

New Perspectives in the Israel-Palestine Conflict: Righting the Wrong through metaphor in *Mornings in Jenin*

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ABSTRACT

Majority of world opinion today is critical of Israel's role in the current standoff with Palestine fueled by the illegitimate occupation of the West Bank, depriving millions of Palestinians of their homeland. Yet, almost all non-Islamic countries maintain diplomatic relations with Israel, recognizing it as a country. The plight of the Palestinians, especially the children uprooted from their homes and forced to lead lives of deprecation as refugees as a result of Israeli occupation has become a subject for insightful writings by many writers and critics, including Abulhawa who in *Mornings in Jenin*, skillfully employs language to showcase not the political tragedy (though it operates as the background) but the personal one. This paper textually analyzes Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* to explore the author's use of the literary metaphor to expose not only the reality in Palestine, but more importantly, the horror of Israeli violence against Palestinians, trauma both physical and psychological. The study further highlights how the author raises a significant question: Who is the real terrorist in Palestine? The findings show that the novel utilizes several literary techniques to bring forth Israeli terrorism and Palestinian agony under Israeli occupation. Via language use, Abulhawa concludes that it's the Israeli occupation, brutality and aggression that leads to Palestinian resistance/terrorism. *Mornings in Jenin*, in other words, is an attempt by Susan Abulhawa to justify the means of resistance concluding that Israel is the actual terrorist and not the Palestinians who have a 'just cause' to resist Zionist colonization. What is remarkable is her ingenuous use of literary devices to achieve the desired effect on the readers.

Key words: Abulhawa, Coexistence, Literary Techniques, Occupation, Resistance, Terrorism

INTRODUCTION

The Novel, The Novelist, and the Critics' Lens

A great deal of remarkable modern literature in English is attributable to the first-hand pain and anguish suffered by the children and immediate victims of racist, religious, regional and political oppression around the world. Among Palestinian writers in English who have been through and catalogued decades of racial hatred, abuse, and homelessness, Susan Abulhawa is best known for *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), renamed from the previous title, *The Scar of David* that was originally published in 2006. Though now finding succor in her work as also a human rights activist, Abulhawa recasts her suffering in her literary characters, speaking through them of all the angst and pain that came from herself being deprived of her roots, being born in Kuwait to refugee parents, moving to the US as an infant, again being displaced to Kuwait till she found herself in an orphanage in Jerusalem. Respite came at last after three years when she could again move to the US in three years.

Year 2010 saw Abulhawa's *Mornings in Jenin* being declared the bestselling novel of the year based as it was on the "holocaust inflicted on a family" (Bano: p.1). Bano describes *Mornings in Jenin* as "a collective story grounded in history" (p. 2) which provides a significant historical background to events that still afflict the Palestinian land. However, while the historical events play an important role in the story, Abulhawa's main concern is to depict the hardships to be inevitably faced by the Palestinians under occupation. In this, she may be compared to Sahar Khalifa, as she seems to embody the mainstream of Palestinian narrative whose main concern is to reflect the difficulties of Palestinian social life under occupation in a narrative that is dry or lifeless, but one which is alive and dynamic much like the lives of the people it deals with. Sahar Khalifa's novel, *Wild Thorns*, for example, portrays the harsh realities to which the Palestinian people are exposed in the West Bank city of Nablus under Israeli domination. The story circles around the life of an ordinary person striving hard to meet the basic needs of an uprooted, displaced family. Through the life of its characters, the story

further highlights the problems of “discrimination, exploitation, unemployment, poverty, interrogation in check points, life in prison, and the experience of exile” (Priyanka: 2016, p.144). Similarly, *Mornings in Jenin* is very much concerned with the unnatural, unwelcome and certainly, most unfair difficulties of life forced upon a race under the Israeli domination, yet the oppressed take to different forms of resistance and protests against aggression, highlighting the indomitable spirit of the Palestinian people.

Rodopoulos (2010) notes that Abulhawa’s writing shows an unmistakable influence of Hanan Ashrawi, a compatriot and a legislator and scholar, Edward Said, the Palestinian literary academic and critic, and Robert Fisk, the journalist and writer specializing on the Middle East. This is also acknowledged by Abulhawa who attributes the portrayal of the Abulheja family to Ashrawi and Said. However, Rodopoulos also notes that through the eyes of Amal, the protagonist, Abulhawa depicts the experiences of a Palestinian refugee living in America and paints the melancholic experience of exile, both physical and emotional, which were perhaps her own but superimposed most artistically on real or near-real locations and characters. According to her, Abulhawa’s “use of words” illustrates the tragedy of “individuals coping with the brutal events of dispossession” (p.1-3).

Interestingly, *Mornings in Jenin* draws the attention of researchers and critics alike. This can be attributed to the sensitive issues that this novel handles, the lifelong conflict and domination of Palestine, and the annihilation of individual lives in the aftermath of it. However, most of them focus on the trauma and the quest for identity that informs Abulhawa’s novel, *Mornings in Jenin*. Abu-Shomar, for example, notes that the distinct assimilation between “Abulhawa and Amal has provided the author with the means to construe collective stipulations including anti-nihilism, negotiations with difference, belonging and unbelonging, and, above all, the creation of spaces that simultaneously accommodate conflicting emotions of love and trauma” (2015, p.128). Leila Bellour and Abdelhafid, further observes that Despite her “endeavors to deny her previous self, Amal’s deep-seated internalization of the trauma of her uprootedness makes it difficult for her to bury her memories. She realizes that the homeland exerts a strong pull” (2016, p.11). According to Bellour and Abdelhafid, “Love of God, love of the land, and love of the family are the pillars of their life”. Love of the land is embodied in the character of Yehya, grandfather of Abulheja family, who refused his son Hassan’s proposal to continue education as he wants him to remain attached to the land, that passed down from one generation to another (ibid, p. 9). Eman El Sayed Raslan also considers *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa as a ‘trauma novel’ as the author uses trauma as “a powerful indicator of oppressive cultural regimes and practices” (2017, p. 186). According to her, various types of trauma are fused together to portrait the Palestinian life (ibid).

Al Suod, on the other hand, focuses on feelings of nostalgia, displacement and alienation in a critical reading of three recent Arab American novels: Susan Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* (2010), Naomi Nye’s *Habibi* (1999), and

Shaw Dallal’s *Scattered Like Seeds* (1999). He concludes that Susan Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* and Shaw Dallal’s *Scattered Like Seeds* present two Palestinian characters, namely Amal and Thafer, who are imprisoned in the past of their life in Palestine, and struggle hard to assimilate themselves in the new environment to have a life free of conflict in America. In America, they find themselves “torn between two cultures and they feel how they can’t fully assimilate into either of these cultures. They experience the feeling of in-betweenness throughout their time in America” (Al Suod: 2015, p. 11). Al Suod further notes that Abulhawa’s protagonist, Amal, suffers from the traumatic memory that permanently affects all her life in the United States. She is haunted by memories of trauma back in Palestine as a consequence of massive killing and injustice in her native land. According to him, most psychologists agree that “traumatic memories are not stored in people’s minds as exact copies or reproductions of the past; rather, they are an alterable reproduction of the past which is influenced by present-day elements and the prevailing details of the past” (ibid, p. 48).

Much of the story in *Mornings in Jenin* is devoted to highlighting Palestinians’ anguish in the face of Israeli occupation, torture and terrorism of an entire race. The story starts in Ein Hod, a small village, before the birth of Amal, the protagonist, before history “marched over the hills and shattered present and future of the millions of Palestinian, before the Jewish grabbed the lands of the Palestinian ... and changed its name and character” (Bano: p.3). Powerful use of simple words, history of injustice being created as the world merely watched on. The author’s intention is clear: Declare to the world the real tragedy of the Israel-Palestine conflict, one in which that that Palestinians are merely victims defending their land and life, and not terrorists. But, as Said and Hitchens (1988) note, “it is by no means an exaggeration to say that the establishment of Israel as a state in 1948 occurred ... partly because they had already won the political battle for Palestine in the international world in which ideas, representations, rhetoric, and images were at issue” (p.1). Abulhawa, however, turns the image upside down and breaks the complicity of the world community, a fact which has been mostly ignored by critics and researchers. It is this aspect of the language of *Mornings in Jenin* that the current study investigates, the unique power of Abulhawa’s pen which shows the colonizers as oppressors, the displaced as victims, and not the other way round.

Metaphoric/Symbolic Language in *Mornings in Jenin*

Indeed, Abulhawa’s main concern in *Mornings in Jenin* is to reflect the miserable life of Palestinian people who suddenly became homeless, living in shelters unfit even for animals. The misery of their lives is introduced through characters, one of whom declares: “If we must be refugees, we will not live like dogs” (2010, p. 49). Their agony is fully summarized in Amal’s words, when she says that the story of Haj Salem, the old man, who has seen it all, ‘was everyone’s story’, a single tale of dispossession, of being stripped to the bones of one’s humanity, of being dumped like rubbish into refugee camps unfit for rats” (p. 78). The death of Haj Yehya,

further, haunted the villagers who wonder, "How was that a man could not walk onto his own property, visit the grave of his wife, eat the fruits of forty generations of his ancestors' toil, without mortal consequence?" (p. 48).

In Abulhawa's perception of the agony of these people, expression is impossible unless via literary devices such as metaphors, contrast and symbolism which she skillfully employs to illustrate the helplessness of her people, and the Israeli aggression against them. Abulhawa, for instance, succinctly reflects the situation of Palestinians when she describes them in an oxymoron: Living dead (p. 77). Such exaggerated picture is intended to portray the reality of the Palestinian suffering and pain. Through language, Abulhawa carefully creates images and expressions that concisely depict the case of Palestinians. Her metaphoric language, in other words, creates a live picture of her fictional world. She writes, for example, "in the sorrow of a history buried alive, the year 1948 in Palestine fell from the calendar into exile, ceasing to reckon the marching count of days, months and years ..." (p. 35). These words and images vividly describe the situation in Palestine whose history is personified by being buried like a human being or suddenly removed from history to make space for a new nation to emerge and start on its own. The image further shows that Palestinian history appears like an obsolete clock that has ceased from being effective in the history of the world. Indeed, it's a metaphor of the removal of the very Palestinian state and its history from the map and putting Israel in its place instead.

Significantly, Abulhawa mockingly describes the unjust world as a thief stealing her nation and its history in order to hand it over to an emerging force, Israel. She continues her extended metaphor and says: "forty generation of living, now stolen (p. 35). Hence, her metaphoric language seems to be her weapon with which she chooses to highlight the problem of Palestinians who, according to her: "were slowly being erased from the world, from its history and from its future" (p. 48-9). Through her figurative language, Abulhawa skillfully delineates the sorrow and the agony of her people and society.

Among other devices, contrast also plays an important role in Abulhawa's language which she skillfully uses to illustrate the ugliness of the occupation and the misery of people under that occupation. The ecstatic picture of Jolanta, for instance, is set against the melancholic situation of Dalia. "Moshe wanted Jolanta to be happy. Jolanta wanted a child" (p. 36). Hence, Moshe "steals a child", Dalia's son Ismael and hands him over as a gift to his wife Jolanta whose "face opened like a spring blossom ... She held the precious child ... She enfolded him with her deepest yearnings, ..." (p. 38). Thus, Jolanta's image of celebration and happiness of what fate has brought to her, a child without mother is set in contrast to Dalia who, on the other hand, goes into a hallucinatory state, shouting "Ibni! Ibni! {my son, my son}" (p. 37). Like the Jews who considered Palestine as their homeland, "Jolanta convinced herself that Ismael was her son and named him David without questioning her Husband about the boy's roots; — He's my son, this is the only truth {s}he needs, she decided caging the butterfly"

(Nachida 2017, p. 31). The contrasted image of both Jolanta and Dalia is projected in such a way as to depict the contrast between Jewish people who find "a land without people" and Palestinians who suddenly became "people without land" (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 38). Thus, as "Dalia lay heartbroken, delirious with the loss of Ismael, Jolanta rocked David to sleep" (p. 39). Interestingly, Dalia's loss symbolizes her loss of happiness, family and above all, the land. The changing of his name, from Ismael to David too symbolizes the act of theft of Palestine, its identity razed to the ground, given a new name, Israel.

The birth of Israel was at the expense of the veritable death of Palestine. Moshe, and his wife, Jolanta, who "saw the birth of Israel" (p. 37), comforted her from the beginning that "{they} will live to see the land between the Mediterranean and the Jordan River with nothing but Jews" (p. 37). He holds her tightly and says "Palestine will be ours. You will see" (p. 37). At this moment, Abulhawa critically draw the picture of Jewish people who are arriving from all over the world, against the image of Palestinians being pushed out and displaced (p. 38-9). This picture is expressed through the Swedish UN mediator who clearly indicates that it is a violation of the basics of the elements of justice if Palestinians, the 'innocent victims' "were denied the right to return to their homes, while Jewish immigrants flow into Palestine, and, indeed, at least offer the treat of permanent replacement of the Arab refugees who had been rooted in the land for centuries" (p. 40). This report of a western journalist shows the tortured Palestinians who "just want to go home" (p. 40). Their life became miserable, living in poor tents in Jenin as they have been slowly "erased from the world, from its history and from its future" (p. 48-9).

Such contrast is further elaborated by Shamenaz Bano who notes that while Palestinians became hysterical and were shattered as they lost "everything they possessed, Israelites were rejoicing with the accumulation of wealth, land and also a new country. While Palestinians were struggling for the survival of their families, Jewish people were making merry" (p. 3-4).

Abulhawa carefully applies different literary techniques such as contrast, imagery and symbolism to critically depict the reality of her society. Through such devices, Abulhawa makes it clear that "a foreign minority went about building a new state in 1948, expelling Palestinians and looting their homes and banks, ..." (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 39). Ein Hod, for example, "was being settled by Jewish artists from France, ..." (p. 48). As Ruba Salih and Sophie Richter note that the current Palestinian culture of resistance focuses "on the powerful paradoxes of everyday normal(ized) life under occupation, this art often proposes cynical, humorous, or ironic genres to engage the dark reality of occupation and siege" (p. 18).

Moreover, Yehya Abulheja's return to Ein Hod symbolizes the dream of all Palestinians to go back to their native land. He suffers in exile, therefore, he feels nostalgic for his home. But more importantly, it portrays the aggressive nature of the colonizers who have dominated and humiliated an entire race. To set the irony straight, Abulhawa introduces

the imagery of peace against that of death: “When the family cleaned Yehya’s body for burial, they found three olives and some figs in his pockets” (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 48). Those olives and figs are set against the atrocities of the heavy weapons and artilleries of Israeli army which kills him. It’s like giving two utterly different images, one of innocence and peace, another, contrasting one, of hatred and death. Leila Bellour notes that “there is a spiritual connection between him and the land. He grew up on the land, loved it, and worked it” (2016, p. 10). “That terrain is in my blood [...] I know every tree and every bird. The soldiers do not”, Abulheja said (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 40). Yehya revisited his land, but it was his last time to see his homeland. His death is metaphoric in the sense that land for Palestinians is life and death. Such strong connection to the land is embodied in almost all Abulhawa’s characters. Hence, Abulhawa’s novel very much stresses Palestinians attachment to God, land and family which is the core of their being and for which they are ready to scarify their lives.

Then again, David, the illegitimate child is a symbol of the illegitimacy of the Jewish people occupying another’s land by force and his return to his original family who had suffered a lot signify the possible return of this land to its original people, the Palestinians. In this sense, through subtle symbol, the author encourages Palestinians and their families to continue their struggle and resistance against Jewish settlers until they get back their lost land, like David who ultimately returns to his family after a long time. However, his mixed Jewishness and Arabism seems to suggest that even after the return of the land, it won’t be the same as before, but one where perhaps coexistence is possible between the two peoples. Hence, the story of David (Ismael) who grows up among Jewish people can be read as an indication of the possibility of the coexistence that the author seems to hint at. This idea is further presented through Hassan Abulheja and Airi who remain friends until the death of the former. Through that friendship, Abulhawa attempts to suggest the possibility of coexistence and tolerance. However, as someone puts it, “this is the evil logic of terror, to make everyone take sides, to turn even the peace loving into killers (“Wild Thorns”). Jewish people appear unwilling to endure Palestinians as they have their own strategy supported by the most powerful countries in the world. Alhjar and Alwadih write, “terrorism for Zionism movement is a strategic work, besides being the core of its ideology” (p.102).

Similarly, the name of Amal bears some hope too. Her father once told her: “We named you Amal with long vowel because the short vowel means just one hope, one wish, my father had once said. You are so much more than that”, not just words, even names play their part in Abulhawa’s scheme of meaning and symbolism. He continues “we put all of our hopes into you. Amal with the long vowel, means hopes, dreams, lots of them” (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 72). Amal herself saw the “wave of hope through the living dead” of Ein Hod people who helplessly attempt to defend themselves against Israeli attack on their village (p. 77). Indeed, jokes, irony and symbolism have become an integral part of the general cultures of resistance in Palestinian art. As Ruba Salih

and Sophie Richter-Devroe have observed that “Palestinian artists engaged in an ongoing process of experimenting with new languages, symbols, and aesthetics” (p. 10).

Occupation and Resistance: Who is the Terrorist?

Indeed, resistance is one of the most important themes in Palestinian literature both in poetry and prose. Palestinian writers are continuously engaged with the pervasive political issues. It can be said that the major concern of contemporary Palestinian literature is to present the Palestinian realities to the rest of the world and thereby, legitimize their strife (Priyanka: 2016, p.1439). Hence, in the Palestinian context, much literature arises from conditions of military occupation and ongoing struggle for liberation (ibid). According to Priyanka, “The idea of resistance is intimately engaged with different forms of hegemonic power structures and strategies” (ibid). Resistance in *Mornings in Jenin* is portrayed at two different levels, self-resistance and national resistance. Self-resistance is almost embodied within all characters who simply could not cope with the colonization. Amal’s inability to acquire a new identity can be attributed to her inside resistance of the Israeli domination. Her ultimate return to Palestine shows her deep love for her homeland and strong resistance for the alternatives. Abo Alheja’s sudden and brave return to Ein Hod, his village, shows the dream and the longing for the return which embodies a strong spirit of resistance for which he paid with his own life like many others.

National resistance, on the other hand, is reflected mainly through Yousef, Amal’s brother who joins the rebels in Jordan under PLO which launches its attacks on Israeli soldiers. The 1967 Israeli-Arab war gave the Palestinian “resistance movement immediate rise and support within the Arab world; it established a new dynamic in the struggle against Israel”. In other words, it leads to the development of the idea of “armed struggle” as an “urgency that had been lacking” before 1967 war. It is also noticeable that “... after 1967, the Palestine resistance movement had taken on the form of a nationalist uprising and not a social revolution” (Siklawi:2017, p. 923).

Interestingly, Yousef is used as a scapegoat through whom Abulhawa raises a significant question, *who is the terrorist?* This question is raised by the author to mock the world that has not only put Palestinian agony behind its back, but more importantly, has not shied from depicting them as terrorists. She attempts to portrait the situation of Palestinians who are “left without rights, home, or nation while the world turned its back to watch or cheer the jubilation of the ... proclaiming a new state they called Israel” (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 78). In another context, Carla Perrucca and Manuel Herrera Almela have described the situation of Ahed Tamimi who faces Israeli aggression by saying that: “her feminism reveals the ugly face of patriarchal settler colonialism, and her courage vividly shows everyone that Israeli occupation is simply an aberration of human rights” (“The Ahed Tamimi story”).

Significantly, Abulhawa carefully attempts to illustrate the relationship between the Israeli cruelty and Palestinian struggle. She makes it clear that in all cases, Palestinian resistance or terrorism, as they call it, is merely a result of

the aggressive nature of occupation. The fact is that “on its first day of occupation, Israel bulldozed the entire Moroccan neighborhood of some two hundred ancient houses ... while they themselves were evicted to ghettos or exiled” (Abulhawa: 2010, p.140). It’s the occupation, the Israeli hegemony and oppression that leads Palestinians to go for a ‘death deal’. Yousef, whose wife and daughter were murdered in a horrible manner, for example, was influenced by the aggressive bloody war launched by Israel and ultimately decides to take action. “This psychological shock angered him and filled his heart with hate and a desire for revenge” (Nachida: 2017, p. 35). In a telephone call to his sister Amal, Yousef wonders, “How much must we endure, and how much must we give? He screamed, ‘They ripped my Fatima’s belly with a knife!... They killed my babies! He screamed more. They killed my babies, Amal. Oh God! Oh God ...’” (Abulhawa: 2010, p. 227).

Thus, Yousef, the only remaining member of Amal’s family left his sister to join the resistance. Before his departure in 1968, he left a very emotional letter to Amal in which he says:

I am like a caged bird here. I know you are too [...] It is unbearable to think of our future as nullified, condemned to an eternal refugee’s life of subjugation and shackles. The resistance is forming and eventually we will take back what is rightfully ours. You were born a refugee, but I promise I will die, if I must, so you do not die a refugee. (p.120).

Hence, Yousef decides to fight as he wants to take revenge from those who slaughter his innocent wife and kids. “... I’m going to fight. It is my only choice. They have scripted lives for us that are but extended death sentences, a living death. I won’t live their script” (ibid, p. 120). Obviously, Yousef Abulheja has no choice but to scarify himself and become “Jenin’s own Fedayee” (p. 122).

Indeed, Abulhawa seems to fly with two wings, the first one is used to show the ugliness of Israel, and the second is to justify the attacks against Israel. She, in other words, attempts to say that it is Israelis who are the real terrorists, and not the Palestinians. Hence, Throughout the novel, Abulhawa attempts to unmask the real face of Israel, that of a terrorist. Amal, the narrator protagonist, for example, gives the readers live broadcast of the aggressive nature of Israeli terrorism when helpless villagers (her father and his neighbors) were compelled to defend themselves against Israel’s invasion on their village. Amal, who was still very young, feels “impressed with the would-be fighters who walked among {them}”. She carries on, “Baba had long been hiding rifles in the kitchen... He distributed the weapons to the fighters, whom I had until then only known as fathers, brothers, uncles and husbands” (p. 65). Hence, those innocent people were forced to resist the Israeli attack on them with whatever means they could.

Interestingly, as referred to above, Abulhawa’s *Mornings in Jenin* raises an important question, What’s the difference between resistance and terrorism? However, she does not directly ask such a question, but has skillfully created doubts in the mind of her readers. She does so by pointing

out the massive killings and the horrible attacks of Israel on Palestinians; men, women and kids. Most of the pictures she creates show the brutality of Israeli soldiers towards innocent people in Palestine. In the situation referred to above, for instance, Amal remains hidden for a whole week with her friend Huda, in a hole, ‘experiencing death in life’, during the Israeli invasion on their village (p. 65-70). From her place, Amal saw one of her neighbors lying on the ground with a gun in his hand and his dead son, who has been shot by Israeli soldiers, in the other (p. 71). And in her explanation to Amal, Fatima, Yousef’s wife, makes it clear that Palestinians are exposed too early in their lives to terrorism when she says: “... fear comes where terror comes to others because we are anesthetized to the guns constantly pointed at us” (p. 193). The historian and storyteller Haj Salem, who frequently appears in the story, says: “I’ve seen it all. All the wars” (p. 78). Amal remarks: “in our camp, his story was everyone’s story, a single tale of dispossession, of being stripped to the bones of one’s humanity, of being dumped like rubbish into refugee camps unfit for rats” (p. 78). During that Israeli attack on Ein Hod, in which Dalia loses her son, Ismael, the village was laid to ruin and Darwish’s wife is shot dead. “The soldier fired his pistol twice. She fell instantly dead” (p. 31). This horrible situation haunted Dalia who “would revisit, in her mind, over and over for many years,... she became lost”,... repeatedly screaming, ‘ibni! Ibni!’ My son, My son”, from a “mother’s deepest agony”, for the rest of her life (p. 32-33). Thus, through such incredible Israeli aggression scenes, Abulhawa effectively delivers an important message; Israel is nothing but a terrorist state.

Jerome Slater (2015) defines terrorism as “deliberate attacks, whether by governments or non-governmental groups, on noncombatants” (p. 80). He argues that “Israeli terrorism has been significantly worse than that of the Palestinians” (ibid, p. 79). Slater clearly sympathizes with Palestinians as he continues: “by contrast, consequentialist morality holds that, in the final analysis, actions and behavior can only be judged in terms of their practical consequences” (ibid, p. 80). His discussion shows that the “consequences of terrorism might be morally preferable to a status quo that cannot be changed except by terrorism” (ibid). Slater further speculates if it is morally admissible to function “unjust means if they are truly necessary to reach a just end or realize a just cause” (ibid). According to him, Palestinians have what he refers to as “just cause”, since they are resisting occupation and tyranny (ibid, p. 79). Based on Slater’s views, one can simply conclude that Israel is the terrorist and not the Palestinians whose terrorism can be morally justified. And indeed, this is exactly what Abulhawa tries to say through her novel, *Mornings in Jenin*.

Similarly, Adnan Ibrahim Alhjjar and Ahmad Alwadhah conclude that the “Palestinian acts against the Israeli army and settlement and material interests of Israel state are considered legitimate and legally permitted according to the provisions of general international law and the decisions of the United Nations” (p. 96). For them “there have been numerous forms of Israeli terrorism against the Palestinians which all the Palestinian in the territories of 1948, the West Bank

and the Gaza Strip had experienced” (p. 96). Thus, Alhajar and Alwadih, clearly indicate that Israel is a terrorist state that uses different terrorist forms to subject Palestinians and exploits their land for their own needs and interests.

As mentioned earlier, Abulhawa’s main concern is to justify Palestinian attacks against Israeli occupation, and at the same time exposing, in Slater’s words, ‘the Israeli terrorism’. She skillfully shows the unjust world where the victim has become the terrorist. She tries to mock the world that turns the image upside down, Israel, the imperialist and the colonizer is looked at as the victim, whereas the actual victims, the oppressed and the displaced Palestinians are treated as terrorists. Like Abulhawa, Alhajar and Alwadih blame the international community for taking no action against Israeli terrorism. For them, “the world community seriously fighting terrorism except in Palestine where the world view of Israeli terrorism changes altogether ...” (p. 100). Abulhawa’s view is further confirmed by Said and Hitchens who note that there has been a tendency, especially in the United States “to associate resistance to Israel not simply with ‘terrorism’ and ‘communism,’ but also with anti-Semitism” (1988, p. 2-3).

In this sense, Abulhawa on several occasions, clearly mocks the terrorist state of Israel that addresses and depicts Palestinians as terrorists. Amal, for instance, indicates that Israel label their refugee camp as “breeding ground of terrorists and a festering den of terror” (Abulhawa: 2010, p.190). Moreover, the former Prime Minister of Israel, Ariel Sharon says “[w]e are confronting Terror for 120 years, we once called it Arab Terror and it is now Palestinian Terror” (qtd in Priyanka: 2016, p.1436). As Priyanka notes “Power, on the other hand, invents new strategies to curb resistance. Palestinian resistance has mostly been depicted in western hegemonic powers as violence and terrorism” (2016, p.1440). Likewise, Said and Hitchens (1988) point out that the American media such as the American screen and the commercial film represented Palestinians as “the mad Islamic zealot, the gratuitously violent killer of innocents, and the desperately irrational and savage primitive” (p. 3). Said and Hitchens further observes that Palestinian image has been damaged as a result of Israeli-western committed co-ordination to draw Palestinians as mere backward terrorists where “support for Israel is absolutely crucial” (ibid).

In accordance with the Israeli strategy, Joan Peters argues in *From Time Immemorial* that “[t]errorism is the core of the new Palestinian identity that West Bank Arabs created in 1967”. Peters further claims that a “Palestinian state would be regarded as a terror state” (qtd in Priyanka: 2016, p.1436). According to Priyanka, such arguments show that “Palestinians do not have positive identity and they are often generalized as terrorists, hijackers, oil suppliers, and suicide bombers” (p.1436). And as Alkodimi generally concludes, in his article, al-Muqri’s Anti-Religious Stance: A Call for Moderate Islamic Discourse, “western media ... mostly portray Muslims as terrorists” (2019, p. 40). Furthermore, Palestinian writer Sahar Khalifeh also shares the same views as she notes that “[a] Palestinian is a synonym to a terrorist; an Arab is a synonym to a filthy, greasy sheikh with a beard

and beads, a camel in the background and a dagger behind his back”. For Khalifeh, Moslems are “fixed in one reality, one image, one picture which is considered real and true”, that of a terrorist. (qtd in Priyanka: 2016, p. 1436). Hence, Palestinian resistance has mostly been depicted in western hegemonic powers as violence and terrorism (ibid, p. 1440). However, the question that arises is, how did this happen? And why?

Awol Allo, in *Marwan Barghouti in Tel Aviv*, points out that “Israel sought to stage Palestinian terrorism in the courtroom with the view to discrediting the Palestinian leadership as ‘murderous gangs’ and ‘enemies of mankind’ with whom Israel cannot negotiate a lasting peace” (2017, p. 49). Richard Wilson also writes “criminal trials are now prime venues at which. history is investigated. and eventually stamped with the imprimatur of a legal judgment” (qtd in Allo: 2017, p. 51). Obviously, the trial of Marwan Barghouti was planned in such a way as to create particular views and images that serve Israel’s motives. According to Allo, Barghouti was “a convenient scapegoat that embodies everything Israel needed to put Arafat and Palestinians on trial”. By subjecting a well-known influential Palestinian figure to critical investigation in its own courts, Israel’s main aim is to “consolidate and cement the truth of the image and the narrative it sought to construct” (ibid, p. 52). That image is clearly expressed by Schmemmann who appears to be in full agreement with Allo as he notes that Israeli authorities publicly declared that they “intend to use the trial to substantiate its claim that the entire Palestinian leadership of Yasir Arafat, in which Mr. Barghouti played a prominent role, is nothing more than a band of terrorists and murderers” (“The New York Times”). Thus, the trial is planned purposefully to emphasize a certain image within the Israeli and Western social media that associates Palestinians with violence and terrorism.

Hence, the public trial in Tel Aviv was a fundamental component of a larger Israeli plan attempting to depict Palestinians as the assailants and Israelis as innocent victims of Palestinian savagery and to “stamp this alternative reality” with a universal official lawful judgement (Allo: 2017, p. 53). This view is further emphasized by Hilla Dayan who writes, Barghouti’s trial “is the first case of a defendant, charged with terrorist offenses, not to be tried by a military tribunal, but at an ordinary civil court”. This public trial, according to her, is aimed at creating certain image and reality of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that “corresponds to the official needs of the Israeli government: discrediting Arafat and the Palestinian Authority to justify the status quo and blame Palestinian violence and terrorism for the lack progress in the peace process” (qtd in Allo: p. 53). Thus, the image of Palestinian terrorism planned and designed by the Israeli court, falls, within a larger strategy which intends to depict Palestinian acts of resistance against occupation as acts of terrorism. Through Barghouti, a famous political figure who represented the hope of Palestinians to resist occupation and rejects all types of reconciliation with it, the Israeli courtroom established an intended image of the Palestinians in general and their leadership, in particular, that of mere terrorists, a long-life image with which Palestinians are identified (ibid, p. 54-55).

It is that false image of Palestinians which Israel has created that Abulhawa has turned upside down through her novel, *Mornings in Jenin*. She tries to correct the image by showing that Palestinians are actually victims and not terrorists. Abulhawa, in other words, uses her narratives to unmask the reality in Palestine where the real terrorist is thoroughly exposed. According to her, Israel is a terrorist state that exercises all types of terrorisms and aggressions against Palestinians who have been excluded from a “meaningful existence” (Said and Hitchens: 1988, p. 3). In a nutshell, she simply yells at the world to stop, in Said and Hitchens’ words, ‘blaming the victims’, and consider the real terrorist, instead.

CONCLUSION

Like the mainstream of the Palestinian narratives, *Mornings in Jenin* by Susan Abulhawa attempts to describe the reality in Palestine. It highlights the resistance spirit of Palestinians. However, what is peculiar about Abulhawa’s novel is that it indirectly raises an important question on terrorism in Palestine. Abulhawa simply puts it, who is the real terrorist in Palestine? Interestingly, she has utilized several literary techniques such as metaphor, contrast and symbolism in order to answer the question, as well as to draw a live image of the reality in Palestine. In this regard, it is worthy to say that Abulhawa is guided by two dimensions. Firstly, through different language tools, she depicts the agony of her fragmented nation under Israeli hegemony and aggression exposing Israel as the actual terrorist. This paves the way for her to, secondly, justify the Palestinian resistance, through whatever means, against Israel. That is to say, she uncovers the illusion created by the Israeli and western media that portrays Palestinians as mere terrorists. For her, if that is the case, then what can Israel be called? According to the author as well as the many critics and researchers referred earlier, the definition of terrorism by Jerome Slater, Israel is but a naked imperialist colonizer that freely exercises all types of terrorisms over Palestinian land and people. Abulhawa’s ultimate message is that the whole world should firmly stand against Israeli terrorism rather than blaming the victims.

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