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## Revisiting Edward Said`s Self-Representation in Susan Abulhawa`s *Mornings in Jenin*(\*)

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## استدعاء التمثيل الذاتي لإدوارد سعيد في رواية "سوزان أبو الهوى" صباحات جنين"

نوره حسن القحطاني

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### الملخص

دعا إدوارد سعيد الفلسطينيين إلى رواية قصصهم الخاصة، مع التأكيد على الحاجة إلى التمثيل الذاتي في الأدب والسياسة والخطاب الثقافي. وأعرب عن اعتقاده بأن الفلسطينيين، باسترجاعهم لرواياتهم، قد يحاربون الصور غير الدقيقة، ويقاومون القوالب النمطية السلبية، ويؤكدون استقلالهم الذاتي في بناء تاريخهم وهويتهم. وتذهب هذه الدراسة إلى أن الكاتبة سوزان أبو الهوى تردد اصداء دعوة إدوارد سعيد إلى التمثيل الذاتي باستخدام رواية القصص للتعبير عن منظور فلسطيني. وتوفر طريقة أبو الهوى سرداً بديلاً للتصوير الأجنبي، الذي قد يديم حالات سوء الفهم أو التبسيط المفرط للواقع المعقد. وتركز هذه الدراسة حصراً على مفهوم إدوارد سعيد للتمثيل الذاتي أثناء دراسة رواية سوزان أبو الهوى. وأثيرت المسألة باستخدام منهجية ما بعد الاستعمار. وبالتالي، فإن هذه الدراسة تحقق في المنظور الفلسطيني للصراع بوصفه استراتيجية مقاومة للاستعمار تهدف إلى صنع منبر سياسي للفلسطينيين من خلال التركيز على تجاربهم ونضالهم في ظل الاحتلال الإسرائيلي. وخلصت القول الكاتبة من خلال روايتها تسهم في إجراء حوار أوسع نطاقاً بشأن الهوية الفلسطينية، انتزاع الملكيات، والمقاومة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** إدوارد سعيد، مقاومة الاستعمار، الصراع الفلسطيني، كتابات المقاومة، التمثيل الذاتي.



## Revisiting Edward Said`s Self-Representation in Susan Abulhawa`s *Mornings in Jenin*

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### Abstract

Edward Said advocated for Palestinians to tell their own stories, emphasizing the need of self-representation in literature, politics, and cultural discourse. He believed that by reclaiming their narratives, Palestinians might combat inaccurate portrayals, counter negative stereotypes, and assert their autonomy in constructing their history and identity. This study argues that Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* echoes Said's call for self-representation by using storytelling to communicate a Palestinian perspective. Abulhawa's method provides an alternative narrative to external portrayals, which may perpetuate misunderstandings or oversimplify complex reality. This study focuses exclusively on Edward Said's concept of self-representation while examining Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*. The question was raised using a postcolonial methodology. The data for the study was obtained from Susan Abulhawa's novel *Mornings in Jenin*, which was published by Bloomsbury Publishing in 2010. So, this study investigates the Palestinian perspective on the conflict as a decolonial strategy aimed at developing a political platform for Palestinians through a focus on their experiences and struggles under Israeli occupation. In sum, the author`s narrative contributes to a broader conversation on Palestinian identity, dispossession, and resistance.

**Keywords:** Edward Said, decolonization, Palestinian conflict, resistance literature, self-representation.



## Introduction

The tragic history of Palestine can be traced back to several significant international events, including the First Zionist Congress held in Switzerland in 1897, the United States' entry into World War I in 1916, which allowed Britain to gain control of Palestine, the signing of the Balfour Declaration in 1917, and the publication of George Eliot's novel *Daniel Deronda* in 1876. Indeed, Kenneth M. Newton (2010) believes that the existence of Israel would not have been conceivable without this literary masterpiece. Furthermore, since the establishment of the State of Israel in 1948, Palestine's history has been marked by land grabs, forced displacement, dispossession, targeted killings, and massacres.

As a result, the Palestinian people have been engaged in a struggle to reclaim their collective memory and revive their historical narrative ever since. In this pursuit, literature serves as a secure stronghold for preserving their identity. Among the various forms of artistic expression, the novel stands out as a prominent medium for addressing the challenges faced by Palestinians. Moreover, it particularly highlights the tragedy of the Nakba as a central theme, effectively transforming the novel into a repository of alternative memory and geography. Through this literary avenue, Palestinian identities are safeguarded against the threat of annihilation, while it also sheds light on the destructive nature of certain "deadly identities" of Zionists, as aptly described by Amin Maalouf (2000).

Since the occupation of Palestine in 1948, Palestinian novelists have endeavored to create envisioned narratives that begin with the Nakba of Palestine and the accompanying events, including ethnic cleansing, coerced displacement, and a diaspora that dispersed Palestinians across the region. Irrespective of the narrative's level, whether it is Palestinian or Arabic, its purpose is to capture the moment of the Nakba in a specific time and place, as described by Mikhail Bakhtin in his theory on literary chronotope (1981). Novels written by Palestinians in Arabic and other languages have successfully presented an alternative narrative to the Zionist account of the occupation of Palestine and the establishment of the Hebrew state.

In this context, American-Palestinian writer, political and human rights activist Susan Abulhawa demonstrates the impact of the Nakba and the



subsequent displacement and diaspora of the Palestinian people. Known for her books *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), *My Voice Sought the Wind* (2013), and *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015), Abulhawa is a prominent figure in the field of modern Palestinian-American literature. She was born in 1970 in Kuwait to a family of refugees. After spending some time at an all-girls school and orphanage in East Jerusalem, Abulhawa went on to attend college in the US. She currently possesses a master's degree in neuroscience from the University of South Carolina. Abulhawa is the founder of Playgrounds for Palestine, a charitable organization that constructs and maintains playgrounds for children in the West Bank, Gaza, and Palestinian refugee camps. She presently lives in Pennsylvania. Her narrative *Mornings in Jenin* serves as a response to this devastating crisis and as the voice and collective memory of the Palestinian people. It evolves beyond mere historical or direct enthusiastic approaches, instead raising silenced questions.

Abulhawa's work centers on the common human issues that Palestinians living under Israeli rule grapple with every day. Her trip to the Jenin refugee camp shortly after the tragedy of the Battle of Jenin in April 2002 sparked her creativity and motivated her to develop a narrative centered on individuals enduring the oppression of Israeli settler colonialism. In an online article, the author discusses how her initial plans for writing the novel transformed as she commenced the writing process. "I started with a humanitarian objective", she stated. "I wanted the world to know what happened in Jenin. But as I wrote, the characters started to come to life, to fill out, and eventually being true to these characters and telling their story honestly became the only focus" (Qualey 2012). She believes that the newly emerging Palestinian works that are being published in English can impact non-Arab readers, namely in terms of their understanding of the Palestinian viewpoint on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict.

The author extensively utilized historical sources, traveler books, documents, and personal testimonies of Palestinians who lived there before the Nakba. Additionally, the author drew from her own experiences to construct the narrative. The author's approach involved employing imagination and creativity to develop characters and depict events. The aim was to synthesize a portrayal of Palestinian lives that were disrupted by the Nakba by weaving together various images and sequences. Still, the hardship



endured by successive Palestinian generations as a result of the Nakba, and its profound influence on the personal and collective memory of the Palestinian people was initially met with a stance of denial and the refusal to acknowledge it by the first generation who regarded it as a transitory circumstance that would soon be resolved.

Since the Nakba, Palestinian literature has produced numerous novels; however, the novel *Mornings in Jenin* specifically focuses on the themes of self-representation, documentation and the preservation of memory. The author's work delves into the intricate Palestinian historical, political, societal, and cultural situations which cannot be simplified to just the issues of diaspora, calamity, and occupation. Instead, it explores the interconnected manifestations of these issues, sparking significant controversy. Abulhawa asserts "I believe that the novel is a powerful means of decolonization. This is something Frantz Fanon espoused and wrote about. Assertion of narrative through art is a way of reclaiming the stolen heritage of native peoples. I believe this is one reason why Edward Said lamented the lack of Palestinian literature in Western culture" (Qabaha 2019).

In 1984, *The London Review of Books* published an article by Edward Said, a Palestinian theorist, writer, and literary critic, titled "Permission to Narrate". The article focuses on the story of the Palestinians and provides contemplation on the influence of storytelling on the struggles faced by the Palestinians. Said emphasizes the crucial significance of narrative evidence in a political and cultural environment where Palestinians are consistently expected to engage in the process of eradicating their own historical accounts and lived realities. The significance he places on narratives also addresses the issue of how to utilize official facts and figures which, paradoxically, appear to be inconsequential. Said's proposed solution is to establish a repository of Palestinian accounts through the acts of writing, documenting, remembering, reading, and sharing (Said 1995). Said's insistence on the importance of storytelling and documentation is highly pertinent to the ongoing Palestinian struggle.

In this regard, Edward Said underscored the significance of Palestinians narrating their personal experiences within the framework of Palestinian identity. He promoted a genuine portrayal of their lives, questioning the



dominant narratives imposed by external influences. Said argued that, by the act of reclaiming their narratives, Palestinians might exercise their autonomy, challenge preconceived notions, and actively contribute to a more equitable comprehension of their historical experiences and challenges.

In *Mornings in Jenin*, Susan Abulhawa uses narrative as a means to encompass the collective Palestinian story, providing significance to this narrative through the compilation of factual information, statistics, and testimonials from witnesses who have observed the abhorrent Israeli oppression. Additionally, she poses thought-provoking and contentious inquiries, thus supporting Said's plea for self-representation and questioning dominant narratives. The core of Edward Said's notion of self-representation revolves around the idea that individuals and groups should proactively engage in the process of shaping and presenting their own narratives. Within the framework of Palestinian identity, Said challenged the Orientalist depiction of the East which was based on Western prejudices and biases, especially against Palestinians.

### Rational of the study

First, this study intends to fill a gap in the literature rather than provide an exhaustive coverage of the topic. Despite the extensive studies on Palestinian narratives, there have been few studies analyzing Abulhawa's novel *Mornings in Jenin* and even less thorough analyses of its politics of self-representation (AbuHamda 2010; Wang 2014; Ebileeni 2017; El Sayed Raslan 2017; Chaker, Lanasri & Barka 2018; Maghfiroh & Khoiri 2020; Oulwan 2021). Secondly, these studies concentrate on forming an identity in exile while overlooking how ideological theories are portrayed in literary works. The current study aims to contribute academically to the ongoing discussions about Palestinian narratives by analyzing self-representation in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* as a platform for Palestinian memory. This study argues that *Mornings in Jenin* echoes Edward Said's call for self-representation and highlights the significance of memory in affirming the Palestinian claim to their land and challenging the Zionist perspective and narrative, especially in light of the normalization carried out by the occupation and the promotion of the idea that Jews have a political and historical connection to Palestine.



This study explores how fiction helps bring to light forgotten or hidden pasts by integrating these alternative memories into recognizable structures. The study examines how the novel *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa prompts a reevaluation of established narratives influencing our comprehension of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This study contends that the novel not only revises a disputed historical narrative for a global audience but also illustrates the process of historical remembrance, both at the individual and societal levels and questions how previous occurrences gain significance for succeeding generations.

### Methodology

This study focuses exclusively on Edward Said's idea of self-representation in studying Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*. The question was raised through the utilization of a postcolonial methodology. The study's data source was derived from the novel *Mornings in Jenin* authored by Susan Abulhawa and published by Bloomsbury Publishing in 2010. Additionally, this literary analysis necessitated the utilization of a postcolonial framework. The data consisted of direct and indirect quotations, phrases, and dialogues. To gather the necessary data, an in-depth reading of the novel was carried out to identify and categorize the required information in the form of pertinent statements and quotations which were used for the subsequent analysis.

According to Edward Said, the act of retelling stories to bring attention to knowledge that has been marginalized or ignored represents a practice that opposes and questions prevailing beliefs. This approach is essential to the framework of postcolonial thinking (Said 1993:32). This study utilized the postcolonial perspective to analyze political and cultural structures as well as power dynamics. In other words, Abulhawa's narrative embodies a counter-hegemonic culture that challenges dominant ideologies, representing a new paradigm of storytelling that emphasizes self-representation. This study aimed to examine the potential connection between Edward Said's theory and Abulhawa's work by posing two questions:

- 1- How does the author's developing paradigm of Palestinian storytelling, namely *Mornings in Jenin* reflect Said's call for a more nuanced and authentic representation of Palestinian voices?
- 2- Does the author's new counter-hegemonic narrative, characterized by self-representation, hold any significant pertinence to counter stereotypes, humanize the Palestinian experience, and offer a more complex understanding of the region's history?



## Discussion

### Postcolonial framework: questioning preconceptions and self-representation

Edward Said contends that narratives are crucial in molding cultural and political identity. In both *Orientalism* (1978) and his wider literary output, Said's works underscore the impact of narrative on the formation of perspectives in many cultures and communities. He argues that influential entities can create prevailing accounts that sustain stereotypes, marginalize specific groups, and foster an inequitable distribution of power. He also argues that the issue surrounding postcolonial discourse stems from the concept of re-presentation which grants Westerners an advantage as the authentic creator "whose life-giving power represents, animates, constitutes, the otherwise silent and dangerous space beyond familiar boundaries" (Said 1978:57). This image possesses significant potency, as it introduced the notion of the Orient primarily within Western academia, subsequently permeating Western consciousness, and ultimately influencing Western imperialism (Said 1978:203). This representation establishes a binary opposition between the self and the other, with the former being in a privileged position to define, characterize, and express the Orient according to their own desires, while the latter is relegated to a passive and marginalized object of study. Said argues that it is impossible to differentiate between representation and misrepresentation, as the distinction between the two is merely a matter of degree.

First published in 1979, Edward Said's *The Question of Palestine* is valuable, beneficial and just as significant a work as *Orientalism*. It is also one of the few limited perspectives on the history of Palestine that is accessible to Western society. Though published 45 years ago, the book still offers noteworthy and relevant arguments that warrant careful attention. Furthermore, it enables us to thoroughly understand the historical reasons behind the current situation in Palestine: the clear failure of the Oslo accord and US intervention; the eruption of the second Intifada which seeks the independence of the entire Palestinian population; the destruction of what is left of East Jerusalem, Gaza, and the West Bank after four decades of military dominance; the dissolution of the Palestinian National Authority; and the ongoing killing of innocent Palestinians. The value of Said's involvement



lies in his endeavor to reinstate the issue of Palestine from a Palestinian perspective, starting with the inception of Zionism and the assimilation of its ideology within the framework of European colonialist culture during the late 19th century, ultimately leading to the influx of migration towards Palestine. Said simultaneously provides an overview of the historical background of the Palestinian people, meticulously examining their sociological and demographic characteristics.

In the chapter "The Issue of Representation" Said states: "The Arab had become a nonperson as much because the Zionist had himself become the only person in Palestine because the Arab's negative personality (Oriental, decadent, inferior) had intensified" (Said 1992:37). The narrative of the Zionist colonization of Palestine and the subsequent establishment of the State of Israel is centered on an ideological framework that is later manifested via a systematic political strategy: the eradication of the Palestinian people. Indeed, the indigenous people are entirely disregarded or otherwise dismissed as uncivilized, lazy, opportunistic, or wild. The notion that Jews had an obligation to take over an underdeveloped and sparsely inhabited territory and reconstruct it from scratch, thereby modernizing and updating it is intricately linked to this prevalent colonial stereotype. Said strongly emphasizes a critical matter, supporting it with an extensive collection of evidence and carefully analyzing it down to the minutest detail (Said 1992). Between the 19th and 20th centuries, European nations, led by England, were determining the fate of Palestine and supporting the cause of Zionists to establish a presence there. It is important to note that Palestine was not an uninhabited region during this time. Contrary to the Western narrative, the country was home to a political and civil population of over 600,000 individuals who had lawfully resided there for many generations. The Palestinians predominantly spoke in Arabic and adhered to Sunni Islam but also included Arabic-speaking Christians and Druze.

The Zionist movement, closely aligned with European colonial powers, has long denied the existence of the indigenous Palestinian people on the land designated for the establishment of the Jewish state. This denial is rooted in colonial and racist ideologies and has been actively backed by the European powers in many ways. After extensive deliberation, the Zionist movement ultimately selected Palestine as the location for the Jewish state, instead of



Argentina, Cyprus or South Africa. This decision was not primarily based on spiritual considerations, but rather on the prevailing belief, articulated by Israel Zangwill: "Palestine was a land without a people for a people without a land" (Said 1992:9).

Said asserts that the fundamental flaw of the State of Israel is rooted in its inherent Zionist ideology which involves a refusal to coexist peacefully with the Palestinian people. The Zionist ideology, aided by anti-Semitic persecution and the Holocaust catastrophe, has successfully achieved gradual territorial acquisition in Palestine. However, Israel's inability to maintain its dominance without resorting to oppressive, colonial, and fundamentally discriminatory methods is seen as a major failure. The notion that the Jewish people are the native people and the Palestinians are the foreign inhabitants has been and continues to be disseminated globally and is not limited to the West. The fundamental cause of the numerous setbacks suffered by the Palestinian people can be attributed to the peculiarity that Zionism transcends the typical type of external conquest and colonial rule. It garnered extensive success and wide-ranging support from European governments and the general people, surpassing the level of support seen in other colonial endeavors.

Nonetheless, a significant error was made by the Israeli political elite and the influential US Jewish elite who have consistently supported its political and military decisions. Before the establishment of the State of Israel, there existed a Palestinian population in Palestine. Despite the presence of the State of Israel, this population persists and remains determined to endure, despite experiencing numerous losses, humiliations, and the destructive loss of their possessions and cultural heritage (Said 1992).

Susan Abulhawa explains that Edward Said "championed the cause of Palestine with great intellect, moral fortitude, and a contagious passion that touched so many of us in many ways" (Abulhawa 2010:327). Consequently, she admits that "Dr. Edward Said influenced the making of this book [*Mornings in Jenin*] in no small way" (Abulhawa 2010:327). This author explores how refugees can utilize remembering as a defense against being forgotten or wiped out. Indeed, memory is crucial for Palestinians in confirming their identity.



### Palestinian narrative preserving the unified collective memory

Palestinian fiction differs from its counterparts by constraining imagination and limiting its presence in the narrative. The Palestinian story conveys the struggles and hardships of a nation enduring tyranny and occupation. Literary author Susan Abulhawa explores Palestinian themes in her work to inform readers about Palestinian lives under Israeli rule using fiction as a medium. Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010) explores the experiences of the Abulheja family over three generations and several decades living under colonial persecution. In the Author's Note, Abulhawa emphasizes that "Although the characters in this book are fictitious, Palestine is not. Nor are the historical events and figures in this story" (Abulhawa 2010:325). The author's remark demonstrates how historical events and locations accurately depict the reality of Palestine. Abulheja family's enduring sorrow for over fifty years reflects the suffering of a population still grappling with Israeli occupation.

Therefore, engaging with Palestinian fiction involves delving into the Palestinian conflict and collective memory, connecting with the enduring journey of suffering and resilience throughout numerous decades. This Palestinian narrative provides a profound message that holds equal worth to the act of struggling in battle. It provides readers with a unique insight into the daily lives of a population living under brutality and oppression. The nation resides in a vast penitentiary, isolated from a dignified existence, without necessities and the basic human rights required for a peaceful life.

In his poetry collection *Why Did You Leave the Horse Alone*, Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish states that "Whoever writes his story inherits / the land of speech, and has the meaning completely!" In alignment with Darwish's experience, Abulhawa offers a narrative made with the Palestinian collective story and gives meaning to this story by escalating the Palestinian experience and its lines, revealing the epic dimension in it through characters and their lives, mobilizing metaphors and composite images that are crowded in her novel. During an interview with Olivia Snaije at the Abu Dhabi National Exhibition Centre, Abulhawa asserted that:

"I think times are changing. There is new generation of writers who have lived most their lives in the West and we are telling our story, finally, in our



own voice and in Western languages. It has been Israel's narrative that has dominated literature until recently, which was mostly propelled by Leon Uris' novel 'Exodus'. It was natural that the first story be that of the conquerors, because they were mostly from Europe and spoke in the languages and nuances of Western cultures. They also told the story that the West wanted to hear. It was easier to hear a story of a land without a people. It was a romantic happy ending. The Palestinian narrative was in Arabic. It was unappealing, and it did not reach the West in those early years. But our voice is coming of age in Western literature now and I think there is a real interest among readers to hear our story" (Snaije 2012).

Indeed, Abulhawa assumes a prominent role in presenting the literary expression of the Palestinian people to the global audience in the English language.

*Mornings in Jenin* narrates the tale of the Abulheja Palestinian family spanning three generations. They were compelled to leave their olive-growing town of Ein Hod due to the creation of the new State of Israel in 1948. The narrative revolves around displacement, deprivation, and unfair treatment. The family's past has been completely altered. They reside in Jenin refugee camp, dwelling in tents for fifty years due to strife and violence that shattered the aspirations of several generations. Said wrote of exile in literature that "at most the literature about exile objectifies an anguish and a predicament most people rarely experience firsthand; but to think of the exile informing this literature as beneficially humanistic is to banalize its mutilations, the losses it inflicts on those who suffer them... it has torn millions of people from the nourishment of tradition, family, and geography" (2000:181). Abulhawa's Palestinian tale on exile often portrays a deep suffering and difficult situation that people actually encounter firsthand. This narrative depicts the severe impact exile has on individuals, including the profound losses it causes by separating millions from their cultural heritage, family, and homeland. The foundation of Israel disrupted the happiness and delight of the Palestinians. The Abulheja family is one of many thousands of families enduring the dominance of Israel. It is a narrative about a country that is under foreign control. It symbolizes the hardship and perseverance of Palestinians. Life's routine is disrupted by the clashing interests of Palestinians and Israelis.



At the beginning of the narrative, the author captures the life of the Palestinian family before 1948. In Ein Hod village, life is routine as inhabitants commence their day with the dawn prayer, seeking assistance from Allah and relying on Him for their daily tasks. The inhabitants of Ein Hod are delighted to reap the rewards of their labor during the harvest season. It is the season for collecting figs and olives. They lead joyful lives and have strong relationships with friends and neighbors, fostering a sense of community despite differences in race and religion. This includes Ari and his family, who have a unique background with his father being a German professor who escaped Nazism and settled in Jerusalem, renting a home from a local Palestinian family (Abulhawa 2010:8). They have a strong rapport with Palestinians, especially Abulheja's family.

Jewish immigrants were treated cordially in Palestine before the establishment of Israel, before the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and before the Israelis took control of Palestinian residences and properties. Ari Perlstein's bond with Hassan deepens. They lead lives characterized by love and mutual respect, particularly in terms of their reverence for culture and religion. The author discussed the pre-1948 life in Palestine, focusing on Abulheja's family and their interactions with Jewish refugees who fled Nazi Germany to seek sanctuary in Palestine. Ari and Hassan reside in tranquility, distant from the animosity and hostility spawned by conflicts and political affairs.

Hassan expresses his gratitude for his friendship with the Jewish youngster by referring to him as a brother on multiple occasions (Abulhawa 2010:9). However, peace in Ein Hod and other Palestinian villages is often short-lived. Jewish gangs are disrupting the peace of the residents, causing unrest due to alleged violence committed by Zionists against British and Palestinians: "The country is being turned upside down by Zionists and...Zionists killing British and Palestinians every cursed day? They're getting rid of the British so they can get rid of us, and everybody's too stupid to see or to do anything about it" (Abulhawa 2010:16).

The Jews, supported by Western governments, have initiated a global effort to create a homeland in Palestine, which they described as a territory uninhabited by people for a people without land. Ari warns his friend Hasan that "They're going to take land. They've launched a campaign across the



world calling Palestine 'a land without a people'. They're going to make it a Jewish homeland" (Abulhawa 2010:23). About this, the author refers to the dominant colonial belief expressed by Israel Zangwill which Said elaborately discusses (Said 1992). Thus, presenting the stories of numerous Palestinian families and their ancestral lands, farms, homes, and history that span centuries challenges the common colonial ideology and establishes a genuine counter-narrative.

The Jewish gangs were "[T]he Irgun, Haganah and Stern Gangs. The British called them terrorists" (Abulhawa 2010:24) because they persistently and aggressively committed assault after assault against Palestinians, carrying their anger from one community to another. Palestinians lacked the capacity and capabilities to oppose the attacks against them. They were unarmed. Jewish gangs displaced, banished, killed, and confiscated the belongings of Palestinians. They exiled Palestinians to refugee camps (Jenin) within their homeland. Said asserts that "[E]xile is strangely compelling to think about but terrible to experience. It is the unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place, between the self and its true home: its essential sadness can never be surmounted" (2000:180). Thus, Abulhawa reflects Said's idea of exile as an incredibly horrible experience. It is the irreversible chasm that is forced to exist between a person and their birthplace, or between the self and its true home; its underlying melancholy is something that will never fully heal.

Furthermore, it is not just about the homes and property; they have also taken away their children. Ismael, Hassan's son, was abducted from his mother's embrace by a Jewish man named Moshe to appease his sorrowful wife, Jolanta. She is childless. Moshe and his wife named the boy David. The Israeli soldiers returned to Ein Hod to plunder the recently vacated village. Moshe expressed his joy at having a son who brought a smile back to his wife, "while Dalia lay heartbroken, delirious with the loss of Ismael" (Abulhawa 2010: 39).

In his article "Permission to Narrate" (1995), Said sought Palestinian approval to share his narrative of Israel's aggressive war on Lebanon in 1982 and criticized the Western media, particularly America's, for promoting the Zionist narrative including their coverage of the Sabra and Shatila massacre.



In line with this view, Abulhawa dedicates Chapter 33: "Pity the Nation 1982" in her novel to incorporate Said's plea into her narrative:

"On September 16, in defiance of the cease-fire, Ariel Sharon's army circled the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila, where Fatima and Falasteen slept defenselessly without Yousef. Israeli soldiers set up checkpoints, barring the exit of refugees, and allowed their Lebanese Phalange allies into the camp. Israeli soldiers, perched on rooftops watched through their binoculars during the day and at night lit the sky with flares to guide the path of the Phalange, who went from shelter to shelter in the refugee camps" (Abulhawa 2010:223).

Amal is the narrator and is considered reliable due to her firsthand experience at the Jenin camp and the rest of her family who have been slaughtered in the massacre of Sabra and Shatila.

The author employs many literary techniques, including multiple viewpoints, a vast range of characters from different countries, and interrelated storylines to provide an authentic, multi-perspective portrayal of the Palestinian genocide by Zionist Israelis. One source was Robert Fisk, an English author and journalist. He criticized U.S. foreign policy in the Middle East and the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians. The journalist described the horror of the massacre in the tale:

"They were everywhere, in the road, the laneways, in the back yards and broken rooms, beneath crumpled masonry and across the top of garbage tips. When we had seen a hundred bodies, we stopped counting. Down every alleyway, there were corpses—women, young men, babies and grandparents—lying together in lazy and terrible profusion where they had been knifed or machine-gunned to death.... Jenkins and I were so overwhelmed by what we found in Shatila that at first we were unable to register our own shock. We might have accepted evidence of a few murders; even dozens of bodies, killed in the heat of combat. But there were women lying in houses with their skirts torn up to their waists and their legs wide apart, children with their throats cut, rows of young men shot in the back after being lined up at an execution wall. There were babies—blackened babies because they had been slaughtered more than



24 hours earlier and their small bodies were already in a state of decomposition—tossed into rubbish heaps alongside discarded US army ration tins, Israeli army equipment and empty bottles of whiskey” (224-225).

Zionists have slaughtered many Palestinians, but they cannot eliminate their history or erase their memories. This narrative will endure and continue to be told. Despite being forced to leave their homes, Palestinians persist in recalling their past and comprehending their position in the world through their unique perspectives.

Traumatic encounters generate a nostalgic memory that maintains a connection with a terrible history. Amal still bears the scar from an Israeli bullet as a reminder of the harsh realities she endured in life. She finds a secure haven in her nostalgic memories of the tragedies and sorrows she tried to conceal, avoid, or even ignore. In "Invention, Memory, Place" (2000), Edward Said discussed the relationship between collective memory, trauma, and identity formation. Amal cannot forget her past which has been ingrained in her identity and sense of nationalism. Even though she is living the American dream, it does not provide her with peace and fulfillment while living overseas. Edward Said highlighted that collective memory and its representations are closely related to issues of identity, nationalism, power, and authority. The study of history is not just about facts and basic truths; it serves as the foundation of memory in educational settings and is largely a nationalist endeavor aimed at fostering loyalty and a deep understanding of one's country, tradition, and faith (2000:176).

Upon her visit to her country, Amal, a Palestinian-American, was assassinated in Jenin while protecting her daughter: "...the one about the Palestine Amreekyah who was killed protecting her daughter. This woman has survived an Israeli bullet in her youth and died by the one intended for her child." (Abulhawa 2010:316). Unfortunately, the massacre in the Jenin camp was ignored by Western media and the United Nations, notwithstanding their assertion that "NO MASSACRE IN JENIN" (Abulhawa 2010:317). The United Nations' official report was authored by individuals who did not physically visit Jenin and did not communicate with either the victims or the perpetrators.



Victoria Brittain's paper "They Had to Die: Assassination against Liberation" (2006) elucidates the overarching objective of assassination, which is to dismantle resistance formations and thereby undermine the determination of a population to oppose the prevailing order and compel them to acquiesce. According to Brittain, the apartheid regime's assassination campaign had the objective of eliminating the most intelligent individuals inside the movement and weakening the determination of the ordinary members to resist apartheid. As Brittain elucidates, this particularly applies to the Palestinian situation given the fact that the geographically and economically crucial region known as the "Middle East" has historically experienced extensive colonization.

Furthermore, Israel's actions have consistently evaded scrutiny in a global landscape characterized by power dynamics and inconsistent standards. Richard Falk, a retired professor of international law and practice at Princeton University and the United Nations rapporteur on human rights violations in the Palestinian Occupied Territories, shares Brittain's view on Israel's blatant disregard for consequences and the distressing plight of the Palestinians. This alignment is evident in Falk's (2007) article titled "Slouching Toward a Palestinian Holocaust," where he draws parallels between the Palestinian situation and other global tragedies. Falk argues that the moral implications of the situation in Gaza are even more severe, despite the absence of widespread fatalities. The situation is far worse because the global community is observing the unpleasant display unravel while several powerful members actively endorse and support Israel in its strategy towards Gaza. Both the United States and the European Union are complicit. Notably, Falk's statements were penned before Israel's latest conflict with Gaza in 2008-2009 and 2023-2024.

Despite the ongoing promotion of the Zionist literary narrative by the mainstream media in the Western world, particularly in America, Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* has significantly advanced presenting a convincing narrative regarding Palestinian rights in response to Israeli misinformation. Indeed, the Palestinian characters reveal the true nature of Israel and its actual image. The novel employs several literary strategies such as varied temporal viewpoints, diverse characters from different nations, and interconnected narratives to offer a sophisticated, multi-perspective interpretation of the past



that avoids assigning simplistic guilt. Moreover, the author encourages readers to reconsider their perception of the past and establish connections between various historical accounts. By doing this, Abulhawa establishes a powerful function for literature in shaping collective memory. Thus, *Mornings in Jenin* showcases the political influence a novel may wield when viewed as a component of a national, ethnic, or religious memory-building process. It serves not just to delve into the past and acknowledge its lasting impacts but also to envision altered futures.

## Conclusion

Edward Said campaigned for Palestinians to narrate their own narrative, highlighting the necessity of self-representation in literature, politics, and cultural discourse. He held the belief that, through recovering their narratives, Palestinians might confront erroneous portrayals, counter negative stereotypes, and express their autonomy in shaping their history and identity. Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* aligns with Said's advocacy for self-representation by employing storytelling to convey a perspective grounded in the Palestinian experience. Through this approach, Abulhawa offers an alternative narrative to external portrayals that may perpetuate misunderstandings or oversimplify intricate realities.

The study emphasized the Palestinian perspective on the conflict as a decolonial practice to create a political platform for Palestinians by focusing on their experiences and challenges during the Israeli occupation. Recognizing Palestinians as the original inhabitants of the land in all aspects—historically, culturally, genetically, and legitimately—while viewing Israel as a Zionist colonial power is a crucial aspect of this decolonial practice. Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* presents the Palestinian story boldly and without apology. This is an intergenerational novel that covers significant occurrences in Palestinian history that are frequently overlooked by international media. Abulhawa elevates the Palestinian voice from the margins to the center. Telling your narrative empowers you to have control over your own life as Edward Said posits. That is essential for pursuing decolonization. Reviving indigenous storytelling is crucial in the fight against colonialism. Being unable to share your story results in a loss of perspective and dehumanization. Abulhawa uses her fiction to restore humanity to Palestinians who have been dehumanized by Israeli invaders.



The novel, narrated by Amal, discusses the continuous oppression of Palestinian individuals and their resistance against Israeli rule, a perspective often overlooked in the Western world. It causes emotional distress and sadness, and leads to doubts about mankind. *Mornings in Jenin* juxtaposes brightness and hope with the darkness, oppression, and misery experienced by individuals currently residing in the occupied regions. The novel, according to the author, can serve as a means to achieve decolonization within the Palestinian experience.

Indeed, Abulhawa has effectively portrayed the Palestinian experience of dispossession and exile in a way that emphasizes their humanity. Through her work, she initiates a dialogue on Palestinian literature, culture, resistance, and emancipation. She exposes the long-standing injustices suffered by Palestine and its people, while also highlighting their vibrant culture. She contemplates the human aspect of the war.

Israel not only oppresses but also deeply humiliates Palestinians, profoundly impacting Palestinian society. Israel is responsible for the psychological, historical, cultural, and familial denial of the Palestinians, which is a result of their exile. The narrative illustrates that Palestinians and other indigenous peoples who have lost their territory to ruthless colonization will always carry a shadow of anguish. They will always bear the burden of history since it is ingrained in their shared awareness.

There is hope that if the two sides get together, cease fighting, and engage in dialogue, the situation will improve. This work by Abulhawa, narrated from a Palestinian perspective, challenges and dismantles the dominant colonial narratives that shape perceptions of Palestinians. It encourages a reevaluation of the current issues by presenting a Palestinian viewpoint. Abulhawa believes that expressing a story via art is a method of confirming one's own existence. She is reclaiming the original story of the struggle as a decolonization practice to challenge the prevailing narrative that justifies the occupation and devalues the local people.

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