

Research paper

## A Home away from Home: Diasporic Cultural Identity in Susan Abulhawa's Morning in Jenin

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### ABSTRACT

This article aims to negotiate the diasporic identities in exile and their impact on the formation of national identity and self-discovery in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010). It sheds light on the forced displacement, fragmentation, alienation, and shattered identity of the forcibly dislocated characters. It also reveals the influence of the Israeli invasion and occupation of Palestine and its devastating consequences on the migratory characters. Moreover, it traces how exile and diaspora narrate mini-personal narratives of catastrophic stories of characters who live in internal and external refugees' camps. In this sense, diaspora is linked to the fracture and disintegration of the identity of Abulhawa's characters away from their homelands. Also, this study focuses on recent themes in *Mornings in Jenin* that are not thoroughly analysed by previous studies and research, especially the protagonist's transformation, self-discovery and growth. In addition to that, home is used metaphorically to help the diasporic characters to mature and gain self-confidence in their struggle towards achieving decolonisation, autonomy, emancipation and self-determination.

**Keywords:** diaspora, refugee, identity and exile, Susan Abulhawa, *Mornings in Jenin*

Literature, and especially narratives of diaspora, forced displacement and exile offer new contexts for understanding the political and social agency of exilic migrant subjects. Besides providing a literary representation of diasporic immigrant subjects, whose identities are characterised as fractured and forked identities (Ilango, 2019; Schefers, 2026). Contemporary diasporic narratives suggest alternatives for constructing new forms of identity and belonging. This type of literature is concerned with narrating the plight of Palestinian refugees and the devastating conditions of these exilic and diasporic humans. In this regard, the Palestinians are displaced, exiled and expelled from Palestine due to the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The Israeli occupation of Palestine traces back to 1948 Nakba (Catastrophe) which led to the displacement of 700,000 Palestinians from Palestine. Nearly two decades later, the 1967 six-day war Naksa (Setback) led to the expulsion between 300,000 and 400,000 Palestinians. There are other dates that impressed upon the Palestinian history and national consciousness: 1917, the year Arthur Balfour, British Foreign Secretary, promised Palestine as a 'national home' for the Jewish people; 1936, the year of the Palestinian Revolution against British rule in Palestine and Zionist immigration to the country; 1982, the year of the Israeli invasion of Lebanon and the massacre of Palestinians in the refugee camps of Sabra and Shatila in Beirut; year of the First Palestinian Intifada, and 2000, the year of the Second Palestinian Intifada; 2002, the year of the massacre at Jenin Camp on the West Bank; 2024, the Israeli multi-faceted aggression on Gaza and killing thousands of infants, children and destroying churches, hospitals, schools, mosques and houses. The state of Israel

has occupied and colonised the territories of the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and Gaza Strip, which also led to further displacement of thousands of Palestinians in the Arab countries and worldwide. It has established Jewish settlements in the occupied territories and maintained military control over the Palestinians and prevented them of having their own freedom and living a dignified life.

One of the excruciating incongruities of the Palestinian- Israeli conflict is the forced displacement of Palestinians because of systematic violence, demolition of homes, political instability and the expansion of Israeli settlements. Many Palestinians have been homeless, stateless and forced to flee their homeland due to the current colonisation of Palestine. They have become refugees and immigrants in many neighbouring Arab countries in the Middle East, and in other parts of the world. Abu Amrieh (2022, p.2) clarifies that 'the Palestinians were forced to leave their country after the creation of the State of Israel in 1948 and have been living as refugees in camps since then'. The mass exodus and the forced displacement of Palestinians left them without home and shelter. Consequently, thousands have escaped for better life in diaspora, while the others remain in over-populated refugee camps living in a devastating state of poverty and with a complete dependence on international aid. This article aims to examine the representation of diasporic identities and home in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), it examines how fictional exilic diasporic identities are burdened with loss, alienation, fragmentation and cultural ambivalences in a contemporary Anglophone Arab novel as employing diaspora in their narratives. Accordingly, diaspora literature plays a pivotal role in shedding light on how Palestinians have been scattered, dispersed, and obliged to flee their homeland. Also, this article showcases the results of diaspora, which are the continuous quest for Home, and the formation of diasporic identity of Amal and Nur in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*.

The term Diaspora is introduced by Gabriel Sheffer, in his book *Modern Diasporas in International Politics* (1986), states that the concept of diaspora cannot be limited to Jewish people only because there are many ethnic groups have existed even before them, for example, Phoenicians and Assyrians. According to Sheffer there are three sets of actors that are relevant to Diaspora theory, which are: diaspora group itself, the host society and the homeland that might be actual or virtual. The triadic relationship between these factors is the principal components of diaspora theory. In addition, diaspora is as ancient as the dispersal of Jews from the land 'promised' to them by God to Moses by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar 586 BC as he dragged away their leader Zedekiah and the key military, religious and civic personnel in chains to Babylon, therefore, the tradition suggests that Jews remain forever dispersed. By the same token, other ethnic groups joined the term either by slave trade such as Africans, or ethnic cleansing such as Armenians, or famine such as Irish, or lastly by occupation in the case of Palestinians who were forced to leave their homes and become refugees in neighbouring countries and all over the Middle East and beyond (Cohen, 2008). Robin Cohen defines diaspora in his book *Global Diaspora: An Introduction* as: 'Dispersal from an original homeland, often traumatically, to two or more foreign regions' (Cohen, 2008, p.17).

The concept of Diaspora started first by Jews dispersal from Babylon, then modernised to include more ethnic groups, such as Africans, Armenians, Irish, and Palestinians after the formation of the state of Israel in 1948. Cohen argues that Diaspora Studies have gone through four phases. Besides, the concept of Diaspora has attracted the attention, not only of cultural studies, but also the wider academic world, so that, this term is now applied more generally to the mobility, scattering, and dispersion of immigrants outside their homelands across countries and cultures. In this view, this displacement creates differences in cultures, traditions, values, histories and languages, bearing in mind, tensions and ambivalences between the place of presence and the place of origin. Helena Schulz and Juliane Hammer demonstrate that 'Diaspora, life away from one's homeland, is life in flux; it implies an unstable and ephemeral, fugitive condition. The diaspora condition encompasses transnational lives. The very term implies, as we have seen, a cross-border, unbounded condition (Schulz & Hammer, 2003). In this context, the concept of 'diaspora' has encompassed agonised images of uprootedness, wandering, and dispersion that affect the immigrants' existence and individual consciousness. In this vein, Claire Alexander points out that:

*Here the emphasis is on diaspora as inseparable from forced movement, exile, loss and longing, on the one hand, and the forging of new identities in the places of arrival, on the other. The recognition of the unequal and often traumatic circumstances of migration and dispersal, along with the minoritization. (Alexander, 2010, p.113)*

Alexander stresses the intersection and interrelation of diaspora with loss of homeland, statelessness, denial and traumatic impacts of forced displaced immigrants.

The present article also relies on the great efforts of great scholars such as William Safran's characteristics of 'Diasporic identity' (1991), Robin Cohen's expansion of Safran's model (2008), Gabriel Sheffer's Diaspora Theory (1986), Avtar Brah's formation and types of diasporas (1996), Homi Bhabha's border crossing and the resulting third space (1994), and lastly Stuart Hall's cultural impact on individuals living in diaspora (1996). Departing from the unity of blood and the unity of religion, this article aims to shed light on the Palestinian cause as it is felt to be a priority to every Arab Muslim individual. Moreover, I believe our duty is to defend this cause with a great effort to gain supporters and affect the maximum audience, as it is unjustly handled and the reason behind millions of Palestinians' ongoing misery.

In fact, the term diaspora and the Arabic word ghurba share emotional and psychological resonances, especially in their relations with alienation, estrangement and pain of separation from homeland. The concept of ghurba is associated with displacement, exile, nostalgia and identity crises. It emphasizes a strong sense of emotional turmoil and existential dilemmas of displaced individuals away from their homelands. Nadeen Dakkak demonstrates:

*Ghurba as a concept and a state of being can allow us to understand narratives of dislocation in a more expansive way, first by situating these narratives within the Arab world, and even within the boundaries of the homeland itself, and second by disentangling them from experiences of migration, exile and diaspora. (Dakkak, 2023, p.10)*

Thus, the term ghurba carries layers of meanings related to Palestinian refugees and migrants who have been displaced forcibly from their homeland. In the contexts of refugees and migrants, ghurba signify forced displacement experienced by Palestinian refugees because of the Israeli colonisation and occupation of Palestine (Anizoba & Davis, 2019; Andreson, 2025). Thus, narratives of ghurba, diaspora, exile, and displacement offer new codes for understanding the political and social conditions of forced displaced migrants. Moreover, it provides a literary representation of diasporic migrants' subjects, whose identities are constructed through transitional and transcultural spaces (Bastug, 2020).

These widespread notions are in tandem with the texts and contexts represented by diasporic Anglophone Arab writers who have lived in exilic spaces and experienced displacement and uprootedness. Their works shed light on living in different spaces, ideologies and cultures. I have previously written about how 'they use their fictional narrative discourse to express problematic transitional issues connected to many notions of lived experiences and memories hovering in the realms of their displacement, existence, sense of alienation, and consciousness' (Aladylah, 2023, p.213). Moreover, they interrogate existential and political circumstances, exclusion, estrangement, and marginalisation. Actually, there are also many Anglophone Arab female writers, such as Hala Alyan, Laila Halaby, Fadia Faqir, Liela Aboulele, Ahdaf Souleif and Susan Abulhawa. As a matter of fact, these Anglophone Arab female writers have addressed the Palestinian cause from many angles, either to reflect their experience, to counter-write the Israeli literature and to struggle against discrimination, racism and stereotypical negative images of Arabs and Muslims in narrative discourses, media, and cinema. Diasporic Anglophone Arab female writers, who have experienced uprootedness from their homelands, a sense of fragmentation, tension, transnational displacement, devastating loss, and exilic diasporic traumas (Webb, 2026). This has led these writers to carve out a space of assimilation, cultural and social acceptance, and attachment in diaspora. In this respect, they question spaces at diasporic borders, and try to create new spaces, voices and tunnels between moving and belonging 'here' and 'there', which results in constructing new identities that are hybrid and syncretic. Their discourses spring from the experiences of estrangement, living in-between and exclusion, which is indeed problematic. Dalal Sarnou believes that 'they voice two consciousnesses: home and diaspora, English and Arabic, the past and the present' (Sarnou, 2016, p.210). The narratives of these female writers present experiences of displacement, questions of belonging and nonbelonging, uprootedness, in-betweenness and acculturation. They negotiate current issues related to contemporary sociopolitical conflicts, civil wars, refugees' dilemmas of the Arab world and the occupation of Palestine.

One of these female novelists, Susan Abulhawa, is a Palestinian- American writer and a political activist, she resides in Pennsylvania, USA. She has written many novels such as *My Voice Sought the Wind* (2013), *The Blue Between Sky and Water* (2015), and *Against the Loveless World* (2020). Abulhawa tries to question contemporary political and cultural issues of the Arab world, like civil wars, diaspora, exile, discrimination and prejudice. She opens up multiple issues connected with Arab immigrants, and their estrangement, dilemmas and traumas in host countries. In the selected novel, *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), Abulhawa uses the 1948 catastrophe as a backdrop to the novel and the subsequent dramatic change in all people's lives in the novel. The main characters, Amal Abulheja and Nur, have gone through multiple conflicts, troubles and setbacks which within time have formed and sculpted their identities.

Amal, the protagonist, is an example of a diasporic identity who conform both to William Safran's ideal type of diaspora and Cohen's extended features of diaspora. Safran argues that the concept of Diaspora was limited to the Jewish experience, then it was developed to meet other ethnic groups, such as Palestinians who were forcefully displaced from their homeland. Safran's article, 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myths of Homeland and Return' (1991), gives six characteristics that should be applied to a diasporic identity, that they should have a homeland and they were dispersed to one or more locations, a collective memory to that idealised mythical land which they are in ongoing relationship with it and plan to return and restore it, and they are defined by it, in addition to the sense of alienation in the host land.

The novel has been received with acclaim by Arabic and foreign readers; therefore, many dissertations have discussed the novel from many perspectives. For example, in her dissertation 'Dressed in olive branches and cracked happiness: Palestinian identity in Susan Abulhawa and Nathalie Handal' (2017), Lisa Altomani discusses the Palestinian voice of Mahmoud Darwish to reflect upon the lost voice, lost land, and lost Palestinian identity. Being separated from Palestine is like a child being separated from her/his mother, and metaphorically it was

echoed by Amal's separation from her mother Dalia and, consequently, the disturbed relationship between Amal and her daughter Sarah. Altomani states that exile has many shapes of separation even from Amal's own identity and duty, which has led eventually to the creation of a diasporic space. Therefore, the purpose of this article is to connect the dots between Darwish and Abulhawa to serve the greatest goal of reclaiming Palestine and Palestinian identity in diaspora.

The first feature identified by Safran and Cohen, that the individual or his/her ancestors must experience a displacement from an original place, which is the case of Amal, she was displaced from her ancestral village Ein Hod to a refugee camp then to an orphanage inside Palestine then to the United States, and with each displacement her identity sculptured. Losing Palestine and being scattered in many countries have an adverse effect on identity formation. In the article 'The Portrayal of Amal's Diasporic Identity in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*' (2020), Aimatul Maghfiroh and Much Khoiri examine Amal's character closely to capture the diasporic identity by applying Safran's model of diasporic identity along with diaspora and diasporic identity theories. Tracing Amal's journey in several countries, Maghfiroh and Khoiri argue that Amal exhibits five out of six features of Safran's study of Diasporic identity. Therefore, Amal's diasporic identity is revealed by discovering the differences between herself and American girls. The article proves that Amal possesses a diasporic identity as she was born in Palestine, and grew up in the USA, which is a completely different environment, with different customs, language and religion, and with no ties to homeland around her, that represents the literal meaning of 'diaspora' in her own character. Furthermore, displaced individuals pertain to some kind of collective memory to their homeland. Palestinian sensory memories of olive and orange orchards demonstrate how place and geography are crucial components of communal memory in nationalist ideologies. Since nationalism is fundamentally an ideology concerning the division of territory, it also benefits from the concept of 'our' environment, landscape, and geography. One characteristic feature of the symbolic usage of nature is the tree, which is commonly used as a symbol of rootedness, as in the Swedish fir and birch, the Lebanese cedar, or the Palestinian olive tree. Effective instruments for defending historical rights are metaphors for people that are securely rooted in the land. Images of the past as a peasant and by the way that people speak about their sense of rootedness and attachment to the soil (Shulz & Hammer, 2003). Another feature has been experienced by Amal, her disturbed relationship with classmates and families she had lived with in the USA, which indicate how her personality was shaped based on her relationship with others, starting from changing her name to Amy, ended up her martyred death in Palestine.

In the same vein, Ayman Abu-Shomar's article 'Diasporic Reconciliations of Politics, Love and Trauma: Susan Abulhawa's Quest for Identity in *Mornings in Jenin*' (2015) traces the politics and traumas which affected thousands of Palestinians living in diaspora. Abu-Shomar focuses on Amal's diasporic identity, and how her identity was shaped in relation to others. He argues that the sense of 'otherness' makes Amal perceives the 'self', and her quest for identity flourishes by passing through many identities, starting from changing her name to Amy, and denying the Palestinian identity, ending up dying in Palestine her homeland by Israeli's weapon while defending the Palestinian cause. Abu-Shomar believes that the divided diasporic identity of the protagonist finds reconciliation between whole and fragmented identity eventually, after long years in exile, and trauma caused by Zionists to her country, her family and finally to her husband. In addition to that, the trauma of meeting her Jewish stolen brother Ismael/David, and family role in keeping in touch with homeland, made Amal feeling home again in the family bosom is the main turning point in Amal's identity formation and final reconciliation with her original Amal not disturbed Amy.

Departing from this point, Safran argues that the displaced feels obliged in maintaining the prosperity and restoration of homeland, by keeping in contact and visits. Correspondingly, the quest for identity continues as Samira Zaiter and Fatima Zahra Kadri in their dissertation *The Quest for Identity and Nostalgia in Susan Abulhawa's Mornings in Jenin* (2019) discuss the role of nostalgia and the Palestinian culture in the novel, which aids in shaping the Palestinian identity. Moreover, Abulhawa's reaction to the domination of Israeli's literature from another perspective, as she narrates reality from the point of view of a displaced Palestinian person and exerts the effort to counter write the Zionist's literature, and emphasises on the existence of Palestinians' presence, humanity and the ancient history which they belong to. By the same token, Payel Pal argues in her article 'Nostalgia, identity, and homeland: Reading the narratives of the diaspora in Susan Abulhawa's fiction' (2021) that displacement and deprivation from the simplest rights of a human is a forcing power that triggers nationalism and encourages Palestinian to demand and fight for a free Palestine. Exile and living in diaspora affects the life of Palestinians and their descendants, who might lack connection to their original country; therefore, they will not have the power to claim their original identity and land. Pal argues that nostalgia and the sense of home are the main shapers of one's identity and character, so being away and disconnected becomes a mutation to one's identity which will make displaced people eventually waive their rights and their country of origin.

Similarly, Maghfiroh and Koiri (2020), in their article 'Amal's Intercultural Encounter in Shaping Her Diasporic Identity in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*', focus on the role of intercultural encounter that shapes Amal's diasporic identity, by using postcolonial approach, culture and identity, and diasporic identity theories.

Furthermore, the article reveals the role of intercultural encounter in shaping the protagonist's final identity as an Arab-Muslim who lives in America after a long state of confusion and estrangement within herself, whether to conform and blend in the American society and lives as Amy who keeps her Arab identity in shadows, or Amal should prevail, and get prouder and stronger to defend her Arab identity, and fights for her homeland.

The main character, Amal with a long vowel -- means many hopes, narrates the history along with her story at first as a displaced refugee, then living in diaspora for years before the story ends up by her death in a refugee camp in Palestine. Fischer (2019) argues that Arab female writers tend to mention common themes in their stories such as Jerusalem, Nakba, Sabra and Shatila refugee camps in Lebanon, the Jenin refugee camp and massacre, these themes authenticate the Palestinian lost land and emphasise the credibility of their story and history.

Susan Abulhawa depicts many characters who leave their homeland for multiple reasons, among which is the occupation of Palestine and the expulsion of the Palestinians from their homeland. *Mornings in Jenin* has been translated into 32 languages, and it is the bestseller novel of the Arab American writer Susan Abulhawa. The popularity of the novel gives the chance to many scholars, researchers, and critics to comment and study the recent themes used in the novel.

*Mornings in Jenin* is a novel written by Palestinian American novelist Susan Abulhawa, the book relates the tale of the Abulheja family, a Palestinian family that was forced to be driven from their village of Ein Hod in 1948 as a result of the Nakba, the massive exodus of Palestinians that occurred with the creation of the state of Israel. *Mornings in Jenin* is a tragic novel related to the displacement and expulsion of four generations of Abulheja family, beginning from 1941 till 2002. They were dislocated from Palestine and relocated in a refugee camp in Jenin in 1948. Amal was born in Jenin's camp, and witnessed many tragic events, like the Sabra and Shatila massacre, Naksa, and the battle in Jenin in 2002. She has lost many members of her family, her grandfather, Yehya, her mother, Dalia, her father Hasan and her brother Imael/ David. Her husband Majid was killed during Sabra and Shatila massacre. Consequently, her brother committed suicide in the U.S. embassy in Beirut. These events have formed and shaped the identity of Amal as a diasporic traveller and as a Palestinian.

In fact, the novel chronicles the family's journey as they attempt to rebuild their lives in various Middle Eastern locales throughout the ensuing decades. *Mornings in Jenin* has received accolades for its detailed representation of Palestinian life and its sympathetic portrayal of the human cost of the conflict. It has received widespread praise in the West and the Middle East and has been translated into more than 32 languages. The representation of the Palestinian experience from the 1940s to the current day in *Mornings in Jenin* is strong and emotionally compelling. The novel tells the story of the Abulheja family's deportation from their ancestral village of Ein Hod, their subsequent exile in Gaza and Jenin refugee camps, and their final immigration to North America and Western Europe, with noting that, the Nakba, the 1967 War, and other significant historical occurrences that affected the Palestinian experience are interwoven with the Abulhejas' individual tales throughout the novel. The protagonist, Amal, narrates the history along with her story at first as a displaced refugee, then lives in diaspora for years and the story ends up by her death in a refugee camp in Palestine. The main event in Abulhawa's novel is the 1948 aftermath of the mass displacement Palestinians, which resulted in protagonists living in diaspora, and finally possessing a diasporic identity. In this view, Helena Schulz and Juliane Hammer opine that 'It is in the process of displacement that identity is shaped, or reshaped, but that process requires a sense of a place left behind' (Schulz and Hammer, 2003, pp.9-10). Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* reveals the dilemmas of exile and belonging that shaped the characters' identity through Abulhawa's depiction of Palestinian-Israeli continuing conflict as a backdrop of the novel. *Mornings in Jenin* is narrated by Amal who is the protagonist of displacement and traumatic exile from the origin of her family Ein Hod village.

*Mornings in Jenin* traces four generations of Abulheja family from 1948 till 2002, revealing the multiple tragedies that lead to the scattering of the family members around the globe, then their final re-union under the Palestinian soil, Amal says 'Me — that doubtless, irrefutable Palestinian certainty that I belong to this land. It possesses me. Always we thought about returning to Ein Hod. We thought it was paradise' (Abulhawa, 2010, p.139). More than 22,000 Palestinians who were driven from their native homes in 1948 as part of the Nakba, or disaster, when Zionist forces ethnically cleansed Palestine to establish the state of Israel, reside in the Jenin refugee camp. On April 9, 2002, during the second Intifada, more than 150 armoured vehicles and bulldozers were brought into the camp by Israeli forces supported by fighter planes. Over the course of more than ten days, there was a confrontation with the resistance, during which at least 52 Palestinian militants and civilians as well as 23 Israeli troops perished. Over a fifth of the camp's inhabitants were forced to leave during the raid by the Israeli army, which also seriously damaged hundreds of additional dwellings. The camp was eventually rebuilt (Aljazeera, 2008).

The narrative discourse of the novel is based on many tragic events that have shaped the Palestinian history. Firstly, the establishment of the state of Israel 1948, secondly, Jenin massacre in 2002 is used in the novel as the main event to highlight the attack of Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) on displaced Palestinian camp in Jenin, as witnessed by many misfortunate Palestinians. One of the citizens Kamal Anis who said to The Guardian newspaper reporter Sharon Sadeh, that he 'saw the Israeli soldiers pile 30 bodies beneath a half-wrecked house. When the pile

was complete, they bulldozed the building, bringing its ruins down on the corpses. Then they flattened the area with a tank' (Sadeh, 2002). As Edward Said argues, the uncountable sediments of history, which include untold stories and a bewildering variety of peoples, languages, experiences, and cultures, are all swept aside or ignored during this process and consigned to the sand heap along with the treasures that were taken from Baghdad's libraries and museums. For 'our' East and 'our' Orient to become 'ours' to rule and own, both men and women write history and have the power to erase and rewrite it, always with varied silences and omissions, always with forced forms and tolerated disfigurements (2003). So, the Zionist policy to erase the people once living there, to erase their history and legacy, is another type of ethnic cleansing.

Amal, the main character in *Mornings in Jenin*, is an example of a transnational identity, her voyage trajectory stretches through multiple spaces from Ein Hod, Jenin, U.S.A., Lebanon and Palestine. She strives to gain her own lost identity and state. Amal travels to the U.S.A. to avoid the devastating impacts of living in Jenin's refugee camp, the narrator says that 'the future can't breathe in a refugee camp, Amal. The air here is too dense for hope. You are being offered a chance to liberate the life that lies dormant in all of us. Take it' (Abulhawa, 2010, p.112). Thus, she decides to travel to the U.S.A. to complete her education. In the United States, she feels separated and insecure of living in a foreign space, cut off from her roots and alienated. Amal is isolated spiritually, existentially and physically; therefore, this is the inception of the disruption of Amal's space of otherness. She cannot imagine herself living anywhere else other than Palestine, irrespective of the insecurity and instability of her homeland and the hard circumstances of living in her original home, the narrator says that:

*No matter who conquers it, because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors. Because it knows the private lust that flamed the beds of all my foremothers. Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past. I am a daughter of the land (Abulhawa, 2010).*

In this context, Amal's diasporic journey is influenced by exilic traumas between hybrid cultures, homes and identities. In effect, Amal suffers loneliness, feels lost, threatened, fragmented and faces difficulty in being attached, assimilated and included in an alien culture. She experiences emotional, cultural and ontological displacement and disruption between two different spaces. Amal possesses a diasporic identity as she was born in Palestine, and grew up in the U.S.A., which is a completely different culture, with different customs, language and religion, and with no ties to homeland around her, that represents the literal meaning of 'diaspora'. Stuart Hall explains that such alienation:

*...accepts that identities are never unified and, in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicization and are constantly in the process of change and transformation. (Hall, 1996, p.4).*

The above quotation symphonies with the fracture and fragmentation of the character of Amal, and her search for her self-conscious stability and security in her native home.

Indeed, Abulhawa writes a counter-narrative of resistance where Amal maintains a vision of home as a space she seeks to achieve self-transformation, self-realisation, and self-awareness. The narrator says, 'I had thought of little else but to return to my family, to myself. But I had also forged real ties in America and in many ways, the place I had called home for the past years had become part of me' (Abulhawa, 2010, p.144). Additionally, Amal's displacement and alienation outside her homeland direct her to realise the importance of her belonging and her roots to the homeland. These emotions of diaspora, estrangement and detachment strengthen her interior desire to return to her native homeland. In this light, William Safran avers that exilic individual 'believe that they will never be recognized and known by their host countries. They yearn to return to their home countries in safe conditions and to continue to support their native land' (Safran, 1991, pp.83-84). In this regard, 'home' for transnational immigrants becomes an icon of acceptance, social inclusion, belonging and roots. Also, Avtar Brah demonstrates that:

*Home is also the lived experience of a locality. Its sounds and smells, its heat and dust, balmy summer evenings, or the excitement of the first snowfall, shivering winter evenings, somber grey skies in the middle of the day [...] all this, as mediated by the historically specific everyday of social relations. (Brah, 1996, p.192)*

Amal's displaced individuality pertains to some kind of collective memory to her homeland. Her memories of olive and orange orchards demonstrate how place and geography are crucial components of communal memory in nationalist ideologies. Furthermore, Amal is obliged to exile, leaves her village, relatives and neighbours, but her personal national identity forces her to be recreated, reconstituted, and retransformed to cope with the collective national identities of all the forced displaced Palestinians. Hence, Abulhawa drives her protagonist back to Palestine to fulfil her heroine's diasporic transformation and identity stability.

In fact, Abulhawa as an Anglophone Arab writer sheds light on the dilemmas of the forced displacement of the Palestinians and their resistance and struggle against the Israeli occupation of Palestine. The narrator brings up the story of Amal, one of the refugees' camps in Jenin who embodies the deeply afflicted, dejected and distressed Palestinians victimized by dispossession of their homeland. The shattered and broken diasporic identity of Amal finds reconciliation and harmony between homogeneous and heterogeneous identity eventually, after long years in

diaspora, and trauma caused by Zionists to her Palestine, her family and finally to her husband. In addition to that, the trauma of meeting her Jewish kidnapped brother Ismael/David, and family role in maintaining ties with homeland becomes a central narrative force that reawakens Amal's sense of belonging, identity existence, and final reconciliation with her original Amal, not disturbed Amy. Living in a diasporic space could not prevent Amal of sustaining her national fixed identity and original roots. In this sense, the forced displaced identity has started its pilgrimage to her space of birth. The narrator states that: 'I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation of the banished to no place, no man, no honor. My Arabness and Palestine's primal cries were my anchors to the world' (Abulhawa, 2010, p.143).

It is worth mentioning that the Israeli occupation of Palestine has inflicted injustice, oppression, chaos, and alienation on the Palestinians who were forcefully removed and expelled from their homeland. They were dispersed to one or more locations; they have become refugees inside Palestine or in many host countries. As Robert Cohen puts it 'the majority of the Palestinians are in diaspora, the majority of these are, in turn, officially registered as refugees' (Cohen, 2008, p.40). In this regard, exile, displacement, deprivation and living in diaspora triggers Amal to defend her Arab identity, fight for her homeland and stand with the rights of all the displaced Palestinians.

Finally, Abulhawa uses diasporic fictional character to portray the trauma, suffering of the Palestinians and the collective and painful memories of homelessness and displacement. She incorporates exterior spaces to achieve stability, independence and transformation within the identities of the displaced and deported characters. Through narratives of defiance and return, her novel resists occupation, exclusion, erasure and domination by focusing on the dilemmas of all the forced displaced exilic Palestinians. *Mornings in Jenin* is a movable space that stresses on the ongoing struggle of Palestinians, their dream of liberating their homeland.

*Mornings in Jenin* depicted various exilic characters who suffered from living in host countries. Diaspora made them miserable and devastated, experiencing ongoing misery, and misfortune. Eventually, they decided to return to their homeland and attained a complete identity formation and existence within Jenin mornings. Abulhawa has pictured within these broad contexts of the novel images about the genocide by displacing hundreds of thousands of innocent Palestinians and killing those who fight and resist, in massacres such as what happened in the Jenin refugee camps, create hegemony by controlling borders and imposing multiple curfews, and the barbarism in dealing even with children, women and the innocents, all perpetrated by the Zionist invaders and colonisers against the Palestinians in order to expel them from their country, and to force them to give up their dream of a safe homeland. In addition, Abulhawa has highlighted the ugliness and savagery of the Israeli invasion and occupation of Palestine; she further gives voice to the subaltern who have been dominated by the colonizer. Therefore, the subaltern cannot speak either because they belong to the third world or because they are women; their voices are systematically controlled, silenced and excluded by dominant, authoritarian force and discourse as Gayatri Spivak puts it: 'If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow' (Spivak, 2003, p.54; Demir, 2025). According to Spivak, people from colonised, silenced and marginalised nations are considered subaltern. They are also further divided and minoritised by gender, class, background, area, religion, and other ideologies which prevent them from speaking out. And finally, they are unable to stand together due to these divides. Similarly, Palestinian individuals who suffer and struggle Israeli forces to attain their state and independence are silenced either by the prison or by the bullet.

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All research reported in the submitted paper has been conducted in an ethical and responsible manner and is in full compliance with all relevant codes of experimentation and legislation.

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The author reports there are no competing interests to declare.

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## Data availability

The author confirms that the data supporting the findings are available within the article and its references.

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N/A

## Biographical sketch

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