

# **Representations of Exile in Palestinian Fiction**

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## ABSTRACT

1948 is the year in which many Palestinians have had to face the crippling effects of dispossession and displacement from the land of Palestine. Palestinians refer to that year as 'Al-Nakba', the catastrophe. This set the Palestinian fiction into motion to represent the crippling effects of dispossession and displacement. Palestine became bound in memories for many of the refugees, migrants, exiles that these conditions produced. The events that took place in the Middle East after 1948, the six day war in 1967, the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the atrocities in the refugee camps in 1980s further intensified the deprivation, the suffering of Palestinians and the burden of their memories of Palestine. They produced works of fiction that primarily represented these events, a romanticized version of Palestine prior to these events and the problems Palestinians have had to face afterwards. Ghada Karmi's autobiography *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* is a clear example of this tradition that will be studied under the typology of 'first wave'. The autobiography as well as other works mentioned or studied makes this tradition much more visible.

On the other hand, it has been 65 years since the first exiles ran away from what they knew as their home. For 65 years they have been living in their new home whether it is England, America or a refugee camp. The primacy of the disturbing political events of 1948 and 1967 is slowly losing its thematic value in the representation of Palestinian exile. The 'inbetweenness' of Palestinian exile is not the end result of these representations anymore, but a characteristic that continuously reshapes it. Samir El-Youssef's novella *The Illusion of Return* holds the characteristics of 'second wave' style of representation.

The study of these representations provide the dialectics of the representations of exile and help us in placing these representations under these two lucid categories in which the various variations between these two styles of representation could be understood . The categories distinguish the representations according to the primacy of events they represent and what they suggest about Palestinian exile. It seems a necessity to study these texts under these two lucid categories since the characteristics of representation of exile seem to hint at various shifts and turns in relation to the stance of these Palestinian exiles towards nationalism which tends to produce hybrid identities.

**Keywords:** Palestine, Exile, Representation, Gender.

## ÖZ

1948 yılı Filistinlilerin, Filistin denen diyardan yersizleşmesinin ve yurtsuzlaşmasının felç edici gerçekliğiyle yüzleşmelerinin yılıdır. Filistinliler bu olaya felaket anlamına gelen “Al-Nakba” derler. Yaşanan olaylar, ortaya çıkan yersizleşmenin ve yurtsuzlaşmanın kurgudaki temsiliyeti için Filistin kurmacasını harekete geçirmiştir. Filistin mültecileri, göçmenleri ve sürgünleri için, ülkeleri artık hatıralarında yeralmaya başlar. 1948’den sonra Orta Doğu’da yaşanan olaylar; 1967’deki 6 günlük savaş, 1980’lerde İsrail’in Lübnan’ı işgali ve mülteci kamplarını kontrolü altına alması Filistinlilerin yaşamakta oldukları mahrumiyeti ve acıları güçlendirip, Filistin hatıralarının yükünün ağırlaşmasına sebep olmuştur. Tarihsel gelişmeler yaşadıkları kaybı, ait hissettikleri topraklarının, kültürlerinin ve kimliklerinin kurgu içerisinde pek çok farklı şekillerde temsil edilmesine sebep olmuştur,ve bunu yansıtan pekçok edebiyat eseri üretmiştir. Ghada Karmi’nin *In Search Of Fatima: A Palestinian Story* adlı otobiyografisi bizim ‘birinci dalga’ diye adlandırdığımız bu temsiliyet geleneğinin açık bir örneğidir. Hem bu otobiyografi hem de incelenecek veya bahsedilecek olan diğer eserler bu geleneği gözler önüne serer.

Öte yandan, ilk yersizleşenlerin ev olarak bildikleri Filistin’den kaçışlarının üzerinden 65 yıl geçti. Yeni yurtları bazıları için İngiltere, Amerika, bazıları için mülteci kampları olmuştur.Yeni yurtlarına yerleşmelerinin üzerinden geçen bu 65 yıl içerisinde Filistin sürgününün temsiliyeti, yaşanan rahatsız edici olayların temsiliyetinde 1948’in ve 1967’nin edindiği tematik önceliğini zamanla kaybetmeye başladığını da göstermektedir. İkinci dalga temsiliyetinde ise Filistinlilerin arada kalmışlığına olan vurgudan çok melezleşmenin vurgusu yapılmaktadır. Samir El-

Youssef'in *The Illusion of Return* isimli kısa romanı ikinci dalga diye adlandırdığımız bu temsiliyetin karakteristik özelliklerini taşımaktadır.

Bu temsiliyetlerin incelenmesi bizlere hem sürgünün temsiliyetinin diyalektiklerini hem de bu temsiliyetleri 'birinci dalga' ve 'ikinci dalga' diye adlandırdığımız şeffaf kategoriler altında ayrıştırıp incelememize yardımcı olmaktadır. İki eserin bu temsiliyet dalgaları altında incelenmesi, Filistin sürgününün yansımalarındaki değişim ve farklılaşımın arada kalmışlıktan melezleşmenin gerçekliğine giden süreci göz önüne serer.

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To all those who grew up listening or grew old narrating romanticized stories of distant imaginary places lost in the past; like the stories of my parents' of Asomados (a village near Limassol) and Tahdagala (a part of Nicosia).

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# Chapter 1

## INTRODUCTION

Palestine is one of the most troubling cases of international relations, a case whose solution is nowhere to be seen. By solution, it is not the ‘two state solution’ drafted by the international powers that is being referred to here, but the idea of solution that Edward Said in his article *Invention, Memory and Place* explains (192) as mutual recognition of other’s narrative. Palestine is a problematic, multi-layered question that dates back to the period between colonialism and the subsequent national movements of the 20<sup>th</sup> century where the imperial powers of the period turned the Middle East region (as well as other regions around the world) into a grand chessboard while various military powers became the players of the game.

The existence of Palestine is troubled not simply because of its non-recognition by western powers nor because of the recurrent attacks it receives by its powerful neighbours once in a while but due to the limitations of memory and the expansiveness of fiction. The inevitable end of one’s memory is what threatens the existence of Palestine in fiction. Its past inhabitants produced works of literature that have countered this threat to its existence where it is an undeniably present fictive place for the ‘tender beginners’ for whom it exists or existed. The tender beginner is a conception of Hugo of St. Victor.

It is, therefore, a source of great virtue for the practiced mind to learn, bit by bit, first to change about invisible and transitory things, so afterwards it may be able to leave them behind altogether. The man who finds his homeland sweet is still a tender beginner; he to whom every soil is as his native one is

already strong; but he is perfect to whom the entire world is as a foreign land. The tender soul has fixed his love on one spot in the world; the strong man has extended his love to all places; the perfect man has extinguished his. Hugo of St. Victor<sup>1</sup>

Displacement from 'home' has become a common experience of numerous people around the world and pins down multitudes to an understanding far from being the perfect way to relate to the earth. These people have been trapped in the primary experience according to Hugo's account of relating to a native place or to places. The processes of displacement leave individuals without much possibility of achieving Hugo's idea of 'perfection'.

### **1.1 Displacement in today's world**

One of the major reasons for the commonality of the humiliating<sup>2</sup> experience of displacement is because of the violent history that Dascalu termed in relation to the colonial history of the world. This suggests that the historical practices have established the experience of the necessity of leaving your homeland as a way of life and a natural part of the globalised world. Globalisation has evolved into an age where movement or 'cancellation of space' seems to represent the modern individual and the policies of the modern institutions at present.

Zygmunt Bauman, in his essay "Tourists and Vagabonds" distinguishes two categories of people emerging from the process of Globalization. The first of these categories, according to Bauman, is the 'tourist', whose movements are out of choice. The tourist has an incessant desire to travel that does not find fulfilment, since the current system tends to shorten the satisfaction of desire towards the

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Said quoted in "Reflections on Exile" (185)

<sup>2</sup> Brodsky suggests that exile is a humiliating experience; since he cannot seem to find one positive aspect of the experience of exile even for writers.

ultimate of goal creating the ultimate consumerist world. The “tourists” category are identities where individuals will feel ‘displaced’ if they stayed at the same place, since that portfolio of subjects’ identities are shaped by a trend in Globalisation which promotes a desire and an identity based solely on travel endeavour in the postmodern era. This is shaping various types of travel shape today.

The desire to cancel space is in line with the free flow of capital; individuals just like capital could transcend borders without being caught up in any national, regional structures if it is along the lines of tourism. Tourism has become an important sector in the global market. The renewal of people’s desire to travel occurs along the lines that Bauman explained. Bauman explains that satisfaction is becoming momentary within the consumerist society that supposes an everlasting desire which leads to the desire for other places. As Bauman notes, the features of modern individuals and institutions are fetishized with the desires to cancel space and time in a way that leads to consumerism being embedded into the very idea of identifying one’s self.

However, it also produces another form of travel based on the necessity of travel, the concept of displacement in the definition of globalised world. In this process, the experience of displacement transcends any sort of historical, cultural, political, economical and even psychological underlying definitions. Displacement and travel are parts of the narrative of the 21<sup>st</sup> century; which describes the necessities and desires that seem to categorize a major role in the creation of new identities. This suggests that movement on one side, and belonging on the other are going through a transformation that is reshuffling the importance of these terms for identity formation that is shaping new grounds of identification in today’s world.

### **1.1.1 Concepts of Displacement - Migrant vs. Exile vs. Refugee**

There are various lexicons that are signifiers of the various types of displacements, each distinct from one another; expatriate, refugee, migrant, immigrant, and nomads. By studying the differences between these terms at the outset we can point to the significance of different classes, and hint at the process<sup>3</sup> by which one becomes displaced.

A refugee can be defined as a person who emigrates without choice and usually without the necessities of survival. The beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century is filled with such examples caused by famine, wars, totalitarian rules and oppressive regimes that cannot recognize political, gender, racial and sexuality differences. The Palestinian refugees, running from war and destruction to the neighbouring countries due to the creation of Israel in 1948 are examples of this. The main concern is to find a shelter, resources and the absolute necessities of life.

The emigrants<sup>4</sup> are those who had the choice to stay but would not or could not because of economical, psychological, political or social reasons. They had the possibility of choice in the decision to be displaced. The expatriate chooses to become displaced not out of necessity but through personal choice, which signifies a higher class of displacement.

The various terms of displacement are not going to be dealt with in detail, in relation to the variances of their representations in literature and what each type of

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<sup>3</sup> Eva Hoffman refers to the terms of displacement carrying a reference to class and to the process by which the individual or group became exile. By process, the process by which an individual became exile; out of necessity, chose out of desperation or had the freedom to choose.

<sup>4</sup> Higher freedom to choose but not necessarily higher in class.

displacement grounds its understanding on. The conditions and perceptions that have produced the underlying dynamics of the concepts of displacement at times become vague amongst the innumerable experiences and practices of displacement.

Caren Kaplan reminds us that, displaced writers are not usually referred to as “immigrant writers” or “refugee writers”<sup>5</sup>. Kaplan mentions this in order to point out that the concepts of displacement has various foregrounding elements that have resulted as an outcome of this procedure. The reason that writers are not called ‘refugee’ or ‘immigrant’ due to the long tradition of criticism to associate these experiences under the term of ‘exile’ as Kaplan notes was the case in Euro-American critical practices. The tradition of emphasizing the psychological or aesthetic elements of displacement has produced this tendency since representation and criticism moved away from the historicity, placement of displacement in this way. This tradition has also shaped the term of exile that will be challenged by referring to Palestinian displacement as Palestinian exile.

There is a special emphasis on the experience that refers to an individualistic experience, an experience that seems to have an element of spirituality embedded in it. It is a concept that we can fully grasp through Kaplan’s criticism of Euro-American critical practices.

All displacements are not the same. Yet the occidental ethnographer, the modernist expatriate poet, the writer of popular travel accounts, and the tourist may all participate in the mythologized narrativizations of displacement without questioning the cultural, political, economic grounds of

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<sup>5</sup> Kaplan: “Few of the writers included in critical assessments of Euro-American high modernism are referred to as immigrants or refugees. Their dislocation is expressed in singular rather than collective terms, as purely psychological or aesthetic situations rather than as a result of historical circumstances”(4)

their different professions, privileges, means and limitations. Immigrants, refugees, exiles, nomads, and the homeless also move in and out of these discourses as metaphors, tropes, and symbols but rarely as historically recognized producers of critical discourses themselves. Euro-American discourses of displacement tend to absorb difference and create historical amalgams; thus a field of social forces becomes represented as a personal experience, its lived intensity of separation marking a link with others (Kaplan, 2)

The concept of exile is one that has been shaped by this process as well. Therefore the definition of exile we ought to make here must not fall into the pitfall that Kaplan notes in the Euro-American critical tradition. Kaplan also notes (4) that there is a difference between wide spread experiences of exile and the metaphors and symbols that represent these displacements and questions why this representation evokes individualized, often elite, circumstances. A historical interrogation of the formation and usage of these concepts is necessary to be able to understand the politics that have shaped them; she attempts to change the concept but each concept has its own internal dynamics and limitations.

My attempt here is to refer to Palestinian displacement as Palestinian exile. Why is the concept of exile used in this thesis? This is partly due to Kaplan's analysis that the attempt to reach a less charged overarching concept to describe displacement shows that it is almost impossible since there is no single concept that is free from the preceding historical limitations that have coined these terms. The limitations of these concepts needs to be addressed by thinking of the aesthetic side of displacement but localizing, historicizing and thinking of the experience in relation to the collective experience.

The very choice of referring to Palestinian displacement as exile is an attempt to place Palestinian literature into Deleuze and Guattari conception of 'minor



literature'. Deleuze and Guattari point out that national literature like English literature is filled with minor literature. Numerous works of minor literature have shaped not only the fictive space of English literature but also its language. The literary work exists within a major language. The works of literature used in this thesis are also hinting at the idea that the literature studied here may renegotiate and revert the established forms within the field of exile and the English language. Minor Literature can subvert these forms by being aware of three characteristics; "deterritorialization" (Deleuze, Guattari, 16), "political" (17), and "takes on a collective value" (17). These works of literature challenge and propose new forms in national, cultural, political aspects for both Palestinian and English fiction.

The underlying assumptions of categorizing the various displacements of exile into one term would certainly be a monolithic approach. In this thesis, Palestinian dispossession of land, their displacement shall generally be referred to as exile but not claiming that exile is the overarching term for various types of displacements.

Hamid Naficy in his book *Accented Cinema* in which he studied films on displacements created a typology for these various films. His typologies for the films of displacement are exilic, diasporic and postcolonial/ethnic films. Naficy suggests that categorizations are "ideological" (Naficy, 36), and proposes that these typologies only refer to the treatment and the themes of the films. He stresses that the typologies he uses are lucid and are re-definable.

Naficy's typology is centered upon an anti-Barthesian claim in which his conception of the exilic, diasporic and ethnic filmmaking mostly depends upon the categorization of the films according to the filmmakers. Naficy attributes an

importance to the authorship of the accented films: In addition, in the course of their careers, many filmmakers move not only from country to country but also from making one type of film to making another type, in tandem with the trajectory of their own travels of identity and those of their primary community. (Naficy, 11)

The authorship is given credence. The author which assumes the role of the film director in film studies seem to be placed at the core of Naficy's typology or in other words this is the ground through which Naficy typology emerges. On the other hand Naficy's approach of having to place authorship back into the author is seen by Naficy as an poststructuralist position.

If prestructuralism considered authors to be outside and prior to the texts that uniquely express their personalities, and if cinestructuralism regarded authors as structures within their own texts, poststructuralism views authors as fictions within their texts who reveal themselves only in the act of spectating. Post- structuralist theory of authorship is thus embedded in theories of ideology and subject formation, and it privileges spectatorial reading over that of authoring.(Naficy,31)

Naficy posits his own position as a post-structuralist in which the reading would be the ultimate privilege which he sees as placing the author back into the "locatedness and the historicity of the authors back into authorship." (Naficy, 34) His conception derives from the authorship theory in which he politicizes the structural position of authorship. That is why Naficy suggests that, "It is thus that authors become discursive figures (Foucault 1977) who inhabit and are constructed not only by history but also by their own filmic texts." (Naficy, 35)

Naficy's typology informs the pages of this thesis in which there may be a tendency to refer to Palestinian displacement not just as exile but émigré, refugee as well as other terms of dispossession to refer to the themes of the works at various places.

The usage of the term of exile necessitates as Caren Kaplan's critique in *Questions of Travel: Postmodern Discourses of Displacement* that there must be a stand against the tradition of aesthetization of exile as a condition outside of its historical, cultural, political circumstances on the one hand and the stress to divergent tendencies and contradictions that are at the heart of dispossession on the other. This treatment needs to reconfigure the term of exile in order to incorporate a more collective experience of displacement. This is studied in Chapter 2. However, the term Palestinian exile does not refer only to the dispossession of individuals but on the contrary to the displacement of multitudes who found themselves in such a demeaning situation.

## **1.2 The Politics of Belonging in Exile**

Eva Hoffman reminds us that in the medieval Europe exile was the worst form of punishment and that there was an intricate link between identity and belonging; belonging to a group, to a people, to a history and to a narrative.

This was because one's identity was defined by one's role and place in society; to lose that was to lose a large portion of one's self. After being banished from Florence, Dante lived less than a hundred miles from his city-state --- yet he felt that his expulsion was a kind of psychic and social death, and his dream was either of return or of revenge (which he executed very effectively in the *Inferno*). Real life, for Dante; was in Florence; it could not exist fully anywhere else. (Hoffman, 40)

Exile existed as a punishment in and outside of this terrain and it continues to be used as a form of punishment to this day. One of the historical phases that provided a concrete place this punishment has been in the centuries long life of colonialism

which paved the way for the master's right to travel to other colonies, and master's right to export (or displace) slaves into whatever market lacking cheap labour or whatever land that did not possess economic worth. Colonialism gave exile a universal significance not only during the colonial period but also in the subsequent de-colonisations especially within nationalisms and nation states which have continued this long history of displacing peoples according to the policies and political, cultural views of their institution.

Nationalism as a narrative and nation as a political group both instil an idea of belonging to a piece of land, a land that becomes the object of the commodification of their selfhood. Land produces the fetish of nation on which their existence becomes meaningful and glorified. However this fetishization of lands also produces the opposite tendency of displacing others or those whose identity do not conform to those of the ruling nationalism. These tensions in between nationalisms were reinserted into the very heart of identity.

The overlaying influences of religion, nationalism, and globalisation shape the identity of multitudes today. The example of the very usage of first person plural pronoun 'we' in relation to another entity is one of the representations of the understanding of "belonging" in nationalisms. This is an example of the tool by which every national, gender, racial and religious narrative directs its subjects to belong to it and shapes the unconscious. The usage of language in this regard is essential to understand the experience of exile that can be seen as a separation of the 'self' from its 'home', and at times from 'we'.

When Hoffman says “we feel that there is an ideal sense of belonging” (39) he is referring to the subjugated characters under religious narratives; especially the construction of home in relation to the ideal home envisaged in Abrahamic religions. Narratives inflict the subject with an ideal sense of home and ideal being. Eva Hoffman referred to Genesis as one of the initial exiles of people, when she claims that the very idea of belonging to a ‘home’ envisioned by religion surfaces in the Biblical and Koranic traditions.

The process of belonging becomes transparent especially when the subject departs from it. Edward Said defines “exile” as “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” (“Reflections on Exile”, 173). Native place seems to be the fundamental element of identity especially once the subject becomes displaced, he or she becomes decentred, incomplete or enters as Said suggests a “discontinuous state of being” (Robinson, 140).

### **1.2.1 Scope of Exile in Literature**

The experience of exile is a state of ‘in-betweenness’ so it is useful to understand the condition of exile as the experience of estrangement, of gaining a state of in-betweenness that has its repercussions on the individuals. The definition of exile must not be limited to the event of displacement. The condition of exile that occurs after displacement finds various representations in literature. As Christina Dascalu explains,

The exile lives in a foreign country, a culture that is not his or her own, one that is alien, ‘other’. The exile’s existence, therefore, is underpinned constantly by a sense of his or her geographical displacement. To fit in with the dominant culture, the exile most often appropriates expectations that are

alien; the exile assimilates the roles and expectations of ‘the Other(s)’ among whom they find themselves. In this process, the exiled displace who they are. (Dascalu, 7)

The exile becomes entrapped between homes, cultures, languages and time. The linguistic displacement from the native language usually forces characters to exist in a new language; acquiring or rejecting the dominant language which is a simile for becoming assimilated or rejecting the dominance of the new culture; its language, and vision of home and future. The exile, whether a communal or individual<sup>6</sup> experience, makes individual(s) confront(s) the painful process of having to adapt to the conditions of their present.

The exile becoming entrapped between homes has another important signification. The native or true home, which he becomes displaced from, becomes a part of memory. Therefore, the concept of ‘home’ for an exile is located in memory; an imaginary Palestine as Salman Rushdie would have called it. Salman Rushdie suggested the partiality, the fragmentary vision of individuals, and home located in memory is also incomplete. It is only a part of the home that they experience is what they know. It cannot be seen as a complete; the limitedness of human perception and experience is the underlying assumption of Rushdie.

The term “Imaginary Palestine” also hints at the very idea of Hobsbawm who suggested that nation is a fictive construct though it appears to be claiming to be the opposite and Benedict Anderson in his book *Imagined Communities* suggested that nations are imagined political constructs since they are imagined entities. The very idea that nation is an imagined tradition suggests the fictive element of nationality

could be deciphered which would be evident from what Anderson calls the imagined community.

The imaginary communities that are placed in the individual's memories of the past - and not in their present- produce various opposing tendencies on how to deal with this type of loss. Andre Aciman also defines one of the possible shared qualities of exiles, which is "compulsive retrospective" (13), the continuous contemplation of the past, which the exile cannot ignore. When the exiled becomes displaced from home, the real home that is a subject of memory and therefore one's past, the exile may find himself / herself continuously attempting to contemplate it.

The very opposite of being retrospective is also possible where the displaced tries to forget his / her past, which may signify the temptation to be subsumed in the present. Re-establishing one's self in the present by attempting to leave aside the past where the home as well as the traumas that produced their displacement is located is futile. Hana Pichova mentions the two phenomena the exile is faced with; the pull of the "past" (Pichova, 3) and the pull of "forgetting" (Pichova, 4). The pull of the past is the process of the émigré becoming imprisoned in the "realm shaped by memories" (Pichova, 3). The Past constitutes the safe, familiar territory for the émigré in an unknown, unfamiliar and even uncanny territory. Pichova bases this understanding on Joseph Brodsky's definition of émigré as a "retrospective being" (3).

The two sided relationship of remembering or forgetting can be seen as one of the contradictory approaches that the displaced may be inclined to do in order to deal

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<sup>6</sup> Experience of exile is usually accepted to be individual experience expressed by Aciman but on the other hand, Karen Caplan criticizes this tendency to view exile as an individual experience.

with the trauma of leaving their home. Nabokov claims that bridge that the exile tries to create by “clinging on two shores” is bound to fall; the depiction of metaphoric fall occurring due to the intricate link between the two homes, two languages, two identities which cannot stand without the power of memory on one side and adapting to the present culture on the other.

With this pull of “power of memory” and “pull of forgetting”, if the émigré is encapsulated into the past too much, there is a chance of creating an identity fixated in the past where metaphorical fall to the rocks below happens as ‘the bridge collapses’.

The other phenomenon, the impossibility of creating the bridge involves the pull of forgetting where the exile distances himself / herself from the past to be able to integrate into the new society. Here, the émigré becomes stranded in the present without any familiarity. The opposite tendency where the émigré’ forgets the past and becomes encapsulated into the present the bridge will lose its grip on the opposite shore and collapse once again. As Pichova expresses,

If imagination is not strong or expansive enough to sustain a creative link with now necessarily imagined past, an émigré is reduced to clinging desperately to literal memories. Yet specific details about the past begin slowly to slip away, and forgetting becomes an inevitable part of exilic existence, causing the émigré to lose his or her grip on the old familiar shore. (Pichova, 3)

These two different visions of the exile suggest that exiled self has a lost attempt to construct a landscape for it gets encapsulated in the past. This attempt is problematized by the weak memory that leads the displaced to become encapsulated in the present.



The concept of home inevitably becomes located in memory with an opposing tendency for forgetting. The exile becomes discontinuous<sup>7</sup> in terms of time. This suggests that once the displacement occurs, the exile is faced with an identity crisis, for which there is not an easy way or any way out. This is the view of many writers and critics of literature of exile including Andre Aciman's claim that exiles are Permanent Transients. Even if the exile returns to his / her homeland after a period, the home one returns to is never the home one remembered or one seeks. Beckett's striking story of *The Unnamable* where the character's journey to his / her home is a "spiral movement"<sup>8</sup>, in which his character has to travel one complete circle to realise that it is still as far, and when he finally gets there, it is no longer the place he remembers<sup>9</sup>, which is signified by the murder of the character's family when he reaches home. This outlook suggests that displacement places the displaced characters into moving sand, the exilic characters unable to stand up tumble in it having to face the dynamic of exile.

### **1.3 Palestinian Dispossession**

Whether living inside or outside Israel, the Palestinian has an affiliation to a country that no longer exists, yet he or she carries a Palestinian national identity and belongs to a land they still call Palestine, typically without the denial of the existence of Israel. Although the source of this identity Palestine, has been replaced politically by the establishment of Israel, Palestinian writers in particular identify themselves with Palestine, a country many of them remember or about which they romanticize its former existence before 1948 or the lands unoccupied before 1967(Al-Saleh, 79)

Palestine is a non-existent country, a country which is not recognised by the United Nations although there have been many attempts to gain recognition. It is located in

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<sup>7</sup> Discontinuity seems to be one of the common forms of literature of exile which represents exile's position.

<sup>8</sup> Beckett's *The Unnamable* incorporates a deforming narrator; a voice that is trying to reach his home or travel back home, but could do so only in "spiral"(310) movements around the world.

<sup>9</sup> Remembers- The concept of 'home' for exile is located in memory. The connection is not a physical one, but a virtual link located in memories.

the Middle East, a region of the world which has been both romanticised and demonised by Western critical practices.

The catastrophe of 1948 has had a big impact<sup>10</sup> on Palestinians and Palestinian fiction since the Intifada. Israel exists; Palestine was torn apart, ghettoised in two parts which had dire consequences for Palestinians. Each family has relatives, loved ones who emigrated and became a refugee. It produced Palestinian Diasporas around the globe. Sayigh calls the Palestinian case ‘unique’ due to the unending repression of Palestinians is not only associated with the colonial period of British mandate which favoured and harboured the Zionist movement but to the period of national liberations that preceded it. Events that occurred during and after 1948- the catastrophe when Israel was established and Palestine ceased to exist, the continuous occupation which led to the six day war in 1967 when Palestinians had to endure hardship whether they were in Israel, Jordan, Syria, Egypt or Lebanon.

Sayigh also suggests that it does not exist as a state; it does not exist as the Palestinian national identity envisions it, and it does not exist as a territory on which Palestinians have sovereignty over and has caused over a million Palestinians to try to live under different nation states who are themselves trying to exert their own power.

Memoirs serve to provide the realities of the past and suggest dreams of the future and its relation to present includes the attempt to reclaim history, land and the right to return and the right for Palestine.

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<sup>10</sup> Nicholas Pagan signals the impact of the catastrophe in relation to Fateh Azzam’s play *Baggage*. “Inside Fateh Azzam’s *Baggage*: Monologue and Forced Migration”.

Sophie A. McClennen argues for understanding exile writings as dialectical so that we can explain the “tension and anxieties” related to such writings. Dialectical thinking, for McClennen, assumes that contradictory positions on exile, such as its national and global implications, are united in a form of necessary opposites. Some of these opposites are the physical and mental, the liberating and confining, the personal /individual and political / collective aspects of exile, all seen as dialectical tensions that track in “a variety of different ways in each particular case, but these tensions are a common feature of exile writing.”(80)

The binaries in time, in place, in how one relates to them, on exile’s inclination to remember or to forget are a dialectical process involving many binaries. It is never a case of ‘is’ but of ‘becoming’. Hamid Naficy in his book *An Accented Cinema*, in which he studies films of exile, diaspora and ethnicity, states “identity is not a fixed essence but a process of becoming, even a performance of identity” (6).

#### **1.4 The Focus: Representation of Palestinian Exile**

The tradition of representations of Palestinian exile as mentioned earlier, has produced various tendencies in representing Al-Nakba and the six day war of 1967. There have been an innumerable number of writers that have represented the great impact of these events. The writers experiencing these events have produced what may be called ‘the first wave’ of writers like Said, Darwish, Turki, Karmi. These writers have represented and dispersed the tragedy of Palestinian people in various different ways.

Fatfeh Azzem’s play *Baggage* is one where there is a character named Traveler who is at the airport trying to go somewhere. The setting is a surreal airport since the flights from the airport are not only destinations of cities but a surreal airport with the announcement directing, guiding and interrogating the passengers. “Attention please. All passengers traveling home” (Azzem, 66) or another announcement that follows for passengers who are looking for “love”(67) or “happiness”(67). The

announcements suggest that the airport is a reflection of the people's individual journey. Therefore, the routes may refer to various states of a person. The character called the traveler is questioned by the security announcement, for the baggages he is carrying is the frame of the play. The questioning of the Traveler shows that each baggage is the memory of his past, belongings given to him by various other characters which seem like physical and metaphorical burdens of his past.

After the interrogation about the contents of the luggages, the Traveler becomes in apt to choose a gate to go to. This suggests that Azzem's play is an example of the 'first wave' style of representation since the impossibility of deciding what to do is an example the way the character is stuck and cannot produce a more hybrid stance to be able to overcome this inbetweenness. The burden of the traumas of the past weighs the character down in the temporality of the present time and place.

Nicholas Pagan in his essay "Inside Fateh Azzam's Baggage: Monologue and Forced migration" points out the way that Catastrophe has made Palestinians tighten their grip on the collective Palestinian identity. The Catastrophe has made play writers produce an array of plays and novels that can be seen as an "catalyst of creativity"(17) of what Pagan terms as "the trauma of forced migration and how one adjusts to living in exile" (17).Pagan also notes that one of the most important steps in Palestinian theatre was the establishment of al-Hakawati theatre, which he states holds importance for Fateh Azzam, is "building political awareness and resistance to occupation" (Pagan, 18). Seeking to refute the official history, to reclaim the past, to build a political awareness or demand can be seen as ways to define this 'first wave' style of representation.

However, there has been a 'second wave' of writers whose representations of their burdens are not necessarily that of 1948 but later. A new generation of writers whose representation of exile is outside of the traditional tendency to represent the historical events of 1948, 1967 as primacy or necessity. The dynamics underneath the change in these representations is crucial to the understanding of the representations of exile.

This 'second wave' of writers that build their views upon the initial representations of Palestinian exile and in various ways criticize and adopt the tradition of first wave writers include writers like Lila Abu-Lughod, Suad Amiri, Lisa Suhair Majaj and even Mahmoud Darwish because of his latter poems. The 'second wave' being referred to is hinting at a major differentiation in the works of various writers from concentrating on representing the catastrophe, into a state of 'in-betweenness' that seems to critically approach not only the poetics of exile but also the prior representations of exile. A motto for this 'second wave' of writers may be identified as 'not representing Palestine, but imagining it.'

The motto is a direct criticism of earlier 'representations as' that fixes certain realities of Palestine to and prior to 1948, however the second wave of writers seem to challenge the very idea of 'representing' a romanticized Palestine prior to 1948 and the intense feeling of loss of home and the devastating fortune are no longer the overarching significance anymore.

The social, political forces that have produced this 'second wave' in the representation of Palestinian literature may have been caused by the new generations that only listened to the events as stories or as a generation that produces new ways

of understanding the dynamics of Palestinian exile, diaspora and those who have become multi-ethnic identities.

The focus of this study will be in relation to two works of literature Samir El-Youssef's novel *The Illusion of Return* and Ghada Karmi's novel *In search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story*. The comparative analysis of these two distinct modes of representations mentioned above will become more evident in reference to other Palestinian fictions ranging from Mahmoud Darwish's poetry, Azzam's play *Baggage* and many others. These references to Palestinian exile (or exile itself) will be used to make out the outline of the exilic Palestinian character and how these works treat exile aesthetically and politically.

In this study, the works of various writers whose fiction is situated closely in relation to the geographical terrain are not necessarily writing in Palestine but writers or the characters within their fiction have in some shape or form associated their identity with Palestine.

Therefore situating this study in relation to a geographical place derives from many reasons since as stated earlier in the introduction; the study will not be purely about the aesthetics of exile but rather the political, social, cultural elements of exilic fiction. Confining the study to a national identity, which we will look at in detail, we could map out the fields of Palestinian exile discourse. The decentred subject whose narrative becomes discontinuous causes an anomie, a crisis of the subject and its representation. The way the two authors represent exile, the differences of their stances or their character's stances on the past, national identity will clarify the differences of the waves of representation.

## Chapter 2

### **GHADA KARMI'S IN SEARCH OF FATIMA: A PALESTINIAN STORY**

I had looked forward very much to this experience, but it was not working out right. Sitting in the back of the truck and facing what seemed the wrong way, I could not see where we were going, only where we were coming from. (Achebe, 2)

[] Perhaps just me, a me that is no less a figment of time than this city is a figment of space. (Aciman, 34)

The study of representations of Palestinian exile points to various tensions in the very fabric of exile writers in general and Palestinian exile writers specifically since there is an element of uniqueness in the Palestinian case. These tensions within the representations are reified by the various tensions of experiencing exile as well as the dynamics of selfhood. In the representation of exile in Palestinian fiction, the influence of the native nationality and the national desires and demands due to dispossession of Palestinians, Al-Nakba are visible.

The exilic experience incorporates various opposing dynamics of linguistic, cultural, national aspects for those who experience it. This has a similarity with the dialectics of selfhood. As Keya Ganguly in her study "Migrant Identities: Personal Memory and The Construction of Selfhood" suggests, "The contention here is that the decentering- and recentering – of subjectivity is staged not as singular, noteworthy, or ritually dramatic events, but rather in ordinary narratives of dislocation and renewal"(27). This suggests that identity formation through a process of otherness is inherent in exilic representation., The sense of otherness, in this respect is clarified

by Ganguly as occurring “in the mundane process of recollecting the past and everyday exigencies of being in the world. To import Suleri’s epigraph, otherness is to be found ‘precisely where you are sitting’” (29).

The formation of selfhood inherits the dynamics of negotiation and renegotiation with ‘other’ in which is an ongoing process. This process becomes clearer in the dialectics of exile in which recollections serve as “ideological terrain on which people represent themselves” (Ganguly, 29).

The process of personal recollections of home move along the lines of remembering or forgetting and between assimilation and rejection of the various cultural elements of the different cultures that are in tension in exile in order for the identity in exile to form. This process produces an array of identities and representations of Palestinian exile. This process makes visible the various paths or tendencies of the way the dialectics of exile shape identity and representation and provides the very dialectics of the formation of selfhood in a clearer manner.

The collective loss of land, authority and the right to a state by Palestinians are some of the important aspects of Palestinian fiction. The representation of Palestinian exile is troubled by these aspects since the recollection of the collective experience and the underlying political assumptions suggests that Palestinian identity formed prior to exile is one of these factors..

Dispossession of Palestinians in the wake of what Sheila Hannah Katz’s suggestion in her study “Adam and Adama, ,Ird and Ard: En-gendering Political Conflict and Identity in Early Jewish and Palestinian Nationalisms” that the period at the



beginning of the 20th century was defined by the formation of nationalist response to the challenge of identities in relation to the shift towards “secular nationalism” from the prior identity during Ottoman times that was shaped by “loyalties of village, religion and empire” (Katz, 85). The emerging national identities of the period saw the dispossession of Palestine which produced its own sentiments in order to deal with it.

This is one of the reasons that exile Palestinian fiction incorporates a much more dense relationship with the national desires of Palestinians. The process of the formation of national identity that was occurring during the period of dispossession produced various narratives of nationality<sup>11</sup>. This uniqueness of the period of the first half of 20th Century, as a period of de-colonisation, gaining independence from being a colony, the development of new types of nationalisms, the Catastrophe and having to deal with the Catastrophe in a collective manner has placed emphasis on various dynamics of exile which is a terrain with a deeper interplay with political, cultural, national discourses .

This terrain shares common themes of home (Palestine), Catastrophe (Al-Nakba), the demand of return in some way or another in order to reject other claims on the land and to define and reassert themselves is one of the factors that shape the otherness of selfhood influenced by the terrain of history.

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<sup>11</sup> Yezid Sayigh mentions (32) that there are at least 2 Palestinian nationalities; one based on being Arabs of the land of Palestine which refutes Israeli claims and the other a nationality that suggests that they are not Arabs but Palestinians that have formed in order to refute the claims of other Arab nations on the land.

The representation of exile referred to here is the ‘first wave’ of representation whose representation of exile was problematized by the national, collective elements and desires mentioned above. The ‘first wave’ representation is in no way a singular representation of exile. It is a tradition of representation in which exile was directly linked with the dispossession in which the lands of Palestine became an important issue and theme of exile.

This ‘first wave’ tradition produced numerous works through writers like Said, Turki, Darwish and others that produced such representations in different genres of fiction. The text that will be studied as an exemplary representation of the ‘first wave’ is Ghada Karmi’s autobiography *In Search of Fatima: A Palestinian Story*.

The memoirs, biographies and autobiographies have been one of the plateaus of the fictional representation. This genre provided a ground for the expression of individual histories especially in relation to the dominant history and this is one of the reasons that self narratives of the past link the individual experience with collective experience and try to reassert themselves, their past homes, the traumas and the loss they had faced into fiction.

Nancy S. Struever in her essay “Rhetoric: Time, Memory, Memoir” looks at the rhetoric involved in this genre.

The memoir is a generic response to the vital task of designing memory and employs rhetorical values and procedures to fulfill this task. (I am using “memoir” simply as an inclusive term for the genres of recollection.) The primary constraint on the memoir is that the structure of “life”, this narrative of living through change, becomes the point of view for relating and assessing all issues of accomplishment and error (Struever, 427)

Struever's view that the perception of time yielding around a first person is seen by her to overlay a plain which conceals questionings of various institutions, faculties since "memoir of an inquirer has particular motives" (429). Therefore, this genre is underpinned by a motive that pervades it. Struever recognizes various parallels and distinctions between historical works but stresses the motive behind the "memory work"(429).

Therefore, the rhetorical element of genres of recollection must not be dismissed since it portrays the inquiry with a certain motive of the author. The rhetoric involved in the way the events, stories, memories usually in a linear development of time that narrative story is shaped into a climax of success or failure. This informs my study of Ghada Karmi's autobiography.

The 'first wave' representations of exile incorporate the loss of Palestinians as a concern are very much infused in historicity acting as a fictional gateway to the historical existence, the there "hadbeenness" of one's home and identity. Their "hadbeenness" a much more clear term in order to understand the function of using the genres of recollection that claim a version embedded in reality. This expression portrays the concreteness of home, people, identity that had existed in the distant past and the genre of writing personal histories acts as a direct claim of the materials of fiction to that of historical existence of Palestine.

On the other hand, as mentioned in the introduction Caren Kaplan suggested that the literature of exile is a plain where individual experience plays a more important role especially in the western critical practices in which aesthetics of exile became the defining feature of the concept of exile. Kaplan suggests (5) that this may be

countered through historicization, localization, placement and expanding the understanding of displacement from singular to plural. This attitude would require “considering material histories of immigration is only one way to destabilize modern myths of travel” (Kaplan, 5). Kaplan’s proposition of countering the fallacy of producing concepts and perceptions that are ahistorical provides the framework of studying the representation of exile in Palestinian fiction in relation to dispossession.

The genres of recollection as stated above usually assert themselves in place, in time in which the narrative development is shaped by it, they are usually very much in politics, and act as an inquiry, a politicized rhetoric. National and collective sentiments that the Catastrophe produced seem to trouble the experience of exile as an individual experience since it becomes a recollection of collective memory; a recollection of the collective identity. The individual experience of having to face the difficulties of departing from one’s home, of having to find a shelter, a camp, a house to stay in, something to live on, making social contact, dealing with the loss of a future envisioned are at the same time layered upon with the collective elements mentioned here.

## **2.1 The Past and Present**

Past and present proves to be a lucid dichotomy in exile studies where writers, characters, scenes seem to be a mixture of different times and places. On the one hand, past and present are seen as linear developments of time, of story narratives but there are also more confusing perceptions of time in literature of exile. The continuous shifts between the past and present in the literature of exile suggests that time is an important element in the representations of exile that cannot be distinctively separated and becomes infused with different places and times in

literature of exile. The past and present in a way fuse together and make both plains unstable. The present incorporates passage ways into the past which holds the conception of home, the native language, an idea of the self in relation to nationalism, and the traumas of the loss of home , and self. The ‘retrospective’ element reshuffles the almost oblique distinctions of the past and present even more oblique.

The outcome of the loss and traumas of the past means that the process places the individuals into an unfamiliar context who face with various opposing tendencies within the present. These tendencies seem to either shape around remembering or forgetting of the loss without producing a singular outcome or a singular tendency but tending to produce narratives with various contradictory standpoints. These standpoints involve the desire to belong to the culture in the past or the one in the present.

It is necessary to study the treatment of the past in order to be able to understand the nonstablensness of two places, times, themes and the tensions that affect the end products. The tensions of these distinctive forces referred to as the “dialectics” (Dascalu, 10) of exile or as we have traced this to the dialectics of selfhood will become more clear in the study of the effects of national identity with gendered, political subtexts in a process of other.

The study of Ghada Karmi’s autobiography will show the symbolism of Fatima that centers on a gendered portrayal of nationalism almost an archehtype of Palestinian nationalism, her parent’s inability to create a bridge which is due to her parents’ other being the present, the shift and turns of Ghada’s identity portrayed in the text.

The historical, collective significance these have for the representation of Palestinian exile, or in Dascalu's expression the dialectics of Palestinian exile clarifies the politics involved within this representation.

The treatment should be at first address the historicization of the exilic experience in terms of the historical events and conditions that produced it as well as the conditions and events that shaped the lives of the exiles need to be addressed. The placement of exile in terms of the geographical and fictive space they occupy or occupied needs to be understood so that the pitfall of exilic criticism to see this experience as a purely aesthetic mode of being may be transcended.

### **2.1.1 The Past as Palestine**

The past is, as some writers stated, familiar since it is experienced. It is contained in memories which hold conceptions of identity, belonging and traumas of separation exists. Palestine is in a place of memory which also includes the unending violence and suppression of Palestinians by colonialist Britain. The colonialist regime that had sided with the Zionist movement through the Balfour declaration, the Western support evident in the construction of Israel in 1948 and then in 1967 has influenced the Palestinian exiles. The familiarity includes the history of oppression that Palestinians faced.

For 'first wave' representations of exile, the past incorporates Palestine before 1948; "the catastrophe", Al-Nakba the centuries long of a settled people, and tradition. The period of the Palestinian mandate was the period in which the national struggles were taking effect and many political entities had tried to resist the British colonialist policies much earlier than 1948. The Palestinian nationalist resistance had been

defeated time after time by the British colonial administration and its government which was in favour of the creation of a Jewish state after the colonialist period ended.

However, The past for Palestinian writers is Palestine in which they associated themselves with the land; the failed struggles against British and Zionist movements and the catastrophe of 1948 that saw the creation of Israel; and turned many of the Palestinians into refugees, exiles, a dispossessed multitude. Keya Ganguly notes,

recollection of the past serve as the active ideological terrain on which people represent themselves to themselves. The past acquires a more marked salience with subjects for whom categories of the present have been made unusually stable or unpredictable, as a consequence of the displacement enforced by postcolonial and migrant circumstances.(29-30)

As Sherwell explains, the displaced who are ‘not there’, not in Palestine anymore, tend to have more of a “static memory” (Sherwell, 166) of the moment of departure; and the Palestinians ‘there’ still living in the West Bank or Gaza, experience the humiliation everyday. This view is in accordance with the popular belief in exile studies that exiled writers are in a way fixated with the period of departing from home. As for other Palestinian writers ‘there’, 1948 is also a major point in which their home, and identity suffered a major blow.

The past is a subject which is not only troubled for the displaced Palestinians but a point of crisis for all Palestinians. The continuous subjugation of Palestinians under the political visions of national systems that assert their history by suppressing those

of the other, like other Arab countries of the region which have repressed the history of Palestinians did not only problematize the identities of the displaced but of all Palestinians.

The categorization of the chapter as Past and Present, suggests that the aim is to try and locate the very symbols, metaphors, scopes of the texts; and try to understand how they relate to the positions of displacement theories and representations in fiction and the way the writers treat the tensions of personal identity formation or re-formation and collective elements that influence it to produce an 'inbetweenness' of exiles mentioned in the introduction.

The collective element in *In Search of Fatima- A Palestinian story* seems to be an attempt to add an entry into the archive of history of Palestine as a fictional registry of the journey of a Palestinian and to redefine the collective identity of Palestinians. The definition of 'displaced autobiographies' by Asaad Al Saleh is confronted with various underlying dynamics of this vast literary tradition that exists, as we try to seek for the collective elements of Palestinian experience in Karmi's book.

Asaad Al Saleh in his study *Displaced Autobiography in Edward Said's Out of Place and Fawaz Turki's the Disinherited* suggests that these two texts alongside various other texts of Palestinian writers like Mufid Abdul Hadi, Mourid Bourghouti, Serene Husseini Shahid, Hisham Sharabi are categorized (Al-Saleh, 89-90) under this subcategory of autobiography that he calls 'displaced autobiographies'. Al-Saleh suggest that these writers of autobiographies identify themselves with Palestine; prior to 1948 or lands prior to 1967, they try to re-narrate those lands and this tendency produces a certain medium. "A medium of revisiting the old homeland, oral



testimonies, memories and autobiographies prevail in modern Palestinian literary and cultural scene” (Saleh, 80). Saleh’s study infers that the displacement of Said was more “smooth” (Saleh,3) whereas Turki’s displacement was more “difficult” (Saleh, 3) due to his experiences in a refugee camp, a difference of experiencing displacement that produced the end result due to economic and political conditions. Al-Saleh coins the term of ‘displaced autobiography’ in this way;

Autobiography stems from the state of being and it gives this state a voice to be visible to other people ... present their individuality - with attitudes, ideas, and reflections about it - as they think it is or as they want it to be... Without a politically existent Palestine in which to belong, while consciously identifying oneself as a Palestinian ... Express an unsettled state of state of the self-divorced from a crucial part of its identity. Reading their work, therefore, without recognizing such connections between the presence of the narrator and the absence of his place misses the essence of what I call “displaced autobiographies”. This subgenre is concerned with authors writing about a life-story that lacks a settled place to contain it. The disturbed lives recorded by Palestinian autobiographers create personal narratives related to the collective Palestinian memory of displacement. These accounts are displaced the sense that displacement permeates their setting, characterizations, voice, and whole subject. Displacement is more than a theme in these Palestinian autobiographies. It is a process that shapes the Palestinian memory and determines even the mode of autobiographical production, allowing it to express the individual as representative of the collective. (Al-Saleh, 88)

Al-Saleh’s terminology of ‘displaced autobiography’ subcategory hints at an established link between the self-narratives of the displaced writers and the collective loss of a group or a nation provides a critical space in which Ghada Karmi’s *In Search Of Fatima - A Palestinian Story* may studied in relation to Kaplan’s understanding (Kaplan, 5) of historicizing the aesthetic elements of exile in which the aesthetic practices of exile needs to be critically engaged in order not to fall into the pitfall of the Euro-American critical practice to see it only as an individual act. The aesthetic elements of exile referred to is the overt abstract depictions of exilic

experience, the depictions that treat exile as a purely aesthetic gain for individuals since the exile moves beyond the borders of native culture.

The study of the symbols within the recollection of the past, the treatment of the past and the various tensions in relation to the political desire behind the recollection provides us with various problematic of exile and its representation.

### **2.1.2 Prologue and the Change in Narrative Style**

Prologue which is an initial description of Ghada's moment of separation and departure from home and from Palestine centers the story on loss. The epilogue also incorporates the separation of Ghada from Rex, her dog which is one of the recurrent symbols of her life in Palestine. The other recurrent symbol is Fatima. These two symbols need to be distinguished in order to understand the importance they have for the narrator and how Fatima is the embodiment of Palestinian collective identity and the underlying political certainties this has.

The narrative describing the separation describes the main character of this fictional biography with the third person singular pronoun 'she' whilst in the book the narrative description uses the first person singular pronoun when narrating the same event. The usage of third person singular in the epilogue seems important in which the narrator of the epilogue seems to position him or herself at a distance from the character experiencing the displacement. However, the narrator of the epilogue that seems to have an insight of Ghada's feelings and thoughts seems to be the narrator of the story. "You'll be fine and we'll be back. But she knew somehow that it wasn't true. Despite her parents' assurances, a dread internal voice told her so" (Karmi, 2). The narrator of the epilogue looking at the event of departure from outside suggests

that this is the narrator's view of the past, looking at the events of her memory from a distance from the present. However, in the *Palestine* chapter the same event is narrated with the first person narrative.

They sat silently, their eyes fixed on the road ahead. No one seemed aware of my terrible anguish or how in that moment I suddenly knew with overwhelming certainty that something had irrevocably ended for us there and, like Rex's unfeigned, innocent affection, it would never return. ( Karmi, 122)

The difference in the narrative style suggests that the narrator in the Prologue tries to distance herself from the one within the story rather than the first-person narrator of the book. The study of the process of the identity formation of the narrator provides the reasons why such a distancing occurs. The process of the constructions of the narrator's selfhood will provide the symbols, events and gender roles that shape the process.

### **2.1.3 Fatima as a Symbol of Palestine**

The Prologue hints at the importance Rex, her dog, has for Karmi. Rex is their dog and the dog which is very much house bound, with which Karmi spent time at their home in Jerusalem. Rex would follow her to school (Karmi, 44). It seems that the young girl has a very close attachment to Rex. This closeness to Rex suggests that it is a symbol, an embodiment of her childhood in Palestine and their home in Jerusalem. The naivety of the child's attachment to the pet is what signals this symbolic understanding which we can trace prior to their displacement. Rex is a company both for her and Ziyad that is described as an innocent being that was a part of their childhood, but even from the quotation above and the prologue, the narrator's reflection of her awareness and realizations of her departure on to its consciousness can be taken as a clear sign of this link.

The plot of *In Search of Fatima* is organized in a chronological order where with each page days, months and years of the character's story is narrated. However, Karmi's life that takes the shape of narrative development is not a single story. There are at least 2 different saturable layers of the narrative. The first story level is the chronological development of Ghada's life. Another layer is the various descriptions of political, social, economic and cultural elements or positions of that moment's condition. This second layer acts like a descriptive historical style that describes the cultural norms, traditions, music, cuisine, language that are all portrayed in this vast body of work. This is especially true for the Palestine chapter that starts from 1930s to the Catastrophe and ends with her arrival to the airport in London. This is the chapter of her personal past and collective past of Palestinians in which both layers can evidently be noticed indicating the complexity of the narrative.

The importance the narrator places on class, ethnic, gender relations, the cultural and political elements as well as the stories and perceptions of various other individuals, who were acquainted with her family, provide a collective memoir about the culture and the catastrophe. Their effects are on all the layers identified here.

As we have already mentioned, the Palestine chapter involves a symbol of 'home' and the England chapter presents the 'new home'. Fatima who is a peasant villager is an important symbol that encapsulates the chapter on Palestine. The villager who worked in their house is whom she felt "devotion" (Karmi, 17) to. The Palestinian Felahin (peasant) which constituted the symbol of home is, as the title suggests, what the narrator is searching for. Fatima who is a peasant woman is a recurrent symbol,

one that has acquired the status of an archetype image of national interest in Palestinian art and literature.

The claim of Fatima being a national symbol can be understood through Sherwell's study. Sherwell in her study *Imagining Palestine as a Motherland* notes that in the period prior to 1948 the ground of justification of the events to come had already denied the existence of Palestinians. This occurred through the representation of Palestine as an 'empty land' in various genres of art, literature and photography. The 'empty land' in the Western photographic representations of Palestine legitimized the Jewish migration during the British Mandate period. The mandate government was unable to stop the huge number of migrants which provided the basis for the creation of Israel.

Sherwell studies the depiction of Palestine in art and suggests that in Palestine there was a lack of artistic production and interaction with the western forms of art in those periods. However, especially after 1948 there has been a tendency to incorporate the visuality of the Palestinian village, its landscape, the villagers (especially women and children) and their labour which strengthens the Palestinian identity since it provides a space in which the historical roots of the Palestinians are emphasized. This emphasis acts like a counter argument to the previous representations of Palestine.

The depictions of Palestine after 1948 in which Palestine was often the landscape of the village with women and children depicted in order to create a masculine demand of watching out for them from the viewer: "Thus, the viewer assumes a paternalist position, interpolated to care for these women, children, and their village and in so doing, to safeguard Palestine and its future" (Sherwell, 163).

The past that has been portrayed as the village life dating back to the early part of the twentieth century seems to be the way in which Palestinian national identity had tried to envision its past; as simple, hardworking people whose lives are in a very close proximity with the land. It is a dignified, glorified vision which can be a national symbol and be used in the service of nationalism.

The past in Palestinian art and poetry; especially in relation to home finds representation as women in nationalist imagery. Sherwell notes that in the paintings women were depicted as a 'home' or as the virgin with the underlying nationalist assumption of 'a virgin to die for' or as beings who are 'responsible for the future'.

Nationalism as gendered masculine narrative in which being a nationalist is associated with masculinity and the politicization and the fetishization of the land in relation to the female body occurred for nationalist desires. The past and the future both entail symbols of women according to the national ideals. Katz mentions this process in which gender role played an important part in the formation of nationalisms in both Palestine and Jewish nationalisms. In Karmi's book Ghada is aware that there are various underlying meaning associated with peasant woman. Karmi explains the social classes within Palestinian society prior to 1948 as "peasantry, the rural landowning families and the townsfolk" (18). These social classes those were also representative of economical classes, and the narratives of that time.

The artistic tendency to represent Palestinian exile imbued with nationalism provided the substance to represent Palestinian village life around a masculinist perspective that becomes evident in various genres of art and literature. This process provided

various themes, metaphors, symbols that evolved around peasantry and women in order to form a certain understanding of belonging to land, representation of this belonging. This process is evident in the symbolism of Fatima.

Ghada explains how she felt devoted to Fatima during her childhood. Ghada felt as if Fatima was her mother. She would eat with Fatima, she felt a certain closeness to Fatima that she does not seem to have for her mother. She would even pretend as if Fatima did not have any children. This closeness and devotion to Fatima in her childhood is what turns Fatima into a symbol.

Karmi also notes that Fatima who was a fellahin, a peasant from one of the villages. . Ghada notes the prevailing stereotypes towards fellahin which her parents, sister and brother all shared undelays the underlying socio-economic values of these classes. These stereotypes made Ghada feel a sense of shame of being associated with Fatima since the stereotypes of fellahin was that it was a group of “primitive and uncivilized”(18) people. A narrative of modernization in which urban, modern life as well as class despised the group of people whose identity depended on the feudal ties with land and production.

On the other hand, Ghada notes that the fellahin also had been seen as symbols of “tenacity, simplicity, and steadfastness” (21), and which Fatima became a symbol of Palestinian people and culture.

And people believe that it was these qualities which saved them from the disintegration in the refugee camps after 1948 where so many of them were sent and still remain to this day. In the immediate aftermath of the expulsions from Palestine, they showed themselves steadfast and stoic, especially the

women. Having worked all their lives in the home and on the land, these women soldiered on in their tents in the same way (Karmi, 20-21).

The prevalent stereotype of fellahin before 1948 constituted a link with the national identity of the Palestinians, especially after the catastrophe and as a response to the tradition that had depicted Palestine as an empty ghost land in which a few Arabs lived. The social classes that were in many ways disintegrated in the catastrophe has in turn created a link between the national narrative and metaphors of peasantry; it was the firmness of the peasantry in the traits and traditions they held that the stereotype turned into a collective symbol after 1948.

The nationalist image became associated with the village, with the hardworking women of the villages; their caftans have in the process since 1948 also become symbols as well. The demeaning attitude towards the peasant class and its customs were destroyed since the Palestinian villagers became the strongest link to the claim of the land, its past and to the national identity. As Falestin Naili notes in her study “Memories of Home and Stories of Displacement: The Women of Artas and the “Peasant Past”” that these attributes are relevant not only to the period immediately after 1948, but also guide their lives in exile” (Naili, 72).

The stereotypes became transformed into the elements of national continuity, firmness and provided the bases to assert the defining characteristics of Palestinian nationality as a hard working group linked to the soil of Palestine, to its customs, to its embroidery and to its dress code. Ghada expresses this.

No one could have known that after the loss of Palestine in 1948 this despised peasant costume [caftan] would become a symbol of the homeland, worn with the pride by the very same women who had previously spurned it. In exile, it



became obligatory for each Palestinian woman to have her own caftan and show it off at public functions. (Karmi, 23)

The prevailing metaphor of Fatima suggests that the biographical novel seems to be a search not only for the character called Fatima al-Basha, but what it represents for Karmi and a metaphor for the Palestinian identity.

Tina Malhi-Sherwell in her study titled *Imagining Palestine as Motherland* suggests that, “The depiction of women in Palestinian literature and art increased after the displacement of the Palestinians from their land” (166). Sherwell suggests (165) that art and literature has played a crucial part in the creation and articulation of national identities, Sherwell suggests that landscapes such as the Palestinian village has had a clear function; “the village served as a suitable metaphor for Palestinian identity ... revival of Palestinian heritage and folklore” (164). Sherwell’s analysis of the painting in the period after 1948 showed that “Peasant women constitute the central subject of such paintings” (163). Women were not the central subject due to the presence of body but of women with “traditional costumes...embroidered dresses ... come to function as a way of mapping that land” (163). The place of village women as main markers into the national identity as well as nationalist imagery which had other various meanings such as the political significance of ‘women fertility’ or of reproducing the nation (162), as a mother of martyr, as a virgin to die for. Sherwell’s study is based upon various paintings from after the Intifada to the end of the twentieth century. Sherwell traces a transformation of the woman figure in Palestinian painting from being a site of reunification, that of peasantry, to becoming incorporated into the nationalist symbols where the symbol of women became something to die for, one who will bring about the new state, to one which according

to Sherwell became “a site of disillusionment” (161). A ‘disillusionment’ that Palestinian nationalism exploited in order to reclaim the land of Palestine. This process of claiming or reclaiming was in line with the masculinist view towards women that produced this tradition of representation.

The relevance of the common elements in painting, novel and poetry suggests that the representation of Palestine and its past holds common themes and representative styles that are plagued by similar elements such as the gendered narrative of nationalism or the desire to refute official history through a claim to land by claiming rural spaces of Palestine.

Sheila Hannah Katz suggested that the very political construction of nationalism is engendered. She proposes 5 distinct levels of the way that it is gendered discourse.

National narratives are, in fact, gendered texts at a number of different levels: (1) in the centrality of notions of manhood and masculinity to nationalism, (2) in the feminization of the land as the central symbol of survival, (3) in the ways nationalists imagined women, (4) in the ways modernization co-opted gender to shape nationalism, and (5) in the ways women colluded with or contested these constructions. (Katz, 86)

The gendered discourse of nationalism in relation to these levels set forth will guide us in terms of the understanding the symbols, the tensions of exile in the face of tensions and shifts of exile.

#### **2.1.4 Gender role of Palestinian women under the symbol of Fatima**

The displaced autobiography of Ghada Karmi image Palestine as Fatima is both a private symbol of her relation to Palestine, and a collective attachment to Palestine since Fatima is the symbol of Palestinian people. Edward Said in his article

“Reflections on Exile” explains the dynamics of nationalism and belonging in relation to exile.

Nationalism is an assertion of belonging in to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, customs and by doing so feeds of exile... Triumphant, achieved nationalism then justifies, retrospectively as well as prospectively, a history selectively strung together in a narrative form. (Edward Said, 176)

Ghada Karmi’s retrospection of the land of Palestine and of her childhood is a way to understand the symbolism of Fatima. Said’s proposition that nationalisms in a way piece together a narrative ‘selectively’ suggests that there is an element of rhetoric in Karmi’s retrospection.

The chapter on Palestine does provide a sense of gender dynamics of Palestine. The selective referral of Karmi to the Women Organizations and her mother’s role in taking part in it suggests that there were various movements of gender politics in which some women of the organization “discard the veil” (32), and how the women organizations took part in helping those who had been imprisoned prior to 1948.

An underlying dynamic is that the gender politics of Palestine was distorted by the Catastrophe which has severed various social classes. Their move to Damascus immediately after their displacement suggests that Syria is a space in which the masculine narrative could easily be felt. The education of women in that culture as “girls with enough education to read the Quran” (133), her insignificance there in her grand parents’ house which prompted her understanding of gender inequality is stressed. “People thought he was special and better than me because he was a boy” (134). The importance of Ziyad’s circumcision in her grandparents’ house and the

inequality she felt of being a girl suggests that Syria made her aware of the gender inequalities. Karmi mentions someone pulling her hair and shouting “cover your head” (139) suggesting her to wear a veil. Damascus of the period as a much more gender biased space makes Ghada aware of the gender roles in a way that she detests. Her description of Damascus suggests that the gendered bias she experienced there was not evident in Palestine. The difference of the gender aware narrative of the character suggests a less gendered bias culture in Palestine.

Karmi’s description of the 1930’s Palestine in which politics seemed to her as “men’s natural activity” (Karmi, 48), and the way Palestine has come to be portrayed through feminization suggests that the two levels of gendered narrative of Palestinian identity was experienced by Ghada. However, Ghada seems to have been cut off from this process through exile. Her exile into a more masculinist space where she starts acquiring awareness of the gender roles signals to the abrupt end of the national narrative to which she was subject to.

The symbol of Fatima and the feminization of the land that inevitably places belonging as a form of masculinity is the very problematic that this symbol produces. Women’s roles become encapsulated within this masculine perspective.

#### **2.1.5 Karmi’s Parents- ‘the Collapse of the Bridge’**

Karmi’s attachment to Fatima and the way Fatima’s mother starts wearing a caftan after their exile suggests that the symbol of Fatima falls into the earlier unifying representation. Karmi’s mother who removes the rugs from her house in Golders Green in London, and gets down to wipe those tiles in her house is the very attempt of Karmi’s mother to cling on to her past.

After displacement, her mother's radio is a recurrent object in the text which was used by her mother to listen to Arabic music. Her attempt to correct her children whenever she felt they were diverging from their Palestinian culture or even in their taste of music suggests that her mother's retrospection shows a break from the present, England.

The narrator notes; " Palestinian Arab origins so zealously maintained by our mother" (Karmi, 2008). Her mother's criticisms all yield her distaste for England, her refusal to negotiate with the English culture, her fear of her children's identity, her attempt to create her house as Palestine. Her mother's attempt to resorte a life much influenced by the generic code of the symbol of Fatima which had a gendered narrative behind it is one of the reasons that her mother does not negotiate with the current culture. Ghada's mother's stance of trying to live upto the symbol of Fatima is the anticolonial stance that this national symbol holds.

Her mother's stance is contradictory to her father's stance that seems to have in terms of his desire to work for BBC london, seeing England as an oppurtunity for his daughter's education. This will be dealt with in the future subject since the difference between Karmi's mother's visions seem to have risen out of their aspirations and fantasies of the future.

My parents' cultural isolation should not be understood simply within the context of migration. Many migrant groups are known to maintain their previous cultures and lifestyles in their countries of adoption, often insisting that their children do the same. But this is by way of adjusting gradually to the new society and creating a bridge between the past that they had chosen to leave behind and the present they had opted for. None of this held true for us. My parents did not choose to leave Palestine and they never willingly acquiesced in its loss. They did not see England as a place of fortune, but only as a staging post on a route to where they could never go. And it could not

have been otherwise, for abandoning that view was tantamount to accepting the irrevocable loss of Palestine. (220)

Nabokov's aesthetic portrayal of émigrés as a bridge mentioned in the introduction as an attempt to cling to both shores seems to be the same imagery that Karmi refers to. However, Karmi's bridge is not a metaphorical one since she is referring to her parents relationship with them and how their denial of the past and obliviousness to Ghada's troublesome period of having to deal and be subjected to English lifestyle, art, culture. Karmi expresses that her inner-self is not Arabic but English. The metaphoric expression seems substantialized with various examples of forming or deformation of links between past or present cultures. The national identity under the peasant women suggests that the national identity is inscribing a certain gendered trait accompanying it that directs the subjects.

#### **2.1.6 Ghada: Palestinian vs. English**

Ghada's earlier past, Palestine, seems very much entangled with the disruption stemming from childhood. Her childhood was in Palestine. The symbols of Rex and Fatima are the symbols of her childhood and Palestine. The narrative that provides the backdrop of political events in Palestine of the period was not known to Ghada whilst she was living in Palestine and for the first years when she was living in England. This was suggested to be the first level of the gendered text that Katz mentioned earlier.

Her mother and her father dealing with their loss in a denial that is different from Ghada's did not yield the environment for Ghada to recuperate from the loss of her Palestinian identity.

In London, Ghada's exilic experience suggests that she has become subject to the English nationalism. Facing the new culture, Ghada enters a process of mimicry. The mimicry of the dominant culture can be seen as the way she starts having a sympathy towards the statue of St. Mary (Karmi, 192), her affection to Catholic Church (193) since she started attending Roman Catholic school. The way she refers to the "features of the Virgin's lovely face" of the statue she had to clean since she did not know English. The mimicry is further intensified by various cultural elements that she learns through living in London; Madame Tassaud, the London Underground, cinema, music, social environment, the cultural-political context of London in the 1950's all add on to this process of mimicry. Her parents' suppression of retrospection of the personal loss they had been through gives birth to the political situation that made her resent her parents for choosing a name difficult to pronounce in English (191) portrays the process of mimicry she had been a part of.

Her resentment recounting the past events (208) of her parents for leaving her alone in the midst of the polemics she had been faced with between Palestinian origin and the English identity that she had to negotiate with is her current stance on this process.

Ghada explains clearly that this process was an individual adjustment of the circumstances. After living few years in England, the narrator starts expressing the elements fragility of memory that is emerging since Ghada is forced to face suppressed, unexpressed past due to her parent's attitudes.

During the first years in Britain, the memory of Palestine grew more distant... no expression of sorrow... no mention of the circumstances that had

prompted departure... Palestine had become a faded dream a place of the buried past ever brought to mind (Karmi, 209).

Ghada's awareness of her family's suppression of the past of Palestine is linked with her forgetting in the narration.

I could no longer recall the way our house had looked, or Rex, or even the features of Fatima... essential memories of my childhood had simply faded away, leaving behind shadows and elusive fragments of feelings... amnesia... of earlier life in Palestine... I simply put away the past (Karmi, 210).

Falling into fallibility of memory of the past due to an invisible force that did not permit the events to be shared at home is hinted to be out of shame. "Perhaps... a sense of shame for having deserted the homeland" (Karmi, 210). The shame Ghada mentions has the underlying framework that they are ashamed of leaving their country. They are ashamed of their present situation, of their exile. The shame they feel stems from the morality of nationalism of belonging, to be fixed in the land. This morality arises out of the ideal sense of belonging that we referred to in the introduction.

The displacement forces Ghada, in a way, to question the role of women in Palestinian context; her declaration of her Englishness occurs when she decides to marry a British man she meets at the medical school. The period from moving to England until 1967 is the period in which Ghada mimics and tries to assimilate herself into the English culture; becoming an educated woman, defying her parents and marrying an English man. This suggests that the underlying gender roles of Palestinian nationalism provide the breakpoint for Ghada's distancing from Palestinian nationality. This is what Katz referred to as the way modernization "imagined women as both vehicles and objects of civilization" (Katz, 93). The third



level of gendered narrative of nationalism becomes that of the culture she is being assimilated into. Ghada being under the influence of modernization and English nationalism which had a certain gender narrative of the independent woman and Ghada's early life in England falls under this narrative in which she slowly become English.

As Ghada faces the assimilation of the new culture, its music, its education, its lifestyle, its films, its language become aspects to learn, the modernization and nationalism narrative embedded together with a gender subtext she had to negotiate with her views of the past. However her parents' position of not remembering the past allows no mention of the stories of the past to cling on to her past identity. Ghada becomes English in her inner process. She goes to medical school, she meets John. Their decision to get engaged in secrecy (350) which she shares with her family later on by writing letters to her father and Siham in English. The prospect of Ghada marrying a non-Muslim alarmed her mother the most. Siham and Ziyad's first attempts at convincing them out of the wedding plan (354) fails to do so since the couple looks determined. However, Ghada's mother "would not accept it" (355). Her mother in her desperation to prevent Ghada sends Siham to attempt to convince her again. The conversation between Siham and Ghada shows the family's desire to prevent the marriage solely because Ghada is "an Arab and a Muslim" (354). Trying to defy Siham in their second meeting, Ghada states firmly how she feels on the issue, "because I am English. I know you find that difficult to believe, but I've grown up here, I have no other country... my future will be here too" (355). The marriage with John is the peak of Ghada's Englishness, defying her mother, defying Palestine and trying to reestablish herself as English. The gender norms of Palestinian identity

are detested by Ghada since the gender norms she has contradict with her to claim to have a Palestinian identity.

Even her father's stance was as only to fulfill his duties although he opposed it. Ghada expresses how going to the wedding with her father was like "going to a funeral" (359). The wedding takes place according to Islamic culture. They got married according to shari'a law a week in advance but this did not impress her family. This attempt to make up for getting married with an English man does not cover up or make her family accept her marriage. The family acts almost like a diaspora to insist on the original identity and culture in exile. This is supported especially by her mother's reaction to her daughter's wedding by not attending the ceremony and leaving her house that night. Her mother, "was found by police in the early hours, wandering the streets, distraught and weeping" (360).

After they got married, tensions began to rise first on their honeymoon. They go to Morocco, an Islamic country, and Ghada suggests that it made her experience "a strange nostalgia" (361) since it resembled Palestine the home she had forgotten. Ghada became "Person non grata" (361) for her mother, and her family's efforts of limiting their contact had taken a toll in her marriage with John. The tensions of her acquired identity starts meeting with the 'figmentation' of space that Aciman was referring to and the familial pressure that was sustained after the displacement which continuously exerts the diasporic stance towards the native cultural identity and roots.

On the other hand, the war of 1967 disrupts the process of Ghada's assimilation into the English culture. Her sense of 'Englishness' becomes jeopardized. John's attitude

towards the war, the forming public opinion that was pro-Israeli and “the depth of sympathy, Israel evoked amongst people in Britain” (372) distorted the process of adaptation into the new culture, the new community. This suggests that Ghada’s renegotiation with the English culture, language and art did not in any way erase her original feeling of belonging to Palestine, and having lived the catastrophe and displacement made her aware of the subject matter.

Politics of 1967, the political views of the British people, of John (376) suddenly send her into a second identity crisis and Ghada comes to better understand her “inbetweenness”.

I was crushed by the thought that my life had been nothing but a sham. The sense of belonging I had nurtured was only pretense that I could no longer support. I may have become English in culture and affinity, but in all the ways in which it mattered I was not. And my isolation amongst my colleagues forced me to face another melancholy realisation. Even had I wanted their acceptance they would never have given it. Their opposition to my stand on the conflict between Israel and Arabs meant I could never be one of them. But then, who was I one of? And could I go back to being the split personality that had caused me such anguish? (377)

Her native identity that was constructed in relation to ‘the other’, the other being Israel, which caused them to become displaced is suddenly associated with the Englishness that she had been aspiring to. The popular support that the English public and her friends, her husband shows for Israel suddenly triggers her realization that ‘the other’ for English identity is the Arab countries which her past ‘self’ was constructed upon. Karmi realizes that ‘the other’ is actually ‘where she was sitting’, an adaptation of Suleri’s epigraph that Keya Ganguly was referring to quoted earlier.

During the period after her divorce, Ghada's experiences are constantly underpinned by her identity as a Palestinian. "Due to all these factors, by the 1970s I felt invisible as a Palestinian" (386). However, this also thrust Ghada into becoming politically active in which she established (394) Palestine Action in 1972. Contemplating her political activism, Ghada suggests "By the mid-1970s, I had latched passionately onto the cause of Palestine as an inspiration, an identity, and a reason for living" (399). The political activism is an attempt to reinsert 'the other' into the Englishness on one hand and the renegotiation of the gendered narrative of her native nationalism on the other.

Her acquired gender roles along the lines of 'modern' woman is cut off from maturation due to the otherness of her past in her present identity. This constitutes the major reason that fuels Ghada's political activism. Her political view that depends upon her past, Palestine creates the motivating factors of this activism. Katz explains "women fought for the fruits of equality and even contested national boundaries" (96) and taking Ghada's economic status into perspective as a doctor, Katz suggests that "As upper-class women assumed their roles as reformers of their people, they formed charitable organizations which made significant contributions to other women's lives" (98). Katz analysis is strictly referring to Palestinian and Israeli women however it should be noted that the application of this process into exile creates a two-sided dynamic in relation to the identities Ghada negotiates with. The reasons that made her become more self-conscious were linked to the goal of improving the attitude towards Palestinians by working for their cause that seems like an attempt to renegotiate the 'us' and 'them' dialectic for the British society of the period.. Al-Nakba remains an event that troubled her life 20 years later.

Ghada's symbol of Fatima as Palestine enters a renegotiation as Ghada identifies herself more in terms of the gender norms that diverged in exile. The counter dynamic becomes the feeling of belonging to Palestine due to the realisation of her otherness in her acquired identity. Although, her parents did not recount the stories of the past, it will be looked at in more detail in the following subsections. Al-Nakba is an event that she could not forget, that is why the 1967 war sent her into a second crisis, in which she became much more aware of her own condition.

Her futile adaptations of identity according to political, social and emotional events that shape her life seem to thrust Ghada between the two binaries of remembering and forgetting of Palestine or England, with interplay between the two cultures, gender roles and nationalisms.

The search for Fatima is the search for a steadfast identity like that of Fatima, although Fatima is nowhere to be found except in the past, in her childhood. Even when Karmi returns to Jerusalem and visits their house in Jerusalem, Ghada has to face the change of place. Jerusalem is not the Jerusalem she remembers. Ghada has to face up to the fact that her Jerusalem, her Palestine is not the Palestine in her present, "squeezing my eyes to banish the present from my consciousness and recall the memories of childhood, the echoes of laughter of those other children long ago, and the scent and sounds which had once been homely and familiar. But I could not." (441).

When Ghada does find her house in the "Epilogue", the reality of her house with that of the present shows how the description of her house up till now was very much based on the partialness of her memory; of how the house in reality "a fraction of the

size it had been in my child's memory" (447). The difference in her partial perception of the size of the house is the very experience Salman Rushdie was trying to suggest in "Imaginary Homelands" suggests three distinct points of displaced writer like him. Firstly, Rushdie accepts (Rushdie, 10) the fact that the home writers have lost, even if recollection suggests that the homeland that becomes recollected will be "imaginary homelands , Indias of the mind"(10). Rushdie supports his claim by suggesting that the displaced person trying to recollect his memories is inevitably faced with a fragmentary vision (10) and that the recollection is inevitably of the "remains"(12) of memory. The writer or the character that has become displaced is unable to "perceive things as whole... capable of fractured perceptions" (12). Rushdie explains what he means by this through the narrator of his book *Midnight's Children*.

In *Midnight's Children*, my narrator Saleem uses, at one point, the metaphor of cinema screen to discuss this business of perception: 'Suppose yourself in a large cinema, sitting at first in the back row, and gradually moving up... until your nose is almost pressed against the screen. Gradually the stars' faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume faces dissolve into dancing grain; tiny details assume grotesque proportions;... it becomes clear that the illusion itself is reality'. The movement towards the cinema screen is a metaphor for the narrative's movement through time towards the present, and the book itself, as it nears contemporary events, quite deliberately loses deep perspective, becomes more 'partial'... I felt it would be dishonest to pretend, when writing about the day before yesterday, that it was possible to see the whole picture. I showed certain blobs and slabs of the scene.(Rushdie, IH, 13).

Rushdie's insistence on the partialness of human perception reminds us that each character has a different view of Palestine; their Palestines vary. Each Palestine differs in its smell, the tastes of its cuisine, the colours of the streets, its sounds, the personal moods for those who remember and attempt to recover it.

However, what makes Ghada most strongly feel the existence of Palestinians is the call to prayer (450). The prayer makes Ghada aware that her past could not be acclaimed by a physical return and it also acts as a reminder of the existence of another people, the Muslim Arabs that live in and around the country called Israel.

Ghada's identity of 'inbetweenness' becomes visible after the two cultural forces that are operating on her becomes evident, on one side her mother, her family, her memory and the symbol of Palestine, her nationality, its gendered and political pretexts of her native nationality that we have mentioned as Fatima. Whilst, England, her friends, music, the English language and the stories she writes that are set in London are the examples of the opposing forces.

The past is 'imaginary' as Salman Rushdie suggests when he tries to explain what he had been faced with as a writer, writing about his home. The home he remembers is with smells, sounds and a fixed image in the past. The closer he looks the more grotesque the image becomes. Fatima is a symbol like the tastes and sounds that a displaced reminiscizes, charged with a direct appeal to the ideal sense of belonging of nationalism with a gendered and political subtext.

Nabokov's aestheticized representation of creating a bridge between two shores finds a similar description in Ghada Karmi's autobiography (221) . However, Karmi's autobiography uses it as historicized, politicized representation with the gender codes that problematize the construction of bridges, both remembering them and forgetting them.

Her parents try to remember Palestine, especially her mother. Remembering problematizes the present as in Fateh Azzem's play *Baggage* in which the Traveler was not able to choose which gate to go to after having to open the contents of his suitcase in line with the security announcement which integrated him. The contents all portray the contents of the memories of different people and belongings.

Forgetting in Ghada's case means not recollecting the past. Forgetting occurs through the absence of stories and the gendered narrative of the Palestinian identity that is symbolized through Fatima, a narrative which is not able to reconcile with the narrative of modernization, of having to adapt like in Ghada's case but which eventually leads to remembering through politics of the period in 1967.

The realistic mode of writing in Karmi, El-Youssef, Said, and Turki (in displaced-autobiography ) places the individual at the core of the narrative, each character interacts with history that serves as a means to make the character real, his or her identity real, their pasts real and their home real.

However, the works of these writers where they use:

The conventional tools that literary history has used to authorize depictions of the truth of the world. The realistic mode, with its emphasis on the centrality of the individual, the attempt to contain language to representations of static concepts (and, therefore, deny the free-play imaginative flow of language), and the emphasis on a true reflection of a factual world ( Dascalu, 8).

Dascalu's insistence that writers like Naipaul, Mukherjee and Rushdie's works reject the realistic mode in order to represent the "fictionality of reality" (8) and that "any single and unitary notion of reality is a fictional simplification" (8). The idea that



autobiographies create 'unitary notions of reality' has to be addressed since displaced autobiographies are very much embedded in a realist mode, do not in anyway take away the stress from the fictionality of identity and of home.

### **2.1.7 The Importance of Stories**

Karmi detests her family for not remembering, for not recuperating the past; Palestine, the events, the cultural traits. In her displaced autobiography, Karmi suggests that this is not how it happens in refugee camps, and she has a vision that families in refugee camps share the stories of Palestine and what it means to be Palestinian with their children. The stories always construct a link to the past so Karmi's assumption seems correct in the sense that links between gender and national identities become reiterated through such recollection; an ideal sense of belonging envisaged through recollection.

Ghada's assumption on the recollection of stories seems to hold various differences in the usage of stories in that of Samir El-Youssef's novel. Karmi's assumption that stories act in a way to constitute a link with the past is different from the way stories act in the Palestinian Refugee Camps in the representation. The stories that the characters share are not of the past but of the absurdities of the present their present to which they are trying to adapt to.

Ghada's return makes her come to the realization that her Palestine is not the Palestine in the present. Therefore, the search of Fatima in this sense shows that she can never be found. Fatima as a symbol has been lost due to the fragility of memory in exile on the one hand and the renegotiation of Ghada's identity with gender roles and nationalisms through which she realizes her 'otherness' in the adopted identity..

Ghada Karmi's displaced autobiography shows the necessity of having to adapt and readapt identities in terms of the two cultures, Palestinian and English. Her experience of displacement is in close proximity with the events that are collective memories of Palestinians. 1948 which made her leave Palestine and enter into a period of having to adapt to the English culture and 1967 which made her leave her husband, and question her Englishness by becoming aware of her otherness portrays a detailed historical link of the way these two important political events that have had a remarkable experience for what the 'first wave' of writers in which the representation of the dispossession of Palestinians, of their trauma played a more important role in their treatment of past and the 'inbetweenness' in their present.

Fatima is an almost suspended symbol, she is located within memory, and the romanticization of Fatima is only overcome by Ghada through forgetting her and Palestine in England. Ghada's life is very much influenced by Fatima. The feminization of the land, the way her mother tries to play out according to the symbol of Fatima, the way English culture acted as the factor of modernization which changed Ghada's perceptions of gender roles catalyzed her assimilation to the society. The gender role of Palestinian nationality that were centered on Fatima which she contested by adapting an English one are the five levels that Katz explained of nationalisms as gendered texts.

The narrator of *Illusion of Return* is similar to Ghada in that he is not a direct exile stemming from the dangers of the various rhetorics in the context of the refugee camps that suggests the difference of the representation of exile.

## Chapter 3

### THE ILLUSION OF RETURN

*The Illusion of Return* is a novella about the exile of an unnamed narrator. The narrator is understood to be exiled from Palestine. The story is set in London in the present and involves recollection of memories from a refugee camp in Lebanon. The novel does not mention Al- Nakhba or the six day war does not find direct representation.

The past is a refugee camp in Lebanon under Israeli control; the patrol cars around the camp suggests that it is set in 1980s. The decade when Lebanese militias intervened the camps in Lebanon and slaughtered hundreds backed up by Israel that started the period when Israel had control of the refugee camps. The narrator's recollection is of the events of the refugee camp. The thematic difference of Palestine not constituting the object of recollection as hinted in the introduction suggests that *The Illusion of Return* can be seen as an example of 'second wave' style of representation.

The very structure of the novel suggests that the present is problematized by the past evident from the division of the chapters since the beginning chapter is called "Prologue from the Present" and the end chapter is "Epilogue from the Present". These two chapters on the present are separated by "The Past chapter". The past chapter is structurally positioned within the present. A chapter which occurs only

after the narrator has to face the fact of retrospection after Ali, his old friend from the refugee camp, calls him.

The novella starts with a 'phone call'. A phone call that seems to destabilize the safe heaven of the exiled narrator of the book. The protective bubble around the narrator bursts with the phone call. Ali, the narrator's friend from the refugee camp, is on the phone. The conversation with Ali seems to send the narrator's fragile identity into a questioning which has an overtone of his failures and the failure of his identity.

You see, over the years I have achieved very little, so little in fact that I was desperate enough to consider an achievement the mere completion of fifteen years without seeing anybody from the past. And now even that sense of achievement turned out to be premature. A short phone call has changed things. It was a call from Ali, an old friend of mine who had left Lebanon two years before I did. ( Samir El-Youssef, 3)

The phone call and the arrangement of a meeting with an old friend disrupts his 'sense of achievement' and this fragile sense of achievement was based upon the narrator's disillusion that it was a success 'to forget' the past through suppressing the past, by not meeting anyone, and by not contemplating it.

Marc Robinson in his book *Altogether Elsewhere* reminds (xv) us that exile cuts people off from history, and he argues that their displacement may eventually create "a new sense of self" (xv). In these circumstances a simple act of remembering may set off various tensions. "A private moment of remembering a favourite site back home for instance, can resonate political, historical, psychological and artistic chambers" (Robinson, xv).

The tensions and dynamics that surface as the achievement of the narrator is a clear indication of his failure since he refers to his feeling of incompleteness (El-Youssef, 4). The narrator feels unable to complete anything (5) in his life even his thesis. The narrator explains his thesis as a reflection of his “obsession with completion” (5). His proposed thesis is an attempt to link his past and his present in a narrative of continuity, change in not only of his condition but of the conditions of Palestinian refugees. However he was unable to finish his thesis, that seems to top his narrative of having no achievement.

The thesis served his desire to oppose the rhetorics of ‘the right of return’ and make his present existence meaningful by refuting the ‘rhetorics’ reminding him of the refugee camps.

### **3.1 Amina as a Symbol vs. Rhetoric**

Remembering the past for the narrator centers upon two distinct memories. The first is the loss of his sister Amina and the second is his distinct memories of the exchanges between himself and his friends in Ramadan Cafe. Both of these events occur in the refugee camp.

Firstly, the past entails the traumas of the narrator; especially because the traumatic events the narrator experienced includes the narrator’s loss of his sister Amina. The trauma produces periods of silence in his daily life and their mother’s daily life. The narrator’s sister was not a typical Palestinian woman. Amina was someone who became a political activist together with other Palestinian refugees who were actively participating in a resistance against occupation and opting for a change towards the role of women in Palestinian culture.

Ten years ago Amina was only seventeen, merely a girl playing a part in a play that involved my parents and our world. Amina was groomed to be the epitome of the new Palestinian woman, not the wife or the mother who minded the house and children, but the comrade and partner of the Palestinian man in the so called “national struggle”. Amina, my fair-haired sister, was groomed to be “Comrade Amina”, an icon Palestinian women would look up to and in whose footsteps they would follow. And she went along with this big lie with great enthusiasm. She was not the only one; other girls of the same age and neighbourhood believed that they represented the new Palestinian woman who was fighting the political battle side by side with Palestinian men. Like her, they were deceived, yet they were not as unfortunate as she was. (El-Youssef, 111)

The narrator links Amina’s involvement in the politics not to politics but to “rhetoric” (113). The rhetoric of being a symbol for Palestinian women, a symbol of the new Palestinian women which produced a rhetoric to engage women in political activism against the occupation. The rhetoric of being a new model for Palestinian women and similar rhetorics is detested by the narrator in the present which will be looked at in more detail later.

The narrator portrays various rhetorics that surround Amina’s suicide. One of these is the rhetoric of ‘liberation’ that his parents participated in towards their extended family, a rhetoric of change that signalled to women’s roles in the western countries as well as in Israel. Golda Meir who was the female president of Israel in 1970 acts as a symbol of ‘modern’ women for the narrator’s parents rhetoric on change in gender roles. A rhetoric of ‘change’ in women’s role that signals at more politically active women is the idea that her parents shared with their eldest son’s friends from the resistance group that Kamal was a member of. This view is in accordance with the fourth level of gendered narrative Katz has identified. Katz does not suggest that it is an envy of the “developed” countries, but narrator’s parents position suggests that the rhetoric revolves around their desire for a ‘modern nation’ that influences the

change of gendered subtext at the refugee camp. This seems to be one of the factors that influenced the production of the rhetoric of Amina that attempted to become a symbol of change.

Their parent's rhetoric on the 'liberation of the women' is unconsciously dismissed when the parents have to deal with the family's paranoia that evolved around the 'reputation' of the family due to the political activism of Amina. The extended family's fear and their threat of cutting contact (El-Youssef, 124) makes narrator's parents dismiss their rhetorical claims to women liberty by another rhetoric which is the masculine rhetoric of Kamal, the elder brother who is a Comrade in one of the resistance groups. He is the character that caused Amina's death. He is the eldest brother which means he has authority over Amina since he is a man and he is older. These factors suggest that Kamal is a symbol of the masculine authority in the cultural setting. Amina's older brother Kamal who was not keen on Amina's activism since the change or transformation of Amina into Comrade Amina might have been a threat for him, which would challenge his gender roles as the narrator suggests.

The narrator suggests that the family gathering in which their parents agreed that the political activism of Amina would not damage the reputation of the family and the other girls in the family. Amina's clothes, her attitude, smoking were not seen as acceptable, and their parents had to accept that her activism would not bring such a shame so they entrusted Kamal with the authority and only intervened when necessary. The masculine frame of mind had found a masculine police for its self, the

elder brother. Her elder brother Kamal harassed her, he would oppose things that he did not see as fit. At times the parents had to intervene.

One day, following Amina to her group's headquarters, he sees Amina kissing a stranger. The suicide occurs as a consequence of this event.

As soon as he noticed that she moved away, he quickly rushed towards her, blocking her escape as if he wanted to keep all the evidence at the scene of the crime... "Bitch! Bitch!" he snarled grabbing her by the hair. He seemed to want to drag her by the hair out on to the street and all the way home... dragging her so that everybody would believe that she had done something wrong. (El-Youssef, 129)

Her parents did not object to Kamal's treatment of Amina since he is 'the elder brother' who is seen as a substitute for parental duties. The older brother's beating her eventually led to the suicide of Amina. Kamal's obsession towards the safeguarding of the reputation, the reputation of the women, the threat he receives causes him to become obsessed enough to follow her until he catches her. The event makes Amina detest what has happened, and she kills herself.

Amina's death can be seen to be a representation of the fifth level of gendered narrative of nationalism that Katz talks about, the contestation of the imposed national image with a gender text (86). In this novel Amina is the symbol of the contestation. She commits suicide in the face of the violence and shame that has been brought to her by her family.

The fetishization of the family 'reputation', the rhetoric of his parents that surfaces due to taking care of the 'family reputation' see the rhetoric that Amina is trying to



aspire to as a threat. A threat to the girls of the family, a threat that would destroy the image of gender norm abiding girls of the family.

On the other hand, the rhetoric of Amina's political group, the rhetoric of the death of the martyr, the rhetoric of the posters as an identity at the service of the nationalist narrative seems like a failure which the narrator describes with a certain cynicism. Amina's death which is confessed late on in the book seems to be a death caused by circles of rhetorics. Amina died because of the failed rhetorics of liberation and change in the refugee camp. The failed rhetoric of a socio-political change is inscribed in gender roles.

The refugee camp seems to be a mud paddle of rhetorics that do not prompt action or change in the current situations of things. The refugee camp under the sovereignty of the occupiers suggests that the various resistance groups which strive towards liberation without the possibility of a solution or achievement is one of the factors that shaped the formation of rhetoric. It is the significance of the rhetorics of the refugee camp that leads to the death of Amina. Amina's political stance and more importantly her lifestyle finds a counter argument in their family.

Amina's suicide is suppressed by her family since the camp setting that lead to her death continues to subjugate Amina since the diasporic masculinist view of nationalism in the camp would associate her suicide with a 'shameful act'. Amina's death and the events that proceed it suggests that the claim to gender inequality under a renewed codes of nationalism almost seems impossible . The loss of Amina causes the narrator's mother and him to enter into silence about it. The man of the family forbidding the use of Amina's name on the one hand and the political rhetoric for of

the gendered text of a new type of nationalism enter a conflict; a power conflict that becomes evident in the gendered attitude of identity and the nationalist narrative.

On the other hand, the narrator talks about her death, recites her name in exile. The narrator's position of voicing Amina's story is a clear example of the way the narrator removed himself from, the masculinist subtext of his nationality and the diasporic element of the refugee camp that does not give way to the opportunity to voice her name.

### **3.2 Role of Memory**

The memory of the four friends, Maheer, George, Ali and the narrator are on the exchanges that the four friends share. They experience the effects of Palestinian displacement in the refugee camp. Each individual has manifested a questioning of what is it to be a Palestinian and what is being. Each character's position reflects how they deal with their troubling present of being subsumed in the political, power struggles of their place. The political aspect of being stuck in the refugee camp under the rubrics of power in which each character assumes a symbol of a difference of the way to deal with their 'present' is what the stories of the past entail for the narrator.

Maher who is described as a Marxist acts like a metaphor for the political questioning that exile pushes characters into questioning of the political situation of their existence. Maher sides with the resistance no matter what they do; he supported the resistance.

George's experience of exile thrusts him into a philosophical enquiry into "being" in order to find a basis for his identity. George continuously utters Heidegger's concepts

“ontology”, “Dasein”, “Being-in-the-world”. He tries to prove that his friends have a misconception of existence, an understanding of existence through a ‘preontological standpoint’. A standpoint that gives meaning to their beings. Heidegger in his book *Being and Time* explains (Heidegger, 38-39) that Being already has a preconceived notion of itself, it is an entity that needs to be questioned. This is the view George is putting forth and he suggests that Maher and the others need to understand the ontology of Dasein. Therefore, Dasein is “ontically distinguished by the fact that, in its very Being, that Being is an issue for it” (Heidegger, 32) .

Heidegger’s understanding of the mode of being as Dasein, and what Heidegger tries to mean when he says “Being-in-the-world” needs to be understood. Malpas in his book *Heidegger’s Typology* quotes and explains the philosophical basis of the attempt to define what these concepts infer.

Grounding spatiality in temporality is , according to Heidegger, a matter of showing that spatiality is existentially possible only through temporality... “meaning” -- in which case the derivation of spatiality from temporality would also mean exhibiting temporality as the “meaning” of time...The derivative character of spatiality is, as Heidegger puts it, “indicated briefly” as follows: Dasein’s making room for itself is constituted by directionality (orientation) and disengagement (dis-tance). How is anything of this sort existentially possible on the basis of Dasein’s temporality? ... To Dasein’s making room for itself belongs to self-directive discovery of something like a region... concerned being-in-the-world is directional -- self-directive. Belonging-somewhere has an essential relationship to involvement. It always determines itself factually in terms of the involvement- context- of the equipment with which one concerns oneself... (Malpas, 105)

Heideggerian concept of Dasein which explains the being of humans means ‘being-there’. In Malpas’s study of Heidegger’s typology (105) he explains that Dasein’s Being- in- the- World, as its mode uses the underlying structures of Being in the world, is inscribed in attachment to temporality of time, space and place.

Heideggerean criticism of what Dasein needs to be aware of in order not to remain within the boundaries of the preconceived notions of belonging in terms of the question of identity that the characters of the novel, seem to have troubles with since their present temporality, or Being- in- the-world seems to incorporate tensions with the preconceived notions of their being, their identity. Heidegger's philosophy suggests that Dasein is the skilful adaptation of one to the circumstances to "there" in its way of adaptation and changefulness in relation to the timefulness of the world. The world of everyday life that Dasein' mode of existence depends upon by becoming in the skilfull adaptation that is seen as a divergence of the understanding of being from understanding of being a 'rational animal'.

George's criticism using Heideggerean philosophy attempts to hint at the misconceptualized formations of identity that the characters are experiencing in their inability to skilfully adapt to the "there" which is the timefulness of the conditions of the refugee camp.

Ali and the narrator, on the other hand, were the audiences for the discussions between the two characters above. Ali and the narrator's exilic experiences had led them astray taking "drugs"(El-Youssef, 20) in which they would accuse the situation; the current political, social, economical contiditions which sent them into despair. The Heideggerean outlook would suggest that how they fit in to the temporality of the refugee camp, their sileces, their use of drugs all define their "being".

The refugee camp, the political mess and various fractions has produced the events in his past. The Israeli control, the resistance, his family's politics of gender all

produced the end result. The incompleteness arises from the loss of so many things dear to him; which he could not stop or prevent since he was trying to cope with his own.

The trauma , the suicide of his sister Amina who was a political activist and was continuously harrassed by their older brother Kamal until one day she comitted suicide and both his mother and the narrator is engulfed in silence. Amina's death providing a sense of rupture for the narrator. Since he seems to be consumed with the grief following his sister's death.

Refugee camps are filled with people unable to return, and unable to go back. The degredation of individuals in the harsh environment of the refugee camp makes the character deal with this issue in which the events cause a turbulence in the characters; any sense of achievement becomes lost.

This is one of the climaxes of the novel, in which the narrator and Ali meet in Heathrow in the Epilogue of the Present. Ali's experience in America entails recounting of a conversation with a Jewish exile from Poland (147-152). A Jewish man called Bruno who had experienced the horrors of the Holocaust.

The old man, Ali said, kept referring to his life then as a long nightmare, sometimes the man didn't believe that he had managed to survive it. Ali agreed with him that it must have felt like a long nightmare. But with one important difference, he added: a nightmare was unreal, while what happened during the war was obviously all too real. The old man objected. He said that both memories, the real and the dreamed, had the same unreal nature. He went on explaining to Ali that because people in violent times and places lived in constant fear and worry about their survival, they were reduced to mere survivors... And once a person's life was reduced to that, the old Polish man said, it lost its diversity; and without diversity there could be no proof of reality. (148)

Bruno who had been through the more violent period expressing his account of the claims that concentrate on multiple views, experiences and attitudes giving essence to the reality of the past and the confusions of the present. The narrator's present becomes influenced by Bruno's perception of the difference in the existence of individuals who experiences terror and violence.

Ali exclaimed, "he didn't believe in the right of return to anywhere." Bruno didn't think that it was possible for people to return, Ali explained. He believed that people only moved on; even when they went back to the place of their birth and early life they were only moving on.

"'It's a one-way-journey!' he told me," said Ali. "'As for those who claim to return to a place where they never were; said Bruno, ' they are simply confusing the symbolic and the metaphorical with the possible and actual.' He said that the Jews who went to Palestine, they didn't return but emigrated to Palestine. The idea of the right of return in such a case is, he believed, no more than a claim on the past- the near or the faraway past- and perhaps the possible legitimate claim for those who are faced by the inhospitality of the world. The idea of return is actually an attempt to escape the inhospitality of the present state of the world- the discrimination and persecution," said Ali. (152)

The exchange between Bruno and Ali that has helped Ali and eventually the narrator act like a prophecy of the problems of the narrator's ambiguous feelings towards the past; of real and unreal, and to his prior futile attempts of forgetting the past, and trying to establish himself in the present which he views as a failure.

The importance of this exchange between Bruno is that the character is Jewish. This interaction is an interaction between a member of the Jewish exile from The Holocaust and the exiles of a refugee camp in Lebanon due to Israeli occupation and The Catastrophe. An exchange of the experiences of displacement and outlook at the effects of such violent, traumatic experiences provides a frame of mind, a view of existence that relieves the characters.

The humanitarian side of displacement of having different stances on the past that can enter an interaction with the stories of others who have experienced exile producing a positive outcome, a discourse of different attitudes. The dynamic shaping of the contradictions produces in the narrator the decision to write the novella.

Yes, I shall write it as an essay or a story, which I could call “The Illusion of Return”. I liked the title and decided that as soon as I got home I would write it down on a big sheet of paper and stick it to the wall. Or I could stick it next to that poster which claimed that there could be no peace between Palestinians and Israelis unless Palestinians returned the one that I had vandalised to avenge being beaten by those three students. (153)

The narrator’s assuming the authority of the text which is his assumption of writing the novella *The Illusion of Return*. The novella is a completed text suggests that the sharing the stories with Ali and Ali’s stories of their displacement and Bruno’s insight in a way counters his inability to complete things, to get rid of the failure of the present. Retrospection and the memories the narrator shares in the present are not put forth in a linear understanding of time. The book is an end product of the present conditions that insists on the collectiveness of the reality of the past, and the collectivity of stories not only of Palestinians but also of Jewish exiles due to the violent history of civilization provided is the remedy for him, the narrator reasserts himself as a complete person.

A dialogue with the Jewish character’s experience of displacement through Ali seems to create the frame of mind which provides meaning to his past and his present. This interaction is called a dialogue since according to the novella it was a dialogue between the two characters, Bruno and Ali, in the past and Ali and the narrator in the present.

The nationalism as a grounded gendered narrative that Katz has mentioned plays a part in the rhetoric that insists on Amina being a symbol for the new Palestinian women and masculinity as embedded in the network of family that eventually opposes this. This attempt at change is restricted through the proceedings of various gendered cultural understandings of family; its reputation, the eldest son having the authority. This circle produces the demeaning way in which Amina was subjected to the male understanding of the culture. Once faced with the degradation and the pressure Amina commits suicide, the response of the woman who reacted to the situation.

However, Amina's funeral, her subjectivity to the narratives of struggle against the occupation does not allow her response to become known. Her family, the political organization used her death for their own rhetorics that produced her poster as a martyr and the silence of the members of the family on what happened to Amina.

### **3.3 The Second Wave of Representation: Seeking Palestine and The Illusion of Return**

It may be that writers in my position, exiles or emigrants or expatriates, are haunted by some sense of loss, some urge to reclaim, to look back, even at the risk of being mutated into pillars of salt. But if we do look back, we must also do so in the knowledge which gives rise to profound uncertainties that our physical alienation from India almost inevitably means that we will not be capable of reclaiming precisely the thing that was lost; that we will, in short, create fictions, not actual cities or villages, but invisible ones, imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind.<sup>12</sup>

At the time of writing this thesis, it has been exactly 65 years since the establishment of Israel and consequently the initial dispossession and exile of Palestinians from historic Palestine. Over the six and a half decades, majority of the initial refugees and exiles including Edward W. Said and Mahmoud Darwish have long perished from



the face of earth in exile while the new borns of the time are now elderly exiles in foreign lands.

The impact of the tragedy of Al-Nakbha and the six day war of 1967 has produced numerous and rich modes of representation within Palestinian exilic literature. The suffering of Palestinian exile as well as the 'return' (whether as right or illusion) typified by writers like Said, Darwish, Karmi, Turki and many others whom experienced the impact of the events in, around and outside of occupied historic Palestine and whom -for the purposed of the discussion- were mentioned in the introduction as 'the first wave' of writers, at least until the last quarter of the 20th century, helped to create a mythologized, somewhat romanticized and timeless Palestine, quite often symbolized as mother, woman, lover and virgin, as well as preserved a historically-suspended Palestinian national identity.

The illusion of return may be a solid reality for many exiles, however, this does not cancel or in anyway remove the right of return. The 'right to return' to homeland from exile, both as a human right as well as a political claim still continues to stand despite the fact that the literal 'return' is still barred and guarded with political, judicial and military status quo. However, illusion of return for the individual although taken to be a characteristic that stands like a universal aspect in exilic studies, the right to return is the only legitimate strand of being that an exile can proudly manifest. Yet, after 65 years where initial exile is now a full scale diaspora, being aware of the illusion of return as an exile and mingling this with right of return,

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<sup>12</sup> Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, p.10

seems to - in a way - foster the idea of “not returning” and steers the “in-betweenness” of the exile towards assimilation and to a new self.

This ‘in-betweenness’ as a term from Homi K. Bhabha, refers to his reading of Martin Heidegger’s, ‘boundary’ which he interprets as “neither a new horizon, nor a leaving behind of the past” (1) but rather, “a moment of transit where space and time cross to produce complex figures of difference and identity past and present, inside and outside, inclusion and exclusion”(2). In this sense, ‘beyond’ becomes an interstice where crossing the boundary disturbs and distorts the idea of the ‘present’ and disfigures the ‘fixed-ness’ of binaries to create new hybridity.

This sense of hybrid “in-between” can be seen in recent Palestinian exile literature. Against the backdrop of the ‘first wave’ of exilic writing which mainly focused on representing the loss and suffering of Palestinians and tended to hint at the inbetweenness due to the troublesome past. This was followed by a ‘second wave’ where the representation of Palestine, Palestinian nation and culture exceeds the initial representations of 1948 and 1967. Although the effects of Al Nakba is still evident in the ‘second wave’ of writers like Fady Joudah, Suad Amiri, Lisa Suhair Majaj, Misha Hiller’s representation of exile and its effects stands at a critical relation to the former modes of representation.

The ‘waves’ mentioned here, however, should not be taken as clear cut and historical and/or intellectually distinct ‘periods’ but instead as ‘modes’ where the realization of return as a postponed ‘illusion’ is more evident and acknowledged while the place to be ‘returned’ to is subject to questioning. In fact, this change is not simply visible in the new generation Palestinian writing but also some of the ‘first wave’ writers like

Mahmud Darwish's late poems as well. Needless to say that this change in mode is at some level linked with the international politics and perhaps more specifically with the Oslo Accords of 1993.

Lisa Suhair Majaj, *On Writing and Return: Palestinian- American Reflections*, notes that Oslo Accords of 1993 had an attempt to change the international lexicon and replace the term 'occupied lands' with 'disputed lands' aiming to erase the right of return altogether, but the failure of the framework made it clear that right of return could not and would not be erased. Although her essay is dated 2001, Oslo Accords seem to be a distinguishable period in her analysis of what she refers to as 'recent' Palestinian- American exilic literature. Majaj notes that, in general, Palestinian- American exilic literature had served a purpose to inform the readers of the longing to return to homeland and how this return had become impossible due to historical, political and military events. Although Majaj sees the Palestinian Exilic literature as an attempt to reclaim the fragmented past through writing, she makes a clear distinction that the recent writers, writing on multiple layers of cultural, personal as well as gendered displacement, exceeds the traditional, romanticized and historic understandings and creates a 'return' which "is not simply going back: it is also to go forward; to create a new future from the fragments of a reclaimed past."<sup>13</sup>

A similar change in approach towards exile and return can be seen in the late poems of the Palestinian national poet, Mahmud Darwish as for most part of his 1970's and 1980's poetics noticeably reported on the sadness of loss created by exile. In a reading of Darwish's 'Who am I without Exile?', Yair Huri suggests that unlike the

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<sup>13</sup> Lisa Suhair Majaj, *On Writing and Return: Palestinian- American Reflections*, 2001, p 116

traditional criticism of exilic literature which tends to see literary works on a binary logic as either creating a trapped nostalgia on the bases of a ‘static memory’<sup>14</sup> or a sense of imaginative freedom to reach return with “a stroke of a pen”( Seidel, 7);

Darwîsh’s later literary exilic output should not be read simply as representative of the longing of the exile, but as a more complicated performance which aims at both insisting on seeing a positive aspect in the exilic experience (“The land is not constantly alienating,” as he declared in one of his recent poems) and undermining the idea that identity, whether national or personal, is fixed.<sup>15</sup>

However, undermining the fixed sense of national or personal identity, had not really come into being until the last part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, as until then, (especially within the first wave -mainly male- exilic writers) the majority of Palestinian exilic literature , perhaps understandably, is rooted in expression of the loss in a fetish fixation representing Palestine as stable and frozen in time. Even among women writers, a critical approach to the symbol of landscape as female body was not frequent, if at all. Lifestyles and folk that were dismissed as trivial and even belittling in pre-1948 Palestine, became national symbols in exile and many writers took refuge with their advocacy.

*Seeking Palestine; New Palestinian Writing on Exile and Home* (2013), in its entirety is also good example ofo the ‘second wave’ writers and as the name suggests, the essays and stories within the book is in search of a new Palestine, where the question

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<sup>14</sup> Previously Quoted: Tina Malhi- Sherwell pg1

<sup>15</sup> Yair Huri, Who am I without Exile?: on Mahmud Darwish’s Later Poetics of Exile, p. 3

of “How do Palestinians live, imagine and think about home and exile six decades after the dismemberment of historic Palestine and in the complicated present tense of a truncated and transitory Palestine ?”<sup>16</sup> is one of the main subjects of inquiry. Each of the writers within the book, stands in various dialogical contrasts with each other and the first wave writers like Mahmud Darwish, whose writings not only helped in representing and recounting of a place lost but also preserved a sense of national identity that became a traditional and gendered “Authority”<sup>17</sup> within itself.

Through out the essays within the book there are constant references to Darwish’s poems and most specifically to, “To Describe an Almond Blossom”, where writers tend to propose their criticisms of the Authority that Darwish’s poems have helped to strengthen in relation to Palestinian nationalism.

Penny Johnson, in the introduction chapter of the book titled, “Intoduction: Neither Homeland nor Exile are Words”, also refers to Darwish and calls up on this new stand in Palestinian literature by suggesting that “Seeking Palestine, then, is not a representative anthology [but] an intimate key and its claim is to imagine, rather than represent .”<sup>18</sup> This motto, ‘to imagine, rather than represent’ is a direct challenge to an all too familiar canon that for decades, have represented what Palestine was and imaginatively look for ways of rethinking Palestine and being Palestinian in the present time. Although both the book and the writers acknowledge the importance of representation and “recognize memory’s function as a means of resistance and of

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<sup>16</sup> Penny Johnson, Introduction: Neither Homeland or Exile are Words, Seeking Palestine; New Palestinian Writing on Exile and Home, 2013 p. ix

<sup>17</sup> ibid p.ix

<sup>18</sup> Penny Johnson, p. X

belonging”<sup>19</sup>, they are aware of the problems proposed by reclamation of land from nostalgic memory. The social and political move that brought this change from representing to imagining Palestine, without a doubt owes a lot to the ‘in-betweenness’ and assimilation of this new generation of writers as well as their youth. Almost all of these writers have come to see Palestine from the recollection of nostalgic memory told by the older generation before them who had experienced Al-Nakhba from first hand whereas the writers, although feeling its effects did not live through the catastrophe themselves thus the intensity of the dispossession, dislocation and displacement do not have the same burning significance it did for the previous generation.

It is for this reason that, the feminized and fetishized Palestine stereotypically asserted as a well-known, predictable and unchangeable place brought out from the depths of memory met in Darwish’s poems or Ghada Karmi’s Palestine with Fatima is not the Palestine that the ‘second wave’ writers want to return to. In fact, Suad Amiry almost declares a war with her repetitive ‘noes’ against a nostalgic and romanticized Palestine of memory when alluding to Darwish’s To Describe an Almond Blossom. Amiry responds as,

No  
And it would not be about the blooming almond trees and the red  
flowering pomegranates that were not tenderly picked in the  
spring of 1948 nor in the summer after<sup>20</sup>

Insisting that Palestine of memories, “If at all, It will only be about an obsession” is an instance where Palestine to be returned to, charted in the politics of recollections

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<sup>19</sup> *ibid.* p. X

<sup>20</sup> Suad Amiry p. 75

no longer signifies the new generation of writers. Fady Joudah, in the introduction of his *5 poems* where he mathematically imagines various meanings of ‘Seeking Palestine’, clearly resonates this stance when he notes;

Perhaps this fourth Palestine will help us move past the tragic and horrific limitations of the nation-state age we live in. Perhaps that Palestine that never was is true to exile as a state of being; not exile as a state of despair or eternal longing, but a state where one is free to wander the earth between the possible and the necessary return, since what has not yet arrived has not yet been lost.<sup>21</sup>

Here, Joudah is providing a direct criticism of nation-state which he sees as ‘tragic and horrific limitation’, after all, both creation of Israel and expulsion of Palestinians from Palestine scattered around the world as well as the troubling discussions of solution and return have thus far been situated on the bases of nation and nation-ness. For a writer “Palestine” has multiple troubled meanings resorting to a Palestine that never was and has not yet been arrived at, signals an imagined space in the realm of beyond.

This attitude can also be observed in *The Illusion of Return*, the way the narrator’s exile is not troubled by his Palestinian identity, the way the Palestinian refugee community, and what may be called its diaspora, the PLO members he confronts are all seen as rhetoric by him. The narrator no longer associates himself with the Palestinian identity but is trying to adapt to the circumstances he is in.

Similarly, Misha Hiller, who describes herself as a product of time and space, was born in diaspora and has never been to Palestine. Being a British citizen of different ethnicities (half Palestinian and half English), she notes that she finds herself having

a universal outlook rather than having loyalty to a state or nation. In Hiller's account, Palestinian exiles and the 2 generation of descends born in diaspora are estimated at around 4.5 million that live across the globe today. Hinting at hybridity being the new and 'enriched' means to describe humanity while defying nationalism and tribalism for "creating deep divides often based on little more than arbitrary differences - work on bases of exclusion not inclusion, and assume an implicit superiority over others."<sup>22</sup>

Hiller is careful when she refers to the 'right of return' and notes that 'return' is mainly for those who were displaced from Palestine but not necessarily their descendants who have never been to Palestine even though they are 'tied' to Palestine. Recounting a memory of being excluded by all ethnic and religious groups in Beirut when she confessed that she does not believe in God, she declares that she would not want to return to a place where nationalist and religious sectarian tendencies are the driving force of such a place.

Hiller's account of detesting the cultural , socio-political norms of Palestine is what *The Illusion of Return* also portrays the distaste of the situation of Palestinian people in the refugee camps, a distaste of the gendered, political rhetorics.

Hiller also voices her objection to the ideas that every Palestinian whether in exile or diaspora should write in order not to forget from a nostalgic, romantic and nationalised sense of belonging. Instead, she feels the need to write, not because she

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<sup>21</sup> Fady Joudah, Palestine that Never Was: Five Poems and introduction

<sup>22</sup> Hiller, Onions and Diamonds, p.179



is a Palestinian but because she desires a Palestine and world which is something “ bigger-hearted and more inclusive” than just a state.

Hiller’s treatment of writing suggests that writing as not being reminiscent of the past, but actually writing to lead somewhere suggests that the hybridity of these writers, characters have formed who are aware of their actions. Therefore, writing in the case of *The Illusion of Return* in a way completes the hybrid character and makes him complete. This goes outside of the representation of exile that we have looked at as producing tendencies to shift between the two cultures, nationalities and so on.

In contrast to the ‘first wave’ writers, ‘second wave’ writers seem to have a reduced sense of nationality and more conscious of the underlying elements of their identity formation. The ‘second wave’ representation does not suggest that the position of Palestinian exiles is a stuck state of inbetweenness but as a position that is able to deal with the problematics through their hybridity. This, for sure owes a lot to the fact that most writers that are considered as ‘second wave’ may have to do with not experiencing Al-Nakba at first hand, or they were too young to remember it. However, if we situate this difference in terms of the fiction, we see that representation of exile is institutionalizing through the continuous challenge brought forth by questioning the margins of nationalist, religious and gendered tendencies.

The ‘second wave’ style of representation does carry the shadow of writing in order not to forget but not in order to glorify a nostalgic past but on the contrary it hints at a vision in mind, the vision to create a new terrain, where a new Palestine free not only from occupation but of the sense of limitation that past, nationalism and other aspects posit it under. A new Palestine where regardless of ethnic, religious or gender

all people will be free whether they are Israeli or Palestinian, Christian, Jewish or Muslim and whether men or women.

## **Chapter 4**

### **CONCLUSION**

The shared experiences of Palestinians are both fragmentary in their nature and collective in some sense. Each individual has his or her loss whether it be for fictional characters or narrators, like the loss of Rex, Fatima or Amina. These suggest that what each person experiences and envisions is a personal Palestine, which has shared qualities due to Palestinian cultural memory. The outer garments of Palestinian loss puts forth the national representations of Palestine; the symbols of a village life, its embroidery, the caftan, its cuisine that became the symbols of differentiation from other national identities. Nationalism reproduced the very symbols of fetish with gender politics. Women has been the fetish of national imagery and portrayal whilst the loss of Palestine also produced various representations which questioned women's role in Palestinian culture that became representations of exile.

The imaginary Palestines recaptured vary from each other in detail since as Rushdie had foreseen there is a partiality of individual perspective. The Palestines referring to the different experiences of Palestinians of their country. Anderson's influential book in which Anderson underlies that all communities are imagined surfaces in this manner. The totality of Palestinian imagery when representing the past has a gendered narratives in the stories of recollection produces various metaphors for the exile.

The experience of displacement of characters dating to 1948, 1967 and later like 1982 or even now each hold divergent tendencies for exiles experiences of displacement. 1948 that is also the symbol of Nakba produces more collective stories that overlap each other in the commonality of suffering and humiliation, 1967 suggesting a further suffering in which Israel's power destroyed many Palestinians aspirations of return but also the refugee camps in other countries that became subject to the pressure of the nation state it is under, of Israel and the continuous degradation that Palestinians lived there in the end produced much more individualized forms; in which the shared Palestinian entity seems to lose its grip on the representation of Palestinian exiles.

Both Palestinians and Palestine unite under the major events and the writers who seem to have had a first hand experience of the events of 1948 or 1967 seem to enroll in the contemplation of the loss either in retrospection or attempts of forgetting; in which both includes some form of coming to terms with the past.

Palestinian exile can also be seen to incorporate elements of nationalist imagery after the Nakbha. Various examples of the portrayal of women as symbols, metaphors in painting, biographies, novels, poetry shows us that exilic literature is both portraying this and taking a step further in which politics of gender in the Palestinian culture becomes criticized or portrayed with its current repressive elements.

I have also hinted at the idea that the partiality of individual's perspective has in various ways led to the desire of 'return' which has a symbolic view for Palestinians, like the narrator of *Illusion of Return*, and different meanings for others, that the Palestinian exilic literature even if it represents individuals having a desire for a

future, escape the mud paddle of the present have the desire for a Palestine either based on their past experiences prior to displacement or in the hybrid view do not seek for specifically for the Palestine. This suggests the idea of return is illusionary, fragmented since it is based upon the partial experiences of characters which seem to trouble the demand of return, as in the narrator of *the Illusion of Return*. This is not to suggest that Palestinians do not demand a return, the representation of the demand of return becomes substantiated as a 'symbolic value' (El-youssef) on one side, the right of return on the other, and even the awareness of the impossibility of return. The fictiveness of national identity and the rhetorics envolved under this representation is what suggests that there is a change in the way of representing Palestine.

Palestinian exile is a representation of a land somewhere on which politics has not only changed its people, its trees, its landscape as Said suggested in *Invention, Memory and Place* but also placed it in a distant land with the second longest man made wall that tries to defy the unity of earth and acts like a baricade of the hopes and dreams of its exiles.

It is also clear that the tradition of Palestinian exile representation inevitably is creating more critical approaches as the experiences of 1948 and 1967 strays towards distant past. The recurrent themes with all their complexities are revitalising in their insistence to treat Palestine not as a representation but as an imagination.

As Ihab Saloul noted that the catastrophe and Palestine in memory is becoming an almost "obsession"(Imre, 37) . The detachment of the initial loss is providing more perfect characters in relation to Hugo's account of belonging mentioned in the

introduction. The inbetweenness starts to provide the awareness of their situation and through which they create new perspectives in this long tradition of representation and imagination of Palestine.

The exilic studies had been more focused on the aesthetic gain of the exiled writers. This perspective tended to center upon the view of literature as individual experience which did not conceptualize these writings under refugee writers but placed a certain veil between collective experience and the writer's experience. This outlook incorporated the major writers who had been displaced and produced a certain canon of the exiled writers.

Many of the writers, whether it be first wave or second wave, seem to be representatives of the collective experience of Palestinian exile and there are others whose works seem to be much more about the suffering and the pain of having to leave their home as individuals with their families.

The initial cause of Palestinian displacement was based upon the Jewish exodus and the creation of the state of Israel has displaced Palestinians. The very factor behind this displacement was not precisely a desire to move the people. The political motive of creation of one state meant the dispersion of the community which inhabited those lands. The clashes between the various armed national groups which had its disputes in between themselves due to various cultural, identity and economic elements on one plain, the sub-contractor states that negotiated with the imperialist powers according to their interests, and the desire of imperialist powers to be able to maintain a certain "partnership" or control or influence in the region called "the

Middle-East” has produced the 1948 and the events leading to the six day war in 1967.

Palestinians who unaware of the political situations of the periods like Ghada Karmi, a child still in the naive state of her childhood, or as Samir El-Youssef’s novella *The Illusion of Return* narrates the displacement of a young man from the a refugee camp amidst the political chaos or the Traveler in Fatteh Azzam’s play “The Baggage” in which he carries the burden of various individuals’ stories with each suitcase that act like the souvenirs of the trauma. All exhibit a sense of collective being of the people of an imaginary land for them which is called Palestine.

The contradictory positions of women symbols of Fatima and Amina are one of the comparative elements that informs the treatment of national collective elements in these two works.

Fatima acts as a symbol of the feminized land that is attributed with the masculine perspective of the nationalist understanding of the nation. In the text, Fatima is to be either remembered or forgotten. Fatima is the very gendered nationalist symbol that constitutes a link between an identity of the past and the ‘secular nationalism’ as Katz noted. Fatima is a symbol, a rhetoric that Ghada resorts to be able to symbolize a link to Palestine, the unity, continuity of Palestinian nation after the Catastrophe and suggest the importance of the symbol for Palestinians after 1948. Ghada’s experiences of adapting to the new nation revolves around forgetting Fatima.

Forgetting Fatima becomes a symbol of the negotiation process with the new culture. Once Ghada goes to England remembering Fatima becomes a major issue, in which

Ghada's Englishness arises as she learns the English lifestyle, culture, language; which is in accordance with Katz conception of (Katz, 86) the different levels of national narratives as gendered texts.

The way Ghada's mother aspires to the customs of Fatima, the caftan, the way she cleans the floors are all parts of the symbolism of her mother's attempt not to lose her link to Palestine. As it was suggested earlier, Ghada's parents do not manage to create a bridge because of the absence of recollection.

Ghada's mother and Ghada's parents who do not recount the stories of the past, their departure and are oblivious to the troubles their children are facing seem to suggest their inability to constitute a link between Palestine and England. Her mother's identity is very much informed by the gendered national narrative that Fatima is a part of.

On the other hand, Amina is a character expressed to be a character trying to offer a new Palestinian women image in the refugee camp according to the narrator. The narrator's awareness of the politicized rhetoric in the past pushes retrospection outside of the traditional element of a romanticized past. The rhetoric of resistance, her parents' claim to the change in the role of women, Kamal's threatened masculinity all yield a male perspective which on the surface produces rhetorics that apted for 'change' in the role of women, and in nationalism. The narrator is cynical of the masculine culture that centers around the male gaze. The expressions of 'family shame', 'reputation' do not give way to the re-shaping of nationalism in the camp. The collective identity which is masculine refuses to accept this kind of a role as a gender trait which the narrator is conscious of.



Amina's reaction to Kamal's degrading actions of calling her a 'bitch' because she kissed her male friend is to lead to the situation of her 'pulling the trigger' and killing herself. Amina's suicide is what shapes the narrator's and his mother's silences. The revision of gender roles for a nationalism in accordance with the prevalent gender roles of modernity suggests a new way of belonging to the nation which is lost in the masculinity of the refugee camp.

The recurrent symbol of Fatima refer to the recollection of the past, of Palestinian identity, of its culture. Ghada is aware of this suggests that the absence of the recollection is what catalysed her negotiation process of becoming English.

On the other hand, The stories of *The Illusion of Return*, the recollection based upon the loss of Amina, and other characters in the face of the rhetorical political circumstances of the refugee camp produces a reaction of the narrator. This reaction can be summarized as the failure of the nationalist view to uphold the rhetoric of the new women, signals the narrator's reaction since nationalism and the national collective group is represented as living in a rhetoric.

The experience of the other characters each yielding a unique way of dealing with the traumas of exile. Each character has a different perspective on their own situation and the narrator seems aware of the fictiveness of national identity. These stories find meaning in relation to the story of the 'nightmare' of Bruno, a Polish Jew who experienced the Holocaust. This is the climax of the story in terms of the narrator's inability to become complete at present or to complete anything at present. This becomes resolved through Bruno's idea that violence reduces the characters to the function of survival in which the personal differences, depth of characters could be

overcome through the different perceptions of character's contemplation on the past experiences. Bruno's story that stresses the existence of different views of various character becomes the structural position that the narrator claims to the authorship of the novel. The novel is a completed story. The completeness of the narrator is suggested through the claim to authorship. The narrator's completeness arising from the shared stories of the experience of exile due to a dialogue which is not confined to nationality but to the interaction of the stories of others.

A dialogue of the experiences of Holocaust and the Catastrophe is what resolves the narrator's problematized 'unreal past' and incompleteness. A dialogue through the experiences of those who have experienced the violence and displacement and who experienced life in a ghetto. A ghetto drowning in the rhetorics of various political institutions resolves the narrator's insistence on encapsulation in the present and produces claim on the future that is not encapsulated in the 'return' to Palestine, but 'moving on'.

The contradictory positions of the symbols of women, the contradictory positions of the role of collective stories, and the differences in the ways the characters experience exile are what these two exemplary texts of these two categories outer garments portray.

The first wave is more centralized with the theme of catastrophe and the political events that surrounds them. The fiction which is very much imbued with the national sentiments, its gendered narrative incorporates an 'ideal sense of belonging' to Palestine which becomes problematized in exile. The 'first wave' style of representation as the direct outcome of the hardship Palestinians faced stresses the

‘inbetweenness’ of Palestinian exile and plays on the politics of exile that is complicating their present.

In the ‘second wave’, the identity politics of exile seems to be a much more of a conscious trait. The awareness of their identity, problematics of nationality and their hybridity is one of the elements that can be considered as the way representation is shifting towards.

Another element is that nationalist, political, gender issues that complicated their past does not seem to produce a romanticized version of their native land. The reality of exile and the critical view towards the past makes the narrator of *Illusion of Return* see ‘return’ only as ‘a symbolic value’ or Mahmoud Darwish’s poem *Who am I without Exile* which suggest that the ideal sense of belonging has become problematized and Palestine does not constitute incorporate this in the ‘hybridized’ beings that have long been in exile. They portray a more critical perception of the national narrative, and a higher degree of awareness of the fictiveness of identity and therefore the ‘second wave’ of writers place Palestinian exiles into the critical terrain of a more postcolonial look. The narrator’s search for being complete, of leaving aside the feeling of failure, of being critical of the political rhetoric and the preontological conception of the identity of Palestinian identity become resolved in the book through dialogue that incorporates the reflections of other exiles in it.

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