain unanswered, especially when Salwa is obliged to go back to the host country leaving aside the subject of the father's absence. We are taken forward to meet her again as she struggles with the effects of ill health and dotage.

Back in Australia, Salwa cannot help concealing the feeling of solitude that has come over her, especially after the death of Adnan at the age of eighty-two. The things we know about her experiences abroad are scanty and terse. She introduces herself in company of her youngest daughter Diana, whose presence she remarkably lauds as she is there to share her loneliness and alienation. Towards the end of the narrative, we are introduced to a few facts about their life overseas: they "live together in Adelaid in a comfortable two-

bedroom bungalow" they bought right after the demise of Adnan (188). Salwa's mobility across space and time shows the predicament of a displaced person who finds it difficult to comfortably settle in a well-defined geographical spot. Though she is physically tied to Adelaid now that she is sick and decrepit, she continuously visits 'home' in her mind's eye hoping to mitigate the intensity of alienation.

Unexpectedly, as the events move towards the end, we meet her once again in the Lebanese mountain. It seems that making a psychological voyage is not enough to allay her passion for home. She manages to temporarily cast aside the listlessness of old age and make a final physical journey to the maternal land now that Diana has passed away. This tragic event implies that Salwa would be left all alone to grapple with her fate. That's why she takes pains to go back to Lebanon, where she is destined to spend the twilight days in the presence of May. The symbolic imagery with which the language is replete as the story draws to the conclusion betrays Salwa's desire to celebrate her last moments in the homeland. The confusion that has previously marked the concept of home from her perspective –as we are occasionally at a loss for its exact meaning –dissipates as the narrative draws to a close. It becomes clear what 'home' refers to in her eyes. It is somewhere in the Lebanese mountains where she will be probably buried to celebrate a posthumous attachment to the *terre natale.*

Salwa feels impelled to travel to the past and delve into its contents when she finds the physical situation of the house quite unappealing. She seems to be taken aback by its overall conditions as she cogently points out in this quote:

> We are facing the house and I am surprised by how insignificant and unattractive it looks. 'It's not how I remember it,' I say, shaking my head. 'Even during my last trip when Mathilde and the children, were still here. . . it was different then.' May puts her hand on my shoulder. 'Houses are like that, Mum,' she says quietly. 'They need to have people in them to stay alive.' (191)

In addition to the repulsive aspects of Salwa's dwelling in Lebanon due to years of neglect, the change she has witnessed is also partly reflective of her psychological state. She is long past her prime and she no longer looks at space from the same perspective that has marked her youth. There is an aura of pessimistic appreciation around her as she strives to establish communion with the components of the intimate place. She soon takes us further back to the past in an attempt to allay the pangs of despair. In a tone full of nostalgia, she remembers herself as a little child playing with Mathilde paying scant attention to the people around her. This happening, simple as it is, enables Salwa to relive and re-experience a moment that is no longer possible as she is clamped tight in the grip of the infirmities of old age.

The hue that permeates the elements of space cannot merely be construed against the backdrop of the grayish colours, but also as a mental projection of a woman whose end is drawing nigh. The final parts of the novel are coterminous with the impending death of Salwa, whose life is a perennial voyage across time and space. When she cannot physically reach the mountains of Lebanon, she reaches them psychologically through reveries and visualizations that set her mind's eye into function. This return is seemingly her last one as the narrative is couched in the language of natural disintegration and decay. The front gate is unlocked and groans when it is pushed open and the courtyard "has been cemented over and there are no flowers in the bits of earth that line its edges" (190). The way the local natural surroundings are described betokens the imminent demise of the protagonist who seeks to derive some solace from the warmth of childhood times.

Whatever roles women are assigned in this novel, they are active participants in weaving their tales in which they try to cast a light on the past and its intricacies. They are not silent voices as they provide information –no matter how some facets of their lot

are overlooked –that somehow idealizes the past because the present is simply difficult to withstand for one reason or another. Men are obliquely alluded to by the third person narrator who is always a woman. They are mostly branded as dull and irresponsible. Maysa does not care about leaving her husband behind in times of war making her way to the countryside where she develops a career of writing a history. Even if she is a flawed chronicler –as she has excised the period of the civil war from her account –the echoes of her voice are heard throughout the story unlike her husband who occupies the background of the narrative. Like Maysa, Aida finds her own way of avoiding the war and its corollary by emigrating overseas leaving behind Amou Mohamed, whom she subsequently encounters by the phone. This escape –that can be lumped with Maysa's – is consciously or not an attempt to collude with the public discourse "characterized by a collective amnesia" (Hout 2). Emigrating abroad can be interpreted against the backdrop of living away from the cataclysmic event of the civil war that erupted on April 13,1975. Her father, who is occasionally referred to with sheer reticence, is simply thrust into oblivion because he is an absent figure whose place is taken by the Palestinian refugee. In Salwa's story the presence of the few male characters is insignificant, especially the father who has left and never returned until we accidently hear of his death. The dichotomy of absence versus presence and death versus life constitutes an integral part of the story in which the women strive to set up their own room even if they fail – deliberately or not – to extensively cover the civil strife that lasted fifteen years.

The novel gives voice to three women to narrate their personal stories, but their records have unfortunately excluded the war as an integral component of Lebanese history. The journeys made by women and men can be regarded as an attempt to escape from the harsh reality of armed conflicts. War is conducive to the fragmentation and disintegration

of the individual and space; when Maysa relocates to the mountains to relive the past, she hopes to re-experience integration. Nonetheless, she does not have the courage to provide a detailed account of the war. Her retreat is actually a form of escapism; it is an attempt to erect a bulwark against the disturbing nightmares of the hostilities and exult in the quiet atmosphere the mountainous village has to offer. We partly concur with Miriam Cooke that “the urgency and the violence of the war drove [women] to portray some of their most intense, traumatic experiences” (2). Breaking their own silence, the three women are engaged in writing their own stories, but with reservation as they all manage to dodge shedding light on the trauma of war. Maysa makes a brief mention of this catastrophe as she concisely refers to her intention to quit Beirut, which “smolders in a war”. Aida exhaustively talks about her experiences abroad and her return without a single allusion to the domestic offensives. Of course, we can surmise that the long-lived absence of her father and that of Salwa is attributed to the political instability at home, but the female narrators simply avoid providing informative particulars on this subject.

In spite of this shortcoming – the fact of being selective and exclusionary in relating the his/story –Jarrar’s protagonists aim to break out their silence by creating a room of their own in writing. After all, fiction is not merely appreciated for its worldliness, but also for its self-contained identity. Unlike some other writers (i.e. those Cook calls “Beirut Decentrists”), Jarrar does not reach that level where she could “play a leadership role in a war that eschewed leaders,” (Ibid 3) but she has the potential to sketch the human suffering and alienation of a number of women who seek to alleviate the intensity of their plight by undergoing psychological and physical journeys. One major aspect Jarrar shares with her decentrist compatriots is her apparent aversion to emigration as a form of escape from the appalling reality of the war. This is conspicuous in her identification with

Amou Mohamed, the Palestinian refugee who has objection to Dina and Sara's marriage to foreigners feeling certain that "they would never come back home to live" (116).

This reticent approach to unveiling the dramatic and traumatic scenes of the war can be interpreted in different ways. As already stated, it can be ascribed to the characters' inability to face up to its reality and its pernicious effects. They consequently resort to a physical journey that usually occurs in tandem with an "internal exile as a psycho-social or a political phenomenon" (Hout 4). For instance, Maysa deserts her husband in the city and presses her way to her parental house in the countryside where she is inspired to write about her childhood. In the same vein, Salwa's husband reluctantly takes her to North America and then to Australia in quest of better living conditions. Yet there is another reason that may explain this reserved demeanour. This is probably what Haugboll means when he writes that "the Lebanese, like most people, have reservations about what they want to share with a stranger, whether foreign or Lebanese. Embellishing the past in the light of present needs, after all, is a very human thing to do" (*War and Memory in Lebanon* 2). All the protagonists seem to find their niche in establishing contact with the past to eschew –though temporarily – the hardships of the present. Aida has left when Lebanon is caught in the vortex of war and does not return until it ends to indulge in the peaceful Lebanon again. Her past visualizations and imaginings along with those of Maysa can be deemed romantic myths of an early idealized Lebanon. These myths constitute "fixed national symbols and remain integral validating principles in the wake of a devastated nation" (Salem 6).

Narratives give structure and meaning to experience. We live, according to Brian Wicker, in a "story-shaped" world. The narratives that people construct map the world, both descriptively and prescriptively (ibid). Peter Brooks writes, "We live immersed in

narrative, recounting and reassessing the meaning of our past actions, anticipating the outcome of our future projects, situating ourselves at the intersection of several stories not yet completed" (3). Richard Rorty discusses the useful social function of the novelist in his *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity*. He argues, for example, that the utopia of human solidarity will be achieved not by inquiry but by imagination, by "the imaginative ability to see strange people as fellow sufferers" (xvi). The novel is especially geared to eliciting that kind of empathy. Along with the movie and the TV program, it has virtually "replaced the sermon and the treatise as the principal vehicles of moral change and progress" (ibid). Culture needs to be imagined and narrated rather than "rationalized and scientized" (ibid 53).

It is in *A Good Land* that the narration of the self continues to prevail. The hiatus created in *Somewhere Home*, which devotes a scanty space to historicizing the civil hostilities, is relatively filled by the female characters whose return to the fold deserves a meticulous analysis in the next chapter. These characters are made into eyewitnesses to the war-led depredations as they embark upon narrating their experiences at a time when the traces of utter destruction are not yet wiped out. The reconstruction of downtown Beirut that will eventually result in the erasure of these vestiges venerating ancient history and projected future is excoriated because of its potential to sever the Lebanese's ties with the past and afflict them with amnesia (Haugbolle 191).

# Chapter 6

# Return from Exile and Post Civil-War Lebanon in Nada Awar Jarrar's *A Good Land*

## 6.1 A new encounter with Lebanon

The return of the unnamed narrator entails that she has previously left a place most familiar to her to start a new life beyond the geographical boundaries of home. This coercive – rather than willing – act of mobility happens under the duress of domestic armed conflicts. It is an attempt to look for a safe haven elsewhere even if this means "alienation, dispossession and exile" (Hout 2). The characters' experiences outside the native borders are confined to the background in order to foreground a gamut of feelings and sensations associated with establishing contact with a land that still bewails the aftermath of the notorious civil strife. The rubble of the heavy bombardment makes the narrator's encounter with the new Beirut an act mixed with feelings of surprise and horror.

The city is no longer as attractive as it used to be and parts of it have been relegated to an eyesore for the new comer. It seems that the war is no longer a male preoccupation as Jarrar provides a scrupulous portrayal of its repercussions in a space hitherto marked by its beauty:

> Yet the city no longer possesses an obvious beauty. Very little of the lush greenness I knew when I was growing up and which once defined our many neighbourhoods remain. Beirut is invariably overcrowded with people and construction that is haphazard and garish, and areas that once hummed with life lack character and a real sense of community. What is it then that makes us love it so? (3)

The cataclysmic cost of the war is manifested in the construction process that is intended to efface the traces wrought by the 1975 civil conflict and the Israeli raids of 1982. The city has lost its luster and is dominated instead by the hue of the war's corollary. This appalling state does not deter the narrator from declaring her attachment to a space whose beauty has waned under the effect of the construction works. Though she has just

come out of hiding now that the war is over, her love for the city remains intact. The riddle that is too intractable to sort out is her inexplicable identification with a place which has lost a great deal of its defining traits.

The narrator gets back home from exile to relish the winds of change that begin to blow into the post-war Beirut. She is there to "bury and exorcise the traumatic memories" that are still impinging on her though she didn't live through the episodes of fire exchange. These memories, which have always remained quiescent, are likely to be awakened by the overall disarray resulting from the act of rebuilding Lebanon. She casts a look ahead to a future in which the hostilities come to a halt in a new Lebanon awash with peace and security. However, the events that will subsequently occur are liable to shake this firmly-held conviction.

While the narrator is psychologically prepared to get over the excruciating pangs of the past, she is appalled by another act of hostility that makes her question her return. The bombardment of Hariri, "the billionaire businessman who served as prime minister for two terms after the end of the civil war' (8), introduces Lebanon as a place where violence is unlikely to abate. It is exactly at this juncture that she seriously interrogates her act of reverse migration. The narrator who can pertinently be interpreted as the fictional mouthpiece of Nada Awar Jarrar herself cannot help feeling regret for this movement back home. In a moment of candid avowal, she wonders if she has made the right decision to reunite with a land torn asunder by domestic conflicts.

When the future project of peace is annihilated by the bombardment of Hariri, the narrator temporarily deserts her connection with the present in a reverie designed to embark upon a psychological journey with a definite destination. In this nostalgic movement backwards, she takes us to the years of childhood and how simple life used to be in her

parental abode. At the time Lebanon was not seized by the turmoil of armed hostilities. She recounts how she used to derive pleasure from the overall serenity surrounding family life. She makes it clear that they used to enjoy a life of stability that once defined Lebanon: "[she] remembers childhood as a breezy existence that was only interrupted when war broke out, the grownups around [her] taking on a sudden heaviness in their manner, an anxious air, their brows often furrowed" (8). It is at this juncture that the narrator's life takes a new turn.

The anxiety that imbues her attempt to be reconciled with home and celebrate return is fueled by the shooting of Hariri – the event that disrupts her engagement with the present to devote her attention to relating the history of departure to Australia. Her hope for a new Lebanon is somehow dashed when the sectarian violence that has once driven her to far off lands begins to escalate once again. She seeks to pit this act of reverse migration against her flight alongside her family when the civil war allowed a little chance for them to consider the idea of resisting the lure of escape. The narrator tends to rationalize and legitimate the unexpected adventure of departure when Lebanon needed them most. The writer's preoccupation with the bloody conflict that puts the integrity of Lebanon at risk is not a unique literary endeavor as "the war had spawned extensive literary activity" on the part of other women who often castigate migration to other lands to eschew the effects of a devastating armed conflict (Cook 1).

Be that as it may, Jarrar, who raises the problematic issue of whether to confront the turbulence of the war or take shelter from it in a peaceful geographical background in the first novel, exhibits a serious attempt to be reconciled with home through the prism of the narrator's discourse in the second. However, this shift merely serves to impart ambivalence to the narrator's point of view in the wake of her arrival from Australia. Her enthusiasm

for reunion with the ancestral land turns into disenchantment following the bombardment of Hariri. It is as if the narrator wants to question the relevance of the blame laid upon those who take refuge from the intensity of violence in the homeland. She is prevented from relishing the savor of communion with place and landscape when the unexpected murder of Hariri proves that the situation is not back on track in the post-civil war Beirut.

This undecidability of meaning surrounding the experience of return is further entrenched when the narrator places ‘home’ in immediate juxtaposition with her adopted country of residence. Her frustration with the reality on the ground comes immediately after a substantial fervor to establish a physical contact with the native space. When she knows that mayhem does not seem to abate in a land where people have not yet got over the trauma of the civil war, she cannot help viewing the experience of migrating back with sheer regret, the fact that makes her occupy an ambivalent position between homeland and host land. This chagrin is voiced in plain words when she argues:

> For the first time since my return to Lebanon, I ask myself if I did the right thing in coming back. I could have continued to enjoy a quiet life in Australia where my parents and I had fled years earlier because of the civil war here. Mixed in with the anxiety and fear, I am also feeling angry about what has just happened. How dare they do this after all that this country has already been through? (8)

From a space in between two disparate worlds, the narrator – or Jarrar in disguise – seems to negotiate the signification of ‘home’ and where it is geographically situated. Apparently the pendulum of familiarity swings towards Australia, where she has experienced the true meaning of peace and where she consequently grows into a fully-fledged person. “This continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposites” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 10) problematizes the concept of ‘home’, which is a site of both attraction and repulsion. The narrator is repelled by the situation of warfare in Lebanon in such

a way that she is compelled to leave everything behind and journey abroad in quest of a safe haven. In spite of the fact that Australia offers a suitable space where she has fulfilled her dreams, she has not severed all ties with Beirut, whose attraction is simply ineluctable. Once she is back 'home', she regrets the experience of reverse migration due to a dearth of stability and peace. Still what complicates the semantic essence of home is her unshakable love for the only place she dares call "home."

The narrator's conciliatory kinship with the 'homeland' takes on the form of a voyage back in time to reminisce a childhood spent within the embrace of peace and stability. Ironically, her return to the fold makes sense only in her retreat from the present reality. She seems to bury the agony of a fragmented Lebanon in a nostalgic retrospective escape in search of a fleeting moment of solace. Jarrar is seemingly afraid of a nation that might be dubbed – to repeat Steven Sleita's term –"uncultured". The act of terror that targets Hariri is attributed to Arabs as usual: "Arabs and Muslims have become in certain ways coterminous with terrorism. We are thus quintessentially uncultured" (Salaita, *The Uncultured Wars: Arabs, Muslims and the Poverty of Liberal Thought* 1).To take a momentary refuge from the upheavals that have struck Lebanon again, the narrator recalls a peaceful childhood of serenity and union with the *terre natal.*

Her attempt to integrate in Australia takes time, but it is not without a redeeming feature though aspects of the sordid past have heavily weighed upon her: "She made friends. . . from a rapidly growing Lebanese diaspora, as well as young Australians to whom [she] felt attracted because they were boisterous and unburdened by complicated pasts (10). Her flight away from home and its repercussions are probably echoed in Mahmoud Darwish's unfulfilled wish: "If only I knew how to liberate the screams held back in a body that no longer feels like mine from the sheer effort spent to save itself in this

uninterrupted chaos of shell" (2). The quandary generated by the bullet sounds is what perturbs the protagonist and casts the concept of home to the realm of indeterminacy. Living through the war episodes means risking her life and that of her family and taking refuge in Australia is not only an act of cowardice and displacement, but also leaving behind private property in a place considered to be unsafe. However, when life in the homeland is next to impossible, the desire to emigrate abroad is remarkably powerful. In Australia, the family's trajectory has to start anew as they strive to set up a new abode away from the turbulent experience of war.

Calls from home never cease to resonate in the narrator's eardrums. Though she is offered everything that Lebanon cannot afford – high degrees and work – she feels it part of her duty to reunite with what can be termed her only homeland. Her invincible determination to come back after years spent beyond the national boundaries has triumphed over her parents' insistence to remain in Australia, where they have cherished sheer peace and stability. Being physically stationed in diaspora does not deter her from envisioning a moment of return to the fold. Prior to her physical encounter with Lebanon, she revels in sporadic visits by dint of her imagination:

> There are times when, unable to sleep, I put on my slippers, wrap a shawl around myself and tiptoe up the stairs to the upper landing where the lights of the city flicker through the dark. I lean over the concrete banister and sniff at the air and I imagine I hear the sounds of Beirut calling to me, soft whispers that rise from the sea and then gently float up into the waiting sky, memories of a past I cannot leave behind. (11)

In spite of a life of well-being and prosperity the narrator enjoys outside the national borders, she is revealed in this extract to be restless and uneasy as she is obsessed with familiar images of the homeland. The fact that she cannot sleep, evokes constant preoccupation with reminiscences that serve to link her to Beirut. Though she is physically

placed in a far off land where Lebanon – with all its war-related havoc – is simply outside her reach, she is haunted by memories of a past she has shunned but cannot altogether dispense with. This ambivalent attitude further introduces the narrator on the rim of an in-between reality. Her departure alongside her family is attributed to their inability to withstand the situation in her country, where sectarian violence makes life unbearable. But once abroad, she remains attached to a land torn apart by civil strife. This duality of attraction and repulsion continues to underlie the narrative when she is back 'home'.

It is when she is back to Beirut, that the narrator is impelled to narrate the self foregrounding visions, dreams and realities that confer a meaningful touch on her return: "At times, I learn back in the armchair and close my eyes for a moment and, breathing in the silence around me try to picture the me that came before this, the promise that brought me back to the city of light and shadows" (14). It seems that the promise that drives her back from Adelaide is to position the self in a well-defined space with little ambivalent stand on the local and natal background. She is apparently motivated by a craving for a place that resonates with the sounds of peace and respect for heterogeneity, diversity and multiplicity. This dream, however, sounds somehow farfetched as the shadows of sectarianism continue to envelope the seemingly quiet atmosphere that the narrator would like to relish in Beirut.

The light side that is hard to extricate from the shadowy face of Lebanon as it is trapped in the current situation of factional rivalries makes the narrator retreat to the past in a an attempt to mitigate the ambivalence surrounding her attitudes towards the present. The intractability of being ensconced in a space that is still caught in the embrace of warfare partly explains the narrator's fleeting identification with the current times. Rather than provide a surfeit of information on the intricate circumstances behind

the shooting of Hariri, she merely brings up the event and leaves it aside so as to establish herself a refuge from the bitter reality that has always interfered with her equanimity in the land of her birth: “The return of the repressed” (Barbera 581) is probably caused by the escalation of sectarian violence again making Lebanon, particularly Beirut, a highly susceptible place for the time being and for the times to come. So rather than filling the information gap of Hariri’s murder, she seeks ways to repress the appalling realities of domestic bloodshed.

One of these ways is to leave the story of Hariri’s murder aside and get sidetracked into a wide range of particulars about her childhood. It is as if she wants to shun the horror of terror and indulge in past events simple and ordinary as they are. She seems to take a liking to stories other than those revolving around sectarian violence:

> When I was a child my mother told me stories that she made up as I sat in bed waiting to fall asleep. They were not fantastical tales, but described the adventures of a little girl who like, me, lived with her parents in Ras ‘Beirut’ in an apartment not far from the sea. Eventually, I took on the role of storyteller too, adding details to mama’s accounts of the girl’s life changing an ending whenever I felt it needed it and seeing myself as the heroine of an unyielding imagination. (14)

Pitting this extract against the backdrop of psychoanalysis, it is noteworthy to underscore “the importance of childhood memories and experiences” (ibid 583) in evading, or more accurately, allaying the intensity of current tensions due to the outbreak of hostilities in Beirut once again. The narrator seeks respite in this backward voyage in which she craves sharing her story as a little child not yet burdened by the worries and trepidations of a country teetering on the verge of devastation. She is keen on implicitly juxtaposing the imaginary stories of her mother with the real incidents that make life in Beirut more or less unbearable. In this regard Paul Ricoeur looks at mnemonic experiences in terms of a dual function of memory when he refers to “the eidetic difference, so to speak, between

two aims, two intentionalities: the first, that of imagination, directed toward the fantastic, the fictional, the unreal, the possible, the utopian, and the other, that of memory, directed toward prior reality, priority constituting the temporal mark par excellence of the "thing remembered," of the "remembered" as such (6). In this retreat, the narrator mixes up memory with imagination to distance herself from the bitter reality of the present.

In addition to the work of memory and imagination, the narrator finds her niche in transnational encounters with her parents back in Australia. It is through phone calls that her identification with the only land she can call 'home' is shrouded in ambivalence. This undecidability that continues to mark her discourse bespeaks the psychological state of a migrant determined to establish kinship with 'the motherland' only to realize that Beirut is destined to undergo the scars of bigotry because of sectarianism. While speaking to her parents, she once more positions herself on the cusp of an in-between reality. Her attachment to Australia manifests in a longing to be engulfed by its "green and peppery scents, by its white expansive shores and a sky above so vast that it is easy to lose oneself in it" (15). This indeterminacy as to which country is 'home' is emphasized when she subsequently denies feeling lonely in Beirut following the withdrawal of the Syrian troops and this operation's consequential political stability again (ibid). However, the father cannot help visualizing a number of unhoped for scenarios that the current political mayhem is likely to produce. A series of assassinations herald a future full of armed conflicts. He does not put beyond reckoning the idea that Syria could retaliate and that Israel might also be involved. In spite of all this, Layla – now we have come to know the narrator by name in the course of her dialogue with her father – remains invincibly clung to the land of her childhood. This enigmatic bond while aspiring to a reunion with the vast space of Australia imparts ambivalence to her character.

When the father invites his daughter to "come back to [ Australia] where it's safe," (15) he seems to favour the receiving over the sending country. This determinacy is unlike Layla's oscillation between two differing spaces to the extent that the reader cannot be sure which geographical background is more palatable and appealing than the other. For although she is back in Beirut to celebrate reunion with the *terre natale* she repeatedly finds a way to eschew the overall confusion created by absence of political stability. Her physical presence does not keep her from taking a short-lived refuge in childhood memories when she was little and immature enough to indulge a sense of intersubjectivity with the objects and people around her. However, as the plot unfolds Layla begins to declare that her return – while Australia is still tempting – is meant not only to reestablish ties with the homeland but also apologize for her flight when Lebanon needs its people to react as eyewitnesses to the tragic events befalling it.

The intricacies of her ambivalent position begin to disentangle when the underlying motive behind return becomes somehow palpable. Though she has just reassured her parents that the violent storm has abated, she is doubtful about futurity. She sounds candid enough when she makes clear that political stability in her country is strongly called into question, but she summons courage to declare her determination to live through the impending upheavals. She is back not only to be blessed by the native soil, but also to confess a sense of guilt she desires to atone for:

> I suspect also that there is a measure of guilt at play here, the sense so many Lebanese living abroad that they have abandoned their country just when it needs them most…I hear my father sigh. 'I'll never understand the hold Lebanon has over you,' he says. 'But you already understand baba, I protest. 'In many ways, it was you and mama who passed it on me.' (16)

Layla is back in order to send a message to those who have abandoned their country as a

result of political mayhem. She wants them to stay to share the adversity that has befallen Lebanon. She seems to consider a flight away from home in these tumultuous conditions an act of cowardice and staying behind an act of intrepidity and resistance. It is at this stage that she becomes articulate about the strength of the bond that attaches her to Lebanon and wants her counterparts abroad to follow suit. She calls on them to return even at the cost of a peaceful life elsewhere.

The pull is merely too strong to resist for Layla, whose discourse has lost its arcane aspect and is shaped in such a way as to communicate her devotion to a land she dares not leave anymore. She has to surmount her physical weakness and give in to a sort of enthusiasm that makes her cling to the *terre natale*, a fervor she cannot ward off in spite of the turbulent circumstances of sectarian vulnerability. She seems to be lumped with Margo, a displaced neighbor, whose fate has ordained that they should transcend the boundaries of nationality and befriend one another. What unites them is the appalling situation in Lebanon and its consequential deprivations, food rationing and belt-tightening (18). They are also determined to stay where they are trapped oblivious to, but circumspect of, the intensity of violence that alternately escalates and subsides. What matters for Layla is to boldly face up to the inconveniences of the war preferring not to desert Lebanon at a time when it is teetering on the verge of a disaster.

Living through the fears of the imminent hostilities involves a perennial struggle with the self. Layla is continuously engaged in a silent interrogation of the choice she has made –staying away from her household and leading a semi-solitary existence in Beirut – keeping at bay the lure of stability in Adelaide. She keeps imagining what the situation would look like when the repercussions of the war are such that there is a dearth in everything. These interfering musings disrupt her spurious equanimity and perfunctory identification with

the place of her birth but she seals this interrogation with a determination to stay shaking her head to these perturbing thoughts that introduce the positive face of Australia. She does not cease to deal with her compartmentalized self, part of which is still attached to her parents' location. The influence exerted by this part is hardly irresistible when the weather has changed in Beirut.

The coldness and dullness of the weather reflects the inner life of Layla, who is incarcerated in the claustrophobic embrace of her apartment's space. She has a penchant for taking shelter inside instead of outside her country of origin. Amidst these circumstances one is merely motivated by a desire to survive; to shun the turbulence that is always hidden beneath the surface. The awful weather is coterminous with the callousness that marks the warring factions and sects and the coldness of interpersonal contacts between antithetical cultures. Cultural dialogue is simply supplanted by bitter antagonistic structures of feelings and attitudes. The symbolic implication of spring reflects the disarray and chaos generated by domestic hostilities:

> In spring, during the almost sub-tropical rains that fall over Beirut, I step into Margo's apartment shut the front door behind me and feel as though I can finally stop and gather the scattered parts of myself together again. In this sitting room and in this solid armchair, rain descending outside the partially opened window and chaos far behind me, I know I am accepted just as I am lost and sometimes lonely and looking for answers that elude me (18-19).

The chaotic inner terrain of Layla is mirrored by the rainy weather that leads her to shut the door and keep herself from what's going on outside cocooned in her desolate flat. Spring that is considered to be a season of regeneration and rejuvenation is characterized by unsettled moments as if it turns out to be a harbinger of fear and anxiety. Protecting herself inside does not however occlude the complicated trajectories of her psychological state. Though she has made up her mind to stay in Lebanon, refusing any act of flight,

her self is partitioned into heterogeneous segments she finds difficult to put together. The opened window is symbolic of a look inside the self; it is a transparent surface through which she meanders to and fro moving along an intricate time line. She casts a look back to her prior existence in Australia, where she was surrounded by family warmth immersed in peace that is lacking in her current life in Beirut. In spite of all this, she strives to drown this feeling of wretchedness in her conversations with Margo, whose identity is much of an enigma for Layla, who is interested in disclosing facts about her history following her demise.

She occasionally takes herself away from the safety of being enclosed within the four walls of her apartment deserting the bogus comfort of staying close to Margo in order to contribute to the making of parts of the Lebanese history. She is determined to leave some imprints in her participation in a voluntary work of considerable significance. She ponders the value of coming back 'home' if she cannot do something to lessen the suffering of those trapped in adversity because of the rising tensions between sects. She is actively involved in a sort of social activism, especially when she joins other volunteers to provide some help to the children who are the victims of the havoc generated by the bloodshed. This is how Layla wants to go down in the national history; it is one of the measures she adopts to write the self and declare herself at variance with those who revel in a new way of life outside the Lebanese frontiers. In the company of Margo, whose experience with children is a boon to her, she manages to accustom herself to them and create bonds of familiarity that initially seem difficult to form (22).

Layla endeavors to actively engage in serving her wounded country by extending the scope of the space in which she acts and interacts. Reassuring herself of the usefulness of her work with the handicapped children – which can be regarded as a sort of 'categorical

imperative[1]' –she retreats again to her apartment where her interactions with Margo and Fouad serve to palliate the intensity of solitude. She informs him about her work as a university teacher in Beirut and how she sympathizes with his solitary existence after the death of his wife. This dialogue – banal as it sounds to be – is apparently helpful for both as it reduces their alienation and makes them remind each other of the contributions they make for the overall interest of their crippled country. Such encounters and others are needed more now than at any time before. Fouad, who is also a university professor, could live elsewhere away from the political mayhem, but prefers to lead a simple life in "the hills above the city because it is easier to be alone there. . . with a garden for solace and a mountain of memories to sort through" (27). These memories are strangely unleashed when solitude creeps up and potently function as an antidote to its weakening impact.

Layla is aware of the lacunae and the emptiness produced by the consecutive calamities that hit Lebanon from inside and outside. So that her sincerity to the motherland remains intact, she literally inscribes her unshakable love to Lebanon putting into abeyance the powerful influence exercised by the peaceful Australia.

She cogently addresses the whims that prioritize Australia to Lebanon when she finally resolves to remain very close to the motherland. She seems to declare that her interest in Australia is merely generated by the deplorable conditions of warfare in Lebanon and that it is nothing more than a passing fad:

> I think of love as a state of being that I might one day find myself in without previous intention. This is how I feel about Beirut, after all, an attachment that I am not conscious of ever acquiring, my love for it having no beginning nor a likely end, a bond that is impossible to abandon because it has so much become a part of me. (28)

[1] Emmanuel Kant uses this concept to command an action as objectively necessary without reference to any end to be attained. It concerns not the matter of or the consequences of an action, but only the disposition out of which an action occurs, and is insofar an apodictic and practical principle, that is, a law (Cutrofello 97-102).

What ties her to her country is a sort of primordial love that is deeply ingrained in her subconscious terrain and that will always remain such an unshakable feeling irrespective of the situation on the ground. The fact that this feeling is inexorable – a process that goes on ad infinitum – means that she is fated to identify with her country of origin despite numerous hurdles that continuously interfere with peace and serenity in a land torn asunder by sectarian violence. This love manifests itself in an obsessive attachment whose origins she fails to locate. It is not something intentional; it takes hold of her unawares and occludes any desire to reunite with her parents in Adelaide.

As an intellectual she finds ways to place herself in immediate juxtaposition with David, who returns from the United States to Lebanon but cannot endure the turbulence of sectarianism unlike Layla, who persistently clings to the native place. In his conversation with her, David seems unwilling to remain trapped in a country where the prospects of moving up the rungs of the social ladder are all but impossible simply because peace is beyond reckoning. This is not the case with Layla, who knows how difficult it is to survive in a country where cultural heterogeneity threatens – rather than strengthens –the flimsy thread that may tie different cultures. Waiting for a better future, she seeks respite in a tiny world she has set up stealthily in her apartment.

In the intimate space of the apartment, she feels safe enough to bring up numerous issues that affect her life and unravel a few intricate facts about the enigmatic character of Margo. The latter, whose silence is the predominant trait of her personality, suddenly vociferates into a long outburst which provides the backdrop against which Layla has to pit her ordeal. It seems that Margo's experience of the war and its aftermath is more atrocious than that of her Lebanese neighbor. The intensity of displacement she has gone through is nothing compared to Layla's. The complicated trajectory of routes she has

drawn in quest of roots is given prominence in this extract:

> 'After the war I returned to France to find my sister Emily', she eventually continues. 'My parents were already lost by then and she and her husband were living in Paris. . . . She wanted nothing to do with me, accused me of running away during the war just when the family needed me most and said I had been selfish and ungrateful. I couldn't really argue with that. Still, I was shocked that she should feel that way about me. We were very different, she and I, but I always thought of us as close.' (32)

Unlike Layla, who has not severed her ties with her family, Margo is treated with downright callousness after her return from exile. Her dislocation is construed as a coward act of escape in search of protection from the depredations of armed struggle elsewhere. When she is rejected, she makes her way to London before she becomes an émigré in Lebanon. Her story can be empowering to Layla, whose routes as she searches for roots are less arcane and more definite. She escapes the civil war on her way to Adelaide enjoying family protection and high living standards and remains so until she is spurred on by national consciousness to bid a permanent farewell to her parents and answer the call of return to the *terre natale.* Taking Margo as a friend is liable to boost her morale to press her way through survival in a land brewing up with sectarian hostilities.

The belonging/ longing dichotomy is seriously interrogated in the interpersonal encounter that has marked Layla's relationship with Margo. The former looks at belonging from a simple perspective while the latter views it as a complicated process particularly rooted in contingencies. Layla associates belonging with longing to dwell in a geographical space that bears the imprints and marks of one's identity. That's why she sees herself nowhere outside the contours of Beirut. Conversely, Margo defines herself as a nomadic subject that finds it difficult to envisage her ultimate destination. Her stay in Beirut for the time being does not imply that she will live there permanently. As a traumatized

rootless nomad, she falls within the category of women Miriam Cooke refers to when she writes that “the urgency and the violence of the war drove them to portray some of their most intense, traumatic experiences” (2). Under the trauma of deracination, Margo becomes so numb that she reacts with indifference to Layla’s sense of belonging as she avers that her longing for life in Beirut may change in the future (34).

Under the influence of her uncle, who has paid a short visit to Adelaide, Layla’s dormant attachment to Lebanon has come to the fore. At this stage, she has made a firm decision to return where she belongs leaving behind her parents and the politically stable atmosphere of Australia. As she sets foot in Beirut, her bonds with the receiving country remain strong, which makes her occupy an interstitial space of indeterminate affiliations. At times, when the prospect of peace is a farfetched dream in Lebanon, she wishes she didn’t come back at all, but at others she feels it her duty to respond to the national call when the situation requires some sort of activism. This oscillation abates dispelling this ambivalent position and then returns to dominate her again after her conversation with Margo. At first, she reveals herself as an antithesis to her as she is confident that her roots go down in the Lebanese soil (this is not the case with Margo, whose identity is not intimately bound up with a geographical place), but she subsequently reconsiders her politics of location. In this regard, she asks: “would it take only a change of perspective to make me comfortable with myself wherever I happen to be. . . Could Margo be right, am I simply misleading myself in thinking that there is only one place, one way for me to be” (44). Layla intermittently contests this orthodox conception of identity as a unique essence identifying with Margo who deems it a process of interrogation.

This identification, however, is instrumentalized by Layla to save face, for she knows her identity to have little in common with that of Margo whose essence is hard to fat-

hom. Margo compares herself to "peeling away the many layers of an onion to arrive at its essence" (44). In the long run, Layla manages to celebrate a return to the dwelling place of ancestors and compatriots where she continues to work as a university teacher. The routine of moving between her apartment and the university acquires substantial significance and amounts to the level of a repetitive rite that increasingly becomes an ordinary practice that serves to tie her to the home country. Her links with Australia begin to wane now that she is getting integrated in her surroundings. She acknowledges that Margo is instrumental in introducing her to truths that she might have been at a loss for though she has her own idiosyncrasies and quirks. This difference strengthens rather than undermines their reciprocal human bonds. Layla develops a special knack to lucidly negotiate her convictions as regards the idea of belonging. It takes her some time to stop meandering between Beirut and Adelaid and finally voices her unshakable belonging to Lebanon. When ambivalent affiliations dissipate in favour of a palpable identification with the *terre natale*, she becomes involved in the human enterprise of making herself useful not only to the homeland but also to those whose identity seems less significant to her. Only after her death that Margo's nationality as a dislocated Jew is disclosed. This unexpected fact, however, has never affected her relationship with her and the amiability such an encounter could generate suggests that human ties stand above narrow ideological and political divide that mainly feeds on bigotry and antagonism. Margo is a friend though much of the disarray produced in Lebanon is due to the 1982 air raids of Israel.

## 6.2 Indulging in the mundane

Layla's return is narrated in terms initially laden with ambivalence as she is caught in the middle ground between two disparate locations layered with traces and echoes of familiar identification. In the outset of the narrative she is revealed to be "dealing with the question of hybridity, the doubling of signification which impels [her] to search for an in-between space to straddle two worlds" (AL Maleh 27). Leaving for Australia in early childhood does little to undermine her connection with Lebanon, to which she has seen fit to come back when she has fulfilled the project of empowering the self by dint of education. Jarrar introduces her story in order to cast light on the importance of immigration for a whole generation of compatriots who find no way to deal with the curse of war but to flee to other lands where they can revel in peace and safety. Be that as it might, at a given stage in one's life the urge of reestablishing kinship with the *terre natale* is simply unavoidable. This is what exactly happens when Layla –or Jarrar in a literary disguise – leaves the parental 'home' in Australia and celebrates a reunion with the land where she can do something to prove her national affiliations. She needs time to ward off the intervening spell of peaceful Australian life and family warmth and therefore mitigate her ambivalent tendencies. This ambivalence that has not altogether faded away occasionally comes to the surface in her encounter with Margo, whose lines of flight[2] lend support to the indeterminate nature of identity. Her nomadism is inspiring to Layla, who strives to anchor identity in a well-defined space like Fouad, the denizen of Ras Beirut.

Jarrar provides a meticulous account of Fouad, who seems satisfied with what the

[2] In A *Thousand Plateaus* Deleuze defines freedom as a 'line of flight " that would begin within well-defined social groups and behaviour but then take off in an unknown direction, moving towards as yet unmapped territories,outside of conscious planning and previously Known values" (Due 19)

native village has to offer. Completely oblivious to the chaos generated by political mayhem, his affinity with space bespeaks a desire to relish ordinary existence within a familiar family atmosphere. He is inclined to provide an example of a Lebanese citizen that can undertake his regular trips between his place of residence and that of his work. The implied message Jarrar tends to convey on the basis of his story is that escape elsewhere is not necessary when one can find alternatives at home. Looking for a safe haven outside the country of origin is strongly questioned by Fouad, whose life takes its normal course notwithstanding the absence of stability at all levels. He exults in the simple existence he leads in Ras Beirut:

> He would run into the kitchen to see his mother making *Labneh* and cucumber sandwiches for the children's school lunches and the housekeeper stirring the beginnings of that day's stew at the stove. His grandmother, seated at the kitchen table with a bowl of French beans from the garden in her lap, would look up briefly to greet him before bending down to her task, knobby fingers breaking the pods in two then stringing them on either side in one fluid movement (58).

The part of the narrative devoted to Fouad seldom makes allusion to the havoc produced by the warring factions in Beirut. Everyday routines continue uninterrupted by any inexplicable desire to find an outlet on the other side of the national borders. The extended family furnishes the house with a substantial sense of communication that has the potential to keep individual worries deep beneath the surface. The household members are immersed in their chores paying scant attention to what goes on in the nearby city. There is a pervading air of serenity, which gives the impression of peace, all around the house. Fear is simply non-existent in the domestic space of the house where everyone takes part in his job with a focus on the present and its exigencies. The whole family is not clamped tight in the grip of future considerations. What matters is here and now and as long as they can gather and indulge in a simple way of life, there is no need of flight from the

warmth of home.

Tilling the land to make it evergreen and expect to reap some local produce is one of the tasks that impart hope to the grandfather to tighten his grip on the local garden. He represents the living emblem of resistance, persistence and perseverance. This model of tenacity stands out as a real antithesis of Layla's family who have deserted their place of dwelling to be ensconced in Adelaide away from the trepidations of insecure present and unguaranteed future. Fouad's grandfather sticks to the native soil adorning it with plants that embody regeneration and life. He keeps at bay all feelings of moroseness and despair as long as there is room for hope. He seems to obliquely link escape with cowardice and clinging to the maternal land with intrepidity. He elevates his status to that of an archetype, or exemplary model for the entire family. And his acts of tilling the land on a regular basis are intended to confer life on the garden and make it resist time so that its reality is equated with "perenniality" ( Eliad 4).

The incorporation of metaphoric language in Jarrar's portrayal of the grandfather is revealing. Old age that is usually tantamount to inertia and a brooding mood has a different meaning in the intimate space where the old man stirs his physical energy into action. This signifier that could be pertinently associated with aridity and barrenness is imbued with liveliness and fervor. Surrounded by sheer greenery, the elderly man exhibits a spectacular prowess at gardening. Endowed with a youthful spirit, which usually withers in the latter phase of a person's life, he garners more enthusiasm from the sprouting plants and flowers all around him. Death comes into abeyance in order to give way to life, to continuity and to the rejection of surrender or escape. The fact that the grandfather's grey head disappears "behind the greenery and comes out again" (58) betokens a style of life that is anathema to a listless cowardly existence.

Meanwhile Fouad's grandfather envisages a future full of life and extricates himself from the claustrophobic embrace of the little green space. He leaps further in time visualizing the growth of the buds into abnormally tall trees and flowers symbolizing his ineffable ambition; he imagines himself alive to see the garden sprout dense green foliage. The act of decentering the vegetation in the process of growing is intended to reflect the big dream of a man whose ties with the land are unbreakable: "a light breeze appeared and it seemed . . . as if the garden were suddenly unfolding, the trees stretching further up towards the sky and the flowers shaking themselves awake, the plants glistening with intention" (59). The continuity of the garden – its open-ended growth – reflects the longevity of his connection with the *terre natale*. Bataille's notion of "inner life as a loss of self" (Adreas 19) is incarnated in the old man's desire to transcend the strictures of age so as to establish a permanent rapport with the intimate surroundings.

The grownups allow the children to lead and relish a simple way of life in their native village. Too young to be aware of the political instability in their country, they do everything they can to revel in their ordinary childhood. A coin from *Jiddo* is enough to bestow bliss on Fouad and Marwan, who are oblivious to the deafening roar of a tram moving past (60). Their attention is not distracted by the congested vehicle as their sole objective is to enjoy the mundane and make the most of their peaceful childhood. They are simply motivated by a desire to reach the *kaak* vendor on the other side of the street. The only argument underlying their childish conversation is that one wants his *caak* with *zaatar* and the other without it. This ordinary incident reflects the unruffled mental life of two little brothers who are absorbed in their own world. Life goes on even if there is always an impending consternation looming on the horizon.

The situation begins to change for Fouad, who is becoming aware of the effect of the

1939 war event on the political scene at home. Life that has hitherto been simple starts to take a new turn in Lebanon. The political confusion generated by the French colonial apparatus has always remained hidden from the surface as Fouad's family does not yield in to the machinations of the colonizing subjects. There is an invincible attachment to the soil and a particular aura of resistance around all the members of the household. However, the outbreak of the Second World War has somehow turned their attention elsewhere.

The ordinary life of Fouad and his family begins to lose its distinctive quality of establishing a close kinship with one another irrespective of what goes on outside their domestic space. At the age of nine, Fouad could hear the eruption of war in Europe and this impinges on his bodily movements. His gait is enveloped in full secrecy and caution when he has "to tiptoe to the living room and watched his father and his grandfather as they listened to the news on the radio and discussed the situation, their voices hushed and solemn" (61). As they are wont to live in union with the native soil, they develop a spectacular immunity against the intrigues of the colonial system. In other words, by being absorbed in their everyday preoccupations they show little interest in the occupation as long as they still have the capacity to actively interact with their local territory. However, now that the hostilities break out in Europe, fear extends to the family household.

The grandfather, who derives pleasure and euphoria from gardening, becomes concerned with the possible outcome of the war in Europe. The fact that Lebanon is a French mandate means that it is liable to be adversely impacted by the incidents over there. *Jiddo*'s attention is diverted from the garden to act out the role of a political analyst. He is no longer in a relaxed mood when he makes clear that the independence is not in the offing because the French will take the war in Europe as a pretext to stay on in Lebanon. This shift in his life is of considerable importance since the family's preoccupation with

the mundane is affected by the outbreak of the war in Europe. As he grows up, Fouad becomes aware of the French colonial reality and how it is encroaching on the domestic space that has hitherto been under the family's control.

The intimidating power of the colonial system is such that Fouad, who has hitherto enjoyed his childhood in the company of Marwane and *Jiddo*, is becoming increasingly aware of the presence of the enemy in his familiar background:

> One afternoon, walking home from school with Marwan, he looked on in horror when a passing French officer pulled a gun and pointed it at his brother. What did you say, you rascal, the officer shouted. Marwan grabbed his hand and pulled Fouad behind him as they ran through familiar streets, back to the safety of home. (62)

The intimate voyages that the children make between home and school are becoming precarious and the intrusion of the enemy in their ordinary existence is no longer beyond consideration. Spreading fear in the neighbourhood is one of the tactics used by the French to display their unrivaled authority. Threatening a pupil with a gun entails that this power is exclusively ubiquitous, omnipresent and ineluctable. However, the concept of home is still regarded as a place defined in terms of safety. Up to this stage, the French colonial apparatus is still incapable of preventing Fouad and his brother from taking shelter in their home.

The ordinary climate associated with Ras Beirut is teetering on the verge of turning into a variegated cultural space. After the defeat of the Vichy government in France, allied troops begin to be seen in Beirut. Their presence bespeaks not only the dissemination of power but also the creation of a culturally heterogeneous background. The narrator tries not to anchor their arrival in disparate and unequal power relations, but extends his vision to account for a unique cultural encounter that takes the local population one step beyond the mundane. A sense of awe that defines this encounter denotes that those

we take for an enemy can turn out to be a source of attraction. Consciously or not, the narrator's initial reference to those strangers occurs within the ambit of human amiability. They are not alluded to as agents of domination and power:

> Two years later, the Vichy government in France finally defeated, allied troops began to arrive in Beirut, British soldiers who spoke English with a quick, clipped accent that was difficult to understand at first until one becomes accustomed to it, and Australians who became known for their fondness for beer and pretty girls. More French soldiers came too with troops from their colonies in Africa. (63)

What attracts the narrator in this citation is the typically idiosyncrasies of the new arrivals. They are not categorized as potential enemies but as foreign figures whose cultural mores are unlike those of the indigenous. The British soldiers are initially alluded to not as conquerors, but as people whose language has its distinctive features. They are not viewed as imminent land usurpers but as human beings who speak a type of unfamiliar English. In the same vein, the Australians are defined against the backdrop of their usual ways of life and patterns of behavior. Only the French are solely delineated in terms fraught with quiescent fear as agents of authority and power. It is the cultural dimension that predominates over the colonial intentions of the new comers in this initial and reticent encounter between the self and the other. In this context, Homi Bhabha raises a contentious point in *Nations and Narrations*; he claims that "ambivalent nation-space becomes the cross roads to a new transnational culture" (4). From a detached exceptionally neutral standpoint, the course of the narrative is geared towards the celebration of cultural difference in a transnational space. However, the question that can be put is: will these foreigners interact peacefully with or threaten the mundane in Beirut?

Possibly unaware of or oblivious to the veneer of affability that defines the coming soldiers, Fouad takes pleasure in serving them at the canteen where they are provided

board and lodging. Too young to read them contrapuntally so as to appropriately interpret their intentions, he is mainly obsessed with deriving bliss from his routines. He takes them for their words confident enough that they are in Lebanon as saviors and not as conquerors. The ecstasy he experiences from interacting with them borders on idolatry: "he would arrive on a Saturday morning, bright eyed and full of enthusiasm, his cinema days well behind him, eager only to learn more about these men who in many ways seemed out of place here but who also promised something better for Lebanon, the autonomy he had heard spoken of so often. . . " (63). As long as these strangers are after the independence of Lebanon, they are worthy of being an object of admiration and sympathy. They are viewed as displaced people whose altruistic ideals are laudable in the eye of an immature boy who has not yet developed a critical mind to fathom the intricacies and ruses of discourse. It would be somehow gullible to link the existence of these newcomers with the enormous enterprise of a country's autonomy.

Fouad's intersubjective reaction to the British arrivals –the fact of being attracted to their overall demeanour –can be placed in immediate juxtaposition with his father's inquisitive mind as regards their presence in the homeland. He cannot find a logical common ground between Britain as empire and Britain as an active participant in peaceful negotiations. In other words, he is not taken in by the manifest discourse as he delves deep into the real intentions of these unusual migrants. His dialogue with the American professor is meant to destabilize the ideological cant inherent in the discourse of the colonizing subjects. He is skeptical of their goals in Beirut when he brings up the issue of the British as "brutal colonizers elsewhere" (65). This contrapuntal reading of their discourse is meant to disclose the unsaid in the language of empire. It is this "half silent murmur" of another discourse that the father has managed to unearth when the American

professor concurs that ‘it’s not unheard of for people to use the strength of one occupier in an attempt to rid themselves of another without being aware of the dangers involved” (ibid). Fouad, who attends to the dialogue is being obliquely instructed on how colonial discourse is shaped and how it should be read. His grip on the mundane, however, remains as tight and his main concern is to enjoy the rest of his childhood within its framework.

Fouad’s cultural imaginary about Americans is possibly meant to ward off their role as an imperial force. Through the prism of American songs, he would embark on a voyage across space to distance himself from the current political conditions that might interfere with the mundane. Together with his sisters, they are absorbed in popular American music that gives a balm to their ears and makes them stick to the ordinary style of life in the native background. Though he has just been exposed to doses of informative instructions through his active involvement in his father’s dialogue with the American professor, he soon regains his former identification with the normal course of a childish intersubjective mode of life. He seems unwilling to visualize any imminent chaotic encounter with the other; he has a tendency to confer a humanistic touch on his intercultural contact with otherness: “he would picture America as he listened, wide thoroughfares, stocky, clean-shaven men walking through them, smiling women in hats and high heels at their side, something about them. . . so appealing that he dreamed about going there one day” (66). It seems that Fouad is averse to viewing his encounter with the American culture in terms of power dynamics. At this early stage of his life he thrusts power relations into oblivion looking on America as a foreign land so appealing to him that he thinks of himself flying there one day. He and his father are not apparently motivated by the same concerns. While the former locates otherness outside the remit of power dialectics, the latter is fully aware that power is ineluctable between self and other.

The father's reliance on the radio as a source of world and local news is unlike the children's preoccupation with the daily routines that keep them in close affinity with the ordinary mode of life at home. Whether the independence is drawing nigh or not does not matter as far as they can derive sheer pleasure from the local vegetation adorning the garden. As long as they are not barred from accessing the greenery outside the house, they continue to show apathy to the presence of foreigners in their country: Fouad would "shake himself awake, stand up abruptly and, pinching Afaf and Samia on their arms, run out into the garden laughing so that they would follow him, past rose bushes, his grandfather's pride, and weaving in and out of rows of vegetables and herbs, the smell of watered earth and green wafting around them" (ibid). All the worries about futurity seem to be buried in this intimate rapport with the quotidian. Since Fouad and his siblings are ensconced in the family and safe to move through the plants in the garden, there is little that can prevent them to harbor and cherish their infantile dreams in their domestic location.

The grownups are apparently obsessed with the prospect of peace plans and Fouad, while showing interest in the subject, is not wholeheartedly involved as he is more concerned with keeping his ordinary life in Ras Beirut intact. Be that as it might, he knows that there is little chance of indulging in the ordinary life unless the overall peace is ratified. His terse and economical exchange with his father does not fall short of this issue. His father's ruminations are met with serious questions from him. The father's answers are imbued with reticence as regards the autonomy, which is due to be obtained from the French. Marwan, who seems dissatisfied with the way a candid response to the topic of autonomy is shunned, wants his brother to be told the reality –the fact that Lebanon's self-determination is still a farfetched dream. The father is probably motivated by a desire

to keep his little son unruffled by avoiding political issues. On the other hand, Marwan together with Jiddo are averse to being inarticulate about the nationalist prospect of driving out the enemy from their territory. They are even determined to extend their anti-French sentiments beyond the strictures of discourse as when Marwan declares the arrest of the president and the cabinet. This sad news hinders the peace negotiations and pushes Marwan to go beyond speech to action. He feels that something must be done. Fouad, who is the last to know about the recent incidents on the political scene, wants to be briefed on the mayhem generated by the apprehension of their president.

At this point, Fouad is compelled to take a stand on the colonial power and stand up to its hegemony. Under the auspices of Marwan, it becomes necessary to contest the French authority by moving beyond words to deeds. By being regularly exposed to doses of anti-colonial feelings, he shows a tendency to leave aside the quotidian and get engaged in counter-hegemonic interrogation of the colonial ascendency. The arrest of the president is the last straw and an indicator that peace does not loom on the horizon. The act of deriving pleasure from the mundane is possibly deferred when there is a conviction that the anti-colonial struggle is about to start.

## 6.3 Interrogating hegemony

Under the influence of Marwan, Fouad is made conscious of the new course of action he has to take as a freedom fighter. He is in the process of developing a novel personality in the face of the adversity that has befallen the country as a result of colonization. He is forced to temporarily break kinship with the familiar space of the garden and its consequential bliss so as to be committed to contesting the colonial machines of power. Though still young,

he feels that the onus is on him to contribute to autonomy. At the end of his dialogue with Marwan, he volunteers to take part in anti-colonial struggle of his own accord. Jumping out of bed, he is seized by fervor to be involved in counter-hegemony. He leaves behind his former childish life to actively participate in the enterprise of patriotism. Their planned encounter with a group of university students is crowned by a series of instructions and encouragements to boost the morale of Marwan and Fouad, who are steadily stepping their way towards spectacular acts of resistance. It seems that the group of nationalist youngsters is united under one organization and one goal: a desire to make their anti-colonial voice heard if not to deal a fatal blow to the core of the system. What is somehow striking is their readiness to fight the Senegalese soldiers working for the French army. It seems that one subaltern group is teetering on the verge of confronting another. This means that the Senegalese, as members of a French colony are set against the members of their other colony and are therefore relegated to passive pawns in the gamut of power structures.

A lofty aim of the demonstrators is to avoid falling prey to the indefatigable Senegalese troops when no mention is made of the master – the colonial regime. In the stage preceding the physical confrontation with the enemy, the group leader has to alert his compatriots to the vulnerability of such an encounter in which they have to guard against the ferocious Senegalese. It seems that his goal is not to put an end to the colonial power, whose roots like those of bamboo, spread vertically in such a way that there is no tap root to focus on. Conversely, he wants to make sure the colonized subjects have their say in the management of their domestic affairs. They are not a herd that has to supinely accept the dictates and culture of empire. These zealous students are keen on standing unified under the banner of animosity towards the hegemony exerted by the colonizing subjects.

One of them plays the vanguard of this anti-colonial movement:

> A young man pulled away from the main group. 'Ya Shabab, give me your attention for a moment,' he said in a loud voice. Everyone turned to listen. 'The bus will be here in a few minutes,' he continued. 'You know what to do when we get there. If the Senegalese soldiers arrive and come on the attack, disperse and make your own way back here. Above all, avoid being arrested. Good luck. (70)

This unarmed cohort of youngsters constitutes a burgeoning force that will hopefully grow into a fully-fledged counter-hegemonic voice. The fact that it is unanimously made up of youngsters is an indication that it strives for vitality and longevity that are the main defining characteristics of youth. This impending encounter with the enemy does not put beyond reckoning the nightmarish use of force. In that case, this group of nationalist teenagers is asked to find its way to safety and avoid confrontation with the Senegalese. Once on the bus amongst his peers, Fouad celebrates a new rite of passage creating a break with the domestic world of the local space and embarking upon a journey to resistance.

The secrecy surrounding this journey is revealed through the position Marwan and Fouad are compelled to take once all the seats are occupied by the members of resistance. At the top of the ladder leading up to the roof, they lie "flat on their stomach" overlooking all sorts of imminent trouble and relishing their involvement in this act of counter-hegemony. The forward movement of the bus is symbolic of their concern with the future of their nation. They are hardly past puberty but they show maturity and charisma in the way they choose to identify with the cohort onboard the vehicle. In spite of being powerless, they are determined to go down in history as valiant anti-colonial figures. The mini-exchange that goes on between Fouad and a peer of his, in spite of the perils lying ahead, betokens substantial self-confidence in the necessity of starting an anti-hegemonic project. Armed only with a stick, a boy behind Fouad does not shudder

in fear, but lets out a laugh, confiding in his primitive weapon that will be used "to bash those foreigners' heads in" (70). The ability of the boys to express themselves and bring up the issue of resistance as they hold on to the top of the ladder oblivious to the danger of such a journey is indicative of high nationalist spirits.

The subsequent exchange, however, between Fouad and his brother betrays a sense of confusion that suddenly bewilders the former as he begins to question the pertinence of their zeal in the context of anti-colonial struggle. Marwan's persistence is pitted against Fouad's skepticism about the viability of their action. Positioning himself as a guide and supervisor, Marwan chastises his brother for his shaky confidence and consequently makes him rethink his doubts. Nonetheless, when Marwan taunts him about the cowardice issuing out of fear, he picks up the pieces and becomes himself anew. This clearly shows the ebb and flow that are likely to define the situation of a novice fighter. Marwan seems to inculcate nationalist sentiments in his younger brother in order to prepare him for the ineluctable encounter that will soon occur between them and the colonizer or its servants. Being somehow realistic, Fouad is seized by a fear he dares not exteriorize because of the sensitivity of the situation, but when Marwan allows him the choice of running back home if he is scared, he breathes a new life in himself confirming his participation in the movement.

The denunciation of the colonial apparatus takes on the vocal form to prepare the ground for any possible physical encounter with the enemy. The participants repeat the following slogan: "Down with the colonizers! Long live free and independent Lebanon!" The echoes of such a slogan reverberate in the distance and serve to lift up the spirit of the young fighters. All the way to the battleground, Fouad is portrayed to be at the mercy of fear at times and at the top of fervor at others, which gives way to a kind of emotional

disequilibrium. This volatile mood is more apparent when the crowd is intercepted by the gaze of supremacy and surveillance. At this juncture, Fouad is once again trapped in a situation where it is intractable to find a way out: "[he] stood still for a moment, uncertain what to do. He watched as one of the university students was attacked by a tall, foreign-looking man with a beard. Suddenly Marwan appeared as if from nowhere and grabbed the man by the legs" (71). This unexpected reversal of roles that takes place in a context defined in terms of the colonized-colonizer dyad and its complicated implications has struck Fouad dumb. Marwan, who emerges out of this encounter as a hero, problematizes the facile binary opposition of the powerless colonized and powerful colonizer. He manages to sap the foreigner of his own feelings of arrogance and supremacy in such a way that his gaze and the attack that succeeds it come into abeyance. This demeaning position to which the foreigner is drawn serves to boost the morale of the young fighters who are not deterred by the power of the enemy. This act of resistance seems to go beyond words to actions.

Fouad, who has formerly looked at the issue of resistance with sheer reticence, begins to muster strength now that his brother has successfully reversed the dialectics of power. This advanced rite of passage surely confers new identification traits on Fouad's identity. He apparently surmounts the inhibiting hurdles of fear and cowardice when he proves to be a tenacious supporter to his brother. He manages to shake off all sorts of negativity and shares Marwan's heroism and activism. Spurred on to stir himself into action, Fouad casts his fears aside and "grabbed the man by the waist and tried to pull him back" (71). The evolution of his personality bespeaks the symbolic implication of the trip he undertakes as a member of the group. He starts as a raw fighter overcome by fear and suspicion and works his way towards a Lebanese citizen who is actively involved in eradicating

the shackles of bondage. This encounter that feeds on antinomies makes Herder's hope a farfetched ideal. According to Catherine Gallagher, he does not look on human diversity as a discordant mass of mismatched experiences or a pretext for reciprocal clashes but rather a principle of hope. Herder argues that

> "Man, from his very nature, will clash but little in his pursuits with man; his dispositions, sensations, and propensities, being so infinitely diversified, and as it were individualized. What is a matter of indifference to one man, to another is an object of desire: and then each has a world of enjoyment in himself, each a creation of his own" (Gallagher 6).

This is not the case with the dominating colonizer and its dominated subject. The former employs a condescending reductive ethos that leaves little ontological being for the latter. In this regard, the question of armed resistance acquires its significance. The objectifying gaze of the colonizing subject whose onslaught against Marwan is miraculously defeated by the latter in collaboration with Fouad evidences that such a hope is hardly relevant in the colonial context. In such a context the master and slave dialects interfere with any hope of potential understanding between the colonizer and the colonized.

After vanquishing the foreign looking man, who turns out to be a French headmaster, we are taken back in time to commemorate the independence of Lebanon. The way anti-colonial struggle is intimately bound up with its inevitable outcome of self-determination is indicative of the importance of resistance in destabilizing – though not uprooting – power machinery. There is always a system of power domination that tightens the grip and cracks down on any self consciousness to forge a unique identity. However, in the case of the colonizer-colonized dyad, there comes a moment when the former yields to the latter because of his/her indefatigable negotiation of power. The discursive practices that power utilizes to control its subjects are contested when resistance takes its course. In this respect, Stephen Greenblatt, in his attempt to expound self-fashioning, writes: "There is

no such thing as a human nature independent of culture," Geertz writes, meaning by culture not primarily "complexes of behavior patterns-customs, usages, traditions, habit clusters" but rather "a set of control mechanisms-plans, recipes, rules, instructions - for the governing of behavior" (*Renaissance Self-fashoning: From More to Shakespeare* 3). When the oppressed individual starts questioning the ethos of the colonial machine, resistance occurs and the consequential autonomy is expected.

It seems that the notion of hope Herder associates with cultural diversity begins to gather momentum in the post-war Lebanon. The independence makes it a cosmopolitan country and a breeding ground for several cultures. This multicultural climate is the outcome of peace: "The summer Fouad turned seventeen, the war in Europe had already been over for two years and Lebanon basking in its now well-established independence had a booming economy and was attracting people from all over the region and beyond" (72). Fouad is in a position to draw comparisons between the colonial era, when life is a daily struggle for survival, and the period of independence, when the future is promising at both the economic and cultural level. Though the tiny space where he is nurtured in Ras Beirut has been altered as a result of urban expansion, he exults in the idea that Beirut will become "a gateway to the rest of the Arab world." Freedom and peace open new prospects before people whose ambitions in the newly-shaped Lebanon are stirred into action. The narrator gives due attention to the impact of self-determination on petty things that usually go unnoticed. In addition to the disappearance of wild plants in Ras Beirut, such as gorse bush and cactus because of urban expansion, he makes allusion to the emergence of foreigners (with no intention to conquer) and stores on Hamra Street, "bigger and better than those of yesteryear." The narrator's vision that has hitherto been enveloped by the plight of French colonialism, finds full expression in its wake.

There is an aura of substantial activity around Beirut now that independence is in full swing. The hustle and bustle of city life stands in full contrast to the lethargy and reticence that has previously marked the colonial era when the narrative is confined to the domestic routines of Fouad and his family. The focus has mainly been on the garden that links the children and Jiddo to the native soil. Little is known outside it because all that matters is to be cocooned in a space that has to be protected against all odds. The overwhelming impact of colonization is downplayed as long as Fouad's family are not deprived of deriving pleasure from leading their life at home. Now that autonomy has become well-established, the narrator is released from the narrow confines of Fouad's household to cast a look at different corners of the capital. Seemingly unimportant particulars about a variety of activities are expressed to underscore a sense of overall regeneration at all levels. Leaving aside Fouad's abode, the narrator sheds light on other localities. He tediously introduces us to shops and how they are imbued with life:

> Clothes shops, shoe shops and even a small department store; cafés where men and women sat talking, sipping coffee and eating cakes; a general air of freshness and audacity about the city then, rather than embracing the past, seemed to dismiss it: there is no going back now, Hamra was saying to whoever stopped to listen, I am the Lebanon of the future. (72)

The overall hectic atmosphere is the natural outcome of the autonomous life of the citizens. The narrator's psychological overtones are projected on elements of space. His concern with the future –as independence brings about the eradication of the past shackles –is apparently seen through the prism of Hamra, which bristles with the activities of a people relishing the blessing of freedom. Their ordinary routines, which are ablaze with emotions, mark a turning point in the history of a country that has so long suffered from the colonial hegemony.

The curses of colonial dominance are put aside to concentrate on the civil and educational ideals of the American University, which has contributed to the making up of future generations. No longer burdened with the cumbersome load of colonial authority and its consequential social and political strictures, Fouad consecrates his efforts to making the most of his potential as a freshman. It is the future that matters in the post-colonial era and Fouad is more interested in embarking upon a forward journey – a journey whose destination lies somewhere beyond the tensions of the dominant-dominated dyad inherent in the colonial apparatus. The university opens up new horizons in a country where the legacy of colonialism should be confronted with education.

The university offers room not only for intellectual pursuit but also for cultural encounters outside the ambit of power structures. The students who pertain to different geographical backgrounds do not constitute a homogenous cohort even if they all speak Arabic. The university as a mosaic of cultures, perspectives and experiences serves to sharpen Fouad's vision and enable him to embrace and celebrate difference outside the context of Manichean divisions and asymmetric dichotomies. His world extends in scope as he is no longer confined to the intimate space of the garden and the familial interactions. The odyssey of self-discovery begins when he bravely contests the colonial hegemony under the auspices of his elder brother and further develops in his freshman year when he comes into contact with peers from different corners of the earth. Now he "began to feel everyday as though he were embarking on another journey, deep into the mysteries of the self, until what he had once thought of as the outer limits of his world suddenly seemed immeasurable" (83). His lines of flight take him away from the domestic space of family life as a point of departure through university putting beyond reckoning any ultimate point of arrival. It seems that there is no limit to his process of becoming as he

soars higher without visualizing an end to his journey.

The trajectory of his newly-shaped subjectivity stretches between university – in all its intricate implications – and his parental home, where childhood memories are nostalgically harboured. His concerns grow concomitantly with his age, the fact that family members become aware of:

> He brought his new self home, a bit shyly at first because he imagined the family might be surprised by how much he had changed, and then boldly when he realized that growing up was, in fact, expected of him, a son of whom they could be proud. On Sundays, he sat with Marwan and baba, sometimes jiddo too, on the terrace with nargilehs and cups of heavily-sweetened tea, and talked of all the things that mattered, the family business, Fouad's studies and the increasingly worrying situation of Palestine. (83)

He is mature enough to get involved in issues of local and national import. The university can be seen as a non-discursive setting wherein Fouad is concerned with empowering the self now that Lebanon is basking in autonomy. He finds himself immersed in activities other than those that center on the conceptual opposition of powerful and powerless, colonizer and colonized, ruler and ruled and similar binary polarities founded on the inclusion-exclusion dialectics. His relationship with the other members of the family extends beyond the confines of domestic affairs to encompass issues of national and international interest such as the question of Palestine. However, it is worth noting that there is an invincible attachment to the family's home and its vicinity. Whenever Fouad and his family are portrayed, it is in close affinity with the familiar space that brings them together and consolidates the bond that ties them to one another. Nargileh and tea would be void of signification elsewhere, but they are laden with meaning when they link up the family to their abode and trigger deep-felt emotions and sensations. The past is not dispensed with as it lies quiescent in their inner mind and the present and future occupy the foreground

of Fouad's concerns.

As the self develops to a higher pitch of subtlety and refinement, new unexpected considerations crop up. The university that has initially been regarded as a non-discursive site has suddenly changed into a setting where political issues are given wide credit. The conceptual opposition has marked again the narrative as it centers upon Fouad's encounter with Palestinians who have fallen prey to the Zionist extermination machine. The question of hegemony affecting their lives begins to appeal to Fouad, who is interested in the plight of Palestinian refugees:

> Some weeks later following the defeat of a hastily assembled Arab army in Palestine tens of thousands of refugees from Al-Jaleel, with nothing but the few belongings they could carry with them, began to arrive in Lebanon from all over the south, and were welcomed into the homes of families. Those who came from the cities around Palestine sought refuge in Lebanon's cities, Sidon, Tyre, Beirut and Tripoli in the north, and with the money they had brought with them set up homes and attempted to start over as their hopes of returning to Palestine slowly faded. (84-85)

This passage constitutes one of the threads woven into the narrative of Ibraham Fawal when he depicts Palestinians to be scattered like seeds. The text at hand can be regarded as a variegated body in which many voices come into play. Though the focus is on Fouad's ordinary experiences and routine habits, issues like the colonial status of Palestine are raised to pit the narrative against Bakhtinian double-voicedness. As Fouad develops intellectually, he becomes interested in incidents that occur beyond the tiny geographical spot where he has relished a self-centered childhood in the company of Jiddo. The traumatized displacement of Palestinians and their plight as refugees in Lebanon testifies to the polyphonic nature of the text. Its multivalent aspect coincides with Fouad's transcendental leanings as a university student. He has a craving for establishing himself as a voice of dissent and non-conformism. His link to the domestic space where his life used to be a

daily interaction with the family members as they remain attached to the garden can be seen as a screen that veils what lies beyond.

Fouad seems willing to question hegemony at a larger scale. Now that Lebanon has heroically eradicated the shackles of French colonialism, Fouad is left with more sophisticated and ambitious projects. As a university student, he is involved in interrogating the current refugee crisis in the postcolonial Lebanon. Together with colleagues, he points fingers of blame to the Arab leadership. It would be pertinent therefore to note that his identity is undergoing a change. He grows mature enough to chastise supine Arab leaders whom he deems to be complicit in the catastrophe that has befallen Palestinians who are coerced into leaving their home under the muzzle of a gun[3].

This fact does not escape Fouad's notice. The university is a real eye-opener for him. The experience of these Palestinian refugees who are trapped in straitened circumstances in different parts of the world is a matter of interest for him and his friends, whose gatherings turn out to be political assemblies held in full secrecy. Attending to the conversations that take place during such encounters, "Fouad derided himself for having been so naïve in the past, in the days when he had thought of the British as champions of Lebanon's independence against the French, when politics, like everything else in life, had seemed straightforward for him" (85). As he develops critical insights, he calls into question firmly held convictions, especially those having to do with the ruses of discourse. He has been apparently deceived by its superficial overtones unaware of its hidden intent, but he currently begins to rethink his attitudes towards the British whom he used

[3] This historical cataclysmic event is referred to by Benny Morris from Ben-Gurion University of the Negev in his book *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited*. According to him: "There are today on the United Nations rolls close to four million Palestinian refugees (the Palestinian Authority says five million). About one third live in so-called refugee 'camps', which in reality are concrete-structured slum neighbourhoods on the peripheries of cities (Nablus, Gaza, Ramallah, Beirut, Damascus, Amman, etc.)" ( 1)

to trust uncritically. He is now certain that one imperial power cannot help his country obtain independence from another. This sharpened vision is probably acquired through his interaction with other university students, all of whom are united under the banner of speaking out against the hegemony that targets fellow Palestinians.

Orientation towards the realm of politics bespeaks Fouad's desire to understand the ideology underlying relations between countries. That's why political science and history have unexpectedly become more appealing than engineering. He wants to be informed on multilateral relations between the world powers and how hegemony operates on the international political arena. The power of education is also instrumental in equipping him with the necessary tools to understand his place and form his own opinion in the universe wherein the inclusion-exclusion nexus is entrenched. He is in a position to reflect upon the political map that has altered: "the borderless Middle East that his father and grandfather had known had changed forever, this was clear, but it was not yet apparent what would become of peoples that had until a few years before thought of themselves as separate communities living comfortably together under the same sky" (85). The colonial apparatus has apparently disrupted the unity that has hitherto been an integral part and a distinctive feature of the relationship between various communities in the Middle East. For instance, prior to the Zionist invasion of Palestine, Muslims, Christians and Jews had lived in peace and security. Unfortunately, the Zionist machine plays havoc with this co-existence causing political mayhem that leads to the dispossession and displacement of thousands of Palestinians. Those who are trapped in their land are compelled to subsist under the power of Israeli occupation. What has become of Palestinians is an issue for Fouad, but this does not keep him from the pursuit of personal dreams within the framework of history and interactional relationships.

Fouad's identity is in the process of evolution. The period before university has been spent in a narrow domestic space where he indulges the warmth that emanates from his interactions with family members. His ties with the garden bespeak a tenacious attachment to the *terre natale* that is capable of offering shelter at a time when the French hegemony is at its height. The protective function of the house and its vicinity is seen through the eyes of Jiddo, who regularly looks after the garden confident enough that the French territorial expansion will not reach it. At this stage, Fouad is conscious that his country is under the French colonial dominance, but like Jiddo, he feels protected at home where he derives sheer comfort from the garden. His immaturity, as a little boy, makes him unaware of how hegemony works. That's why, he naively thinks that Britain is ready to offer Lebanon support to rid itself of the French colonization. However, his identity witnesses a dramatic change when he moves to university. It is there where he gauges his previously held opinions only to rethink his attitude towards the British as partners in self-determination. Together with friends, he becomes interested in politics and history and how power seeks legitimacy in hegemony. This part devoted to Fouad, ends with the latter's immigration abroad where his identity is likely to undergo more change, but not at the expense of the nationalist project of working as a liaison for the rest of the Arab world.

## 6.4 Identity in a state of flux

Kamal is described as an epitome of displacement proper. Being a Palestinian refugee underscores the predicament of a rootless subject lost along the imminent routes of excessive mobility. Cut off from his homeland under coercion, he finds himself in Lebanon which is

not a point of arrival but a temporary destination that might turn into a new point of departure. In exile, however, he possesses written traces of a Palestinian subjectivity which becomes synonymous with life in refugee camps: “displacement has made him understand that certainty, no matter how solid it might seem, is transient” (103). Deliberately or not, Kamal betrays his skepticism about certainty which should not apparently be anchored in the monad of the Cartesian logic of ‘cogito’ ergo sum. The fact that he is Palestinian does not translate his current position as a homeless refugee who is down and out in Lebanon:

> He carries the same identity papers given to his parents when he was born which describe him as a refugee with special dispensation to reside in Lebanon, though not to work or gain citizenship, and which serve to remind him that he is a man in transition even if neither the starting point nor the end of his journey are clearly discernible (103).

The contingency defining identity in the case of Kamal is of capital importance. The truth of his origins as a Palestinian is eclipsed by the technology of power that has dislocated him from his homeland. In Lebanon, his identification papers label him as a refugee with no fixed abode or work sharing therefore his father’s destiny before him. Though it seems somehow denigrating for him not to be granted Lebanese citizenship, he enjoys a fluid identity that cannot simply be subjected to a fixed naming. Being a refugee entails a nomadic way of life, a perennial journey whose ultimate end cannot be easily anticipated. And since the end does not loom on the horizon, it is hoped that the final point of arrival will be the initial point of his parents’ departure; that is Palestine.

For Kamal the act of writing consolidates his ties with the homeland and displays the enormous suffering of his people. That’s why becoming a writer remains a top priority. In one of his new novels, which is not a self-contained work of imagination, fact and fiction intermingle to delineate the tragedies of a dispossessed and displaced population. The

book as a repository of memory lends support to Steven Salaita[4]'s point that no bulldozer is capable of obliterating memory. The latter "enables Palestine to survive despite its persistent destruction" (Slaita 26). What makes Kamal's work voluminous is the extensive scope of its interest. He departs from the ordeal of Palestinians to establish a common meeting ground that links the plight of all humans outside the boundaries of geography and history.

However, there is something especially unique – or more accurately harrowing – about the experience of dislocation as it is undergone by Kamal's compatriots. The stories he has been exposed to are couched in the language of despair and despondency when it comes to the question of Palestine and the great expectation of return: "his parents . . . had come from Palestine when Israel was created and hundreds of thousands were expelled with no prospect of imminent return" (105). Though not yet born when the tragic exodus happened, the stories of family members and relatives affect him so deeply that they become a sort of memory for him. They even provide him with inspiration to write about the ordeal of displacement and the human cost of living away from home drawing solely on memories to establish contact with the lost land.

Because he was not born in the expropriated land, he introduces himself to be in desperate need of tales of dislocation as a means to have a memory of what has befallen his kindred. So as not to fall prey to amnesia, he recalls the stories he was told as a child about a beautiful house with a garden where his mother "would stand waiting for her husband to come home" (106). This close rapport between a person and space is what

[4] According to Glenn Greenwald, author of *No Place to Hide and With Liberty and Justice for Some*: "Uncivil Rites reveals Steven Salaita's deep humanity and integrity. Despite the efforts of the University of Illinois to silence him, Salaita continues to speak out courageously for Palestinian rights. His case is a reminder to us all of the need to defend academic freedom and to protect those who challenge the powerful."

Kamal is in dearth of and to palliate the effect of this psychological gap, he seeks an alternative bond with home in the subterranean regions of imagination. The stories he frequently hears about what life used to be like in Yafa link him to Palestine, to the near past when the family lived in unison with the *terre natale.* At that moment, Kamal's father and grandfather would work assiduously to make their factory a lucrative business. A strong kinship used to be established between them and their project simply because the conditions were fit to allow such an affinity. Political stability meant that the family enjoyed social moorings that lend legitimacy to living not only for the present, but for the future as well. Much to their chagrin, this peaceful relationship with space and its consequential welfare and prosperity comes to an end when the Zionist atrocious machine is set into motion. Not only were the family's plans thrown into disarray, but a break between man and his property occurred forcing him to go into exile.

This break between the colonized subjects and their land means something more complex than displacement. In *the Encyclopedia of the Palestinians* Philip Mattar makes allusion to this ordeal by noting that "the 1948 expulsion and flight of Palestinians were, by proportion of the population affected, among the largest forced migrations in modern Middle Eastern history" (400). The identity of this population once expelled from their country is in a state of flux and turbulence. Kamal, who was not born when his family was forced into exile, represents an embodiment of identity as a process of becoming: "as he grew older and the world around him began to diminish, he became aware of the truth about the endless movement that defined his life and that of his family" (107). Based in Lebanon does not entail a settled way of life for the whole family as Kamal constantly imagines himself to be elsewhere, to live in a place where he can establish communion with space, and this elsewhere has something to do with return to the land where his roots

go deep into the native soil. However, this prospect almost turns into a pipe dream and the displaced Palestinians concentrate their efforts on survival away from home. Regarded as second-hand subjects, they can't fend for themselves and have to depend instead on the United Nations for rations. This servile and demeaning status implies that Kamal along with his relatives and compatriots are reduced to a homogenous cohort of helpless refugees degenerating from Palestinian citizens into scattered exiles whose life is a daily struggle for survival.

As a child Kamal is left spellbound when he first hears that there is an aura of strangeness about the common identification of Palestinians in Lebanon. Their deplorable conditions of poverty and deprivation push them to see themselves beneath the rank of the native citizens who, in spite of various political tribulations, stay in close touch with their homeland. The inquisitiveness that marks Kamal's discourse is met with some reticence by his brother who dares not face up to the harsh reality of life in exile. When Kamal inquires about the implication of the words 'Relief and Works Agency' inscribed on the door of the stone hut where the rations are stored, he is merely hushed into silence. The terse response that issues from Kamal's brother resonates with echoes of fear that disrupts the childish equanimity of a seven-year old boy. The fact that they are refugees sounds somehow unfamiliar to Kamal, who will grow up as a displaced Palestinian inexorably expecting his identity to undergo a change. Exposing himself to constant mobility –if not physical then psychological –mirrors a restless existence that has become the lot of a whole population. When Kamal feels in his bones that there is something precarious about his brother's abnormally short answer ( we are refugees), we can surmise that he will spend the rest of his life grappling with the implications of this appellation.

Space bears the marks of Palestinian refugees who are trapped in squalid camps.

Kamal, whose family can afford somewhere to live somehow decently after their father makes a move from the mountain to Beirut, cannot help being appalled by what he has to behold in the camp during a visit to a friend. The conceptual clarity that the identity of these refugees acquires is due to the change that has suddenly come over their social status as it is manifest through the poverty-stricken conditions of life inside the camp. From individuals exulting in social and emotional stability, they turn into dislocated subjects whose identity remains at the exposal of a potential change as long as they are revealed to be at the mercy of mobility be it physical or psychological. Nonetheless, the refugees who share the plight of expulsion from their homeland are not socially unique. This is reminiscent of Derridean concept of iterability, which means that there is difference in sameness. Under the umbrella of refugee identification, these Palestinians are different as far as the mode of existence is concerned. In exile some lead a better life than others. Kamal, for instance, belongs to a relatively rich and intellectual family. Though he makes clear that his identity is in a state of flux as a result of impending mobility, he looks on himself to be in a better position than his compatriots at the camp. The question that haunts his mind seeks to unravel the mystery of this difference across sameness, but his father offers no clarification beyond the fact that these refugees are all bound by nationality and geographical belonging.

For the father the difference in living conditions and circumstances does not matter as long as they are expelled from their land regardless of their social background. Here Kamal is confused as to the signification of home. Because he was born outside the national frontiers, such a concept sounds a bit baffling to him. In response to his father's contention that they are waiting for the opportune moment to go back to Palestine, he makes a reference to their apartment as home. The father intervenes to rectify this hasty

claim and casts their identity as refugees into the realm of contingency as they constantly expect to return to Palestine, where they belong. In fact, Kamal is old enough to know all this, but he probably wants us to notice how slippery the notion of identity is in exile. Kamal's provocation of his father when he avers that he has a penchant for being Lebanese and that he does not have to go back home is a deliberate attempt on the part of the narrator to place a premium on the existential project of return. The tone of Kamal's speech is steeped in irony because he has previously mentioned that as Palestinians they are denied Lebanese citizenship. This contradictory claim is deliberately meant to stress that the only way out of the crisis of dislocation is a reunion with the homeland.

Space serves as a repository of memory beyond the constraints of time. The conversation that takes place about the fact that they are living in the apartment as tenants and that the only home they have is in Palestine is immortalized within the walls of the flat. As a migrant abroad, he celebrates return to the apartment he used to call 'home' now that he has completed his higher education. The very idea that fragments from his conversation with his father withstand the test of time as their echoes can be heard in the vacant space is tangible proof that 'home' is such a problematic concept for Kamal, who has initially viewed it with utter simplicity. The first thing the narrator capitalizes on after Kamal's journey back to Lebanon is the remnants of the dialogue in which death is juxtaposed to life. The allusion to the father's demise is atoned for by the immortality of his axiomatic conviction that the only home for Palestinian refugees is Palestine. It is unfortunate for the father, whose fate is not unlike that of many other exiles, to die as a refugee leaving the echoes of his dream to eternally reverberate across generations and breathe life in them. It is therefore revealing to introduce us to bits of a conversation that has occurred prior to Kamal's immigration abroad and how they remain alive even after

the death of their author.

Kamal's return from exile to exile bespeaks the plight of a high-flying Palestinian who finds some short-lived solace in the workings of memory. He recalls how his mother used to have a penchant for American films to the extent that she could name many Hollywood stars. There seems to be no such thing as pristine identity. Clearly, there is something American in Kamal's mother, whose Palestinian nationality does not keep her from setting up her own room in Hollywood cinematic culture. This flight back to the past immediately after his arrival to Lebanon can be construed against the unbearable situation of the present and hence the requisite act of mobility which takes on either a physical or psychological form. Though based in Lebanon, his stay is transitory and therefore his identity –like that of a typical exile –acquires meaning only when set within the framework of syncretism. Being denied citizenship as a helpless refugee striving to establish selfhood elsewhere does not interfere with his love for Beirut once in Germany. From there he takes us on a journey back to his home in exile indulging the memory of identifying with the land where he is labeled a Palestinian refugee. Apparently, the scars of exilic mobility aggravate now that Beirut is caught in the vortex of civil hostilities:

> As the civil war in Lebanon raged on, Kamal's concern for family and friends there and for his beloved Beirut developed into an underlying sense of anxiety, reminding him that whatever refuge he had discovered in being so far away would not last. It felt sometimes as though he were really living two half-lives, one present and the other just out of reach, each important in its own way but neither allowing him to be completely himself (120).

The significance of home is highlighted while in Germany. Kamal presents us with an ambivalent image of his identity. One side is somehow identifiable –it is the one that relates him to Beirut –and the other is not and it is the one that links him to Palestine, where he was not born. This ambivalent space of in-betweeness continues to define his

identity now that he is trapped in a country where he is denied citizenship. This interstitial perspective is not a matter of choice as it is the inevitable outcome of dislocation. Under the muzzle of a gun, Kamal's parents are forced into the world of exile where he grows fond of a space his father dares not call home. Being born in Lebanon, where he is identified as a Palestinian refugee makes his lot like that of his parents though he remains a good example of liminality[5]. Though he acknowledges his love for Beirut, he is defined as somebody whose identity is without anchorage. What imparts further instability to his identity is the experience of mobility. This nomadic mode of life - added to the dream of return to Palestine- leaves Kamal without a fixed position from which to identify his affiliations. His stay in Germany does not sever his kinship with the land that offers him shelter from the overall mayhem created by the Zionist extermination machine. When he is in Beirut, his love for the city does not undermine his invincible identification with the land of his parents and pedigree. The echoes of his father's conversation about the unconditional return survive the passage of time and betray Kmal's craving for a place he can call 'homeland.'

The modern claim that identity should not be defined in terms of a unique essence but as the embodiment of a new synthesis somehow applies to Kamal, who is denied a settled way of life. His mobility is spurred on not only by displacement but also by a search for intellectual empowerment. In fact, the Palestinian characters, especially the protagonists, in the corpus under study are active knowledge seekers. Hegemony will not possibly be addressed by armed forces alone, but also by the power of intellect. That's why Yousef in *On The Hills of God* places education at the core of any anti-colonial struggle. Once

[5] The transitional period or phase of a rite of passage, during which the participant lacks social status or rank, remains anonymous, shows obedience and humility, and follows prescribed forms of conduct, dress, etc.

Kamal has fulfilled the mission of education in Germany, he considers the idea of return to Beirut, which is still realistically regarded as Kamal's home. Once the fervor of youth expires, the call of home is stronger. However, the ambivalence inherent in this concept is justified by the difficulty Kamal encounters in obtaining a Lebanese citizenship.

## 6.5 Place as a repository of ontological signification

To slake his insatiable thirst for a place that must be called home, Kamal admits that his life in Germany now that he is officially middle-aged is made dull by everyday routines that make his stay there undesirable. Place attracts like a magnet according to Margo, whose conversation with Kamal places a premium on the ontological project of return: "'It is strange, isn't it, how important place can be at certain points in one's life? She asked. Just when you think you have overcome the idea of attachment to one place or another, you suddenly find yourself drawn to it again. And it should be more important than people at times"' (87). Though he is defined as an exile, Kamal avers that his affinity with Lebanon is such that his attachment to Palestine –unlike that of his parents who are no longer alive –is increasingly on the wane. This ambivalence of being attracted to a place where he is repelled as a refugee driven out from a location that is supposed to be his home continues to define Kamal throughout the rest of the narrative. In the case of Margo and Kamal place can be laden with ontological meaning even if it is devoid of family and relatives.

Margo, who has not undergone such a bitter experience of displacement as Kamal, underplays the ontological project of return to the origin. Her approach to belonging is mired in subtle philosophical considerations. She seems to adopt Benedict Anderson's

conceptualization of national[6] proclivities in terms of imagined communities. She holds the view that one can establish a home anywhere as long as the place is made familiar adding that a sense of belonging actually emanates “from somewhere within us” (139). When Kamal seals her claim by pointing to his heart, he probably begins to endorse her attitude toward pertaining to a place. For a Palestinian intellectual of his caliber, such a view is not in the interest of a cause that looks on return as an integral part in the continuous fight for emancipation. Given that she is a Jew, Margo, who seems to be a superficially open-minded and free spirited individual, wants to make nationalism such an etiolated philosophy in the eye of a dislocated Palestinian. She might concur that a nation is “an imagined political community-and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign” (Anderson 6). The way Anderson has defined this difficult term is similar to Margo’s conceptualization of home as something located within us; it is where we imagine it to be. Such a definition is fraught with ideology and is probably meant to undermine the anti-colonial struggle. Kamal starts to cling to a place where his parents used to feel alienated from their homeland identifying with Margo’s ideological assertion that familiarity is what makes a geographical background so close to a person’s heart. Excluding national ties that bind a person to his land, in the case of Israeli dominance of Palestine, weakens the counter-hegemonic tendencies.

Apparently, Margo’s connection to the native place is loosened by the plight she has lived through. The fact that her predicament is lumped with that of Kamal is intended to introduce both of them as forlorn exiles who are forced to break kinship with what is

[6] Benedict Anderson cogently points out that the concepts of nation, nationality and nationalism have been widely used with etiolated theoretical foundations. In a serious attempt to fill in this gap, he defines the term nation as “an imagined political community. . . It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them,or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion” (6).

supposed to be the homeland. In other words, at this point of the narrative two characters who might naturally be regarded as enemies are portrayed to be in the same boat. The Palestinian and the Jew have fallen victim to bigotry and consequently become wandering exiles. When they come to Beirut –Margo seems to suggest –the call of home ceases to reverberate in their ears now that they grow familiar with the city. In the interstices of the narrative –if we adopt a close reading technique –there is an ideological endeavor to make a Palestinian and Jewish connection to place and space such an intractable issue. This reading of the text against the grain brings to light the ideology underlying the Zionist discourse of a people without land (the Zionists). The attempt to reveal Margo in no better position than Kamal –as both of them are cut off from the roots – is aimed to rationalize the illegitimate existence of Zionists in Palestine. Margo's axiomatic conviction that it does not matter where one lives as long as the place is familiar serves to downplay not only her plight but also to sap the Palestinian existential project of return.

Through his intimate encounter with Margo, Kamal is exposed to prescriptive lessons –no matter how meaningful they might sound for the Jewish exile –about the insignificance and absurdity of relating to the past. For her, the past is simply replete with downright tragedy and it would be better to dispense with its corollary altogether. Indeed, her confirmed break with bygone times is justified inasmuch as Prague, where she was born and therefore supposed to be her homeland, is reminiscent of atrocious confrontations culminating in the loss of her parents. It is not easy for a child who has gone through this ordeal to remain faithful to a place where her parents are deported. Be that as it might, her essentialist rendering of the inutility of the past fails to account for Kamal's situation as he represents the epitome of thousands of Palestinians expelled from their land. As a member of the intelligentsia it is incumbent on him to stay connected to the

past or Palestine. His stay in Beirut should be regarded as transitory –albeit this might fall short of any realistic consideration –in order to breathe life in the spirit of anti-colonialism. Rather than passively endorsing Margo's politics, he is expected to contest the discursive formations that tend to drain the past from its meaning. As a Palestinian, he should make his voice about the collective punishment of his compatriots heard. He had rather pay tribute –as a Palestinian intellectual –to his parents who are destined to die in exile without achieving the prospect of return. Unfortunately, Margo –with whom we also commiserate –has died receiving little information about the Palestinian history of dispossession and displacement.

It is somehow tempting to concur with Jacque Derrida in his stipulation that there is "always a logic of the supplement" inscribed in any pretense toward any clear conceptual identity at least in the case of Margo. Her death reveals unexpected facts of her identity, which remains shrouded in indeterminacy. The conversation that has hitherto taken place between her and Kamal fails to provide a lucid conception of who she is. It is subsequently proven –through personal papers –that her name is not Margo, which has been taken for granted. Also, her identity is not anchored in place and space as she is believed to trace her origins to Czechoslovakia, but ends up in Beirut, where she conceals a great deal of information about herself in order not to arouse her Arab neighbours' suspicions. The encounter that originates between the so called Margo and Kamal leaves many questions about her unanswered and it is only through the posthumous particulars obtained from personal documents that other facets of her identity –as they are pitted against the politics of location –are uncovered. Being a Jewish who lost most of her family in Czechoslovakia turns her into a mobile exile showing little affinity with the homeland and dramatizes any attachment to place in terms of familiarity that stems from the heart or even imagination.

Meanwhile the intricacies of place-cum-identity transport the reader far beyond politics and plunge him into the realm of human amiability. In the wake of the Jewish exile's death, Layla, her Arab friend, embarks upon a journey intent on removing the veil that has disguised a good part of her identity in her lifetime. Drawing upon the few clues at her disposal –a photograph included –she makes her way to Prague to discover the hidden side of her subjectivity if ever possible. The double-voicedness of the text gives rise to other interpretations and readings of the relationship between this Jewish outcast and her Arab friends. In her conversation with Kamal, she is chastised for indifference to the primordial ties to place because it enfeebles the existential project of return for the Palestinian exile. But her death is conducive to the depth of the humanist bond that could inform the relationship between humans across religious and political affiliations.

The fact that Margo has been to different places makes it quite difficult to capture the essence of her identity. Whenever she craves to allay the strain and stress of who she is, she makes recourse to travelling to identify with friends who are based far away:

> When she had felt the urge to travel again, she went to visit friends in America and the West Indies, to the Far East, then to Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Finally making the unexpected decision to remain in Beirut because it seemed the one place in which she could forget who she had once been and remain anonymous enough to ensure a future of sorts for herself. (166)

Before she brings mobility to a close and relishes a sort of sedentary life reflecting upon the future as she severs all ties with the past, she feels the need to identify with a people she considers friends. They are what impart meaning to the places she has journeyed to. At this phase of her tours, she has a desire to have an idea who she is through encounters engendered with those she feels related to. Tormented by the cumbersome load of painful experiences, she seeks solace in identifying with friends living in disparate geographical

backgrounds. Reaching Lebanon is concomitant with sheer reticence as regards particulars about her identity. This being the case, she is determined to stand up against the encroachment of the past allowing little access to how life used to be like in days of yore not only so as to focus on the future, but also to remain anonymous in a place filled with Palestinian exiles. As a Jewish figure, she is likely to be the object of suspicion if her identity is revealed. When she exhorts Kamal to break kinship with the past, we understand –in addition to the ideology that might be involved in such exhortation –that she wants to defer any meaning attached to her person and remain much of an enigma (without the notice of those around her) until her demise.

Place is accorded primacy again when a memorial ceremony occurs at Margo's abode. The human warmth and emotions surrounding such a celebration supersedes or rather occludes any ideology that might be involved in the encounter that has taken place between Kamal and Margo in her life. The reservation with which she has treated her Arab friends is not probably construed against any ideological or political background and her refusal to dwell on the past at the cost of the present and future can be interpreted as the outcome of dislocation. This multiplicity of interpretations is tangible proof that the text does not lend itself to one unique reading. Margo's flat is set ablaze with life in order to allow the visitors –most of them friends and neighbours –access to the enigmatic character of this deracinated Jew, whose secrets are contained in the papers hidden inside the apartment. The significance of holding this posthumous meeting in her intimate and familiar space must be underscored as it is a repository of interesting facts about her identity. Rummaging through a bundle of papers safely lurked in the flat, Layla finds valuable information about Margo. There seems to be an implied message in this intimate social gathering; those who know Margo from afar are now invited not only to commemo-

rate her death but also to get familiar with part of the history inscribed in the personal documents.

Layla undertakes to disclose more historical particulars about Margo's peripatetic movements. The facts contained in the documents provide literal marks that serve to reduce the arcane nature of her identity. Not only does she have another name, but she exists in Lebanon as a wretched displaced Jewish exile. Tracing the trajectory of her life experiences, Layla attempts to supply us with traces that offer insight into the meaning of her being that is nevertheless constantly deferred. The past that she has always disregarded proves to be crucial in her identity formation. It becomes somehow clear why she has a propensity to take refuge from a past heavily freighted with agony. Layla's encounter with Anna is of remarkable significance as it allows access to a facet of Margo's history. Czechoslovakia, which is supposed to be a homeland laden with ontological signification, is where a life of compulsory mobility begins.

Tracing the genealogy of Margo, Anna takes us back in time to the outset of her nomadic life. In the process of her mobility, we realize –at different stages of her journeys – that she grows up amidst the trepidations of armed conflicts targeting her family members. Czechoslovakia for her is synonymous with bloodshed and political instability. This being the case, she is thrust into forced exilic wanderings desperately looking for a safe haven that materializes physically but not psychologically and emotionally. As she sees it, place is devoid of national sentiments and affiliations and loaded with idiosyncratic appreciations of familiarity. Though, we have previously berated her for losing fellowship with the past interpreting her claim against ideological convictions, the intricacies that mark her subjectivity make us reconsider such a verdict. As part of the past, Czechoslovakia provides limited information about her identity formation. The reason is that her identification

with this country –which is supposed to be a natal geographical location –is a passing fad because it reminds her only of the calamity that has befallen her and her family. It is this dark face of bygone times that Margo seeks to escape when she declares her enigmatic familiarity with a land that is supposed to be foreign. It seems that the text lends itself to a dialogic reading as the plot moves towards the end. Rather than preserving our skeptical attitudes to her conceptualization of the past, we begin to look at it from a different angle.

The multiplicity of construal that mark our understanding of the text calls into question the orthodox view of identity as a monolithic entity and supports the claim that pits it against the backdrop of contingency. Our initial excoriation of Margo's attempt to manipulate Kamal as she insists that he should extricate himself from the meshes of the past is interrogated in a posthumous encounter with her personal documents and distant relations. Though her break with the past can possibly be read against some ideological considerations, it can also be understood within the context of a forced exile and dislocation foisted upon a wretched human being confronted with the excruciating pain of being parted from her family at an early age. This appalling incident and its ramifications make a univocal approach to the text less of a reliable and pertinent practice. While we have previously foregrounded Kamal's plight placing Margo's at the background, we now begin to look at the Jewish woman as an equally alienated exile.

The past as an embodiment of personal despair and frustration should not interfere with the bogus equanimity experienced in the foreign landscape of Lebanon. Her intimate kinship with the Lebanese soil is probably meant to alleviate the anxiety she dares not disclose in front of her Arab neighbours. It is also a kind of preoccupation to distract her attention from times of yore and focus on the present: "She bent down next to the tree and dug into the dirt with her trowel, breathing in the smell of damp earth and savouring

it. There were the moments when she felt most at ease with herself, when she could lose herself in the immediacy of her surroundings and find a temporary peace" (163). The fact that digging the earth is instrumental in bestowing peace on Margo betokens sheer psychological unrest of a woman who used to strive hard to feel at home where she is compelled to sever ties with some actual home located elsewhere.

It seems that home devoid of family loses its essence and import, or thus believes Margo once on a visit to her sister, Emily. Speaking to Layla about her, Anna notes that: "my mother told me Margo had hoped to live with Emily for a while after her return, but her sister was adamant she wouldn't. She was furious with Margo for leaving the country just before disaster struck and their parents were deported" (174). When she first makes her way to England, it is for the purpose of studying English, but what makes her unwilling to return is somehow convincing as the family that imparts ontological meaning to a place is deported. Less wonder then that her identification with the past is on the wane as she finds in Lebanese friends surrogate family members. Through Anna's story after the death of Margo, we come to grips with significant facts about her history.

Margo can be articulate about anything that does not reveal her Jewish provenance as this might stand out as a sensitive issue likely to raise Arab friends' suspicion. The Arab-Israeli conflict has the potential to debilitate their faculty of judgment as they might associate anything Jewish with Zionism. Being aware of the vulnerability surrounding any act of showing her identity, she decides to remain reticent about it. In retrospect, Anna unveils illuminating facts about Margo's life story noting: "when we saw her that last time a few years ago, she told us she had fallen seriously ill at one point when she was living in London and her Lebanese friends took her back with them to Beirut. She told my mother later that she was very happy there" (174). For an exile like Margo falling back on Arab

friends in times of adversity indicates the difficulty involved in reaching out to a family –an aloof sister and helpless deported parents –who is located in a far off place. Once in Lebanon, she engulfs the self in full secrecy treating her neighbors and friends outside the boundaries of defining aspects of identity. She seems to build up her relationship with the other on the grounds of pure humanistic ideals celebrating impartiality and shunning political partisanship. At this posthumous juncture of the narrative, it becomes clear how recalcitrant and unruly the character of Margo is. The ideological affiliations ascribed to her are subsequently put to the test as she elevates herself to a position where she is fully engaged in her surroundings as a humanist figure that is reluctant to be entangled in the bigotry nurtured by parochial colonial discourse.

Under the guidance and assistance of Anna hidden parts of Margo's subjectivity come to the fore. Layla incarnates human tendency to know and define the other; the arcane personality of Margo should be made known to those she takes for friends or what else should explain Layla's journey to Prague keeping track of the main vestiges of her identity? This persistent search for personal information is not only meant to slake her curiosity, but also to fathom the intricate depth of Margo's identity. Layla manages to establish several encounters with people who might be able to help her further narrate Margo so that she can be able to immortalize her history. To fill in some information gap, Layla interacts with Patricia thus:

> "Margo felt the need to compartmentalize different aspects of her life, I think. Besides, she didn't think she was special just because of what she has gone through during the war. Millions of people suffered as a result of it and she knew she wasn't alone in losing people she loved."
>
> " So why did she feel the need to keep it all secret?'
>
> " She just didn't want the past to continue to dominate her life and chose not to dwell on it by talking about it constantly. Surely that wasn't wrong."(184)

Those aspects related to the roots are accorded limited importance as Margo develops new bonds with Lebanon, where she feels ensconced regarding the place as a bulwark against the demons of the past. The atrocious cost of the war –as far as she can judge –makes the past unworthy of being deemed a safe destination. Her concentration on the present is suggestive of a craving to keep at bay the nightmarish specters of the Nazi bloody atrocities and to look forward to the future fully aware that there is nowhere to go back. However, Margo's stand on the past can be rightly considered as individual convictions that cannot be lumped with Kamal's because his fellowship with the past is shaken but not lost. While interacting with Margo, he is revealed to be at a loss for words as he is spellbound by the rhetoric she uses to back up her claim that familiarity is not solely associated with one's homeland. While avowing that this claim is not devoid of ideology –given that Margo represents a particular individual case whereas Kamal is the epitome of a community of Palestinian refugees who cannot exist outside their past –her death discloses parts of a personal history that makes us reinterpret her break with the past and therefore commiserate with her sense of loss.

This chapter is an attempt to address the issue of return, its ramifications and how hegemony is contested in a colonized Lebanon. Layla, who is seized by the urge of leaving Adelaide in order to reunite with Beirut, problematizes the notion of home as it is thrust into the realm of indeterminacy. The question that remains unanswered is: where is her home located? Is it in Australia, to which she owes her education in a peaceful context or in Beirut, which she is compelled to leave as a child when it smolders in a war? Her return when her parents stay behind can be construed as a desire to be reconciled with the native land. Becoming an intellectual entails that she has something to offer to make the country a better place. Her encounter with Margo testifies to the ambivalent nature of space and

identity. The fact that Layla finds it difficult to define a place as home introduces her as a character on the cusp of an in-between reality. Similarly, Margo, whose identity remains much of a mystery until her death, queries belonging to a particular well-defined area as fundamental to identity construction. This firmly held conviction is what partly accounts for her breach with the past. For her, it does not matter where one lives as long as s/he is familiar with the place. Kamal, who was born in exile probably fails to detect the ideological overtones that may be contained in this Jewish woman's discourse. However, endorsing the idea that the text is intertextual through and through, we subsequently attribute her break with the past to the tragic incidents her family underwent under the Nazi regime. This deferral or semantic slipperiness is also applied to Fouad's affinity with the domestic space. His obliviousness to the colonial apparatus is explained through his ability to derive sheer profit and pleasure from the local garden he tends together with Jiddo. However, as he grows up his identity alters, especially when he becomes aware of the power wielded by the French colonialism. His early participation in a students' revolt against the French turns out to be an important rite of passage that heralds a move beyond the contours of the domestic space to the university that will give impetus to his anti-colonial sentiments.

# Conclusion

Though the corpus is apparently heterogeneous and variegated, it is unified by the plight and poignancy of displacement that engenders a coercive break with the *terre natale*. The Palestinian authors Ibrahim Fawal, Shaw Dallal and Yasmine Zahrane share their main concerns with their Lebanese counterpart, Nada Awar Jarrar. Obliquely or directly, there is an aura of exilic life resonating in the five novels and the characters' tendency to write themselves as they attempt to vitiate the traumatizing effect of this coercive parting with what can be tendentiously dubbed "the homeland." The dearth of research tackling this subject in Arabic literature in English, especially in Anglophone Palestinian and Lebanese fiction is the main incentive behind carrying out this study. However, given that Arab diaspora literature is undertheorized, the task of conducting a research in this sphere is challenging if not laborious.

In all the five novels – to varying degrees of intensity – the characters are fettered by forces larger than themselves. Their lives gravitate towards acts of mobility in quest of a far off safe haven. This flight, which usually occurs against the will of the individual, is debatable from the vantage point of the narrator. In Ibrahim Fawal's novels the escape is not a matter of choice for the Palestinians who are subjected to all means of violence in order to empty the land they have inherited from their progenitors. The unspeakable rites of hostility they undergo at the hands of the Zionist repressive apparatus leave

them little chance of sticking to their homes. The rationale behind granting them voice is to let them relate the somber and macabre side of their existence. Staying behind in their land is tantamount to death; that's why life should be held in esteem by means of escape. This forced migration is not therefore an act of cowardice or a supine attitude towards hegemony. These figures, who bear the seal of human helplessness, bravely narrate themselves and celebrate existence subverting Robert Young's claim that they do not exist[7]

It seems that the characters of Fawal and the Palestinian protagonist of Zahran are exposed to a sort of mutability, which does little to shake the adequate grounds on which the ontological and epistemological aspects of their existence are established. The change that has befallen their identity is concomitant with their flight into exile (they alter from indigenous citizens to exiles with less or no visibility). However, as refugees they tend to write themselves with stoicism against all odds. Though the Palestinian state is relegated to mere discourse, Ibrahim Fawal and Yasmin Zahran respectively in On the Hills of God and A Beggar at Damascus Gate are determined to narrate Palestine, to give it presence within the confines of fiction that can be deemed a mirror held up to what goes on in the historical, political and cultural arena.

The meaning of exile and its implications are not however static and perennial as it is introduced by Nada Awar Jarrar. In her narratives, there is a recrudescent tendency

[7]In his attempt to conceptualize identity as a process of interrogation underlining its perennial fluidity and loose nature, Young, consciously or not, does not conceive of the Palestinian identity beyond the confines of a discursive space. Apparently Fawal, Dallal and Zahran, each in his own way, respond to Young's query: "Who are The Palestinians?... Praised in speeches-el Pueblo palestino, il popolo palestino, le peuple palestin but treated as interruptions, intermittent presences" (11). The Anglophone Palestinian narratives under scrutiny unanimously celebrate the presence and existence of the Palestinians whose voices trace their echoes beyond the diasporic spaces wherein they are reluctant to be incarcerated. It is true that the characters are denied return to their land, but they constantly pit their identity against the backdrop of the occupied territories. That's why the protagonists in all the novels obsess about establishing communion with their home and some transgress the barriers of power to set foot in it.

to associate flight away from home with frailty and lack of patriotic affiliation with the origin. While hailing one group of escapees as heroes looking for a space from which to carry out their anti-colonial resistance and describing others in ambivalent terms occasionally underlining their inability to face up to the reality of warfare in Lebanon, it becomes evident that our ideations can be seen from disparate perspectives. This evokes the Nietzschean concept of perspectivism, or theory of knowledge, which claims that there is no accurate representation of the world as it is in itself (M.Higgins 4). The writer's evaluation of truth cannot transcend cultural formations and subjective designations. The culture of the civil war in Lebanon cannot be compared with the overall atrocities of the Zionist extermination machine. Less wonder then that the meaning ascribed to the term "exile" is different in the Anglophone Lebanese and Palestinian novels. It is this dearth of fixity and stability that defines refugees and exiles in two disparate contexts.

In the Palestinian context, the characters have no other option than embarking on the infamous exodus, whereas in Lebanon the escape from the vortex of civil strife remains an individual, though mostly ineluctable, choice. The collective punishment exacted on individual Palestinians cannot be compared to sporadic cases of border crossing represented by Jarrar. In *Somewhere Home*, for instance, the protagonist's move to the countryside is intended to enjoy the quietude bequeathed by the mountainous life. Her husband, on the other hand, has to put up with the unstable conditions in Beirut expecting the situation to get back on track. The prospect of return is not a farfetched dream as it is dramatized by Fawal. Though reunion with the homeland is what imparts ontological meaning to Palestinian refugees, who are dispossessed and made landless [8], their alienation is such

[8]"In many colonized countries, settlers created vast farms and estates by driving off those who had traditionally lived on that land, some of whose descendants continue to this day to live in an impoverished landless limbo. Without land to cultivate, the only alternative is to drift to the slums of the big cities... Dispossession from family land and the claim for the right of return represents the central issue in

that the ideal of return is enmeshed in the discursive space and the inner recesses of their minds. The exception occurs when this craving for migrating back is not collective but individual. This case is well documented in Shaw Dallal's *Scattered like Seeds*, in which the main character works his way to Kuwait, which once stood out as his point of departure for America. His immigration back from his host country awakens pent-up feelings and sensations of the childhood in his mother's company in Jaffa. However, he finds himself stymied access to the land where his mother is still incarcerated. This being the case, his resolve to stay in closest proximity to the occupied territories is entrenched when he ambivalently ponders the idea of not going back to the States.

Given the enormity of suffering undergone by the Palestinians as a result of colonialism, the first chapter is devoted to space prior to the exodus. In this pre-Zionist stage the connection of indigenous inhabitants with their home is still intact as no brutal power (though they are under the yoke of the British colonization) is unequal to the enterprise of disrupting the symbiosis that defines their affinity with the native land. Moreover, before the catastrophic displacement of the characters, space is accounted for within the framework of intersubjectivity. The aesthetics of the narrative disclose an ethics of discourse among different cultural groups in Ardallah wherein a Muslim, a Christian and a Jew strive for an ideal speech situation outside the parochial restraints of religion and politics. However, the machine of Zionist brutality undermines the overall equanimity and human bonds that define cultural encounters in the space of Ardallah. A kind of comparison has therefore to be drawn between space (including the characters' home and homeland or heim and heimat ) before, during and after the poignant experience of dislocation and the corollary loss of symbiosis that has once underlined the characters'

Palestine" (Young,45-49 ).

relationship with the *terre natale*. The escape that occurs under duress is not construed as an act of cowardice but rather as a spectacular sign of intrepidity, as a desire to remain alive in order to negotiate the project of counter-hegemony and its symbolic and ontological implications.

The celebration of difference that takes place in space prior to the Zionist invasion is highlighted by the trope of the house, or the Safi Jamils' villa, which is exalted to a site wherein disparate cultural and religious meetings are convened outside the confines of epistemic divisions and dualities. Though the characters do not epitomize a monolithic social entity (i.e. the position of the doctor cannot be put on a par with that of the stonecutter), a spirit of co-existence and common sentiments and attitudes towards the land unite them across class distinctions. This unity is heinously destabilized by the colonial indiscriminate attacks targeting defenseless civilian populations. The nightmarish atrocities perpetrated against the colonized subjects make the Zionist invasion a typically unique colonial experience. This is the main reason why primacy is placed upon the corpus dealing with the issues of exile and home from the perspective of Palestinian authorship.

The catastrophe underway, as a subtitle to the first chapter, places a premium on the outcome of the coercive break with the motherland and the repercussions of dispossession and displacement. The portrayal of Zionism as a typically wicked colonial power finds support in its ability to inflict excruciating psychological pain on the victims of the exodus. Bearing the scars of breaking kinship with the home and the homeland, thousands of potential exiles are compelled to grapple with the agony of further ordeal leaving behind halcyon periods when an ineffable affinity with their land is well-established. It is at this and other stages that the history encroaches upon the story to make it a source of well-documented facts beyond the ambit of mere creative writing. The text is neither autotelic,

nor self-sufficient as it is not independent of the external realities that make it an adequate site of historical and political 'truth'.

The al-Nakba, whose echoes resonate in books of history and the archive of written documents, finds its way into the world of fiction when Ibrahim Fawal dramatizes the human tragedy that marks the route to exile. This forced migration is foisted upon a helpless population who are coerced into breaking ties with the roots, but who turn out to be stoic fighters for survival. Be that as it might, the scars of dehumanization, dispossession and displacement will take a long time to heal.

This being the case, a whole chapter is devoted to the psychological dimension of exile. Inspired by some literature on trauma and post-traumatic stress disorder, the analysis focuses on the inner recesses of the characters who are forced to carry the dehumanizing scars (i.e. rape) of colonial aggression to the world of exile. Their quest for selfhood is therefore undertaken concomitantly with the perennial interference of generalized anxiety disorder. The journey that goes on ad infinitum (i.e. physical and/or psychological) sometimes takes on the form of the exile's response to trauma as when Fawal's protagonist and his companion contrive to make a short-lived journey back home and retrieve some objects that will always serve to link them to their land. Another reaction consists in breaking the silence (i.e. the opening of a school and the establishment of an association) and moving forward (the journey should not always be anchored in the past) in order to pave the way for a politics of resistance. Petty as this project might seem, it has the potential to confer political activism on the narrative.

Though the colonial power manages to eject a whole people from their land, they are unequal to the task of interfering with their memories and ruminations that keep them in close proximity with the homeland. The third chapter addresses the workings of memory

and the pivotal role they play in linking the characters to Palestine and fortifying their sense of belonging. It is within the confines of his point of departure to USA that Dallal celebrates return from exile and takes the reader on a retrospective intrinsic voyage to Palestine before, during and after the Catastrophe.

In Yasmin Zahran's *A Beggar at Damascus Gate* cultural encounters are an important telos of defending the Palestinian cause, or more accurately, reaching the homeland. The author characterizes identity against the backdrop of contingency and instability stressing the fictional nature of everything with the exception of Palestine, which is "real." The journey along the narrative is sometimes featured to be a nebulous set of interactions with the ambivalent other since every statement and discursive event is clamped tight in the grip of transience and indeterminacy except Palestine.

The story opens with ambiguous bonds between the characters. The vocabulary they fall back on to label one another is initially construed against the backdrop of colonial discourse. However, the binary logic is soon transgressed when the self is seriously interrogated and occasionally castigated as the challenges and considerations of defending a cause loom on the horizon. As it is palpable in the other stories that try to link the Palestinian individual to his real land outside the confines of discourse, Zahran's narrative likewise celebrates a reunion –which is likely to be fleeting as it takes place in a space where security is a scarcity –with the homeland.

While the concept of exile presupposes the absence of stability and a yearning for reunion with the homeland in the Palestinian novels, it is somehow couched in indeterminacy and contingency in Nadda Awar Jarrar's narratives. Though mobility informs the characters' stories and experiences, it is not always pitted against the notion of exile. In her trilogy, Jarrar does not look at mobility from a univocal perspective. In some cases, it

is seen as an experience which translates a wish to relocate to the ancestral home not only in order to escape the havoc of the civil war, but also so as to conjure up the past and all its ontological implications. In other cases, the exile/home dyad occupies the epicenter of the plot even if it is understood along intricate lines. In other words, it is an individual or family experience that cannot be lumped with the ordeal of the exodus. Still, the exile, in all cases, is compelled to leave the home or homeland. The difference, however, is that the Palestinian exiles find it difficult to establish a new home elsewhere, unlike some of their Lebanese counterparts.

Whereas the meaning of home for the Palestinian characters is, in the long run, lucid and determinate –it is the one they have been expelled from under the muzzle of a gun – its signification is somehow unsettled for the characters of Jarrar. This being the case, the fourth chapter addresses the meaning of home. In the first narrative of the trilogy, home is located where the progenitors used to live, but this does not imply breaking ties with the other home which is located in the city and which bears the marks and imprints of the present life. In the other narratives exile can be empowering. Nostalgia for home is expressed in ambivalent terms as a given character may be confused where it is exactly located: Is it the one left behind due to the civil war or the one where she enjoys copious peace and stability in exile? What is more, the notion of 'home' may occupy a special place in the character's mind when both health and children are gone. Identification with Beirut suddenly crops up in this and similar circumstances and situations. When the character is back in Lebanon, the thread that links her to Australia becomes stronger again only to problematize the exile/home polarity and obliterate the distinctive boundaries between the two.

The last chapter sheds further light on the home/exile dichotomy, but in a way different

from its conceptualization in the Palestinian novels. In Jarrar's A *Good Land*, the author celebrates reunion with the *terre natale* wherein concerted efforts are made to serve the injured country by creating civil organizations in which voluntary workers help children in difficult circumstances. The fleeting stability is ironically subverted by the shooting of Hariri, which once more disrupts the dividing lines between home and exile as the latter offers everything that the former cannot. At this juncture, the conceptual clarity of home once again retreats into further ambivalence. The location of home is difficult to determine in the post-civil war Beirut, where violence and hegemony further destabilize the affinity with the native background. Be that as it might, Jarrar is seemingly critical of those who see fit to escape the chaos and mayhem generated by absence of political stability. This perpetual movement, be it physical or psychological, between the 'homeland' and the 'hostland' introduces the characters to inhabit the rim of an in-between space. Even those whose allegiance to Beirut is unflinching fail to account for their birthplace outside the framework of ambivalence.

The new encounter with Beirut betrays the characters' undecided stand on the *terre natale*. The absence of political stability leads some characters to cling to their tiny locations indulging the mundane and hoping for the situation to get back on track. However, tertiary education in Beirut is presented as an eye-opener that catapults them to a broader space where home issues are tackled in light of interrogating hegemony. For other characters home acquires significance in its ambivalence and semantic undecidability.

The shifting meaning of home and exile, particularly in Jarrar's narratives, reflects the changing identity of certain characters. That's why the last point of this paper raises the issue of identity in a state of flux and turbulence. The fact that the exile is torn apart between different spatial affiliations indicates lack of stability and fixity as far as

belonging is concerned. The abode established abroad is transient for some, but permanent for others whose return to the homeland remains gripped by mythical considerations. However, those who insist on migrating back home after spending a considerable period of time in Australia fail to break every single tie with their adopted country of residence.

This is not the case for the characters of Fawal, Dallal, and Zahran, whose life abroad does not preclude them from establishing kinship with Palestine, the home country that metamorphoses into an obsessive idea, feeling, and a life-long haunting dream. If most characters of Jarrar can be identified against the backdrop of deterritorialization, those of the above authors –though they are physically deterritorialized –are engaged in a constant intrinsic rapport with their violated land. Spurred on by this obsessive inner urge, the protagonists of Fawal and Zahran, who experience a sort of reterritorialization or deterritorialization because they are compelled to lead a nomadic life in exile, visualize a point of arrival or return in the occupied territories. That's why their spuriously stable life in exile is never regarded as an end in itself as they wait for opportune moments to take route to the homeland where the roots of their forebears go down in the native soil. They are fully aware that their real home –though this aspiration may be interpreted to be inherent in the prisonhouse of myth and discourse - exists in Palestine and that their status as refugees will not be permanent. Though one may question the feasibility of allegiance to a land where one was not born as s/he veers towards nomadic subjectivity, the echoes of the homeland reverberate in his/her eardrums.

One of the main difficulties and obstacles encountered while conducting this research is the fact that diaspora literature is not fully explored as it is still a nascent field of research. While a surfeit of research has been done on African, Caribbean and Indian diaspora, less has been written about Arab diaspora, especially the Lebanese and Plestinian experiences

in exile. Rather than being a stumbling block, this difficulty ensures originality as it provides no incentive to rehearse and process ideas and thoughts already consumed by researchers.

While originality is a redeeming feature of this academic endeavor, its theorization is a real hurdle that is difficult to surmount. How to theorize the dialectics of home and exile using a Western theoretical paradigm that might not necessarily chime in with the experiences of the Palestinian and Lebanese exile is a difficult-to-sort conundrum. Nonetheless, this does not interfere with adopting a multidisciplinary approach that might hopefully serve to set the thesis in a well-demarcated theoretical framework.

To Edward W. Said, we owe the worldliness of the text. That is the text maintains a vast web of affiliations to the external realities that go into its fashioning. The text is not about itself as it is about the lived experiences of the Palestinian and Lebanese characters who bear the brunt of intricate colonial and political circumstances. This materiality also finds its way in New Historicism as a critique of literary formalism (or the New Criticism) that regards literary objects as 'ahistorical icons' overlooking the reexamination of the inextricable relationship between literature and history. The fictional portrayal of the Al-Nakba and its aftermath are commensurate with the way they are dramatized in historical records. Likewise, Jarrar's narratives make allusion to such historical facts as the Civil War of 1975 and the Israeli raids on Beirut in 1982. The undecidability of meaning and ambivalence are also used as a backdrop against which parts of the analysis are carried out and they are attributed respectively to Jacques Derrida and Homi. K. Bhabaha. Accordingly, the methodological approach adopted is interdisciplinary and somehow eclectic.

In spite of all these theoretical framings, it remains as yet debatable whether they can

pertinently contain and capture the trepidations of those driven out of their country of origin under duress. This is probably one of the lacunae of a research that inscribes the experiences of Arab exiles in theoretical frameworks that originate in the West and that are the product of different historico-political circumstances. To atone for this shortcoming, we relatively draw on some historical facts that particularly inform the Palestinian narratives in order to relate fiction to non-fiction, and how they complement each other in producing new knowledge that is neither pure fiction nor history proper. Even if there is something of New Historicism in this approach, any future research on Arabic Literature in English should consider solid background knowledge of history and politics as a point of departure. Arab voices in diaspora will remain muffled unless they are set against the backdrop of history, politics and culture. Only people who are unperturbed by the upheaval of war, the poignancy of dislocation, genocide, and forced migration can write a self-sufficient autotelic text solely enjoyed for its artistic merits. Anglophone Arab literature contains the historical, the political and the cultural in the interstices of the literary. In other words, the text is not quarantined from worldly affiliations and language is a synthesis of perpetually experienced moments.

In addition to the necessity of inscribing the experiences of Arabs, especially Palestinian exiles, in their historico-political contexts, the issues of home and exile are not treated in the same way in contemporary Anglophone Palestinian and Lebanese novels. Hence, any future study of home and/or exile had rather take into consideration this difference in the external circumstances –be they historically or politically oriented – that produce these texts. That's why it would be more appropriate to select the corpus on the basis of these differences.

Also, one might extend the scope of this research and open up its horizons to conduct

a comparative study among different Arab voices in diaspora (i.e. in addition to the Palestinian and Lebanese one may include Anglophone Syrian, Iraqi, Egyptian, etc. novelists) and how they react to the exile/home dyad. No doubt, this study would culminate in different research outcomes as the experiences rendered through the mouths of characters would be extraordinarily heterogeneous and umonolithic. Furthermore, there might be a close link between the transnational connections between home and exile and diasporic identities that are in a state of flux without losing some primordial or mythical essence which relates them to the 'homeland.' Moreover, the political instability generated by the ramifications of the recent Arab Spring, the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the image of Muslims and its corollary Islamophobia following the bombardment of the Twin Towers of the World Trade Center will always make the home/exile or diaspora dichotomy a nascent and problematic topic of research.

# Bibliography

Abdelhady, Dalia. *The Lebanese Diaspora: The Arab Immigrant Experience in Montreal, New York and Paris*. New York and London: New York University Press, 2011.

Adnane, Etel. *In the Heart of the Heart of Another Country*. San Francisco: City Lights Bookstore, 2005.

Anatol, Gizelle Liza. *Things that Fly in the Night: Female Vampires in Literature of the Circum-Caribbean and African Diaspora*. New Jersey and London: Rutgers University Press, 2015.

Abrams, M. H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7th edition. Massachusettes: Heinle and Heinle, 1999.

Ashcroft Bill and Pal Ahluwalia. *Edward Said*. New York: Routledge, 1999.

Althusser, Louis. *Essays On Ideology*. London: Verso, 1984.

American Psychiatric Association. *Diagnostic and statistical manual of mental disorders*. Washington: Author, 1980.

Baehr, Peter, ed. *The Portable Hannah Arendt*. London: Penguin Books, 2000.

Barbera Rae and Michael Payne, ed. *A Dictionary of Critical and Cultural Theory*. 2nd edition. West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010.

Bayeh, Jumana. *The Literature of the Lebanese Diaspora: The representation of Place and Transnational Identity*. London: I.B.Tauris and Co.Ltd, 2015.

Bhabha, Homi K. *Nation and Narration*. New York and London: Routledge, 1990.

−−−−−. *The Location of Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1994.

Bois, W.E.B Du. "To The Nations of the World". *W.E.B Du Bois: A Reader*. Ed. David Levering Lewis. New YORK: Henry Holt, 1995.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia*. New York: Basic Books, 2001.

Brannigan, John. *New Historicism and Cultural Materialism*. London: Macmillan Press,1998.

Brooks, Peter. *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative*. London: Harvard University Press, 1992.

Chomsky, Noam. "Foreword." Sayigh, Rosemary. *The Palestinians from Peasants to Revolutionaries*. 2nd edition. London and New York: Zed Books, 1979.

Cohen, Robin. *Global Diasporas: An Introduction*. London: University College London Press, 1997.

Cook, Miriam. *War's Other Voices: Women's Writers on the Lebanese Civil War*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1996.

Cutrofello, Andrew. *Continental Philosophy*. New York: Routledge, 2005.

Dallal, Shaw J. *Scattered Like Seeds*. New York: Syracuse University Press, 1998.

Danieli, Yael. "Foreword." *Beyond Trauma: Societal and Cultural Dynamics*. Ed. Charles R. Figley and Berthold P. R. Gersons RolfJ. Kleber. New York: Springer Science and Business Media,1995.

Darwish, Mahmoud. "Memory for Forgetfulness." Beirut, 1982.

Deer, Patrick. "Edward Said: A Memorial Issue." *Social Text* (2011): 1-9.

−−−−−. "Introduction: Edward Said: A Memorial Issue." *Edward Said: A Memorial Issue* (2011):1.

Derrida, Jacques. *Dissemination*. Trans. Barbara Johnson. London: The Athlone Press, 1981.

Due, Reidar. *Deleuze*. Cambridge: Polity Press, 2007.

During, Simong. *Foucault and Literature*. London: Routledge, 1992.

Edwards, Brent Hayes. *The Practice of Diaspora: Literature, Translation, and the Rise of Black Internationalism*. Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Eisenbruch Maurice and Willem A. C. M. Van de Put. "The Cambodian Experience." *Trauma, War and Violence*. Ed. Joop De Jong. New York and London: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 2002.

Eliade, Mircea. *The Myth of the Eternal Return, or Cosmos and History*. Ed. Priceton University Press. Trans. Willard R. Trask. New York, 1954.

Farah, May. "Lebanese Writer Returns to her Somwhere, Home". *The Daily Star* (2003): 6.

Fawal, Ibrahim. *On the Hills of God*. Montgomery: Black Belt Press, 1998.

−−−−− *The Disinherited*. Montgomery: New South Books,2013.

Foucault, Michel. *The Archeology of Knowledge*. Trans. A.M. Sheridan. London: Tavistock, 1972.

Frank David A and Robert C.Rowlan. *Shared Land/ Conflicting Identity: Trajectories of Israeli and Palestinian Symbol Use*. Michigan: Michigan State University Press, 2002.

Gallagher, Catherine. *Practicing New Historicism*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 2000.

Gilman, Sander L. *Conversations with Nietzsche: A Life in the Words of His Contemporaries.* Ed. Sander L. Gilman. Trans. David J. Parent. New York: Oxford University Press, 1987.

Goya, Yogita. *Romance, Diaspora, and Black Atlantic Literature.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Gramsci, Antonio. *The Prison Notebooks: Selections.* Trans. Quintin Hoare and Geoffrey Nowell-Smith. New York: International Publishers, 1971.

Greenblatt, Stephen. *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

−−−−−. *Renaissance Self-fashoning: From More to Shakespeare.* Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1980.

Haugbolle, Sune. *War and Memory in Lebanon.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Hochberg, G.Z. "Edward Said: The last Jewish intellectual". *Social Text* (2006): 48-65.

Hourani, Albert. "Foreword". Khalidi, Walid. *Palestine Reborn.* London: I.B.Tauris and Co Ltd, 1992.

Hout, Syrine. *Post-War Anglophone Lebanese Literature: Home Matters in the Diaspora.* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2012.

http:// www.wwnorton.com/rgguides/ithedivinergg.htm

Huddart, David. *Homi Bhabha.* London and New York: Routledge, 2006.

Huntington, Samuel P. *The Clash of Civilizations and the Remaking of World Order.* Simon and Schuster, 1996.

Huyssen, Andreas. *Twilight Memories.* New York: Routledge, 1995.

Ikiddeh, Imi. "Foreword". Thiongo'o, Ngugi Wa. *Homecoming*. London: Heinemann, 1972.

Irele, F.Abiola. *The African Imagination: Literature in Africa and the Black Diaspora.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2001.

Isherwood Lisa and Nur Masalha. "Introduction". *Theologies of Liberation in Palestine-Israel: Indigenous, Contextual, and Postcolonial Perspectives.* Ed. Nur Masalha and Lisa Isherwood. Cambridge: The Lutterworth Press, 2014.

Jarrar, Nada Awar. *A Good Land.* London: Harper Collins, 2009.

−−−−−. *Somewhere, Home* . London: Vintage, 2004.

Jawad Abdel and Dr. Saleh. "Zionist Massacres: the Creation of the Palestinian Refugee Problem in the 1948 War". *Israel and the Palestinian Refugees.* Ed. Eyal Benvenisti, Chaim Gans and Sari Hanafi. Heidelberg: Springer, 2007.

Johnson, Paul. *Intellectuals.* London: Weidenfeld and Nicholson, 1988.

Kanafani, Ghassan. *Men in the Sun and Other Palestinian Stories.* Trans. Hilary Kilpatrick. London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1999.

Khalidi, Rachid. *Brokers of Deceit: How the US Has Undermined Peace in the Middle East.* Boston: Beacon Press, 2013.

Kilpatrick, Hilary. "Introduction". Kanafani, Ghassan. *Men in the Sun and Other Short Stories.* Trans. Hilary Kilpatrick. London: Lynne Rienner, 1999.

Kumar, Gajendra. *Indian English Novel.* New Delhi: Sarup and sons, 2002.

Laclau, Ernesto. *Emancipation(s).* London and New York: Verso, 1996.

Laplanche, Jean. *Essays on Otherness.* London and New York, 1999.

Le Blanc and John Randolph. *Edward Said on the Prospects of Peace in Palestine and Israel.* New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2013.

Leila Al Maleh. "Anglophone Arab Literature: An Overview". *Arab Voices in Diaspora: Critical Perspectives on Anglophone Arab Literature*. Ed. Leila Almaleh. New York and Amsterdame: Editions Rodopi B.V, 2009.

Lentin, Ronit. "Introduction". *Thinking Palestine*. Ed. Ronit Lentin. London and New York: Zed Books, 2008.

−−−−−. *Traces of Racial Exception: Racializing Israeli Settler Colonialism*. London and New York: Bloomsbury Academy, 2018.

Litvak, Meir. "Collective Memory and Palestinian Experience". *Palestinian Collective Memory and National Identity*. Ed. Meir Litvak. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Lovalerie King and Shirley Moody-Turner, ed. *Contemporary African American Literature: The Living Canon*. Indiana: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 2013.

M.A.Gultieri, Sarah. *Between Arab and White Race and Ethnicity in the Early Syrian American Diaspora*. London: University of California Press, 2009.

Marie-Aude Baronian, Stephen Besser and Yolande Jansen, ed. *Diaspora and Memory*. New York: Rodopi B.V., 2007.

M. Higgins, Bernd Magnus and Khathleen,ed. *The Cambridge Companion to Nietzsche*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,1996.

M.Nasser, Riad. *Palestinian Identity in Jordan and Israel: the Necessary Other in the Making of a Nation*. New York and London: Routledge, 2005.

Marrouchi, Mustapha. *Edward Said at the Limits*. Albany: State University of New York Press, 2004.

Marzette, Delinda. *African Women Writers Performing Diaspora, Staging Healing*. New York: Peter Lang, 2013.

Masalha Nur and Nahla Abdu. "Introduction". *An Oral History of the Palestinian Nakba*. Ed. Nahla Abdu and Nur Masalha. London: Zed Books, 2018.

Masalha, Nur. "About this book". *Catastrophe Remembered Palestine, Israel and the Internal Refugees: Essays in Memory of Edward Said.* Ed. Nur Masalha. London and New York: Zed Books, 2005.

−−−−−. *Expulsion of the Palestinians: The Concept of "Transfer" in Zionist Political Thought 1882-1948.* New York: The institute for Palestine Studies, 1992.

−−−−−. *Imperial Israel and the Palestinians: The Politics of Expansion.* London: Pluto Press, 2000.

−−−−−. *Palestine: A Four Thousand Year History.* London: Zed Books, 2018.

−−−−−. *The Palestine Nakba: Decolonizing History, Narrating the Subaltern, Reclaiming Memory.* London and New York: Zed Books, 2012.

Mathers, Powys. *The Book of the Thousand Nights and One Night.* Trans. Dr. J.C.Mardrus. Vol. 2. London and New York: Routledge, 1990.

Mattar, Dina. *What It Means to be Palestinian: Stories of Palestinian Peoplehood.* London and New York: I.B.Tauris, 2011.

Mattar, Philip. *Encyclopedia of the Palestinians.* New York: Facts On File, 2005.

McQuillan, Martin. *The Narrative Reader* . New York: Routledge, 2000

Migdal Joel.S. and Barush Kimmerling. *The Palestinian People: A History.* London: Harvard University Press, 2003.

Mikics, David. *Who Was Jacques Derrida: An Intellectual Biography?* London: Yale University Press, 2009.

Mirzoeff, Nicholas. "Introduction. The Multiple View Point: Diasporic Visual Cultures". *Diaspora and Visual Culture: Representing Africans and Jews.* New York: Routledge,1999.

Moris, Benny. *The Birth of the Palestinian Refugee Problem Revisited.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

Nashif, Esmail. *Palestinian Political Prisoners: Identity and Community.* New York: Routledge, 2008.

Nora, Pierre. *Les Liex de Mémoire.* Gallimard, 1984.

Norris, Christopher. *Derrida.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1987.

Nussbaum Martha C. and Abott Gleason. "Introduction". *On Nineteen Eighty-Four: Orwell and Our Future.* Ed. Jack Goldsmith, Martha C. Nussbaum and Abbott Gleason. Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005.

Payne, Michael, ed. *The Greenblatt Reader: Stephen Greenblatt.* Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2005.

Readings, Bill. *Introducing Lyotard Art and Politics.* New York: Routledge, 1991.

Renan, Ernest."What is a nation?" *Becoming National: A Reader.* Ed. Geoff Eley and Ronald Grigor Suny. New York: Oxford University Press, 1996.

Ricoeur, Paul. *Memory, History, Forgetting.* Trans. Kathleen Blamey and David Pellauer. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 2004.

Rodolphe, Gashé. "Infrastructures and Systematicity". *Deconstruction and Philosophy: The Texts of Jacques Derrida.* Ed. John Sallis. Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1987.

Rorty, Richard. *Contingency, Irony, and Solidarity.* New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989.

Said, Edward. *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000.

−−−−−. *Representations of the Intellectual.* New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

−−−−−.*After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives.* New York: Columbia University Press, 1999.

— — — — —. *Covering Islam: How the Media and the Experts Determine How we See the Rest of the World*. New York: Vintage Books, 1981.

— — — — —.*Culture and Imperialism*. New York: Vantage Books, 1993.

— — — — —. *Joseph Conrad and the Fiction of Autobiography*. New York: Columbia University Press, 1966.

— — — — —. *Orientalism*. New York: Vintage Books, 1978.

— — — — —. *Representations of the Intellectual*. New York: Vintage Books, 1996.

— — — — —.*The Politics of Dispossession: The Struggle for Palestinian Self-Determination, 1969-1994*. New York: Vintage Books, 1994.

— — — — —. *The Question of Palestine*. New York: Vintage Books, 1979.

— — — — —.*Beginnings: Intention and Method*. New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1975.

Said Edward and Joe Sacco. *Palestine*. Korea: Fantagraphics Books, 2002.

Salaita, Steven. "Scattered like Seeds: Palestinian Prose Goes Global ". *Studies in the Humanities* (2003): 46-59.

— — — — —. *The Uncultured Wars: Arabs, Muslims and the Poverty of Liberal Thought.* London and New York: Zed Books, 2008.

— — — — —.*Uncivil Rites: Palestine and the Limits of Academic Freedom*. Chicago and Illinois: Haymarket Books, 2015.

Salem, Elise. *Construstructing Lebanon: A Century of Literary Narratives*. Florida: University Press of Florida, 1955.

Sardar, Ziauddin. "Foreword". Fanon, Frantz. *Black Skin, White Masks*. London: Pluto Press, 1986.

Sartre, Jean Paul. "Preface". Fanon, Frantz. *The Wretched of the Earth.* Trans. Constance Farrington. New York: Grove Press, 1963.

Scarborough, M. *Myth and Modernity: Postcritical References.* New York: State University of New York Press, 1994.

Schulz, Helena Lindholm. *The Palestinian Diaspora: Formation of Identities and Politics of Land.* London: Routledge, 2003.

Seton-Watson, Hugh. *Nations and States: An Enquiry into the Origins of Nations and the Politics of Nationalism.* London: Methuen, 1977.

Stephen Greenblatt, et al. *Cultural Mobility: A Manifesto.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010.

Wa Thiong'o, Ngugi. *Homecoming: Essays on African and Caribbean Literature, Culture and Politics.* London: Heinemann, 1972.

Turki, Fawaz. *Soul in Exile: Lives of a Palestinian revolutionary.* New York: Monthly Review Press, 1988.

−−−−−. *The Disinherited.* New York and London: Monthly Review Press, 1972.

Vázquez, Francisco H. *Latino/a Thought: Culture, Politics, and Society.* 2nd edition. New York: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2009.

Weinstock, Nathan. "The Impact of Zionist Colonization on Palestinian Arab Society before 1948". *Journal of Palestine Studies 2* (1973): 49-63.

Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction.* New York: Oxford University Press, 2003.

Zahran, Yasmin. *A Beggar at Damascus Gate.* California: The Post Apollo Press, 1995.

Zalta, Edward N., ed. *Stanford Encyclopedia of Philosophy.* Stanford: Stanford University, 2007.

Zeilig, Leo. *Voices of Liberation: Frantz Fanon.* Chicago: Haymarketbooks, 2016.