



THE REPUBLIC OF TURKEY
SOCIAL SCIENCES UNIVERSITY OF ANKARA
THE GRADUATE SCHOOL OF SOCIAL SCIENCES

IDENTITY AND HOMELAND IN SUSAN ABULHAWA'S *MORNINGS IN JENIN*

Master's Thesis

Safaa Madkhana

Master of Arts in English Language and Literature

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THESIS APPROVAL

This is to certify that the defense examination for the thesis titled Identity and Homeland in Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* prepared by Safaa Madkhana with student number 205429201 studying in the field of English Language and Literature Department – Master of Art in Language and Literature Program has been conducted in accordance with the related clauses of the Graduate Studies and Examination Code of YÖK (Council of Higher Education) on/...../..... (date) at (hour), and has been approved by the majority of votes/unanimous vote.

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TABLE OF CONTENT

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS.....	ii
TABLE OF CONTENT	iii
ABSTRACT.....	iv
ÖZET	vi
CHAPTER I.....	1
1.1 INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER II.....	16
2.1 THE CONCEPT OF HOMELAND IN <i>MORNINGS IN JENIN</i>	16
CHAPTER III	33
3.1 THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY IN <i>MORNINGS IN JENIN</i>	33
CHAPTER IV	42
4.1 CONCLUSION	42
BIBLIOGRAPHY	45

ABSTRACT

The present study aims to analyze the concepts of identity and homeland as represented in Susan Abulhawa's novel *Mornings in Jenin* (2010). By following the story of four generations, the novel portrays the attachment and the sense of belonging to a homeland, exploring the strong connection to the land and the deep sense of identity the characters show amid different traumas and their ramifications on the characters and their bonds to the land and identity, and deeply tracing the emotional effects of diaspora, exile, and dislocation on the characters' identities and ties to the homeland. The thesis examines how the novel illustrates the strong attachment of the characters to the land and their indomitable sense of identity. The novel explores the profound impact of the characters' deep-rooted connection to the land on their sense of belonging and existence, as well as the traumatic experiences challenging them. More precisely, the thesis will approach the novel as a literary narrative charting the impacts of exile, diaspora, loss, and displacement on various characters' sense of home and identity formations. To this end, through the lens of postcolonial literary criticism, Edward Said's theory of Orientalism is employed as an analytical and insightful framework. Postcolonial theory, which accentuates the impacts of external factors on the inhabitants and such issues as homeland and identity and the processes that create societies, can be utilized to interpret and analyze the novel in relation to the conceptualizations of identity and homeland. It suggests that identity is a dynamic process shaped by historical, cultural, heritage, and discursive factors. Said's theory is essential for examining the case of identity, imaginative geographies, and notions such as homeland and identity. Moreover, the theoretical framework is pivotal for a thorough comprehension of the roles of history, cultural heritage, the impact of experiences of suffering, and the sense of loss created by diaspora, exile, and dislocation in identity formation and the relation between the characters and sense of home. The study concludes that experiences of trauma strengthen and crystallize the intrinsic ties of the characters in the novel to the land and their identity. Based on the reading of *Mornings in Jenin*, the main argument in this thesis is that the novel's characters' steadfast attachment to the land and ancestral heritage shapes, determines, and fortifies their identity. However, despite the traumatic experiences that challenge the characters' ties to their roots and sense of home, places, and existence, these challenges have ultimately strengthened and solidified their bond to the homeland and perception of identity, as represented in the novel. Consequently, the novel suggests that the characters' connection to the land plays a pivotal role, even in the face of hardships, in

sustaining and maintaining their identity, their being, and a sense of belonging that persists across generations; thereby, the concepts of homeland and identity are interconnected.

Key Words: *Mornings in Jenin*, Identity, Homeland, Exile, Palestine.



ÖZET

Bu çalışma, Susan Abulhawa'nın 2010 yılında yayımlanan *Mornings in Jenin* romanında vatan ve kimlik kavramlarının temsilini analiz etmeyi amaçlamaktadır. Dört neslin hikayesini takip eden roman, bir vatana bağlılığı ve aidiyet duygusunu resmetmektedir. Roman, karakterlerin toprağa olan güçlü bağlarını ve kimlik duygusunu, farklı travmalar ve bunların karakterler, aidiyet ve kimlik oluşumları üzerindeki etkileri ışığında derinlemesine incelemektedir. Ayrıca roman, diaspora, sürgün ve yerinden edilmenin karakterlerin kimlik oluşumu ve vatanla olan bağları üzerindeki duygusal etkilerini derinlemesine analiz etmektedir. Tez, romanın karakterlerin toprağa olan güçlü bağlarını ve sarsılmaz kimlik duygusunu nasıl resmettiğini ele almaktadır. Roman, karakterlerin derin kökleri olan toprak bağlantısının aidiyet duygusu ve varoluşları üzerindeki derin etkisini, onları zorlayan travmatik deneyimlerle birlikte incelemektedir. Diğer bir deyişle, tez romana, sürgün, diaspora, kayıp ve yerinden edilmenin çeşitli karakterlerin vatan ve kimlik oluşumu üzerindeki etkilerini gösteren bir edebi anlatı olarak yaklaşacaktır. Bu amaçla, Edward Said'in Oryantalizm teorisi, postkolonyal edebiyat eleştirisi lensinden analitik ve içgörülü bir çerçeve olarak kullanılmıştır. Yerliler üzerindeki dış güçlerin etkilerini, vatan ve kimlik gibi sorunları ve toplumları yaratan süreçleri vurgulayan postkolonyal teori, romanı kimlik ve vatan kavramlarıyla ilgili olarak yorumlamak ve analiz etmek için kullanılabilir. Kimliğin tarihsel, kültürel, miras ve söylemsel faktörler tarafından şekillendirilen dinamik bir süreç olduğunu öne sürmektedir. Said'in teorisi, kimlik, hayali coğrafyalar ve vatan ve kimlik gibi kavramları incelemek için gereklidir. Ayrıca, teorik çerçeve, tarih, kültürel miras, acı deneyimlerinin etkisi ve diaspora, sürgün ve yerinden edilmenin kimlik oluşumunda yarattığı kayıp duygusunun karakterler ve vatan duygusu arasındaki ilişkiyi kapsamlı bir şekilde anlamak için de önemlidir. Çalışma, travmatik deneyimlerin romandaki karakterlerin toprağa ve kimliklerine olan içsel bağlarını güçlendirdiği ve kristalize ettiği sonucuna varmaktadır. *Mornings in Jenin* romanının okunmasına dayanarak, bu tezin ana argümanı, romanın karakterlerinin toprağa ve ata mirasına sarsılmaz bağlılığının kimliklerini şekillendirdiği ve belirlediğidir. Ancak, karakterlerin köklerine ve vatan, yer ve varoluş duygusuna olan bağlarını zorlayan travmatik deneyimlere rağmen, bu zorluklar nihayetinde romanın temsil ettiği gibi, vatan ve kimlik algısı ile bağlarını güçlendirmiş ve sağlamlaştırmıştır. Sonuç olarak, roman karakterlerin toprakla bağlantısının, travma karşısında bile kimliklerini, varoluşlarını ve nesiller boyunca devam eden bir aidiyet

duygusunu sürdürmek ve korumak için hayati bir rol oynadığını öne sürmektedir; dolayısıyla, vatan ve kimlik kavramları birbirine bağlıdır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Mornings in Jenin*, Kimlik, Vatan, Sürgün, Filistin.



CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

In literature, the concepts of homeland and identity stand at the heart of different narratives and have been a subject of profound exploration in literary works, particularly in oeuvres that grapple with the aftermath of traumatic experiences such as exile, displacement, diaspora, loss, etc. Susan Abulhawa's 2010 novel *Mornings in Jenin* delves into these themes, portraying a narrative that weaves the characters deeply connected to the land and their formation of identity while grappling with the challenges of preserving their connection to the homeland and their sense of identity and existence amidst external challenges. This thesis focuses on the novel's thematic portrayal of homeland and identity and aims to analyze the portrayal of the interconnection between homeland and identity, examining the profound effect of these themes on the characters and their experiences. One of the most salient themes that is observed in the novel is the strong bonds individuals share with the homeland, as well as the sense of identity and belonging in the face of hardships.

This thesis examines a multi-generational narrative fiction novel that follows several generations of a Palestinian family as they navigate through different traumatic experiences. Through the eyes of this Palestinian family, the novel captures the broader Palestinian experience. It encompasses a range of themes, such as exile, love, loss, and hope amidst adversity, with a particular focus on notions of homeland and identity. Therefore, the primary purpose of this thesis is to critically analyze how the novel portrays the pivotal roles of homeland and identity in the characters' lives, arguing that a deep connection to the land fosters a strong sense of identity, belonging, and existence. It also demonstrates how the impact of different experiences can strengthen and fortify their indigenous affiliation to their land, heritage, and identity. To accomplish this, a critical discourse analysis is conducted to explore the relation between homeland and identity within the literary text. Drawing upon postcolonialism and in the light of the tenets of Edward Said's works, particularly his 1978 influential study entitled *Orientalism*, a critical examination of the novel illuminates the contextualization of such areas as homeland and identity, providing essential theoretical frameworks that offer a comprehensive analysis of the characters' experiences and the dimensions of external forces' impact on the concepts of homeland and identity.

The novel's narrative unfolds within a variety of contexts and depicts a vivid portrayal of the characters deeply entwined with the land. The novel also showcases the ongoing challenges that threaten to weaken this profound tie to home and the concomitant sense of identity and belonging. These challenges reinforce, crystallize, and strengthen the characters' affiliations with the land and identity. The aim of this study is to highlight the individuals' connections to a homeland, identity, and heritage and how these connections influence their perception of identity and belonging as represented in the novel.

As the methodology of this thesis, a qualitative approach is employed. Through conducting a thematic analysis and close reading, the contextualization of homeland and identity is analyzed using postcolonial and orientalist lenses. The theoretical framework through which this study adopts to analyze the multifaceted dimensions of the impact of suffering experiences on various characters' sense of homeland and identity, as well as their strong connection to the place and heritage. This theoretical framework sheds light on the characters' ties to the land for a thorough comprehension of the complex interplay between identity and homeland, as well as the effect of catastrophic experiences in the novel on the sense of identity and place while examining the challenges posed by external forces. This involves identifying the key themes and symbols in the novel and then interpreting these concepts within the context of a theoretical framework.

To determine the analysis of the concepts of homeland and identity as represented in the novel, postcolonial literary theory and Orientalism, which are interdisciplinary approaches and can be applied to a great variety of fields from literature to anthropology and cultural studies, are insightful to adopt. They provide the necessary theoretical framework for the analysis of literary texts. Orientalist theory is crucial for examining the impacts of power dynamics, the legacy of land, the case of identity, the concept of imaginative geographies, etc. To this end, this orientalist lens provides a comprehensive framework for a close reading of the concepts of homeland, in both geographical and metaphorical aspects, and identity. Employing this theory is useful to thoroughly comprehend the impact of suffering experiences on the characters' understanding of their sense of connection to the land and sense of existence and being. By tracing the symbols and character development in the text, the analysis explores how, despite the challenges the characters face, their rootedness to their homeland, heritage, and sense of identity is ultimately reinforced, strengthened, and crystallized. The analysis showcases how traumatic experiences contribute to the reinforcement of a sense of home and identity formation. The thesis contributes to the academic literature by conducting a thoroughly

critical literary analysis to examine the concepts of homeland as well as identity. By analyzing the interconnected nature of the concepts of homeland and identity within the novel, this thesis offers a panoramic view of the overarching theme and sets the tone for further studies that will be conducted in this direction.

This study conducts a thorough analysis of the portrayal of the relationship between the characters and their land and identity in the novel, specifically following their experiences of suffering. The study sheds light on how traumatic experiences and external forces, such as displacement and loss, can both reinforce and strengthen ties to the land and identity, as well as impact the concepts of land and identity within the narrative. This analysis contributes to a better understanding of the significance of the intrinsic link between the homeland and the self in the construction and preservation of indigenous identity and belonging. By conducting a literary critical analysis and employing postcolonial and orientalist theories, with a focus on the thematic analysis of homeland and identity, the study examines the correlation between these themes and the characters. Through these traumatic experiences, the novel illustrates how characters' suffering experiences impact their attachment to the land and identity, deepening their bonds to the land and enhancing their sense of identity and belonging. Drawing on postcolonial and orientalist theories, the novel accentuates the significance of preserving and acknowledging indigenous connections to heritage and land to maintain their identities, specifically in the face of adversity, thereby highlighting the individuals' adaptability in preserving their sense of self and connection to the land and heritage, even in challenging experiences.

Postcolonial literary criticism explores the impacts of colonialism on individuals along with their responses to power structures (Young 4). The novel can be interpreted from various perspectives, and one of these is through the lens of postcolonialism. As the textual literary analysis of the novel, specifically in its postcolonial phase that revolves around such concepts as homeland and identity, this thesis delves into in-depth analysis and interpretation of the concepts in relation to the characters, considering their traumatic experiences, such as loss, uprootedness, and displacement within the context of postcolonialism and Orientalism. Therefore, in reading the novel to examine the impact of hardships on aspects such as homeland, places, and identity, it would be pertinent to employ postcolonial literary criticism. This approach offers the essential theoretical framework for studying literary and cultural texts. Postcolonialism generally refers to representing race, ethnicity, human identity, and cultural hegemony in oeuvres (Zafer 357). It also addresses issues related to the formation of identity,

the dilemma of homeland, cultural resistance, and the influence of hegemonic powers. Nevertheless, this theory is adopted to examine the effects of power structures on various characters and their cultural heritage, identity, and places in both physical and symbolic aspects. As a literary criticism, it adopts a deconstruction perspective and explores how indigenous people respond to external power dynamics. To illustrate the impact of external forces such as traumatic experiences of diaspora, dislocation, and loss, postcolonial literary criticism endeavors to underscore the individuals' reactions to such experiences and their impacts on their relationship to the land, belongingness, and heritage. Drawing on postcolonial literary theory, the present study deciphers the characters' relation to the land and their sense of identity, as well as how their traumatic experiences can influence their bond with the land and their process of identity formation. Furthermore, the theoretical basis of this study is Said's Orientalism, which is a sub-branch of postcolonial theory. In this theoretical framework, the novel is subjected to a "contrapuntal reading approach". Accordingly, this close reading deciphers the concepts of homeland and identity, highlighting the relationality of various places as well as their connection to the characters' identity formations. The analysis is grounded on the theoretical underpinnings of Said's tenets of the orientalist framework, including his other seminal contributions.

Although the novel can be studied and examined from several perspectives, it has surprisingly received scant attention. Only a small number of previous scholarly works have sought to explore the novel. Concerning mainly the representation of trauma, memories, and resistance, for instance, Salam and Raslan comprehensively analyze the aforementioned themes in the text from a psychological viewpoint, with a specific focus on the central female character, Amal. Through contrasting Cathy Caruth and Ronald Granofsky's modern trauma theories, Raslan (2017) concludes that the novel exemplifies trauma fiction with all its features (184). She further examines "the stages of trauma response, namely fragmentation and regression which the main character passes through" (184). She argues that the narrative uses traumatic memory as a powerful indicator of oppressive cultural practices, as exhibited in the life of the protagonist, Amal. Moreover, narrative memory is utilized as a means of resistance and healing (199). In a parallel manner, Salam (2022) also conducts an in-depth comparative analysis that examines the abovementioned themes by applying trauma theory. In his study comparing Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* and Hala Alyan's *Salt Houses*, Salam explores how the main female character, Amal, remembers her past and utilizes memory as a dynamic act of resisting erasure and forgetfulness (31). Moreover, he argues that the novel weaves a

traumatic narrative to capture the terrible past, notably the enormity of Al-Nakba (35). By reading the text on the grounds of trauma theory, he concludes that “examining traumatic narrative decolonizes the theory and extends its analysis beyond Western examples” (46). Likewise, examining the themes of love, trauma, and politics through the central female character Amal, Abu-Shomar (2015) focalizes specifically on the notion of otherness and the other. He suggests that the conceptualization of reconciliations of politics, love, and trauma allows Abulhawa to explore and comprehend a pair of complex human sentiments in a subtle method, without compromising the right to resistance (127). Ultimately, Abu-Shomar concludes that “Abulhawa’s depictions of the ‘Other’ are informed by her human ontological being mounting as a diasporic eternal-improviser that is never controlled or swallowed by political or ideological systems” (133). However, in another controversial research, Mami (2022) challenges the traditional understanding of the role of fiction in the struggle for liberation. By drawing on Aijaz Ahmad’s theory, he critiques the novel’s limited potential for emancipation by arguing that this primarily focuses on ontology, personal actions, and individuals rather than epistemology and collective action. This, according to Mami, can lead to a “narrative obsession with the existential-ontological, turning the struggle into a textual one” (14). He further states that “masking that same postcolonial predicament is the narrative obsession with the existential-ontological, turning the struggle into a textual one. The predicament expands on postcolonial experiences by raising awareness of the dialectics of emancipation discourses” (14). Alternatively, by utilizing Martin and Nakayama’s as well as William Safran’s theories, Maghfiroh and Koiri (2020) delve into the psyche of the main female character, Amal. They ultimately conclude that Amal finds herself stuck in a position of uncertainty due to her intercultural encounters between Arabs and American cultures, and “it is unstable for her. She cannot maintain her Arab culture nor become an American completely” (559). Furthermore, in the realm of the novel but with a rather distinct focus, Alkodimi (2019) “textually analyses Abulhawa’s utilization of the literary metaphor to expose the reality of Palestine and the horror of violence, physically and psychologically” (132). Through an examination of the metaphoric language and literary devices employed in the text, Alkodimi concludes that “Abulhawa effectively exposes the agony of the Palestinian nation,” which serves as a means to raise awareness “rather than blaming the victims” (138). In a different study adopting a comparative approach, Chaker (2017) examines the narrative voices of the central female characters in two novels: Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* and Susan Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* (100). By applying chaos theory to explore the multiple narratives of the main character, Amal, Chaker argues that this narrative technique accentuates Amal’s stream

of consciousness and the chaotic system (96). Moreover, it reveals the many similarities between these two novels, which have “helped to build the bridge between *Beloved* and *Mornings in Jenin*” (101).

After conducting a thorough examination of the literature on *Mornings in Jenin* and reviewing the ever-growing body of work on related topics, it becomes evident that there are still some gaps in the literature to be filled. The early academic studies primarily approached the novel from either a psychological or sociological perspective, with a particular focus on the central female character, Amal. The previous scholarly works have explored themes such as love, chaos, memories, and some other aspects of the novel. However, no previous studies have comprehensively analyzed thoroughly the entire novel and its portrayals of homeland and identity. Furthermore, there is a lack of engagement with literary critique theories of postcolonialism in the existing literature. This novel has not been approached or examined from the perspective of postcolonial or Said theories. Therefore, this overview highlights the need for a study that delves into the portrayal of concepts such as homeland and identity while also analyzing the intricate relation between the characters and their sense of home. Additionally, it is of great importance to explore the impact of this attachment on their sense of identity by adopting a postcolonial lens. This study also aims to interpret the impact of suffering experiences on the characters’ sense of place, homeland, and their formations of identity.

To constrict this knowledge gap, this thesis is an endeavor to conduct academic work that may serve as a contribution to the academic literature through conducting a thorough academic analysis of the novel and employing discourse analysis of the overarching themes of homeland and identity. By charting a critical account of the concepts of homeland and identity grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, this thesis undertakes a thorough conceptual analysis and reading of the novel. It seeks to explore and sketch a panorama of the characters’ sense of attachment to place and identity.

Theoretically, this thesis offers a reflective reading practice situated in the dynamics of postcolonial theory and critical theory. It navigates the theoretical repertoires of Said. It would not be possible to draw from postcolonial literary criticism without mentioning the legacy of Edward Said. Through mediating the theories of postcolonialism and Said’s critical theory, this study proposes a further interdisciplinary critical approach to reading and examining the novel within the framework of land and identity. That may allow to expand the scope of the critical and literary perspectives for a comprehensive understanding of the novel and its significance.

Said's critical works play a crucial role in bringing to attention some of the key notions that underpin postcolonialism, such as identity, homeland, cultural identity, hybridity, resistance, cultural assimilation, affiliation, and hegemony. Moreover, postcolonial critical literary theory provides a lens through which to analyze the experiences of individuals and the lasting impacts of suffering on their attachment to the land and sense of belonging. To a great extent, Edward Said's *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000), following his seminal works *Orientalism* (1978), and *Out of Place* (1999), further contribute to the analysis by exploring the ways in which individuals and communities construct their identities in relation to their homeland, as well as the impact of suffering experiences on these constructions. Theoretically, a similar idea can be detected in the characters' sense of identity and deep attachment to the homeland.

In his landmark 1978 book *Orientalism*, one of the most pivotal resources in postcolonial studies, Orientalism was succinctly defined as a system of representation that constructs the Orient as the Other and perpetuates Western superiority. This representation of the other and the relationship between knowledge and power can be detected in the power dynamics between the colonized and the colonizer. Said's argument of Orientalism facilitates to comprehend how the hegemonic discourse crystallizes individuals' understanding of their own identity. As Said states, it is an attempt "to formulate the Orient, to give it shape, identity, definition with full recognition of its place in memory" (86-87). Correspondingly, the characters in the novel are constantly confronted with their experiences of suffering and the persistent legacy of land and history on cultural identities and traditions, as well as the connection to the land. These experiences of suffering can illustrate how the characters, within the context of the novel, perceive their own sense of homeland, of self-perception, and of identity construction, influenced by experiences of trauma. In this light of Said's Orientalism, the characters negotiate their identity concerning the dominant discourse, often leading them to seek a sense of connection and rootedness, which lays out a further step toward reclaiming their identity and place. In the novel, the characters, to borrow Said's words, "[possess their] own coherence, identity and sense" (88) in terms of identity and existence.

Another significant concept in postcolonial literary theory is the concept of "imaginative geographies," introduced by Said in his work *Orientalism*. Based on his critique of Orientalism, Said posits that places are not merely physical entities but are also designated through imagination, ideology, and culture. Imaginative geography, therefore, plays a pivotal role in the crystallization of identity and the connection to a homeland or place: "Imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself" (55). Being aware of

the dimensions of places and identity is important because any sense of identity and home is shaped by a range of experiences, highlighting the relationality of various places as well as their connection to identity formations. Conceptualizing this notion as an analytical tool in interpreting the concepts of identity and homeland, in both physical and imaginative aspects, within the novel, can assist in a thorough comprehension of the characters' correlation with the land or place and the inextricable link between the idea of homeland and identity, as well as the impact of experiences of suffering on their perception of identity and home.

Furthermore, another significant key concept that Said touches upon in his other seminal book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), which is seen by several critics as a sequel to *Orientalism* (1978), is "the voyage in" (216). In this context, as Ashcroft and Ahluwalia (2001) state that "Said advocates a process he calls 'the voyage in', where post-colonial writers take hold of the dominant modes of literary writing to expose their culture to a world audience" (8). This notion of 'voyage in' serves as a form of resistance, belongingness, and resilience against challenges and powers, and a means of resisting and reclaiming one's own identity and history. In this sense, reading the selected novel in the light of this notion of "the voyage in" is a significant point of analysis. The novel can be seen as a 'voyage in' as it accounts for the experiences of indigenous people, exploring their sense of belonging and identity while striving to maintain their own identity, cultural heritage, and connection to the land. It also highlights the intricate interrelationship between homeland and identity. Said's terminology closely resonates with the characters' own voyage in the novel, as they reclaim and strengthen their sense of belonging and existence through the preservation of identity, cultural heritage, and history.

In his theorization of his exile status, Said in *Reflections on Exile* (2000) and *Out of Place* (1999) utilizes the term "exilic consciousness" to depict the perspective of individuals who have been displaced or forced to leave their homeland and live in exile. According to Said, individuals within the Western diaspora possess a remarkable capacity to navigate both within and outside the dominant discourses in a way that allows them to transcend the problematic and essentialized dichotomy between self and the other frequently perpetuated in colonial relations. Said's further elaboration on the notion of exile or diasporic consciousness is significant in understanding and identifying the impact of experiences of diaspora, displacement, and exile on identity formation and a sense of homeland. Similarly, the concepts of exilic consciousness and diasporic identity acknowledge that the construction of identity and the attachment to the land can be strengthened and fortified by external forces and experiences,

as reflected in various characters within the novel. The experiences, as shown in the novel, create a heightened sense of connection to the land/place and contribute to their identity formation. Said also believes in the concept of “productivity of exile” and asserts that “this homeless status is actually productive and can perpetuate acknowledge the home” (211). This idea resonates with the novel and the characters’ interconnectedness with a homeland, places, and identity.

Said, in *Out of Place* (1999), demonstrates a personal interest in highlighting the Palestinian diaspora and shares his own experience as a Palestinian in exile. Said expresses the paradoxical longing associated with multiple displacements he has experienced throughout his life: “To me, nothing more painful and paradoxically sought after characterizes my life than the many displacements from countries, cities, abodes, languages, environments that have kept me in motion all these years” (252). For him, drawing a parallel from *Orientalism* (1978), Said emphasizes the critical importance of self-awareness and comprehending one’s own identity as shaped by countless experiences: “the starting-point of critical elaboration is ‘the consciousness’ of what one really is, and is ‘knowing thyself’ as a product of the historical process to date, which has deposited in you an infinity of traces, without leaving an inventory” (26). Said’s personal experience and his ‘consciousness’ serve as his starting point for his exploration of exilic consciousness, which plays a pivotal role in his theorization of *Orientalism*: “In many ways my study of *Orientalism* has been an attempt to inventory the traces upon me” (26). This concept of “out of place” is characterized by a sense of dislocation, loss, and uprootedness, which keeps a sense of consciousness of exile and diaspora, shaping the dimensions of identity formation and the sense of attachment to a homeland/place. Diaspora or exile inherently holds the potential for an implication of identity formation and strengthening the bond between exiles/displaced people and their homeland. Consequently, the diaspora has never been experienced without crisis. This concept provides a significant theoretical framework for analyzing the novel. Similarly, approaching the novel from this perspective displays the correlation between the characters and their homeland, both physically and emotionally, as well as the construction of identity.

Furthermore, the concept of exile, within the context of hegemonic discourse, is also exemplified by Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). Exile, to Said, is not solely a physical condition but also a state of mind. He claims that exile is based on the existence of a deep emotional attachment and a real bond with one’s native place. As Said contends, “exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and a real bond with one’s native place; the universal

truth of exile is not that one has lost that love or home, but that inherent in each is an unexpected, unwelcome loss” (336). To Said, exile is a multifaceted experience that presents both challenges and gains. Emphasizing the importance of the bond between exiles and their homeland can significantly contribute to identity formations concerning the native’s place. Likewise, the novel portrays the experience of exile and diaspora, whether emotionally or physically, through various characters who confront different adversities; hence, it suggests that exile is a multifaceted experience.

In addition to the aforementioned theoretical frameworks to apply as useful strategies for conceptual analytical tools in reading the novel, the term diaspora is a critical concept in postcolonial studies as well. Diaspora refers to the dispersion of inhabitants from their homeland and the exploration of their identities. In postcolonial studies, “diaspora is primarily described as a forced exile involving trauma and loss” (White 9). Drawing from a prominent scholar in this field, Avtar Brah, in her influential book *Cartographies of Diaspora* (1996), theorizes that “the concept of diaspora signals these processes of multi-locationality across geographical, cultural and psychic boundaries. It bears repeating that the double, triple, or multi-placedness of ‘home’ in the imaginary of people in the diaspora does not mean that such groups do not feel anchored in the place of settlement” (191). Additionally, Brah delineates that “identity, then, is simultaneously subjective and social, and is constituted in and through culture. Indeed, culture and identity are inextricably linked concepts” (21). As Brah approaches the notion of diaspora, she accentuates the significance of identity, culture, and a sense of home and belonging. Moreover, for Brah, the notion of diaspora space is “constituted within the crucible of the materiality of everyday life; in the everyday stories we tell ourselves individually and collectively” (180). Brah’s notion conjures up the relationality of identity formations to various experiences as well as to places or locations. Such a notion, which is closely aligned with the notion of home examined in the present study, can be used to navigate the dynamic and cultural phenomena of identity formation along with homeland, and the physical-and-fictional spaces. It offers a significant insight into the lived spaces of the characters as well as the multiple tragic experiences that affect their identity formations. Through a comprehensive analysis of the physical-and-imagined aspects of diaspora, this critical term provides a substantial conceptual and psychological framework for examining the sense of identity and the diasporic dimension of characters’ experiences in relation to diasporic events by looking at the dispersion of the characters in the fiction—whether physically, emotionally, or psychologically—caused by multiple dynamic challenges. This concept also

resonates with the interconnectedness between homeland and identity within the context of the novel. Accordingly, by utilizing the notion of diaspora as a mode of reading to explore the dynamic, relational, and complex nature of the various places narrated in the novel, as well as their connection to the characters' identity formations, it highlights the relationality of various locations as well as their profound interconnection in shaping the characters' identities.

Correspondingly, the theoretical underpinnings of postcolonial critical theory and Said's tenets of orientalist discourse, along with his other seminal works, provide a critical lens through which to analyze the concepts of homeland and identity within the novel. The impact of suffering experiences on self-perception and the potential for steadfastness through preserving a connection to the land and identity preservation are explored in a detailed manner. The interpretive framework accentuates the significance of understanding the intricacies of homeland and identity formation, as well as the potential implication of traumatic experiences such as diaspora, loss, and exile, to name a few, on the characters' sense of belonging and attachment to the land, seeking to demonstrate the complex negotiations between identity and homeland/location. The study aims to provide a nuanced comprehension of these notions. Drawing on the analytical tools and critical terminologies made available by postcolonial literary approaches, the present study's literary analysis of the novel seeks to address how the characters' relation to the homeland or specific places influences their identity formations, as well as the impact of several experiences on their identities and relation to the land, which the text charts as dynamic agents participating actively in the interconnection of homeland and identity formation in the struggling experiences.

To set the groundwork and pave the way for the discussion and examination of Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin*, the introductory chapter of the present thesis centralizes on providing the necessary background contextual knowledge and rationale for the objectives and statement, along with the contribution and scope of this study in the literary area. To situate the forthcoming study within the extant theoretical framework and identify areas where further scholarship is needed, a relevant critical survey is reviewed. After analyzing the literature that approaches literary works as closely related to the novel, it explains the methodological approach utilized as well as the theoretical and conceptual framework adopted to interrogate the selected oeuvre. Additionally, to obtain a comprehensive understanding of the literary analysis, the introduction takes a look at the literary theories of postcolonialism and Edward Said, providing the necessary backdrop for the literary analysis. Following that, since the selected novel is not widely known, the thesis deems it essential to provide a comprehensive

plot summary in the first chapter, offering an overview of the major events of the story and establishing the backdrop for the subsequent chapters. By reviewing prior scholarship, outlining the research framework, and introducing the primary text, this chapter establishes the foundation for a close examination of the concepts of homeland and identity in *Mornings in Jenin*.

Following the introduction chapter, the subsequent chapter delves into Susan Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* by looking at the conceptualization of homeland. Elaborating on postcolonialism and Edward Said's theories, it primarily analyzes the relation between the characters and the narrative places within the novel. It specifically focuses on the characters' deep attachment to the land and how this connection is sustained and strengthened by a variety of experiences and external factors. Through the postcolonial lens, the chapter explores the correlation between the characters and their homeland, both physically, imaginatively, and emotionally, and how this correlation, in turn, shapes their sense of belonging and existence. Furthermore, it interrogates the interlocking relations between homeland and identity, and the characters' substantial sense of place, as well as their identity construction. The chapter presents an in-depth textual analysis of the novel in relation to the conceptualization of various places, and it contends that the characters' bonds to the land profoundly impact their sense of being and how traumatic experiences serve as a catalyst for reinforcing, sustaining, and maintaining these ties. This analysis of the concept of homeland highlights its interweaving with the concept of identity formation as well.

Within the oeuvre, the theme of identity is examined in the third chapter. The analysis investigates the concept of identity and its relation to the characters' sense of self-perception and identity formations, whether in the context of diaspora or homeland. Grounded on the theorizations of postcolonialism, the chapter interrogates how various experiences of suffering, physically and emotionally, affect the various characters' identities, and also how their experiences shape their self-perception and the roots of their identity. Both concepts of homeland and identity are highly contested yet closely related. By conceptualizing the formation of identity in the novel, the chapter seeks to demonstrate the interconnection between identity and places/homeland and the interplay impacts of both notions on the characters' sense of attachment, belonging, and the process of identity development.

In the conclusory chapter, the research findings and an overall review of the present thesis are provided. It evaluates the results and its analysis of the notions, bringing together the findings to easily navigate through the essence of the contributions of the thesis and the literary text. The conclusion seeks to accentuate the interconnectedness and importance of both concepts, homeland and identity, in sustaining and maintaining senses of self, existence, and belonging, even in the face of upheaval.

Before delving into an analysis of the concepts of homeland and identity within the literary text, it is of pivotal importance to provide a summary of the novel. The novel, which was originally published in 2006 under the title *The Scar of David*, was reissued in 2010 as *Mornings in Jenin*. The plot captures the pervasive effects of loss, dislocation, struggles, diaspora, and its ramifications on both individuals and society. It has gained widespread recognition, been translated into thirty languages, and is currently being developed into a television series (Tankard 105).

The novel serves as a moving example of a physical, psychological, and analytical narrative, focusing on the experiences of rootedness, loss, exile, displacement, diaspora, existence, and the unbearable sense of diaspora and alienation. Taking a historical approach, the storyline follows the Abulheja family through four generations, depicting their struggles and upheaval in the homeland. By vividly illustrating different experiences and focusing on the intricate relationship between the characters and the land, this multi-generational fiction narrative offers a nuanced exploration of identity formation in the face of adversity through the eyes of various generations throughout the novel.

The novel narrates the story of the Abulheja family, spanning from 1941 to 2002. It opens during the olive harvest season of 1941 in the tranquil agricultural village of Ein Hod, where the patriarch of the Abulheja family, Yeyha, resides with his wife Basima and their two sons, Hasan and Darweesh. Several years later, Hasan married Dalia, and they have two sons, Yousef and Ismael. However, their tranquil existence in Ein Hod is forever shattered during the 1948 War or the catastrophe. The Abulheja family, along with the entire community, are forcefully ejected to flee their land and live as refugees in a camp in Jenin. During the chaotic exodus of 1948, Ismael, the infant son of Hasan and Dalia, is abducted from his mother's arms by the Israeli soldier Moshe, who gives the baby to his wife Jolanta, who raises him to be David. Years later, despite the perilous journey, Yehya stealthily returns to his homeland in

Ein Hod, bringing back some fruits for the village, which the troops have already transformed Ein Hod into a colony. On his next trip back to the village, Yehya is tragically shot dead.

In Jenin, Dalia and Hasan welcome their newborn daughter, whom they name Amal. However, Amal's childhood is overshadowed by the harsh realities of life in the refugee camp. As the Abulheja family attempts to create a new life in the camp, despite their hope of returning to their village of Ein Hod, tragedy strikes the Abulheja family once again. Following the Six-Day War of 1967, Yousef joins the Liberation Organization Movement, while they mourn the loss of their parents, Hasan and Dalia. Amal, tragically, ends up in an orphanage in Jerusalem, where she receives her education. Subsequently, she receives a scholarship to pursue her studies in the United States.

After many years of being in exile, Amal receives a call from her older brother Yousef, who now resides in Lebanon with his wife Fatima and their daughter, Falasteen. Amal embarks on a journey to reunite with her brother after years of separation. While in Beirut, she falls in love with Dr. Majid, and they eventually marry. However, just as their lives seem to stabilize, tragedy strikes again with the invasion of Lebanon in 1982, leaving the Abulheja family devastated once more. Amal, pregnant at the time, returns to the United States and raises her newborn daughter Sara alone, forever scarred by the loss of her homeland, her family, and her love. The invasion leads to the deaths of her husband and Yousef's family, leaving them bereft of their loved ones.

Toward the end of the story, a twist of fate occurs when Amal receives a phone call from her long-lost brother, Ismael/David. This reunion sparks memories and nostalgia for the homeland, ultimately promoting Amal to return to Palestine with her daughter Sara for a long-awaited reunion and to reconnect with their homeland, heritage, and identity. However, tragedy strikes yet again in 2002 when Amal is shot by a soldier in Jenin camp. Sarah, deeply affected by her mother's death, returns to Pennsylvania, the United States, after spending a year in Palestine. The novel closes with a poignant letter written by Yousef to his sister Amal.

As this plot summary of the oeuvre may already suggest, the themes of homeland and identity and the rooted relationality between the characters and these concepts are of pivotal significance, and the novel provides the reader with complex, comprehensive perspectives in the inquiry of these notions. Especially, the overlap of homeland and identity and the experiences of trauma are catalytic events that interrogate the reader by urging them to think more deeply about the contested, complex nature of identity and home. The novel is more about

the intersectional nature of identity formation and attachment to land or place. More precisely, it highlights the characters' sense of identity formation and attachment to their homeland. The novel reveals how tragic experiences can sustain and strengthen their bonds, as well as how such concepts of identity or homeland should not be conceptualized solely. The thesis endeavors to examine the relationship between homeland and identity and the bond of the characters to their home and identity, physically, emotionally, and fictionally.



CHAPTER II

THE CONCEPT OF HOMELAND IN *MORNINGS IN JENIN*

The novel weaves a story that explores the deep connection between the characters and their homeland amid hardships by delving into the complexity of identity and homeland. The novel thematically centers on the idea of how a strong bond with the land and ancestral heritage results in strengthening ties to the homeland. While the theme of homeland is vital and critical for understanding the relationality between the characters and their sense of connection to the land, yet homeland has often been overlooked in the analysis and interpretation of individual and social experiences. Correspondingly, this chapter analyzes the connections between the homeland and the characters in the novel. It further explores how the idea of homeland is portrayed through the characters' identity, attachment and their sense of existence, as well as the impact of suffering experiences faced by the characters in strengthening and fortifying their ties to the land.

Throughout the experiences of its characters, the novel delves into the complex and multifaceted nature of the notion of homeland, representing landscapes of homeland. In so doing, the novel offers a nuanced understanding of the idea of homeland and the characters' sense of place. As a cartographic practice, the novel charts a condensed and contested vision of the characters' lives prior to and post their traumatic experiences within the context of the homeland, both physically and emotionally. Through its various characters and narratives, the novel explores vital themes such as loss, displacement, nostalgia, and interconnectedness. The text both charts and problematizes the rootedness between the characters and the land by demonstrating how individuals' sense of place is preserved and shaped by their diasporic experiences. The novel vividly illustrates the profound connection the characters develop with their land, whether it be through physical rootedness or imaginatively woven through personal narratives passed down through generations. These bonds are central to their sense of attachment and existence. Hence, the homeland idea is sustained and explored through the Abulheja family. In the novel, the characters' bonds to the land are depicted as strong ties, which continue over generations. In fact, the three pillars, as stated in the novel, are the essence and strength of the characters' well-being and existence: "attachment to God, land, and family was the core of their being and that is what they defended and sought to keep" (Abulhawa 28).

One of the key aspects of the idea of a homeland is that it is not merely a physical place but rather a deeply rooted emotional connection to one's culture, history, and identity. Throughout the novel, the love of the land is portrayed through various symbols and characters. This idea is exemplified through various characters, such as Yehya, the patriarch of the Abulheja family, who has been forced to flee his land with his family, along with other characters, leaving behind his land and his heart. However, Yehya cannot endure being dispossessed from his village, Ein Hod, and stealthily and bravely returns to his land. This secret and perilous journey to the land epitomizes his emotional and physical attachment to the homeland. Yehya's love for the land is evident in his decision to risk his life to see and feel his ancestral place. Essentially, this dangerous journey to the land, to see, feel, touch, his plants and trees, epitomizes the characters' strong emotional and physical connection and attachment. Ultimately, this illustrates the spiritual and emotional connection between the characters and the land. Moreover, though returning to the village is quite dangerous, Yehya sacrifices his life for the love of the land to see and feel his ancestral place. Depicting Yehya's decision to return to his place, even though it is highly perilous, presents the relationality between the land and the characters: "He turned and walked as he once had, with purpose and pride ... into a landscape he knew better than the lines on his hands — until he finally arrived at his destination" (Abulhawa 43). Yehya's rootedness to his land in Ein Hod exemplifies how the concept of homeland signifies far more than a physical place for them. Despite being physically displaced, Yehya maintains a strong emotional tie to the soil of the homeland, as he proclaims: "That terrain is in my blood! I know every tree and every bird" (Abulhawa 43-44). Thus, the novel displays the characters' attachment to the land in both physical and emotional terms and examines how their sense of home is reinforced and sustained by such experiences as displacement, loss, and diaspora. As demonstrated in the novel through Yehya and other characters, a strong connection to the land is the only prerequisite for true happiness and existence for them.

Moreover, Yehya's spirit changes once he steps into his place at Ein Hod. The sense of alienation Yehya feels, which is commonly shared by other characters as well, due to being dislocated from the land, has vanished when Yehya steps into his land and touches and picks some olives and fruits, "... as he walked with a merry hunch.... for days he roamed his fields, greeting his carob and fig trees with the excitement of a man reuniting with his family. He had slept contentedly in their shade ... and he returned with as much fruit and as many olives as he could carry" (43-44). This detailed and vivid portrayal of Yehya's visit to the village indicates

his gesture to embrace the land again and to keep attached to his home. For him, the sense of place exists through both physical and imagined attachments even when access is denied: “The aimlessness of captive dispossession warped his mood and bent his posture” (Abulhawa 42). As presented in the novel, the idea of homeland encompasses the cultivation of both tangible and intangible ties. Through Yehya’s affiliation, the connection to the homeland, precisely the sense of a specific physical space, signifies one’s core essence, going far beyond the boundaries of the land. Thereupon, through the characters’ traumatic experiences, the novel provides insights into conceptualizing a homeland for the displaced as an emotional and cultural anchor. For instance, in describing Yehya’s return from his euphoric place, his land in Ein Hod:

He came back from his sixteen days in the paradise of realized nostalgia. Yehya had left the camp with stubborn solemnity, wearing his most dignified clothes, and he returned looking like a jolly beggar with as much fruit and as many olives as he could carry in his kaffiyeh, his pockets, and his hands. Despite his vagabond appearance, he came invested with euphoria (Abulhawa 44)

According to this excerpt, the connection to the land and its trees brings life and joy to the characters, as seen in Yehya’s spirits in the aftermath of his return. In this sense, “nostalgia has become a remedy for existential” and reinforces the sense of home, attachment, and existence (Weiss and Dube 622). This spirit soon gives vent to a spirit of “purpose, pride”, “euphoria”, resilience, and “stubborn solemnity” (Abulhawa 40-44). On the other hand, Yehya’s attachment to the land, particularly his place of memory in Ein Hod, is quite rooted in that it impacts not merely psychologically but also his physical health: “Yehya aged tremendously in those confused months that stretched into years” (Abulhawa 41). Yehya is nostalgic for the old days when he was deeply rooted in his land. This situation of such a character as Yehya is but an instance of various characters in the novel as well.

Metaphorically, the harmonious relationality to the homeland can be seen through another personification of the interconnection between the characters and the land, which is specifically evident in the musical instrument Yehya’s *nye*. Throughout the story, Yehya plays the *nye* as a symbol of his strong physical and emotional attachment to his physical space in his village: “Yehya exhaled through his precious *nye*, moved his fingers, ... he played for his trees” (Abulhawa 17). Thereby, Yehya’s playing music for his land apparently demonstrates the interaction and connection between the characters and their home deeply. Moreover, in his diasporic state, both physically and mentally, Yehya manifests his emotions and belongingness

to his place in Ein Hod, which is still physically and mentally bound to, through his nye. Despite being displaced from home, Yehya continues to play the nye as a means to preserve his connection to his land, to his real place in Ein Hod: “On a rock outside his clay shelter, Yehya sat ... and leaned into the wind. He took in a premeditated breath, closed his eyes, and exhaled into the nye, playing a new tune. ... It was a call to the earth. To the country within him” (Abulhawa 42). This act demonstrates the strong attachment the land/place within him: “he played his nye all morning, rarely opening his eyes” (Abulhawa 42). Yehya’s response and reflections mirror his intimate spiritual, emotional, and physical connection to his space of the village, which is evident in his musical instrument and inner thoughts while in dislocation. This exposes how these suffering experiences impact the characters’ sense of attachment, physically and emotionally. The melody and music of the nye provide remedy, reminiscence, and connection to the land, which brings him comfort: “In the year of waiting in the tent city, Yehya would awake at the Adan and idle through the day, playing the music of his nye ...” (Abulhawa 41). By playing the nye, Yehya charts an alternative space, a place to escape to, to revisit, and demonstrates his strong connotations to his rooted place by showing resilience and rejection of the tragic event of his dislocation through his musical instrument. Moreover, playing the nye itself implies Yehya’s attempts to show and rejuvenate his connection not just to the land but also to his place in his village, as he had always done previously. It is a way for him to sustain and maintain a sense of connection to their ancestors’ heritage, land, and history: “His grandfather had taught him to play that ancient flute and its melodies gave Yehya a sense of his ancestors, the countless harvests, the land, the sun, time, love, and all that was good” (Abulhawa 13). Accordingly, through the embodiment of homeland in his treasured instrument, the nye, the novel suggests how the characters’ strong ties to the land help them preserve their identity and homeland attachment. It also highlights how these experiences impact yet cannot untie the intrinsic connection to the homeland itself, whether physically or emotionally; on the contrary, they can sustain and strengthen the ties.

In the novel, it showcases how the strong bonds to the space of homeland, physically and figuratively, are constructed and shaped through a variety of symbols, such as the olive groves. The olive tree is a powerful portrayal of the characters’ connection to and enduring ties with the land. This deep bond to their physical space, specifically the land, is passed down from one generation to another. This action reveals their love and attachment to the land, which is ingrained in their blood. The rootedness between the characters and their place is also conceptualized through trees, which symbolize homeland and play a significant role in their

connection to their place. Trees, particularly olive trees, are at the center of a rich web of significance, to borrow Clifford Geertz's terminology, symbolizing a sense of existence and attachment. Olive trees function as a symbolic representation of rootedness, shaping the characters' sense of connection to the land, and love for the land. As represented through Yehya's risky journey to the land when he sacrifices his life, the symbolism of olive trees is further exemplified. When the family cleaned Yehya's body for burial, they found three olives in his hand and some figs in his pockets, reinforcing the symbolic connection between the characters and the land through the presence of these fruits. Moreover, the concept of homeland is deeply personal and emotional. Nostalgia and memories play a pivotal role in a sense of attachment and belonging, highlighting the sentimental value that is often associated with the idea of a homeland. As portrayed in the novel:

The memory of that morning's landscape ... It was the picturesque backdrop of my parents' lives—miles of pasture carpeting valleys nestled amid waves of olive groves. Trees like beckoning grandparents, hundreds of years old, wrinkled and stooped with heavy arms that stretched to every direction. (Abulhawa 117)

The novel vividly portrays the centrality of landscapes, specifically trees, in the characters' daily experiences in a way that reflects the tight connection within themselves to their physical space. By incorporating the use of olive groves within the context of homeland, the novel reinforces and explains the idea of homeland. Thus, the olive tree emerges as a symbol of attachment to the land throughout the novel. For instance, after Yehya's return, the deep emotional and physical attachment that the characters have to their land is showcased:

All the olives were still there, too, but they were in need of care from people who knew how to care for them. Those people do not know a damn thing about olives. ... with no attachment to the land. If they had a sense of the land then the land would compel in them a love for the olives, Yehya said, staring at the palms that had caressed those majestic, beloved trees. (Abulhawa 46)

This statement displays the characters' deep emotional and physical attachment to their nature as they express their connection to the land through their love and nurturing of olive trees. The novel demonstrates that, just like the olive tree, the characters are strongly connected to their space in their homeland, despite being physically detached from that space.

As the description unfolds, the olive tree bears the symbolic connotation of rootedness as well as a sense of place for the characters. It serves as a powerful representation of the notion of a homeland. The olive tree, known for its endurance, firmly establishes its roots in rocky soil and requires a significant amount of time to mature and bear fruit. Despite its slow growth, it exhibits remarkable longevity (Grego 11). The rootedness of the olive tree emblemizes the characters' rootedness to their own home, "because its soil is the keeper of my roots, of the bones of my ancestors. ... Because I am the natural seed of its passionate, tempestuous past" (Abulhawa 140). Thus, the characters in the novel find strength and connection in the presence of trees, as they remind them of their collective sense of roots. Throughout the narrative, olive trees and the olive harvest season are repeatedly associated with a sense of interconnectedness and attachment, both emotionally and physically, to the land. The Abulheja family, for instance, has farmed olives for centuries on their homeland, symbolizing their connection to the soil. Yehya, reflecting on the significance of the olives, says, "the olives are ready. ... Yehya [feels] a sense of his ancestors, the countless harvests, the land, the sun, time, love" (Abulhawa 6-7-42-43). Being dislocated from the land deprives the characters of this source of nourishment. The engagement of trees with their surroundings and the experience of livelihood evokes a sense of attachment and a real sense of space, as "the harvest week brought renewed vigor to Ein Hod, and Yehya, Abu Hasan, could feel it in his bones" (Abulhawa 3). Consequently, the tree remains a powerful marker of the profound attachment between the land and the characters. The idea of homeland, in both its physical and symbolic aspects, holds a pivotal connection for the characters by conveying a keen sense of personal dimensions and a sense of belonging to a specific space. It suggests how their heritage and culture are deeply intertwined with the concept of homeland, as if their roots are embedded in the soil itself, shaping the characters' own being and identity.

In the same vein, the storytelling explores the idea of belonging to a particular space and the significance of that place in shaping the characters' identity and sense of homeland spatiality. The conceptualization of homeland takes on a deeper meaning beyond a mere physical attachment to a specific location. In Jenin, the characters who have been displaced maintain an emotional connection to their land, despite the traumatic experiences of loss and dislocation. This sense of connection to the land is transmitted to the next generation, exemplified by figures like Amal, the daughter of Abulheja. In the camp, Hasan imparts to his daughter Amal the importance of the strong bonds between them and the land by exposing her to their culture through a variety of Arabic poems and literature: "Listen to the words I read.

... through them, I felt my father's passions, his losses, his heartaches, and his loves. He passed all of that to me. This great gift from Baba was something no one could take away" (Abulhawa 58-61). Like other characters, Hasan instills in his children a sense of pride, belonging, attachment, and love for the homeland. As Hasan tells Amal, "[the land] can belong to you, as you can belong to it. We come from the land, give our love and labor to her, and she nurtures us in return. When we die, we return to the land. In a way, she owns us. Palestine owns us and we belong to her" (Abulhawa 62). In the light of these excerpts, Hasan's expression of unwavering love for home demonstrates their deep emotional and physical attachment. The preservation of this sense of connection impacts the characters' perception, identity constructions, and attachment to their homeland, even in the face of painful experiences.

Using olive trees as a symbol in the novel reveals profound insight into the personal connection with the character's roots. The power that symbols like trees hold within the context enhances a panoramic understanding of how deeply ingrained the sense of belonging and existence to a homeland can be. Thereupon, the senses of home and roots are highly significant in crystallizing individual and collective identities, a sense of self, and belonging. As exemplified in the novel through multiple characters, such as Amal, for instance, the sense of homeland is explored through the metaphor of an ancient olive tree referred to as the Old Lady. Hasan explains to Amal, in her childhood, the significance of the strong ties between them and the terrain through the imagery of the ancient symbol in Jenin: "Old Lady was a fifteen-hundred-year-old olive tree ... This old girl was here long before any of us, and she'll be here long after we're gone" (Abulhawa 62). This extract encapsulates the generational connection between the land and the characters, as well as belongingness as a shared culture and collective memory through historical symbols. The Old Lady delineates the sense of homeland itself. Amal, representing the third generation in the story, comprehends the meaning of home and existence through the metaphor of the olive tree. The idea of homeland, then, resides in the symbolic figure of the Old Lady, the olive tree. The Old Lady represents the emotional and physical dimensions of the characters' sense of place and being. By giving love, care, and nurture to the land, it nurtures the characters in return, which highlights the strong bond between them and the land. In other words, they are part of the homeland as the land is part of them; "she owns us. Palestine owns us" (Abulhawa 62), and the characters and the land nurture each other. As the novel illustrates, how the characters cultivate the land and, in turn, are nourished by it physically, emotionally, and spiritually: "We come from the land, give our love and labor to her, and she nurtures us in return. ... we belong to her" (Abulhawa 62). The

emotional attachment between the land and the characters creates a vivid physical space where this real and imaginative connection is accentuated. For the characters, the olive tree symbolizes “steadfastness, its rootedness and ability to survive in a land where water is perennially scarce” (Karkar 51). Yet the endurance of Old Lady and the enduring connection to home embodied by the tree offers a sense of rootedness and attachment, emotionally and psychologically, to the places they call home. In the novel, the olive harvest is also a way to strengthen individuals’ bonds with the land and community in the traditions of collective harvesting (Abufarha 358). Despite the experience of diaspora and dislocation, the characters continue to care for and love their olive trees, symbolizing their rooted connection and commitment to their homeland, deeply. Thus, the olive tree and the land endure in the collective consciences of the characters and their heritage and identity.

To begin, the title of the novel, *Mornings in Jenin*, plays an instrumental role in providing insights into the central themes explored within the text, namely, homeland and identity. More precisely, the novel’s title encapsulates the essence of the characters’ deep connection to their lived spatiality. It reflects the characters’ deep connection to their lived spatiality—their sense of belonging, identity, and attachment to their home. The choice of the word “mornings” holds symbolic significance in the novel, referring to a location—temporal location. Mornings are often associated with new beginnings, hopes, and the start of a fresh day. In the context of *Mornings in Jenin*, this symbolism can be interpreted as a representation of the characters’ resilience in preserving connection to their land, despite the hardships they confront. In support of this, as quoted in a current study, “time is essential for deepening meaning and emotional ties to a place” (Lomas et al. 1). In other words, time, represented through mornings in the narrative, plays a significant role in shaping the maintenance of place attachment. The title also evokes the quotidian rituals that take place in Jenin and the routine that gives purpose to the characters’ lives in the camp. Accordingly, time is experienced differently by the characters. As the storyline unfolds, morning/time becomes more personal and subjective, influenced by the characters’ experiences and emotions. The morning becomes the characters’ practiced space to preserve and revive their bonds to the land every morning. The attachment of place is heavily influenced by temporal elements; hence, the intertwining between time and memory serves as a means to reinforce and strengthen individuals and their sense of place (Brown et al. 1). Yehya, one of the characters, for instance, is seen performing the morning ritual activities and enjoying his practiced space in his land: “Satisfied by the morning’s pace, Yehya performed the [harvest] and sat on the blanket where Basima had

arranged the [lunch]" (Abulhawa 12). The morning's pace reflects the comforting routine and connection to their home in the village of Ein Hod —that starts each morning. This morning's ritual acts as a lifeline amid the turmoil. Therefore, the title *Mornings in Jenin* encapsulates how the sense of homeland and daily rituals centered around it anchor the characters' s identity, attachment, and hopes, despite dislocation. This portrayal of the complex interplay between time, place attachment, and ritual is a significant contribution to the discourse surrounding the lived experience of displacement and the search for a sense of home.

In a parallel manner, the significance of the novel's title lies not only in its reference to two specific elements —the physical location of Jenin and the temporal location of mornings — but also in their interplay. By mentioning "mornings", the title suggests that the events and experiences depicted in the novel unfold during this specific time frame, adding a sense of specificity to the narrative. The mention of "mornings" also signifies the characters' ability to find hope and strength amid suffering, such as exile and diasporic situations. It emphasizes the importance of starting each day as a means of maintaining a sense of connection to the homeland, both physically and emotionally. Accordingly, "time and space are the basic forms of all existence, two important dimensions for human perception and understanding of the world" (Mei 13). In this context, time and space serve as tools to highlight the relationship between the characters and their home and identity. Exploring this temporal place and its effects on the characters and their connection to their land showcases mornings as a space rich in detailed memories and emotional bonds to the land. Thus, the title resonates with the dimensions of time and space that are reflected in the narrative, particularly in relation to the characters' sense of homeland and identity formation. In Jenin, for instance, the early-morning becomes "a time and place where the hope of returning home could be renewed" (Abulhawa 41) whereby "gathering for the news became a morning ritual in the refugee camp. ... It was the most important event of the day" (Abulhawa 38-39). Due to the strong sense of connection to the landscape, the tranquil atmosphere of mornings forges a deep emotional and psychological attachment to their home. This attachment to the homeland is formed through a sequence of internal and external experiences, with temporal reference as a primary form of internal sensory perception. This implies that external sensory perception can always be attributed to internal sensory perceptions, which are constructed successively (Noyes 67). In other words, navigating a specific temporal dimension constructs a sense of attachment between the characters and the physical space of the land. Essentially, the storyline infuses place attachment with temporal location. The signifying time, therefore, is where the meaning

of home can be produced, connected, and strengthened. As exemplified in the novel, the characters' sense of belonging to the land is further reinforced and deeply rooted by the interplay between temporal and physical attachment as well.

Within this temporal space of mornings, the characters' development and attachment to their motherland are further strengthened, aiding their development and bonds. In the novel, for instance, Yehya's action of playing "his nye all morning" (Abulhawa 40) epitomizes the profound connection between the temporal and the physical locations, as he used to play music in his village, his material space, before being dislocated. Playing music during the mornings can be interpreted as reminiscing about his attachment to the land and cultural heritage. In simplified terms, a sense of rootedness is cultivated through varied experiences and relations between individuals and the land. That is derived from the connotations, sentiments, and remembrances that distinct locations attribute as venues where individuals forge uniquely emotional bonds that are consistently constructed based on the context of time, sensibility, and events (Purwanto and Harani 9). The utilization of temporal location reveals the deep significance the characters attribute to specific places, whether material or metaphorical. The title of the novel provides an aesthetic connection to the past and imaginative realms within the temporal space of mornings. As mentioned in the novel, Amal considers mornings to be her "special place in Baba's morning" (Abulhawa 51), further emphasizing the significance of this temporal reference, whereas mornings become symbolic of the cyclical nature of life, resilience, and connection to the land. In Amal's childhood, the early morning rituals strengthened her bond to the land. For instance, Hasan reading to his daughter, Amal, each morning expresses their intense love, attachment, and belonging to their homeland, instilling this attachment to the motherland in his children. As Amal states, "every dawn, while Baba read on the terrace of our small adobe home, he and I witnessed the sun pour itself over the land, drenching everything it touched with life" (Abulhawa 52). Hasan's reading of classic poetry reveals their nostalgic sentiment for their old days in Ein Hod, their sense of home and rootedness. Here, mornings and reading symbolize emotional ties between the characters and the land. To put it in other terms, people develop a sense of attachment over time based on symbolic meanings, as the construct is not attached only to the physical world but lies on the symbolic representations people have towards places through experiences (Tang et al. 128). Interplaying factors like (dis)locations, memories, and loss cultivate rootedness, emotionally and physically, across generations. Thus, time and memory reinforce and sustain Amal's attachment to and belonging to her motherland.

The title, *Mornings in Jenin*, is in itself a site of memory, as it illuminates time and locations as basic constituents of the mimesis of memory. As a recurring theme, time/mornings suggest a communal awakening and the shared temporal and memory of the characters. By focusing on a specific time frame, the title captures the cyclical nature of life and the enduring connection to home and community. Subsequently, it serves as a reminder of their shared experiences, collective memory, and unwavering hopes that sustain their ties to the land. Accordingly, the sense of belonging and its dimensions are not only constructed by physical references, but they are also felt, shaped, and strengthened where individuals' ties to the land have been under different hardships (Tang et al. 144). The novel explicitly refers to Amal's morning time with her father, Hasan, who contributes to the idea of homeland by portraying the deep emotional attachment through reading time. Thereupon, Hasan, who recites poetry to Amal during the early hours of the day, reinforces the sense of cultural consciousness and rootedness in Amal's memory and emotions. As can also be comprehended, these scenes lend the novel its title. As Amal states, "eventually I became accustomed to rising before the sun, a habit that has long endured. Every dawn, while Baba read on the terrace of our small adobe home, he and I witnessed the sun pour itself over the land, drenching everything it touched with life" (Abulhawa 52). This sense of attachment and harmony to the homeland connotes a deep emotional connection and identification with one's homeland, identity, and the culture associated. In support of this, based on Said's notion of (af)filiation, to Said "cultural belonging is a matter both of filiation (with the community into which one is born) and affiliation (with groups to which one becomes aligned by virtue of social, political, or professional practices)" (Armstrong 105). This terminology implies the idea of homeland and the sense of bond between the characters and their land. Amal's morning time with her father serves as a representation of shared identity and their attachment to their home. Amal connects with her cultural heritage and homeland through her father's reading of poetry, stating, "I felt my father's passions, his losses, his heartaches, and his loves" (Abulhawa 53). Hasan implicitly attempts to create the bonds between the external world, represented by the homeland, and the internal world of Amal's subconscious. He instills in Amal a deep love and pride for the land, reinforcing the sense of belonging. Amal develops strong roots through frequent interactions with her father during these mornings, even amid loss and diaspora. This ritualistic act reflects a sense of rootedness toward cultural heritage and land as they engage in conversations that reinforce and crystalize their connection to the homeland. Therefore, the strong attachment Amal has to her father and their special time strengthens her ties to the land. In other words, the idea of homeland and belonging is reflected in the father-daughter relation.

While mornings are often associated with positivity and new beginnings, the title further suggests a duality of emotions and experiences. The novel depicts the juxtaposition of hope and despair, joy and sorrow, as the characters navigate the challenges of life in their diaspora, internally or externally. The title, *Mornings in Jenin*, captures the complexity of the characters' emotional landscape, which resonates with their experiences of alienation, loss, and detachment. This duality reflects the multifaceted nature of the characters' struggle, where hope and despair coexist in their liminal space. The characters' ability to incorporate their everyday practices and rituals into their diasporic lives serves as a way of anchoring and sustaining their attachment to the land. In this context, while the experience of displacement is primarily characterized by temporariness, linked through an in-between temporality, that dimension of being dislocated can still foster a sense of belonging and connectedness to home (Murcia 1523). Metaphorically, the characters' traumatic experiences of being in the refugee camp can be interpreted as a means of strengthening and preserving their ties to the homeland. Despite physical dislocation, this in-between state the characters inhabit serves as a constant reminder of their roots and connection to their culture and homeland. It is within this liminal space of the refugee camp that the characters find solace and strength in their shared experiences and collective memory. The novel demonstrates how the characters utilize their quotidian rituals as coping strategies to maintain their hope alive and a sense of connection to the land and their identity as Palestinians. In Jenin, the camp becomes a communal space where characters of various ages maintain their connection to home. Despite the hardships they face, the characters strive to preserve their ties to the land by exhibiting attachment, resilience, and hope. As depicted in the novel, "gathering for the news becomes a morning ritual in the refugee camp ... they continued to gather in this routine" (Abulhawa 38-39), emphasizing the nature of their connection. Consequently, the refugee camp implies the intangible ties that bind individuals to a homeland, hence, the repetition of mornings signifies the constancy of their connection, the nature of their relationship with the land, and their shared experiences as a community. The title thus represents dual juxtaposed memories as it recalls and embodies moments of euphoria and melancholy faced by memories of mesmerizing mornings that generate a sense of connection to the land and hopes for new beginnings.

Jenin, on the other hand, is also a site of collectiveness, attachment, and memory, despite its portrayal of trauma, loss, and diaspora in the novel. By centering the novel's events in Jenin, this physical location contributes to the theme of homeland by evoking a sense of collective memory, attachment, and identity for the characters. It is through Jenin that the

characters' memories and sentimental longing for home are recollected and reconnected. As internally displaced, the characters try to resist the depression, dislocation, and sense of loss that surround their lives by renewing their hopes every morning in Jenin. Their experiences within this specific location reflect, therefore, their deep connection to the land. As Said dissects in his works, "he asserted the need for home and the nation and pointed out that attachment to home and place persist for the exile" (Treacher 386); hence, according to Said, "exile is predicated on the existence of, love for, and bond with, one's native place" (Said 191). Throughout the novel, various scenes exemplify the deep connection between the characters and the homeland. For instance, Yehya, who represents the first generation, returns to his village, walking "into a landscape he knew better than the lines on his hands" (Abulhawa 40) and feels a profound sense of reconnection upon seeing familiar landscapes. This action of "Yehya's daring journey" (Abulhawa 41), among other characters, is an attempt to reaffirm their physical connection to the land and cultural heritage, even at the risk of losing their lives. "Thus, both the new and the old environments are vivid, actual, occurring together contrapuntally", as addressed by Said in his 2000 work *Reflections on Exile* (191). This journey in time and space is also seen in the light of a quest for connection and roots, displaying the harmonious relation between the characters and the land.

In addition, this spatial-temporal journey serves as a means of forming the characters' perception of identity and their connection to the land and cultural practices in their exile. The symbolic items such as figs, olives, grapes, and lemons that Yehya brings back are an extension of their space, hence conjuring up memories and generating a collective euphoric spirit and sense of reconnection with the land. As a result, "Yehya's audacity injected life into the refugees" (Abulhawa 41), illustrating the impact on the characters when physically connecting to the land, which evidently affects their well-being as well. Consequently, this journey instills into the younger generations the importance of the land and its role in their existence and identity. The journey witnessed by the young boy Yousef, the grandson who represents the third generation, "was a seed that planted itself in his memories" (41) and rekindles his spirit and sense of attachment and belonging that he later recollects "in Beirut decades later with his sister Amal, Yousef would recall the evening" (Abulhawa 43). Because "the intangible senses of belonging or feeling 'at home', including memory (of people, place, objects, experiences, sounds, smells, tastes etc.) may be more significant when the individual is no longer fixed emotionally or geographically to a single place, and/or because their 'home'-place is no longer reachable by them" (qtd. in Baskerville 44). The symbolism of Jenin as a place of collective

memory is thus both a survival strategy and an empowering tactic to preserve and strengthen the bonds to the homeland. Therefore, the novel's title suggests that the characters' identity is intertwined with their connection to a specific location that symbolizes their homeland, and their experiences within it. In the novel, Jenin becomes an extension space and a symbolic connection to the homeland, embodying cultural heritage and rootedness. Hypothetically, Jenin serves as a microcosm of the homeland as a whole. As a result, the physical reference epitomizes the characters' connection to their roots, their lived experiences, and their attachment ties, cultural belonging, and identity with the land.

In a postcolonial context, the non-linear narration and shifts in time and space evident in the novel can be viewed as symbolic of transcending boundaries. *Mornings in Jenin*, the title itself, epitomizes this nonlinear approach by fusing a specific temporal location, "mornings", with the physical location, "Jenin", which holds deep meaning for the characters. The mornings in Jenin represent more than just a certain time of day; they encapsulate the characters' experience of homeland, sense of identity construction, and collective memory. The nonlinear structure mirrors how time and space fold into each other in reliving and reimagining the homeland. Just as the narration moves fluidly across time and space, the title symbolizes how 'mornings' in 'Jenin' allow the characters to momentarily transcend the boundaries of their diaspora and exile by reconnecting with the homeland in a nonlinear fashion, both temporally and spatially. This enables the characters to transcend the boundaries of their diaspora and exile, engaging with their homeland's past, history, memories, culture, and nature in a multi-dimensional and fluid manner. In terms of homeland, this narrative structure and the symbolism of *Mornings in Jenin* exemplify the characters' attempts to transcend and preserve a sense of traditional connection to the land and cultural heritage. By accessing the past through their memories, narratives, and recollections, the characters can represent and revise their perspective on the past, hence creating a sense of attachment (Marais 568), even in their diaspora or exile state. In reading the novel, the past, memory, history, and cultural heritage play significant roles in shaping the characters' perception of home. Ultimately, the symbolism of locations serves as a reminder of the characters' commitment to remembering their past and preserving their cultural heritage.

Furthermore, the title and the temporal location predominantly in the narrative elicit reminiscence and memories, emphasizing the importance of remembrance in building a connection to the homeland. Mornings are associated with reflection and introspection; thus, the novel accentuates the characters' efforts to preserve their connection to the places by

maintaining and passing on their memories to the next generation. By recounting stories across generations, the novel underscores the role of memory in sustaining ties to home. This everyday practice in the mornings assists in maintaining a sense of attachment and belonging to the land. As Noyes states, “the preservation of practical knowledge is the function of what de Certeau calls “stories” or “local legends” (102). In line with de Certeau’s insights into the everyday practices, “storytelling” is one of those practices the characters practice in the camp. In the novel, everyday activities, which are mostly practiced in the mornings or at dawn, can be analyzed as a crucial ritual for creating a sense of connection that the characters practice for the preservation of strong ties to the land. The novel attempts to stress the significance of perseverating the ties to the land in shaping the characters’ emotions and identity construction. The connection to the land in the novel is constructed through stories passed down from one generation to the next, forming a collective memory. Haj Salem, for instance, represents the bridge between the ancestors and current generations, because “Haj Salem had seen it all ... [and] inconceivably old” (Abulhawa 66-67). Amal, in reflecting on storytelling, utters that “in our camp, his story was everyone’s story ... it was he who passed history on to the camp’s children” (Abulhawa 66). By zooming in on the significance of cultural transmission through storytelling, the novel emphasizes the key role of oral tradition in preserving cultural identity and connection to the land, as Amal says: “my treasure of Palestinian folklore and proverbs came from him. It was who gave me the names and stories” (Abulhawa 66). The act of passing down stories ensures a connection to the land and fosters a collective memory that transcends time. According to Dossa and Golubovic, “displaced persons nurture a sense of home through memory and storytelling; and ... emphasize how a sense of home is sustained or re-imagined through material objects” (172). Stories function as a link between the characters, their past, and ancestors, “forging lines of continuity between places and temporalities” (Dossa and Golubovic 175). Moreover, the emphasis on mornings as the time for storytelling and remembrance rituals underscores the significance of this everyday practice in shaping the characters’ attachment and identity. Morning becomes a symbol of continuity and resilience as the characters gather to recount their shared history and keep traditions alive. Through the character of Haj Salem, the novel highlights the role of individuals who carry the weight of cultural heritage and function as custodians of collective memory.

Given the importance of oral storytelling tradition, the novel suggests that collective memory also has a pivotal role in forming a sense of connection to the land and personal identity. The oral tradition plays a major role in anchoring the characters to the land and creating a deep sense of attachment and belonging. Many stories told in the novel symbolize a form of cultural connection that upholds the bonds between generations as well as their ties to the land. Therefore, the stories told generation after generation constitute a strong bond to the land. As represented in the novel, Haj Salem serves as the preserver of oral ancestral history, culture, and heritage, providing yet another link to other sites that contribute to the bonds to the land and identity formations. The words of Haj Salem, the storyteller in the novel, are described by Amal as “the greatest wisdom ever imparted to me by another human being” (Abulhawa 133). This accentuates the profound impact that the storytelling has on the characters’ understanding of their heritage, history, and land. Given the direct correlation between storytelling and homeland, in the novel further emphasizes that the strong connection between the characters and land is largely shaped by oral tradition, history, and collective memory, forming a sense of attachment and the meaning of homeland. As exemplified by Haj Salem in the novel, he intricately interweaves the past and present. His stories create an intrinsic bond between generations across time and space, thus maintaining and sustaining a sense of attachment and identity. As Noyes supports this idea by suggesting that “the stories in which the natives cast their knowledge “are the emotional scaffolding”” (279). Therefore, the told stories in the novel not only provide a means of passing down cultural knowledge but also contribute to the characters’ emotional connection.

In similar manners, the term ‘the voyage in’ can be reflected in Haj Salem’s role as the storyteller for the young generation in the novel. According to Said, “this term can advocate a process when a person takes hold of the dominant modes to expose their culture to an audience” (Ashcroft and Ahluwalia 8). This idea of “voyage in” serves as a form of resistance against challenges such as diaspora, displacement, and loss. It is also a means of reclaiming the characters’ connection to ancestral history and culture, hence land, as Amal says, “to cadge one more story from our Palestine” (Abulhawa 131). The narrative itself can be seen as a ‘voyage in’ as it accounts for the characters’ experiences to maintain identity and attachment. Thus, Said’s terminology closely resonates with the characters’ voyage in the novel as they attempt to preserve and strengthen their existence while striving for the preservation of their ties to identity, cultural heritage, and land. By weaving his stories, Haj Salem becomes not only a storyteller but also a cultural preserver and a source of emotional support for the younger

generation, fostering a sense of belonging within the heritage of oral tradition, even in the face of adversity. As Amal describes their gathering for a story, “we all sat spellbound by the tales of his youthful adventures with Baba, from the first day they met at the Damascus Gate” (Abulhawa 222). Storytelling, coupled with its potential to create *communitas*, has the power to be emotive and create an attachment feeling (Kohler 278). For the characters, oral stories are empowering as they allow the remembering subject to strengthen their connection to the past and land. “Stories told by the characters become their living force even when they are displaced from their own place. What they take with them is not wealth but memories transformed into stories to be told to later generations” (Jahan 99). Seen in this light, oral stories can be a powerful tool the characters utilize to create and reinforce ties between them, generations, and the land.

The narrative of *Mornings in Jenin* delves into the nuances of conceptualizing the homeland on different levels. As a cultural manifesto, the novel scrupulously charts the characters’ strong bonds with the land and how they sustain and preserve ties across generations, despite the hardships they face. In the novel, in addition to the characters’ experiences, a variety of items play significant roles in solidifying their sense and idea of home. As exemplified through the characters and motifs, the novel explores the profound effect of hardships on the characters’ sense and understanding of home as a fundamental aspect of their well-being and existence. By portraying the relationality and attachment between the characters and the land, the novel reveals the multifaceted nature of the concept of homeland. All in all, it thematically accentuates that home extends beyond a fixed geographical location; it is a mosaic of memories, stories, traditions, family, love, and culture that are ingrained within the individual and collective consciousness to encompass deeply emotional, spiritual, and personal connection to the land, community, past, and history. Ultimately, the novel highlights the intrinsic ties that define homeland, regardless of the physical distance from the land. The novel sheds light on how the characters negotiate and comprehend the importance of home and their belongingness, as well as exploring the impact of experiences on their bonds and identity. It focuses thus on the idea of how the characters’ traditional connection to nature, culture, and ancestral heritage results in strengthening and maintaining ties to the homeland.

CHAPTER III

THE CONCEPT OF IDENTITY IN *MORNINGS IN JENIN*

Identity is an integral aspect of the human experience and plays a vital role in shaping individual perceptions and societal dynamics. The theme of identity is one of the central focuses of *Mornings in Jenin*, as it explores the characters' identities and sense of self and being within the context of ancestral history and experiences of diaspora, exile, and loss. By examining the characters, their experiences, and sentiments, it can be said that the text highlights how the characters preserve their identity, even amid suffering. This exploration demonstrates the relationality of hardships, roots, and various places, whether in the homeland or outside of it, in crystallizing and reinforcing identity. In other words, the assimilation of identity and homeland through different key symbols and experiences plays an instrumental role in strengthening and maintaining the characters' identities. Thus, the novel's portrayal of the concept of identity demonstrates the interconnectedness between the notions of homeland and identity. The characters' passion and sentimental attachment to the land, nature, cultural heritage, and history also contribute significantly to the concept of identity and foster a sense of belongingness. By delving into the various dimensions of identity, examining how it is shaped and reinforced by historical, cultural, and personal factors, as well as the characters' experiences of exile and diaspora, the narrative highlights the fluidity of identity and its impact on individuals' lives within the context of the novel.

In cultural traditions, history is woven into the fabric of folklore and stories told by every generation to the next, entailing identity. These narratives serve as powerful vessels of collective memory and identity. Within the novel, the symbolic representation of history through stories creates a strong cultural bond to identity that deeply connects the past, present, and future generations. Since the characters' culture is rooted in oral tradition, the stories passed down through generations constitute the core of their history, hence identity. As Amal vividly recalls "it was he [Haj Salem] who passed history on to the camp's children. My treasure of Palestinian folklore and proverbs came from him. It was he who gave me the names and stories of people I would encounter in the history texts that I would read decades later" (Abulhawa 66). These memories and the ancestral stories not only connect the characters to their roots but also instill pride and reinforce their identity. Consequently, the act of retelling stories serves as a means for the characters to preserve and perpetuate their identity and

heritage. Even in exile, these oral traditions become a source of strength for Amal's identity, as she reminisces, "I found myself searching books of history for accounts that matched the stories Haj Salem had told" (Abulhawa 143). In this context, this highlights the integral role of oral tradition in crystallizing and reinforcing identity as well as the community's heritage. Therefore, "culture and history, and the personal narratives of home and the everyday shaping of belonging must never be elided [specifically] in framing migrants" (Scrase and Dutt 4). The novel illustrates how another phenomenon as stories influence the characters' perceptions and contribute to their individual and collective identities. The preservation of oral history provides yet another intrinsic bond between the characters, hence reinforcing identity even in the face of hardships and ensuring the passage of culture, history, and belongingness.

Given the important role of oral storytelling tradition, the novel suggests that collective memory plays a pivotal role in the formation and reinforcement of personal identity. Grounded upon Said's argument of memory and its connection with identity formation, in his work *Invention, Memory, and Place* (2000), he posits that "memory and its representation touch very significantly upon questions of identity ... and history, which of course is the underpinning of memory, is to some considerable extent an effect premised on the need to construct a desirable loyalty to and insider's understanding of one's tradition and faith" (176). As the characters navigate the challenges of exile, loss, and diaspora, their identities become deeply intertwined with their ancestral history and the nostalgic/collective memory of their people and land. In this sense, as Amal articulates in the novel, stories and "memories" are "pillars of strength" (Abulhawa 127) that can serve in identity crystallization. Moreover, the emphasis on the process of remembering, therefore, serves as a process of fortifying and grounding the character's identity. The characters navigate the spaces of memory, oral tradition, and the past as they endeavor to preserve their identity as the people of Palestine. As exemplified through Amal's character, sense of identity is tightly linked to memories and stories of the homeland that have been passed down through the generations in the novel. In her diaspora, she finds strength through connecting with her memory and past in her native land. According to Said, "memory of the past [is] a way of creating sense of identity" (178). Through the power of oral tradition and memory, the characters are able to forge deep connections not only to their identities but also to their ancestral history. As Amal describes, "the bond we forged was molded from an unspoken commitment to our collective survival. It reached through history, straddled continents, and held our collective and individual tragedies and triumphs. It was girlhood letters or a pot of stuffed grape leaves. Our bond was Palestine" (Abulhawa 132-133).

Their bond to the homeland, influenced by cultural, historical, and geographical contexts, constructs a deep-rooted sense of identity. Culture, land, and oral tradition are intricately interwoven in the narrative, occupying the centrality to foreground identity. This resonates with Said's idea that the interplay among memory, place, and invention can be utilized to give themselves a coherent identity, a place in the world (179). The formation of a strong bond among the characters can suggest a profound connection to their identity that extends beyond geographical boundaries. By consolidating identity in the novel, the characters' history of attachment and belonging to the land are depicted as essential to preserving and consolidating their sense of identity.

In the novel, exile, a central motif shapes the experiences and perceptions of the characters, particularly Amal. Amal's journey unfolds against the background of exile, where she grapples with the loss of her loved ones and home as well. The subsequent challenges she faces in her exile prompt her to forge a coherent identity. Her personal journey encapsulates the struggles faced by characters uprooted from their homeland within the contextualization of identity. Drawing from modern diasporic theorists such as Avtar Brah and Stuart Hall, identity is associated with "the idea of roots and notions of ethnic and national belonging" (Toninato 3), which highlights the relation between exile and identity formations based on cultural heritage and a sense of belonging to a specific community or nation. In the context of exile, the narrative demonstrates how exile and loss can reinforce and crystallize an individual's sense of belonging, ensuring the continuity of identity. As represented in the novel, cultural heritage and memories become vehicles through which the characters endeavor to carve out a space for themselves, preserving and sustaining their identity. In turn, this process anchors and strengthens identity, as is evident in Amal's efforts to create her own space in her exile, by searching "I found myself searching books of history for accounts that matched the stories Haj Salem had told" (Abulhawa 143). Thus, exile can be seen as an extension of space to anchor and forge identity, as well as emblematic of the characters' space within their homeland. Symbolically, Amal's connection to her father's words from a book he used to read to her resonates deeply within her identity in her exile: "I reached for *The Prophet*, strewn on the floor among the chaotic piles of my books. I read these words, last read to me by my father" (Abulhawa 184). Recollecting in her exile strengthens and preserves her identity and existence. The juxtaposition of Amal's life before and after exile reflects the strength of identity in the face of adversity. Amal's exile portrays the interplay between assimilation of cultural heritage, ancestral history, homeland, and nostalgia as vital components in preserving identity, especially

in the face of hardships. As Amal expresses her exilic self/consciousness, “my Arabness and Palestine’s primal cries were my anchors to the world” (Abulhawa 143). By utilizing Said’s notion of exilic consciousness, self-identification becomes significant in the formation and reinforcement of a solid self/identity, as exemplified by exilic Amal. This experience constitutes a persistent consciousness of belonging to a homeland, hence emphasizing her existence and identity. Consequently, the novel highlights the transformative power of exile in solidifying the characters’ sense of identity, highlighting the significance of homeland, nostalgia, and memory in their dynamics interplay as catalysts in preserving the formation of identity, even when emotionally and geographically detached.

Exemplified in the novel, Amal’s experience can be analyzed as a starting point for exploring exilic consciousness, which plays a pivotal role in the formation of identity. Drawing on Said’s personal experience and his idea of ‘consciousness’, Amal’s journey can be seen as an example of the critical importance of comprehending one’s own identity as shaped and crystallized by numerous experiences: “the starting-point of self-awareness is ‘the consciousness’ of what one really is, ... and is ‘knowing thyself’ ...” (Said 26). This self-awareness is significant in the consolidation and formation of a solid identity, particularly in the context of exile. Additionally, Amal’s childhood memories at home contribute to her intrinsic bond with her identity and serve as critical components in forming her identity, as she states, “no matter what facade I bought, I forever belonged to that Palestinian nation” (Abulhawa 143). These memories are woven throughout the novel, emphasizing the significance of cultural practices, ancestral history, and nostalgia in identity formations. Thus, exile can be interpreted as a transformative power for crystalizing identity and fostering belongingness.

In a postcolonial context, exile and diaspora can be understood as social experiences that encompass the interconnectedness of identity and homeland within the boundaries of diaspora. Individuals in this context perceive their ancestral culture as possessing core values. As a parallel to this, the route of Amal’s journey, for instance, conjures up “memory [that] pulled her back, and still back, to a home” (Abulhawa 9), thereby generating and consolidating a sense of belonging and connection. As a strategy of being, remembering plays a pivotal role throughout her journey, as she is “holding the fragile memories of Baba” and vividly and deeply intertwining them with her identity (Abulhawa 119). Likewise, drawing a parallel between Said’s exile and the characters’ exile, he depicts his own “geographical displacement” and the experience of being “swept out of the place” in “a place of exile” in a continuous state of

“dislocation” (18-16-254). In *Reflection on Exile* (2000), Said also reflects on his shared experience with other dislocated individuals who are “cut off from their roots, their land, their past” (183). However, drawing from Said’s memoir *Out of Place* (1999), he declares that “the displaced form ... of exile, nostalgia, homesickness, belonging” and being trapped “at the core of [his] memories” (18). Said’s view on exile can be seen as representing the dialectics of past/home/memory and present/ dislocation/exile. In the novel, the memories of the mornings in Jenin evoke a profound sense of belonging and familiarity. Memory functions as a strategy for upholding identity and sustaining a connection to home. Remembering is an essential element in constructing a strong identity that perpetually energizes the sense of belonging: “it sparks an inherent sense of familiarity in me [Amal] ... it possesses me” (Abulhawa 116). Nostalgic memories nourish and refuel that deep bond between Amal and her identity as a part of Palestine. By utilizing memory as a tool to gather fragments from the past, it can act as a source of solace and resilience. Therefore, Amal’s memories of her father are instrumental in shaping her identity in exile, both internally and externally. Similarly, mornings in exile evoke her memories of mornings in Jenin with her father Hasan; as Amal nostalgically recollects, “my childhood was magical, enchanted by poetry and the dawn (Abulhawa 53). Reflecting on her identity, Amal realizes that “this great gift from Baba was something no one could take away. And decades later, in the bleak early hours of a Pennsylvania February, the words of Gibran’s haunting rhythms and the memory of Baba’s soft baritone would be my only thread of solace” (Abulhawa 53). Building on Siad’s ideas of memory/past, the process of remembering is not merely a painful physical detachment from home, but rather it generates nostalgic ties to individual and collective identity and hence to the homeland, acting as a source of solace, strength, and bonds. As a result, Amal’s memories, which are her only solace in her space in America, become an extension space to her home, allowing her to maintain her sense of self and connection to identity, even in the face of adversity.

As it is thematized in the novel, nature, land, places, memories, stories, and sentiments are integral to the breeding, crystallization, and fortification of identity across generations. As exemplified through the novel, specific moments, such as the mornings in Jenin as well as the mornings in exile, highlight Amal’s strong connection to her identity. Mornings become symbolic for transitions within herself from detachment to reconnection. It is noteworthy that “cultural and social belongings often a great sense of belonging to a specific place is accompanied by the wish to reproduce and/or reinvent ‘traditions’ and ‘cultures’ associated with ‘home’” (Baskerville 43). Therefore, cultural and social belongings are deeply intertwined

with the characters' sense of belonging and connection to their identity. The desire to maintain and treasure these bonds and traditions is a manifestation of the wish to reproduce and preserve the identity associated with their strong attachment to homeland. Yousef's diasporic state also provides an example of this longing and belonging, as he reflects on "the memory of that morning's landscape takes my breath away now. It was the picturesque backdrop of my parents' lives—miles of pasture carpeting valleys nestled amid waves of olive groves" (Abulhawa 97). The influence of personal memories and experiences in certain places can significantly enhance person's perception of identity and sense of place identity (Ratcliffe and Korpela 1). This connection illustrates the importance of cultural continuity and the preservation of traditions in crystallizing individual and collective identity within the context of the novel.

Furthermore, the narrative highlights the intergenerational transmission of identity. Beyond its physicality, the homeland and identity in the novel also signify a shared culture and collective memory. In parallel, "decades later, in the bleak early hours of Pennsylvania," Amal recounts and reads to her daughter Sara during "the tender time of the dawn" (Abulhawa 53), "each morning, ... she [Sara] lay in a blanket on my lap as I reached into a pile of books ... reading to her at dawn as my father had read to me in the long-ago days of love" (Abulhawa 194-195). This action allows the characters to keep their cultural heritage alive and also to transmit and instill cultural heritage in her daughter Sara; "she would squiggle her little body in my lap, clinging to me [Amal] for a story or a song" (Abulhaw 193). Therefore, this suggests a sense of continuity in their identity, despite being temporally and spatially detached from the homeland, as "oral traditions and storytelling are ancient means of creating and maintaining a sense of selfhood and belonging in a place or community" (Vandemark 245). Storytelling serves as a pillar of strength in identity formation, which further strengthens and solidifies the characters' love, pride, and attachment to their identity and roots. Exile and diaspora serve as catalysts for forming and strengthening the characters' identity. By doing so, the characters preserve and transmit identity, individually and collectively, to the next generation. Hence, Sara, who represents the fourth generation, in her exile reflects the thematization of individual and collective identity among diasporic communities. Whether physically rooted or imaginatively woven through various experiences and cultural and personal narratives as they are passed down through generations, this bond is central to their sense of existence and belonging.

Navigating space in the United States, Sara embraces her identity through her mother and memories, which evoke nostalgia and an emotional attachment sense for a homeland she has never been to yet. However, being physically disconnected from the homeland, Sara seeks to navigate and further foreground a sense of belonging and have an anchor to her identity, as Sara tells her mother, “I want to know who I am” (Abulhawa 220). Because “exile is fundamentally a discontinuous state of being” (Said, *Reflection on Exile*, 183). Following the desire of her daughter to visit Palestine in a quest for consolidating connection to identity and a prompt sense of belonging, Amal embarks on a journey together to the land from which she has been detached ever since childhood. As Said states in his foundational book *Culture and Imperialism* (1993), insisting that “just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free from the struggle over geography” (7). In Sara’s case, the journey also reveals the powerful role that being close to the homeland has on her sense of identity and belonging. Subsequently, each experience and place, at home and outside, “has a complicated, dense web of valences that was very much a part of growing up, gaining an identity, forming my consciousness of myself and of others” (Said, *Out of Place* 18). The importance of physically connecting to her homeland despite her diaspora is further emphasized when Amal reflects on Sara’s decision, saying, “so little family. So little sense of belonging. A great big “so little” throbbed under her decision to go to Palestine” (Abulhawa 220). Correspondingly, as Said states in his book *Reflections on Exile and Other Essays* (2000), “exiles feel, therefore, an urgent need to reconstitute their lives, usually by choosing to see themselves as part of ideology or a people” (183). Thus, from a postcolonial stance, identity is viewed as a dynamic process rather than a fixed or given state; it is constantly crystallized and influenced by various factors and experiences. As Hall asserts, the dynamic and constructed nature of identity is a production always in process and always constituted within, which is defined by history, culture, and ancestry (222).

The significance of names and naming in the novel is central to the characters’ emotional lives and their sense of identity. Names are more than mere labels; they convey individuals’ perceptions of who they are and where they come from, anchoring their sense of self. They represent personal histories, cultural heritage, aspirations, and the struggle for individual and collective identity. In the novel, names function as a tactic for the characters to claim and express emotions, dreams, and identities. According to Palsson, “naming is a speech act, shaping the life course and the person involved” (621). Furthermore, names go beyond the characters and become a reflection of the broader experience of loss, dislocation, exile, and

diaspora. The characters' names play a crucial role in shaping and preserving their identities. In line with this, "names serve the purpose of situating people in social space, connecting them to family, lineage, ethnic group, and such" (Palsson 621). For instance, Yousef and Fatima, "they had named her Falasteen, the Arabic word for Palestine" (Abulhawa 149). This name holds significant symbolism and represents their deep love and connection to their identity as people of Palestine. From postcolonial perspective, naming becomes a way of claiming, belongingness, and identification. It is a means for individuals to assert their identity and reaffirm their sense of self in the face of challenges. Thus, naming his daughter after the land itself is also a reflection of their cultural heritage and serves to preserve their bonds of identity over generations.

Furthermore, Amal's name is deeply meaningful in the narrative. As her father once tells her, "We named you Amal with a long vowel because the shot vowel means just one hope, one wish. You are so much more than that. We put all our hopes into you" (Abulhawa 61). In this context, this name goes beyond being a mere label and becomes a reflection of the characters' hopes, dreams, and a sense of collective identity that the ancestral generation passes on to the younger generation. Her name, "Amal, with the long vowel, means hopes, dreams, lots of them" (Abulhawa 61-62), which function as the hopes that her father and every character look forward to. This aligns with the idea that "the significance of names can be located in their importance in defining identity" (Nyambi et al. 21). In exile, Amal's name becomes her anchor and source of strength. It serves to remind her of her family's love and aspirations, evokes memories, and connects her to her roots and identity. As suggested, "memory is a cultural celebration of one's own identity and a subscription to the collective memory of a people" (Salam 41). This is reflected in Amal's sentiments when reclaiming her name and existence: "I could feel meaning coming back into that word that had been drained of hope and left as dumbfounded letters" (Abulhawa 226). In the analyzed data, Amal navigates the notion of identity within exile and becomes a symbol of her way to claim and sustain her identity. Thus, "the close connection between a person's given name and their feeling of identity are quite important, as it influences the development of the personality of individual (Windt-Val 273). In a similar vein, Huda, Amal's best friend, "had named her baby girl Amal" (129) in honor of her friend Amal Abulheja and the land, Palestine. In the novel, her name is reflective of the characters' aspirations and continuous hopes for a better future for their community.

Likewise, the naming of things in the novel, such as Old Lady, an olive tree where Amal used to play during her childhood with her friend Huda, holds great significance: “we climbed Old Lady’s back, swung and dangled from her limbs” (Abulhawa 55). It evokes Amal’s childhood memories and a sense of belonging. These nostalgic moments strengthened her identity after her arrival in the United States. As depicted in the novel, naming “a fifteen-hundred-year-old olive tree” (Abulhaw 227) as “Old Lady” reflects a deep sense of connection and rootedness to cultural heritage and the characters’ identity formations. It embodies the collective memory and identity of the characters, specifically Amal. The name itself, Old Lady, personifies the tree, endowing it with a sense of wisdom, strength, and rootedness, symbolizing the spirit of the characters’ belonging and attachment, despite the turmoil. Naming the ancient olive tree also reflects the characters’ deep emotional attachment to identity and their efforts to preserve their cultural and historical legacy. Thus, Old Lady represents the solid affirmation of characters’ identity. Ultimately, names are inseparable from the individual and the community in which they are embedded; thus, the person is inseparable from his or her environment (Palsson 621).

In reading the novel, the characters’ sense of identity and connection to the land is shaped by their experiences of suffering and loss caused by exile, dislocation, and diaspora. However, the characters’ ties to their culture and ancestral heritage ultimately determine and reinforce their individual and collective identity. After analyzing the notion of identity in the novel, it becomes evident that there is a direct relationship between identity and geography as a homeland. The formation of identity is directly related to the geographical boundaries to which the characters are emotionally attached. According to the previous analysis, it can be said that reading the novel examines how cultural, social, historical, and geographical factors influence individuals’ perceptions of self, existence, attachment, and being, as well as the construction of identity, in addition to their experiences of tragedies. The nuanced portrayal of identity in the novel provides a deeper understanding of the complex interplay between personal experiences, cultural background, geographies, and homeland that shape and solidify the characters’ identity and feeling of belonging.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The analysis of conceptualizations of the homeland and identity in *Mornings in Jenin* reveals the portrayal of the characters' strong attachment to the homeland and their indomitable sense of identity. The experiences of diaspora, exile, loss, and dislocation are examined to comprehend and explore their impact on the characters' sense of home attachment and identity formations, which further strengthens their bond to the homeland and their determination to preserve their identity that persists across generations. Consequently, *Mornings in Jenin* is a novel that accentuates the significance of land and belongingness in the characters' affinity towards their identity. In reading the novel, the thesis demonstrates how, by creating and grounding the deep connection to the land as well as the meaning of identity within specific geographical locations contribute to the characters' development of a deep individual and collective identity rooted in the land of Palestine and its places and memories.

Based on the analysis, the notion of homeland in the novel becomes interconnected with the notion of identity. The detachment and longing from the land, as well as the experiences of exile, diaspora, and displacement, are explored to comprehend their profound impact on forming and strengthening their identity and bonds to the homeland. In the analyzed data, the novel draws attention to the significant roles of cultural, traditional heritages, memories, home, and nostalgia in shaping and preserving their ties to ancestral history, identity, and land, emotionally or physically. Drawing from postcolonial literary analysis, the study delves into the legacy of homeland and identity and how suffering impacts the characters and their core of existence and belongings. Said's theory is relevant for comprehending the legacy of homeland, identity, and the geographies associated with the characters' sense of home and identity. Despite the turmoil they face, the characters' steadfast attachment to their homeland and ancestral heritage shapes and determines their identity. This suggests that the concepts of homeland and identity are deeply interconnected, with the characters' connection to the land and identity as people of Palestine playing a pivotal role in sustaining and maintaining their ties.

To recapitulate, many critics, starting with John Locke to Edward Said, have pointed out the interrelatedness between memory, land, and identity. In this respect, “self-introspection, or reflecting upon the past self from a present perspective, grants identities the tempo-spatial boundary that enables them to be constructed and reconstructed” (Youssef and Golson 82). In the novel, the experiences of diaspora, exile, and loss have a significant impact on how the characters perceive and understand the meanings of identity and homeland. Said posits that places are not merely physical entities, but are also designated through imagination, ideology, and culture. Therefore, they play a pivotal role in the crystallization of identity and the connection to places: to quote Said, “imaginative geography and history help the mind to intensify its own sense of itself” (Orientalism Said 55). Throughout the novel, being aware of the dimensions of places and identity is important because any sense of identity and place is shaped by a range of experiences, highlighting the relationality of the land and various places as well as their connection to identity formations. Consequently, based on the analyzed data, the novel demonstrates that the experiences of suffering strengthen and solidify the characters’ ties to homeland, identity, and belongingness, which persist across generations. Hence, both concepts cannot be separated.

Furthermore, in reading the text, the novel highlights the emotional effects of diaspora, exile, loss, and dislocation on the characters’ identity formation and ties to the land. It showcases the characters’ deep relation to the land, both in physical and imagined aspects. This bond serves as a source of core bonds, strength, and resilience, enabling the characters to navigate through the traumas they experience. As a result, the characters transform their suffering into power, grapple with their identity and ties to the land. All in all, the analysis highlights the significance of the concepts of homeland and identity in the characters’ lives, particularly in facing such experiences. The concept of homeland goes beyond a mere physical location; it encompasses a complex mixture of place, belongingness, culture, memory, family, and hopes. The land and identity become a tangible and intangible representation of their history, culture, and individual and collective memory and identity. In the novel, the characters, narrative, and places/spaces have been employed to give expression to the ethnic identity of the characters and to situate the characters within the broader context of the societal fabric. Identity formation and the effort to redraw ethnic boundaries have taken place against the backdrop of various hardships. By charting a new territory of academic inquiry grounded in an interdisciplinary theoretical framework, postcolonial and Said’s conceptual theories have provided different disciplines with a critical terminology and interpretative framework to look

at geographies, the concepts of homeland, and identity. Specifically, it studies the factors contributing to the fostering of such a sense of attachment and belonging among the characters in the novel despite the adversity the characters pass through. Overall, the novel can be read as a manifestation of homeland attachment, belongingness, reclamation, formation, and reaffirmation of identity.



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